



Wheatley River Improvement Group **Winter 2014**

NOTES FROM THE WATERSHED MANAGER

This winter certainly feels like it has long outstayed its' welcome. Although the blanket of winter snow generally means a quiet time for watershed groups across the Island, we have had lots of opportunities for fun this year! The highlight of my winter was being involved in planning and organizing the 4th Annual Winter Woodlot Tour, where a great time was had by all!

As we turn the corner into spring at WRIG, I'm excited for our upcoming field season, and all

the hustle and bustle that comes with it. We will have lots of work to do cleaning and fixing up at Rackham's Pond, and the annual smelt spawning migration will take place in the early spring, giving everyone a chance to witness their progress through our river and streams. If you've been thinking about participating in WRIG activities, now is an excellent time to get involved. Come out to our AGM on April 16th, or send us an e-mail, we'd love to hear from you!

WRIG Manager, Tamsyn Cosh-MacKenzie

WRIG REMEMBERS JACK HANLEY

It was with great sadness that we received the news that Mr. Jack Hanley, former WRIG Board of Director, passed away on January 27th. His contributions to the Wheatley River Improvement Group over the years were notable, as were his many life accomplishments in life. Mr. Hanley volunteered his time and talents to stream work and took part in the restoration of Rackham's Community Pond project.



Here is an excerpt from his obituary published in the Boston Globe:

"...Jack loved nature and spent much of his time at his home in PEI. He fell in love with the island as a child, and eventually he designed and built his own home there, fondly referred to as "The House that Jack Built". Following his retirement Jack pursued his many interests, friendships and travels. He was a lifelong learner, loved music, reading and the great outdoors."

Mr. Hanley passed away at his home in Boston, and is remembered fondly, along with his faithful Springer spaniel companion Reggie, by his friends here in PEI.



WHEATLEY RIVER IMPROVEMENT GROUP INC. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Residents and interested individuals are invited to attend our upcoming 2014 AGM. The meeting will be held Wednesday, April 16th at 7:00 PM at the Cymbria Lions Club, 2184 Church Road in South Rustico. We are pleased to have Dr. Adam Fenech, Director of the UPEI Climate Lab as our guest speaker. Dr. Fenech will be joining us to discuss Climate Changes affecting Coastal Communities. As part of our continued efforts to monitor water quality in the Wheatley River Watershed, we will also be accepting tap water samples brought to the meeting for nitrate level analysis. This analysis will be free of charge for WRIG members, and all information collected will be kept private, with no

confidential information released. If you are interested in participating, bring your water sample to the meeting in a capped, non-returnable container (like a clean water bottle), and it will be collected on your way in to the meeting.

Following the presentation, a short business AGM will follow, and hot refreshments will be served. For more information, please check out the website at www.wheatleyriver.ca, or contact Tamsyn@wheatleyriver.ca.



2014 WINTER WOODLOT TOUR



Gerald MacDougall talking about PEI birds of prey. Photo credit Alex Corbett (www.alexcorbettphotography.com).

Despite the polar vortex that has been hanging around this winter keeping temperatures low, there have been lots of opportunities this winter to have fun outside in the cold! The 4th annual Winter Woodlot Tour was a prime example of some fantastic outdoor activities that keep this season entertaining! February 1st dawned bright and sunny, and we got a lucky reprieve from the cold with unseasonably mild temperatures for our big event. Close to 1200 visitors came out to “My Mother’s Country Inn” in New Glasgow to enjoy demonstrations and activities. Hosted this year by the Hunter-Clyde Watershed Group, the day included horse drawn sleigh rides, bridges by Scouts PEI, backyard maple syrup collection, live birds of prey, and flora and fauna identification. Go!PEI brought enough pairs of snowshoes to go around, and young and old took the opportunity to hike through the woods while staying above the snow. WRIG was in on the action, with a watershed display under the tent, answering questions and talking about what we do while people enjoyed hot cider provided by Wintermoor Orchard. This year we also had the New Glasgow Fire & Rescue on site, and they gave an excellent ice rescue simulation for onlookers. All in all, it was a phenomenal day, and we thank everyone who came out to join us for some fun in the snow. If you enjoyed yourself, spread the word, and we hope to see you all again next year!



Kids and adults had a great time enjoying a horse drawn sleigh ride through the snow. Photo credit Alex Corbett (www.alexcorbettphotography.com).

OPPORTUNITIES WRIG'S SUMMER FIELD CREW WILL WORK FOR YOU!

Watershed residents! Do you have a section of stream needing improvement/restoration or a section of buffer zone in need of the bank stabilizing benefits that trees and shrubs provide?

If so, we have a solution for you. Please contact WRIG to arrange for a spring site assessment and have our 2014 Field Crew plant on your property to increase canopy cover and plant diversity at no cost to you!

Work opportunities - Be part of WRIG's Summer Field Crew!

Do you like working outdoors and making a positive change in your environment? If so, we might just have the job for you! WRIG will soon be hiring staff for our Summer Field Crew. Technicians. Watch the WRIG website!

YOUR 2013/2014 WRIG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair, Stewart MacRae

Treasurer, Stephen Lowe

Secretary Tracy Gallant

Director Allie McCrady

Director Jeff Arsenault



We are looking for new directors; if you are interested in joining, please Contact Tamsyn for more information. Elections will be held at our 2014 AGM on April 16th. Please get involved, WRIG survives because of the generous time and efforts of people like you!

WRIG IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE 2014 FUNDING FROM PEI WCF

As a non-profit organization, WRIG receives its funding through a variety of sources. We'd like to gratefully acknowledge the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund for its continued support of our efforts to enhance and maintain the overall health of the Wheatley River watersheds. Funds awarded for the 2014 field season will help enable our Field Crew to accomplish their important stream enhancement work, habitat restoration and improvement for fish and wildlife, and protection of water quality.

Wildlife
Conservation
Fund



OUR GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION TO THOSE WHO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE:

OUR FUNDING SOURCES:

- Province of Prince Edward Island Watershed Management Fund•
Greening Spaces
- Government of Canada Summer Jobs Program•
- PEI Employment Development Agency – Special Projects•
•Jobs for Youth•
Wildlife Conservation Fund



OUR PARTNERS:

- Hunter-Clyde Watershed Group•
- Agriculture Canada•
- PEI Department of Forestry and Agriculture•

NOTABLE VOLUNTEERS:

WRIG Board of Directors
Winter Woodlot Tour Presenters and Volunteers

AND OF COURSE, OUR FAMILY AND CORPORATE MEMBERS!

Creekfield Homeowners Association•



ESTUARY WATCH PROGRAM

Anoxia is an ongoing annual issue in Wheatley River. When there's an excess of nutrients (especially nitrate), lots of sun, and warm water temperatures with low tidal flushing, aquatic plants like sea lettuce grow out of control and then die off and decompose, causing our rivers to turn milky white and smell like rotten eggs. This is really hard on the health of the river ecosystem and unpleasant for anyone living on the water. While there wasn't a major anoxic event in our watershed this past summer, small patches were seen in parts of our tributaries. While we are all working to improve watershed health, it's important to track these anoxic events so we can best target our efforts.

In partnership with the PEI Department of Environment, Labor and Justice, an Estuary Watch Program is being set up to collect this information, and track changes in anoxic events. This collaborative project will be an opportunity to collect valuable data that will be useful for both WRIG and the Dept of Environment

This is where you, our residents, come in. We need volunteers who live on or near the estuary and tidal sections of our watershed to take part in this project. It won't be difficult; all you need to do is enjoy the view of your section of river daily, and record what you see. For those interested in participating, please contact Tamsyn to get involved. An info session for this project will be planned for late April or early May so the project can get a start this spring.



Section of the Wheatley River (2011) with anoxic conditions.

Coming Events

WRIG AGM: Please join us April 16th, 2014 for the WRIG Annual General Meeting, taking place at the Cymbria Lions Club.

PEI Watershed Alliance AGM: April 12th, Hunter River.



WRIG PARTNERING WITH BBEMA TO CREATE A POLLINATOR HABITAT RESERVE AT RACKHAM'S COMMUNITY POND THIS SUMMER



The distinctive colour pattern of an adult monarch butterfly, seen here with a research tag on its wing to assist in tracking the species throughout its long migration).

After the latest dumping of snow, it's hard to imagine that it's officially spring; the time when flowers begin to bloom and pollinators get to work. Pollinators are essential parts of every ecosystem. Monarch butterflies, one of the best known North American butterflies, are an important pollinator, and this interesting species is currently listed as being of *special concern* on the Canadian Species at Risk Registry.

Spending the summers in the US and southern portions of Canada, these far traveling insects migrate to their overwintering sites in Mexico, a journey that takes 3-4 generations to make. That means that of the original butterflies that set out from here, only their great grand children have a chance of seeing their end destination.

Monarch eggs, laid on the underside of milkweed leaves, are creamy white and turn a pale yellow as they mature. Once the eggs hatch, the yellow black and white banded caterpillar feeds exclusively on



Chrysalis of monarch butterfly, attached to plant stem, soon to emerge.

milkweed in order to fuel their chrysalis into the bright orange and black winged beauties we see during PEI summers.

As adults, the butterflies are drawn to a variety of flowering plants for their nutrient filled nectars.

The challenge facing Monarch populations is the decline of Milkweed plants and nectar sources. These plant food sources are, for the most part, found on agricultural land and roadsides, which are affected by development and herbicides. This loss of habitat and food source not only affects monarchs, but also impacts survival of other pollinators and the plants and wild animals that depend on them.

In order to give Monarch butterflies the best chance of survival to make it to their overwintering grounds in Mexico, we, as stewards of the

watershed, can help.

We can offset the loss of milkweed and nectar

sources by creating, conserving and protecting milkweed patches as monarch habitats. This summer, WRIG will be partnering with the Bedeque Bay Environmental Management Association (BBEMA) to plant and maintain a monarch way-station at Rackham's Community Pond. The soil type needed for young milkweed plants to thrive is wet or damp. This means that the unsightly swamps and lowland areas on your property could be ideal spots to transform into beneficial way-stations for these butterflies, planting native milkweed like the one pictured right.



Swamp milkweed, a PEI native species of plant, is an ideal habitat and food source for monarch butterflies and their larvae.

If you're interested in joining the effort to help monarch butterflies locally, please get in touch with the WRIG office or BBEMA for details on how you can get involved. There are lots of on-line tips for gardening for pollinators, and you can easily turn your yard into an oasis for birds, bees, and other important insects!



Questions? Comments? Just want to get in touch?

You can reach us through the WRIG website www.wheatleyriver.ca, or e-mail Tamsyn@WheatleyRiver.ca.

As summer approaches, the office hours will be increasing, so if you'd like to drop by for a chat, please contact us to make sure we're in, and well be happy to meet you at the WRIG office in the Cymbria Lions Club at 2184 Church Road!

WRIG hats now available!



WRIG hats are now available for purchase from the WRIG office. These high quality navy hats are fully adjustable,

stylish, and very comfortable. As well, they were purchased and embroidered here on PEI, so you can wear your WRIG gear with pride. While quantities last, we're offering a bonus membership deal when you purchase your hat at the upcoming AGM. A 2014 WRIG Membership and hat combo will cost \$20, taxes included. Show your support for our watershed group while you're out enjoying nature this summer!

Special thanks to Rackham's Pond Landowners

- Grant, Nancy, & Steven Rackham ●
- Charles and Laura Lipnicki ●
- Melvin & Debbie Ling ●
- Michael & Betty-Ann Mokler ●
- Philip & Shirley Wheatherbee ●

Please Consider Joining Our Membership

 Individual or Family \$10.00
Corporate or Supporting \$50.00
Simply clip this out and mail it to:

The Wheatley River Improvement Group
2184 Church Rd, RR#3
Hunter River, PE, COA 1N0 

Name _____
Address _____
Telephone _____
Email - Would you like to be notified about upcoming WRIG meetings and events? _____

YES _____ No Thanks _____

Please visit us online at...
www.WheatleyRiver.ca

