



# Souris River Watershed News

Issue #29

Souris River Watershed Committee

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[www.souriswl.ca](http://www.souriswl.ca)

## Website Updates

Remember to check our website for updates on work which has been completed in the summer months by Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation (SABPEIWF) staff. The scope of the work which has been completed can be seen through the amazing photographs taken by staff, and in particular the before and after photos of work completed.

## Souris River Eagle Perches

The popular eagle perches that line the causeway on the Souris River have shown great success with many eagles landing atop them. Eagle perches are used for resting and hunting as eagles can scout out food from the perches. In addition, the eagles are a beautiful sight to see and provide the opportunity for photograph for many people.



A bald eagle atop a perch on Souris River

## New Brush Matting



New brush matting at Cross River

Assessments have been done in many streams for the need of brush matting. Brush matting involves creating a covering of branches on stream banks to decrease erosion, stabilize the bank and manage water flow. They catch sediment and eventually create a stronger bank and a habitat area for various flora and fauna. To date brush mats have been installed at sites in Black Pond, Cow River and Cross River.

The brush matting done in Gowan Brae in 2006 is our largest brush matting project to date. The benefits can already be noted from this as the development of a salt marsh and growth of cord grass can be seen. It has proven effective in catching sedimentation

and creating additional habitat. Although the new brush matting is on a smaller scale, positive results are anticipated as well.



SABPEIWF summer student Jonathan Gallant installing brush mats in Cross

### North Lake Property Clean Up



SABPEIWF staff David Pike and Tim Brothers string together loose Javex bottles

On Friday, June 22 the SABPEIWF staff took a break from routine stream work to partake in a clean-up at a North Lake property. In partnership with property owner Tommy Joe MacDonald, SABPEIWF staff cleaned four separate sites plagued with plastic bottles which were planned to be used for mussel fishing. Some bottles were

strunged together while most were loose and staff tied them together with twine. Bottles from all four sites were trucked or walked to a central clearing and piled together. The pile of bottles was approximately 80 feet long, 8 feet high and 12 feet wide. Approximately three tractor trailers full of plastic bottles are to be removed from the property by Tommy Joe MacDonald. The improvement from the clean up on the property was exceptional. After removing the plastic bottles, all four sites were raked and broken pieces of bottles and labels were cleaned up. We felt this was a very important undertaking as the property borders North Lake Creek, a highly productive watercourse, with adjacent agricultural lands which contribute to the aesthetic value of the area. Unfortunately these bottles were not able to be recycled as there is little market value.



SABPEIWF staff standing in front of the pile of plastic bottles after completing the clean up



A view of the plastic bottles nearly half way through the clean up

## Water Testing in Our Watershed Management Area



SABPEIWF staff Tim Brothers uses a YSI to test water quality at McGinnis Dam

Water quality testing is done in 10 of the watersheds in our watershed management area every two weeks. Parameters tested include water temperature, dissolved oxygen, salinity and conductivity using a YSI meter and turbidity using a Aquaflour flowmeter. All results are recorded in a database along with results from testing done in previous years. This will allow us to further evaluate the health of our watercourses and note development patterns over time.

Keeping water temperature low and oxygen levels high is important for fish species inhabiting the streams. Areas of cool refuge are also important for fish, especially in the summer months, as the water temperature becomes much higher. When water temperature becomes too high, the water will not hold as much oxygen. This causes the streams to become uninhabitable to fish species. Stream work such as removal of beaver dams by our crews is vital to keeping

these parameters in acceptable ranges for optimal stream and fish health.

## Green Crab Stomach Analysis

Green crabs are an invasive species which prey on various types of shellfish and can destroy the vegetation in areas they inhabit. Basin Head, unfortunately, has a healthy population of green crabs. Samples of 20 green crab have been collected from the Irish Moss bed and froze for 24 hours to kill them. Department of Fisheries and Oceans are going to conduct a stomach analysis of these crabs to investigate whether traces of Irish Moss are in their stomachs to determine if they are feeding on it. This is an important matter as Basin Heads Marine Protected Status is dependent upon the presence of Irish Moss. With it being only one of seven areas in Canada with this status, and only one of two accessible by land, it is important to do all we can to protect and conserve the Irish Moss. Results will be provided once the analysis is complete.



SABPEIWF summer student Max MacDonald collects green crab for DFO stomach analysis

## Eagles Nesting at Eastern Kings Sportsplex

Two young eagles were spotted in a nest behind the Eastern Kings Sportsplex by the

of Souris maintenance workers. Both eagles were spotted sharing a nest in a tree towards the east end of the soccer field. The eagles both appear to be well fed and are a healthy size. This is a great opportunity for people to come out and enjoy seeing wildlife in their natural habitat as well as photograph these birds.



Young eagles in a nest behind Eastern Kings Sportsplex in Souris.  
Photograph by Waldron Leard

### **Stream Work Update**

The five crews are continuing to make notable progress in the streams in our watershed management area. Many streams which were not previously enhanced have been opened up. Streams which have been enhanced in previous years continue to be maintained. This work is important for maintaining healthy fish stocks and habitat as well as enhancing water quality.

Much of the new work has been challenging as there has been a lot of debris and blockages to remove from the streams. Beaver dams in new areas were also very prevalent. In one new area, for example, one crew encountered 25 abandoned beaver dams in a one mile area and all were removed. Sightings of active beavers have also been reported by all crews. In watersheds with beaver management plans

in place, beavers will be trapped out by the SABWPEIWF staff in the fall. We are extremely pleased with the work the crews are completing. The following will provide an update on the streams which have been enhanced and maintained as of this year:

- Diligent Pond
- East Lake – Both branches
- North Lake including Mill Creek, Alder Brook and areas below the West Tarantum Road
- Basin Head – Weston Coffins
- McVane’s Dam – Creek west of Munn's Road
- Charlie Campbell’s Creek from beach to West of East Baltic
- Priest Pond – from the bridge to Dixons Dam including south branch
- Cross River – Pond to Souris Line Road (Claude Clements)
- Black Pond – Greenvale Branch and East Branch to Elmer Deagles
- Little Harbour – Tidal to St. Catherine’s
- Souris River – Tidal and both branches (Bear River and Harmony Junction) and MacInnis’ creek
- Fortune – Main branch to Shaw Rd including Big Brook, Johnny Belinda Creek, and many other tributaries
- Hay River
- Cow River
- Bear River
- Naufrage – main branch to Line of the Lot Road to tidal
- MacAskills River



Before (left) and after (right) removal of fallen alders in a stream in Bear River



Before (left) and after (right) debris removal in a stream on Greenvale Road. The stream was not visible before crews removed all the debris.



One of the largest beaver dams crews have encountered to date in Hay River. The beaver dam was approximately 8 feet tall and completely blocked water flow (left). Water was diverted over the bridge once the crew began removing it. Once the beaver dam was removed water levels dropped significantly and flow was restored (right).



Chainsaw operator Tony Meade cutting through fallen Spruce trees (left). This stream in Black Pond had previously never been worked in. The results were incredible with all debris removed and water flow restored.

### **Rescued Partridge**



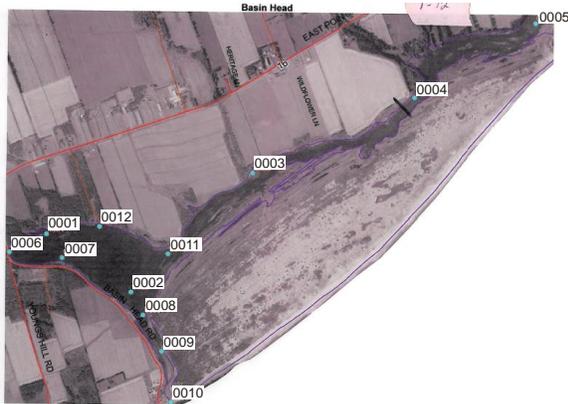
SAB Supervisor Michael Jacklyn holds the young partridge which he found abandoned on the Father James Road

While working in the streams SAB supervisor Michael Jacklyn noticed a partridge lying on the side of the road as he drove past. When he stopped to look he noticed the mother was dead but one of her young was standing beside her. Feeling guilty about leaving it, as its chances of survival alone would be slim, Jacklyn put it in a plastic tote and took it back to the office.

Having come this far, the staff knew they could not simply let it go, so coordinator Fred Cheverie made a phone call to a local resident wondering if he would care for it. Les and Annette Dill of Rollo Bay agreed to his request as they raise chickens. Conveniently, a new brood had just hatched. When Jacklyn arrived he released the partridge into the chicken coop. It immediately walked over to the heat lamp, settled amongst the chicks and made itself at home.

### **Fecal Coliform Testing**

With the shellfishery closed at Basin Head due to coliform counts exceeding allowable levels, coliform levels are being tested every two weeks. In partnership with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, water samples are collected at 12 sites at Basin Head. Water temperature and time of day are recorded at each sample site. Samples are then put on ice and sent to the provincial lab in Charlottetown for analysis. Areas which are closed to shell fishing are monitored 5 times every 3 years, however since Basin Head is a Marine Protected Area, DFO is interested in having coliform levels analysed much more frequently.



Map of Basin Head Lagoon outlining the sites where samples are taken to test coliform counts



SABPEIWF staff Tim Brothers showing the brush matting at Gowan Brae to CIB judges Lucy Chang and Roger Younker

**Communities in Bloom Tour**

On August 11, 12, and 13 the judges from the Communities in Bloom (CIB) organization were in Souris for judging. The SABPEIWF was pleased to partner with the Town of Souris to showcase some of our environmental undertakings. On Friday, August 12 SABPEIWF staff Tim Brothers led the team of judges and town officials to the salt marsh in Gowan Brae. They were very interested in the success and progress of this brush matting project along with additional work we have completed.

The tree inventory conducted by SABPEIWF staff in June was also part of the CIB initiative. A full report was compiled and submitted to the judges outlining the tree species distribution on 16 municipal properties. SABPEIWF will continue to partner with the Town of Souris in the next phase of advising which tree species to plant and on which properties based on the results of this report.

**Coordinator’s Comments**



The recent devastating fish kills in western Prince Edward Island have proven to be some of the worst in Island history. The media has indicated that pesticides are involved and that charges will be laid in conjunction with the legislated buffer zones.

The possibility of having a fish kill in Eastern Kings County is very real. As climate change experts indicate that weather patterns are changing; the likelihood of having frequent downpours with larger amounts of water in a shorter period of time will become the norm.

However, we are very fortunate that producers in our management area are very concerned and are showing due diligence by ensuring that they take advantage of every measure that is made possible to assist in alleviating potential sources.

Most producers have an updated Environmental Management Plan. In this

plan they address all of their farm holdings and potential problems that may exist.

Most producers are also participating in the ALUS program taking sensitive farm land out of production. They are installing soil conservation structures, grassed waterways, grassed headlands, addressing high sloped lands, meeting the needs of legislated buffer zones and beyond etc.

A number of producers in our area use “Dammer Dyker” technology on their cultivators on sloped land to address the possibility of run-off.

All producers practice a three year crop rotation (legislated) and many have a large number of acres in a four year rotation. Many use cover crops and mulch on their lands to prevent wind erosion.

Generally I find the producers of this area are willing to try new and innovative environmentally friendly farming methods. They are applauded by the PEI Department of Agriculture and Agri- Food Canada for their leadership. We see producers in our area involved in their industry: Chris MacAulay is the President, Ryan Keenan is a director of the PEI Soil & Crop Association; Boyd Rose, Brian Ching and Colin MacAulay are all directors of the PEI Potato Marketing Board; Kevin MacIsaac and Boyd Rose are both past presidents of the PEI Potato Marketing Board, and Alvin Keenan is the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of the PEI Federation of Agriculture.

It is unfortunate that a few negligent producers within our province are causing environmental catastrophes; get all producers painted by the media with the same brush.

*Fred Cheverie*  
(Coordinator of the Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation)

### **President’s Comments**



The Bald Eagle Perches installed by the Souris & Area Branch along the Souris Causeway are well used by the residing eagles. It is seldom that I drive past and don’t observe at least one sitting and observing the

estuary for a potential dinner.

They obviously are admired by tourists and locals alike by the numbers of cars that are regularly parked with everyone with a camera in hand.

Eagles seem to be making a comeback from their depleted numbers back in the fifties. We commonly see them at East Point, North Lake, Naufrage, Souris, Basin Head, Fortune and Little Pond.

They truly are a majestic bird and it is great to hear that young have been reported in nests in the eastern area.

*Joe MacDonald*  
(President of the Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation)

Anyone interested in making a monetary contribution to our environmental efforts can do so by making arrangements with our office.

Cheques can be made payable to the Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation

Your generosity would be greatly appreciated.