



SOURIS RIVER -TAKEN BY SANDRA MEADE

Souris & Area Watershed News

Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation

PO Box 692
Souris, PEI
COA 2B0

(902) 687-4115

sourisareawildlife@gmail.com

www.souriswl.com

TROUT, TROUT, TROUT!

SAB receives funding through Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program

Souris and Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation is pleased to have received funding from Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) through the newly created Prevention Stream.

Previously HSP funding was limited to projects focusing on species listed under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*, however starting in 2014, the Prevention Stream was expanded to include projects focusing on improving habitat, mitigating threats and engaging Canadians in the protection of non-listed species.

Our project focuses on the improvement of Brook Trout populations and habitat within the Souris area. The project goal of improving Brook Trout populations will be accomplished through the development of a conservation plan identifying Brook Trout critical habitat, and completing on-the-ground enhancement projects to improve important habitat area. Involving the local community is an important component of this project.

Brook Trout also known as "speckled trout" or "sea-run" trout is the only native stream dwelling trout in Prince Edward Island. Brook Trout require excellent water quality and habitat conditions for survival and prefer water temperatures lower than 20°C. The presence of a healthy Brook Trout population is indicative of excellent water quality which benefits the entire ecosystem. Brook Trout can be anadromous meaning that they migrate to the ocean for periods of time. Interestingly, the exact mechanism of why some trout migrate and others do not migrate to the ocean is not known. Populations of both anadromous and resident (non-migratory) trout can persist in the same river. Typically, anadromous Brook Trout move in the spring towards the ocean where they will live for 2-3 months or upwards of a year in shallow inshore ocean waters. Food is more abundant in the ocean compared to freshwater environments so these "sea-run" trout are larger compared to their strictly freshwater counterparts. *Article continued on page 2*



Brook Trout from Cross River. Photo taken by Scott Roloson

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Brook Trout are carnivorous eating a variety of aquatic vertebrates and invertebrates including aquatic insects (both larval and adult phases) such as mayflies, stoneflies, dragonflies, blackflies and midges. Brook Trout will eat smaller fish, salmon eggs and are cannibalistic eating members of their own kind. Fish that migrate to the ocean eat mummichugs (gudgeons), silversides, smelt and even small eels. Brook Trout spawn in the fall and seek groundwater upwelling areas (springs) for their redds (nests) in freshwater. Groundwater remains the same temperature year round – around 7°C in PEI, so these spring areas are warmer than the surrounding creek providing an excellent growing environment for the eggs over the winter.

Circulating water due to the upwelling groundwater moves oxygen across the eggs and removes metabolic waste. Brook Trout will also retreat to these groundwater upwelling areas in the heat of the summer as the water temperature in these areas is cooler than the surrounding stream. Spring areas are so vital to the survival of Brook Trout that their scientific name is *Salvelinus fontinalis* with fontinalis being latin for “from springs”. Identification of these upwelling areas and ensuring that Brook Trout can reach these critical habitat areas will be a focus for Souris and Area Branch this year. Work has already started as this past fall during our annual Atlantic Salmon redd counts we also enumerated Brook Trout redds and took note of areas where Brook Trout were congregating. Plans for 2015 include public information sessions on Brook Trout ecology, a winter nature walk, increased assessment of Brook Trout critical habitat and population numbers within in our region and rehabilitation projects ensuring Brook Trout can reach groundwater upwelling areas. Please stay tuned for more information about these activities and events.



Larval Stone Fly. Photo by Trout Unlimited Canada



Brook Trout in a groundwater upwelling area. Photo by Trout Unlimited Canada

PHEASANT & HUNGARIAN PARTRIDGE FEEDING PROJECT

Last year was an extremely harsh winter and several volunteers in our area operated feeding stations for birds with specific emphasis on Ring-necked Pheasants and Hungarian or Grey Partridges. Deep snow made it difficult for these birds to locate food and if it wasn't for the efforts of these dedicated volunteers many birds wouldn't have survived the winter. Birds weak from hunger are easy targets for numerous predators.

This year Souris Wildlife will once again supply feed for this purpose, but we only want to supply it when the weather dictates. We don't want to domesticate these birds as we want to teach them how to survive and make them hardy. We plan to commence our feeding stations once the snowpack increases. Please feel free to contact our office (902)687-4115 and speak with Mary or Fred or call Fred at his home to have feed delivered within our management area (Goose River to Annandale and all parts east). Souris and Area Branch would like to extend thanks to PEI's Wildlife Conservation Fund for their support of this project.



Ring-necked Pheasants in Souris Line Road. Photo taken by Liam Kelly

ATLANTIC SALMON

Redd counts 2014

This season of counting salmon redds was the most difficult that we have encountered in the past nine years. Traditionally we usually begin our salmon redd counts in the middle of November after checking a few key areas to see if the salmon have entered the usual spawning areas. This year it was November 30th before they appeared in any numbers in these areas. We are unsure of the reason for their late arrival although it possibly can be attributed to the unusually warm fall season. Unfortunately, the late fall rains and resulting high waters coincided with the start of redd counting resulting in exceptionally difficult conditions to wade and see redds on the stream bottom.

This year we set up a monitoring zone on Cross River to track the spawning times of salmon in a traditionally heavily occupied spawning area. The first salmon appeared on November 8th and on our last sweep of the area on December 9th we counted an additional 7 fresh redds, providing us with a total redd number consistent with the past years.

We would like to thank volunteers Joe MacDonald, Harry Meade, Cameron Ross and Mark MacGregor for their efforts in enabling us to visit as many rivers as possible. We seemed to do well in the headwater regions (upper reaches) of rivers where the water levels were lower while we did poorly closer to the estuaries where the water volumes were higher. All redds were marked using GPS technology and placed on maps for future use and this documentation was forwarded to DFO and the PEI Fish & Wildlife Division

The two redds indicated on Souris River are probable and we will electro-fish the area next summer to see if we can locate any young salmon. We also walked as much of Fortune River as we could with water levels and had no luck locating Atlantic Salmon redds. Fred's personal experience would suggest that our numbers in 2014 are down 30% because of our inability to see redds accurately in high water conditions.

Our numbers are especially encouraging when compared to the rest of the region. Throughout the region, dramatically decreased Atlantic Salmon numbers were noted in 2014. As a result, the Honourable Gail Shea, Federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans recently announced the creation of a special ministerial advisory committee to determine a course of action to address these low return numbers.



An Atlantic Salmon spotted while counting redds in Cross River. Photo taken by Sandra Meade



SAB's Mike Jacklyn pointing out a redd in Cross River. Photo taken by Sandra Meade

Number of Atlantic Salmon redds counted during spawning surveys since 2008 for the Souris and Area Branch Management Zone.

Watershed	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Bear River	3	16	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cow River	12	50	1	4	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cross River	193	268	83	190	100	70	120
Hay River	15	43	3	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Naufrage River	217	453	43	429	33	32	100
North Lake Creek	183	333	106	355	205	213	200
Priest Pond Creek	129	151	21	20	13	8	11
Souris River	2	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	754	1314	257	999	351	323	431

TREE PLANTING AT OUR LEGACY PARK

The first snow fall of the year could not keep our team of dedicated volunteers from planting over 200 trees on November 8th, 2014. Twenty volunteers helped to plant a variety of native Acadian trees and shrubs at our Legacy Park located at Harmony Junction on Souris Line Road. We were grateful for so many hands as it made light work especially on such a chilly day!

We were also fortunate to have the help of Grade 7 classes from Souris Regional School who helped to plant over 100 trees in October at the Legacy Park.

Many thanks to Canon's Take Root Program presented by Evergreen and the Department of Agriculture & Forestry and the Frank J. Gaudet Tree Nursery for their contributions.

The trees planted will re-establish the native Acadian forest on the property. Stay tuned in 2015 for many more exciting opportunities and developments at the Legacy Park including: the grand opening of the park including the nature trail with interpretive panels; dedication of memorial trees; installation of bird boxes; and completion of the larger parking lot.



Tree planting activities in Fall 2014 – Photos taken by SAB staff

SOURIS CHRISTMAS PARADE

Souris Wildlife Branch would like to thank the organizers of the 34th Annual Souris Christmas Parade. Their leadership rallies community and Christmas spirit by producing the best Christmas Parade on PEI. Souris and Area Wildlife Branch captured "The Best Service Club Entry" and we would like to acknowledge the volunteer efforts of our board of directors, especially Brian MacDonald, Justin McKinnon, Kevin Robertson, Fred Ward and Joe MacDonald. We also would like to thank Mooney Farms for allowing us to prepare in their workshop. Needless, to say our staff especially Tony & Sandra Meade and Michael Jacklyn contributed greatly to the float construction.



SAB's President Brian MacDonald as Mrs. Claus on our float!
Photo by JoAnne Dunphy



SAB's float – Photo by JoAnne Dunphy

WE ARE LOSING JILL!

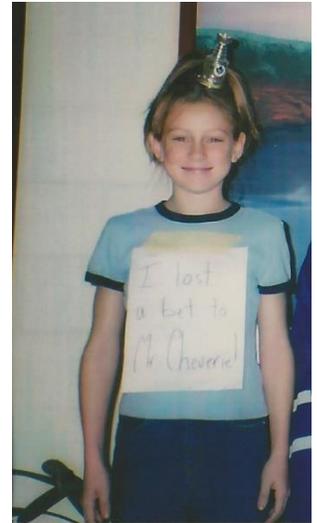
Souris and Area Wildlife Branch is losing a very valuable staff member early in 2015, as Jill MacPhee has been accepted into the Federal Fisheries Officer training program with Fisheries and Oceans Canada. I'm very pleased to see Jill take this step in her career but at the same time realize the expertise and workload she handled at the office will somehow have to be replaced.

Jill started working with us in 2011 under a one year mentorship program offered by PEI Dept. of Innovation and Advanced Learning and basically worked herself into a fulltime job. Jill brought plenty of enthusiasm, smarts and a strong work ethic to the table so we fortunate to be able to offer her some training in accounting and eventually she was running the whole show: publishing newsletters, keeping the books, writing final reports, managing our webpage/Facebook, giving school presentations, maintaining our GIS mapping system, managing the office and unfortunately acting as a public relations officer for the Montreal Canadians.

The Souris and Area Wildlife board of directors would like to thank Jill for her dedicated service and wish her well in her new career. I'm personally very confident that Jill will excel in her new profession. – Fred



Jill educating SRS students about marine life in Souris River Estuary



A younger Jill who once lost a bet to Fred.....

COMMUNITY MEETING NOTICE

Don't Frack PEI is hosting an information session **Monday, January 19th, from 7 pm to 9 pm** at Souris Ski Lodge, Route 305, Souris.

The session is open to all who have an interest in learning more about, and taking action around, hydraulic fracturing (fracking) for natural gas. We will explore what has recently happened in other provinces, and the threat that fracking poses to PEI. One speaker will explain how fracking differs from other forms of oil & gas extraction, will detail the many negative impacts of fracking, and will explain how our four neighbouring provinces have come to enact fracking moratoriums. A second speaker will explore the concept of 'social license', and what can be done to counter the threat of fracking, and finally we will explore the alternatives to oil and gas – Wind, Water, Sun, and Geothermal – and explain how these are valid alternatives, and that they are in fact essential for the future of our planet. Many renowned scientists are speaking out against fracking, and at this meeting, some short clips of interviews with some of these scientists will be shown. While, **Don't Frack PEI** is obviously determined to prevent fracking from coming to PEI, they intend to present the facts and let citizens make up their own minds on the issue. For more information please visit: www.dontfrackpei.com

Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation Membership & Donation Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Province: _____

Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Payment

Please check one or both:

- Membership (\$10)
- Donations

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

(Note: An official tax receipt can only be issued for the value of the donation and will not include the \$10 membership fee)

PRESIDENTS COMMENTS: BRIAN MACDONALD

Another Christmas season has passed and another New Year has been ushered in, it is truly a wonderful time for families to get together and celebrate. It is a little tough on the waistline with the extra turkey and eggnog, but there are lots of winter activities that one can capitalize on during the winter months.

Souris and Area Wildlife Branch received a wonderful Christmas present from one of our most graceful senior citizens, Grace Ryan of Priest Pond. Grace has donated seven acres of her land in North Lake adjacent to Lakeville Bridge.

We are thrilled to have received this property because of its strategic location and we will begin to cultivate ideas on how we will develop this property early this year.

The Board of Directors of Souris and Area Wildlife Branch would like to thank Grace publicly for this wonderful donation and commend her for her "forward thinking" and her appreciation of Souris and Area Wildlife and their efforts to protect and enhance our environment.

COORDINATORS COMMENTS: FRED CHEVERIE

Recently, as I reflected upon Jill MacPhee as she moves on from Souris Wildlife to train with DFO in becoming a Federal Fisheries officer, I couldn't help but think of other former employees as students that used Souris Wildlife as a stepping stone in their careers. Garry Gregory Jr. is now a wildlife biologist at PEI Fish & Wildlife Division. Luke Robichaud is a conservation officer in NFLD. Erica MacDonald (MacIssac) is Manager of Operations & Agronomy with Paradigm Precision. Kyle MacDonald is a supervisor with a forestry company in Alberta. Tim Brothers completed his master's degree in environmental management at UNB and is employed within the technology field in NB. Anthony MacDonald is presently in RCMP training in Regina. Paula Johnston is a food inspector in Alberta. Chad Mooney completed his engineering degree with the military and is presently employed at CFB Gagetown, N.B. as a 2nd Lieutenant. Calvin MacAulay graduated with an engineering degree and is presently employed in Northern Alberta. Kelsey Cheverie is graduating with an engineering degree from UNB next spring. Currently, Max MacDonald and Tyler Holland are completing Power Engineering courses at Holland College. Numerous student employees have chosen to head to the "oil patch" in Western Canada. Regardless of occupations, each and every one have gained an appreciation for our environment and I am confident will be good stewards of our planet.

About Us

The Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation is a non-profit, environmental organization dedicated to the conservation, protection and enhancement of watersheds in north eastern Kings County. Our management area accounts for approximately 62, 000 hectares representing about 12% of PEI, including 24 individual watersheds.

The goals of our organization include:

1. To establish North Eastern Kings County as the "Sports Fishing Capital" of Prince Edward Island
2. The management of natural resources and enhancement of fish, wildlife and their habitat through watershed planning, protection and restoration initiatives
3. To become the model watershed group on Prince Edward Island
4. To bring unprecedented environmental awareness to our stake holders to create a more informed general public capable of eliciting progressive environmental action
5. To promote our management area as one of the most pristine natural areas in Prince Edward Island through ecotourism ventures to attract visitors to the local area

We meet the 2nd Wednesday of every month at the Souris Striders Ski Lodge. Meetings start at 7pm and are open to the public. The next meeting is February 11, 2015.

Contact Information

Mailing Address: PO Box 692 - Souris, PEI - C0A 2B0

Telephone: (902) 687-4115

Email: sourisareawildlife@gmail.com

Website: www.souriswl.com

Facebook: Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation

