

Souris & Area Watershed News



November 2013 • Issue 40



An Atlantic salmon redd in the Naufrage River in early November 2013

Atlantic Salmon Redd Surveys

Each year, Souris & Area Wildlife staff and Board of Directors participate in our annual Atlantic Salmon Redd surveys, walking rivers to identify salmon redds.

A salmon redd, or nest, is a depression created in the cobble streambed by the back and forth action of the tail of the female. The female deposits her eggs here, which are fertilized by the male, then covered with cobble. These nests appear red as the cobble has been turned over, hence the term "salmon redd".

Atlantic salmon are an anadromous species, meaning they have life cycle

stages in both fresh and salt water habitats. The spawning stage takes place in fresh water in the autumn after they have spent at least a year at sea.

In recent years, we have been able to create additional spawning areas and assess hundreds of kilometers of habitat thanks to funding grants from the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation, PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund & Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program.

Our 2013 surveys will include the following watersheds and important tributaries:

- North Lake Creek
- Priest Pond Creek
- Cross River
- Naufrage river
- Hay River
- Cow River
- Bear River
- Souris river
- Fortune River
- Rollo Bay

Each redd encountered is marked using a handheld GPS. This data is used to produce maps allowing us to determine critical spawning areas and areas which may need improvement. This information is a useful resource in planning habitat restoration projects for the following field season to ensure the sustainability of native Atlantic salmon within our watersheds.

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Volunteer Opportunity & Seniors Walk

Are you interested in helping with our Atlantic salmon redd surveys? Last year we had a strong community volunteer force allowing us to nearly double the number of kilometers surveyed per day.

Volunteers will be divided into small groups led by trained field staff who are experienced in redd identification. This can be grueling work as you are walking in water, upstream, but it is very rewarding especially if you encounter a lot of redds. Last year, some groups were even fortunate enough to encounter groups of large salmon spawning at

their feet. This is a great opportunity to experience natural areas in our community guided by knowledgeable staff that are willing to answer any questions you may have.

Volunteers will be provided with chest waders, although you are encouraged to bring your own as they may be more comfortable.

We will tentatively begin these surveys on **November 18, 2013 at 10:00 am**, pending weather and rainfall.

We have also received requests from seniors who are

interested in seeing salmon redds but cannot commit to the long walk. We will host a "Senior's Walk" on **November 21st at 1:00 pm**, pending weather. There has been noted spawning in areas with easy access no farther than 400 meters down a trail. The walk will be generally easy with crossing a ditch on a slight slope being the extent of the difficulty. The exact site will be determined as the date nears.

If you would like to volunteer or sign up for the seniors walk please contact our office at (902) 687-4115.



Loading rocks into the trailer in February



Hand loading rocks into the barrel



Unloading the rocks into the gabion



Securing the gabion logs



The completed gabion at North Lake

New Gabions Installed in the Upper Estuary at North Lake Creek

In the late 1980's, 19 wooden gabions were installed in the upper estuary of North Lake Creek. These wooden gabions are designed to divert flow to the middle of the stream, increasing the water velocity and deepening the channel. As a result, holding pools are created along the stream edge with lower flow velocities.

In 2011, assessments revealed a widening of the channel had occurred causing shallower water with decreased velocity. This was attributed to tidal surges and severe storms as this area is susceptible to tidal fluctuation. Erosion of the bank had deposited sediment causing an infilling of the channel. At low tide, much of the streambed was exposed providing little or no refuge for fish.

Attempts were first made to mitigate this problem in 2011 by reinforcing the existing gabions. All 19 gabions were hand filled with large rocks from the stream. As well, a series of brush mats were installed to catch silt and build up the river bank in hopes of narrowing the channel and speeding up the flow of water. Assessments in 2012 showed the brush mats did work, to a certain degree, but additional work was required to further deepen the channel.

In autumn 2012, under the direction of PEI Freshwater Fisheries Biologist Rosie MacFarlane, a suitable site was chosen to construct and install two wooden gabions. We hope this will further

deepen the channel and become a permanent solution to the infilling.

Preliminary work began in February when 50 juniper gabion logs and ten tons of rock was purchased and delivered to the east end of the Jimmy Paddy Road. An ATV, equipped with tracks, was used to haul the materials to the bank above the site where the gabions would be installed. All materials were hand loaded and unloaded by our two field supervisors Michael Jacklyn and Tony Meade in temperatures as low as -20 degrees. Winter was favorable for this work as the hard packed snow along the trail provided an easy route for the ATV to haul the materials on site.

In August, with a full complement of field staff, the gabions were built. A method was devised to transport the materials from the high wooded bank, approximately 25 feet above the stream, to the actual construction site in the stream.

A "zipline" mechanism was developed to move the materials down the bank. A 14 foot spruce post was anchored four feet into the ground and secured with wooden braces on the front and fastened to a mussel anchor in the back. A cable was secured between the spruce post, stream side, and a spruce tree on the bank spanning 172 feet. The slack on the zipline was controlled via a "come along".

A snatch block was attached to the cable to support a

barrel for transporting the rock. The barrel was made of a modified 45 gallon drum that was cut in half. A set of hinged arms were fastened to each side enabling it to be locked with a spring loaded pin. The snatch block was fastened to the eye ring and the barrel was loaded with rock to move down the zipline to the stream. A series of ropes, combined with a section of bungee, controlled the speed of the drum which was fastened to the ATV. When the rock reached the site, the pin was pulled to dump the contents. The ATV then pulled the empty drum back up the hill.

It took two days to transport 10 tons of rock and 50 gabion logs in this manner. All loading and unloading was done by hand.

This project was funded in part by the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation and Habitat Stewardship Program.

Be sure to visit our website at www.souriswl.com and click on the "Projects" tab to view pictures and videos from this work.



2013 Stream Enhancement

Stream enhancement is the anchor activity of our organization. Each year, countless hours are spent completing a wide range of activities to create suitable spawning, rearing and foraging habitat and allow unimpeded passage to facilitate the life cycle of our anadromous fish populations.

Field staff once again completed the daunting task of removing beaver dams and natural blockages within the main branches and important tributaries of many watersheds. Our summer field staff, consisting of two chainsaw operators, one stream enhancement laborer and five students completed nearly 89 km of stream enhancement. This is very laborious work involving heavy lifting as staff walk through the water while carrying heavy equipment to complete their projects.

The natural practices of beavers accounts for some of the most time consuming restoration activities by our field staff. The construction of a dam is particularly problematic in eastern PEI as we have flat terrain with many shallow, narrow waterways. Beaver dams impede the flow of water and in many cases are too high for fish to jump. Water temperatures behind the beaver dam increase as the water becomes stagnant. The increase in temperature causes the water to hold less oxygen and in extreme cases oxygen levels may drop below tolerable levels. Therefore, much time is spent removing these blockages to ensure unimpeded access and adequate dissolved oxygen levels. (ideal dissolved oxygen levels for salmonids is between 7-9 mg/l)

Guided by our provincially sanctioned beaver management plans, many important areas of our watersheds are deemed "beaver free" allowing our certified trapper to remove these nuisance beavers. In addition, we work closely with local trappers providing them with coordinates of areas with beaver activity.

Be sure to visit our website for more stream enhancement photos and detailed maps of enhanced areas in each watershed.

The following table provides a summary of the number of kilometers of stream enhancement and beaver activity in the 2013 field season. Permitting allows in stream work from June 1 to September 30.

| Watershed | # of km of stream enhancement | # of active beaver dams | # of abandoned beaver dams |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Bear River | 4.200 | 3 | 0 |
| Black Pond | 1.153 | 3 | 0 |
| Campbell's Cove | 1.636 | 0 | 0 |
| Cow River | 4.935 | 0 | 0 |
| Cross River | 10.769 | 0 | 0 |
| East Lake Creek | 5.843 | 0 | 0 |
| Fortune River | 7.1055 | 2 | 0 |
| Hay River | 4.744 | 0 | 1 |
| Naufrage River | 12.4348 | 7 | 5 |
| North Lake Creek | 12.902 | 0 | 0 |
| Priest Pond Creek | 8.061 | 0 | 0 |
| Rollo Bay | 1.545 | 0 | 0 |
| Souris River | 13.538 | 0 | 2 |

Before and after the removal of a beaver dam in the Bear River watershed



Extended Rainbow Trout Season: Souris River



Angler Carl Peters, of Souris, holding his four pound Rainbow trout landed at Gowan Brae

Interested in becoming a member of the Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation?

2013 Membership fees are only \$10

To purchase your Souris & Area Wildlife membership:

- Call us: (902) 687-4115
- Email us: sourisareawildlife@gmail.com
- Mail your membership fee

Membership cards will follow via mail

(2013 Memberships are valid until March 31, 2014)

The 2013 recreational angling season has come to an end. Avid anglers have shared many success tales with us from the past season. This season was highlighted by the opening of a limited recreational Striped Bass fishery, with retention periods in both May and August, and an extended angling season for Rainbow trout in Souris River.

The angling season closed on September 15th. In Souris River, downstream from the Gowan Brae Bridge, the recreational fishery remained open until October 31st for Rainbow trout only. Last year, with input from local anglers, the Souris & Area Wildlife Board of Directors put forth a request for this extension. Single, barbless hook or artificial fly or lure were permitted with a creel limit of three Rainbow trout per day. Each angler participating in this fishery was asked to register at Access PEI and fill out a log book to be submitted to the PEI Fish & Wildlife Division. This data will be important in formulating regulations for an extended season in 2014.

Rainbow trout are spring spawners; moving into fresh water rivers shortly after the ice melts to spawn. Rainbow trout redd surveys were conducted in the spring and showed high evidence of spawning in Souris River. As well, electro fishing surveys over the past few years have indicated there is a healthy population within Souris River. These fish are considered an invasive species and can pose a great threat to salmonids, in particular Atlantic salmon and Brook trout. Rainbow trout are able to tolerate more harsh conditions, such as lower dissolved oxygen levels and higher water temperatures. Therefore, they are able to prevail over these salmonids competing for spawning, rearing, and foraging habitat.

In 2012, Rainbow trout runs appeared in Souris River in late August. In 2013, runs did not appear until early October, which coincided well with this extension. It was common to see up to five anglers casting their lines near the Gowan Brae bridge. Local angler Fan MacIntyre was a permanent fixture sitting on his five gallon bucket, casting a fly, and telling tales to those who gathered.

The extended season proved to be successful with reports of catches ranging between a half pound upwards to five pounds. Many anglers simply enjoyed the catch and release and the company of those who gathered. On one of the last days of the extended season, local angler Carl Peters landed a four pound Rainbow trout.

With the increased fishing activity, Souris & Area Wildlife staff built a set of stairs and landing adjacent to culvert. Many anglers expressed their appreciation over this as it provides another safe area to fish without having to climb the bank.

We encourage all anglers who participated in the extended season to return their logs books to Access PEI. As well, we would love to hear your fishing tales from this past season. If you have stories or photographs you would like to share be sure to get in touch with us. We would love to use them for our website and the 2014 PEI Angling Summary.



Community Foundation of PEI Supports Eagle Perch Project on Souris River



Carol Fraser of the Community Foundation of PEI presents Fred Cheverie with a funding grant

The Community Foundation of PEI is a non-profit, incorporated organization providing grants and scholarships supporting a wide range of activities in communities across PEI. They support projects related to arts and heritage,

environment, urban and rural beautification and community needs, to name a few. In 2013, over \$250,000 in grants and scholarships were awarded.

Souris & Area Wildlife received a grant to assist with the costs of building and erecting bald eagles perches along the Souris Causeway. A new design featuring an aluminum base with a wooden top and arms, supported by a wooden gabion base filled with sandstone was built. In the past, staff had to re-erect these wooden perches each spring as winter ice scouring knocked them over. We are anticipating with this new design, they will be able to withstand the ice and remain a permanent fixture.

Souris & Area wildlife would also like to recognize Foster Campbell Electric for donating the aluminum posts for the

perches. These posts allowed us to build the perches even higher than the original design as they are much lighter, making them easier to erect.

On numerous occasions over the summer months, multiple eagles could be seen perched on the arms at any time. This caught the attention of locals and tourists alike, with many taking the opportunity to view and photograph these birds. This has become a staple in our community providing an easily accessible area to observe these magnificent birds in their natural environment.



Striped Bass Landed at North Lake



The Department of Fisheries & Oceans Canada announced the re-opening of a limited retention recreational Striped Bass Fishery during the 2013 angling season. Two retention periods were opened from May 1st -15th and August 2nd -11th. During these periods, anglers were permitted to retain a maximum of one Striped bass per day

and were prohibited from possessing more than one Striped bass at any time.

A mandatory catch and release fishery was permitted between May 16th and September 30th, 2013 excluding the two retention periods. The commercial fishery has been closed since 1996 for conservation measures.

Striped bass are voracious feeders and have the ability to reproduce in mass numbers. They are an anadromous species spawning in fresh water and moving into brackish and salt water to mature. The only known spawning rivers in the Maritimes are the northwest Miramichi River and St. John River in New Brunswick and the Annapolis River and Shubenacadie River in Nova Scotia. Little is known about spawning activity on Prince Edward Island.

Angler Michael Jacklyn, of Souris, was

fishing at North Lake Harbour when to his surprise he landed a five pound Striped bass. The fish was released as this was not during the retention period. This is the first recorded Striped bass landed in the North Lake Creek watershed.

Striped bass are becoming more common on Prince Edward Island with high landings reported on the Midgell River, in particular. One fish was reported to weigh over 30 pounds. The largest recorded Striped bass caught in the Maritimes was in Bras d'Or Lake, Nova Scotia weighing 57.9 pounds.

This fall, we have received reports of Striped bass caught in eel traps in the North Lake estuary. As well, Striped bass have been caught in Fortune River and Howe Bay. Local fishermen have also reported them in silverside nets in Colville Bay.

“A View From Eastern Kings”

It has been just over a year since the launch of our current website and we are very pleased with the positive feedback.

A highlight of our website is “A View From Eastern Kings” which depicts a daily photograph showcasing natural areas within our management area.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge those who have contributed over the past year. Without you, this would not be possible:

- Wanda Bailey
- Lowell Cahill
- Loretta Campbell
- Carmella Cheverie
- Fred Cheverie
- Julie Ching
- Barb Clinton
- Chris Collier
- Donna Dawkins
- David Deveau
- Sara Deveau
- Joanne Dunphy
- Joel Dunphy
- Carolyn Gallant
- Karen Hoban
- Cathleen MacCormack
- Ashley MacDonald
- Judy MacDonald
- Roland MacDonald
- Jill MacPhee
- Kathy McCormack
- Sandra Meade
- Mary Ellen O’Brien
- Elizabeth Peters-Kearney
- Paula Saltmarsh
- Meg Sullivan
- Dianne Townshend

Just have a look through the archives and you will be treated to magnificent photographs ranging from local wildlife to red cliff coastlines, green pastures and gently rolling streams deep within the woods, all while capturing the changing seasons. We are truly fortunate to have such natural beauty in our local area.

We are encouraging all community members, young and old, experienced and inexperienced, to take photographs and submit them to us. Photographs can be submitted to ggregory@souriswl.com. Photographs will be accepted throughout the day with one posted the following day.

Be sure to share this with friends and family, especially those that are “away”. It is a great avenue to stay in touch with the local community every day.



Photograph by Sara Deveau



Photograph by Joanne Dunphy



Photograph by Wanda Bailey

1st Annual Lobster Fundraising Dinner

On August 11, 2013, we held our first annual "Lobster Fundraising Dinner" at the Eastern Kings Sportsplex, Souris. This was in lieu of our annual "Wildlife Fundraising Dinner" which traditionally was held in the fall. We were forced to cancel this event for a variety of reasons outside our control. As a result, we saw an opportunity to promote our local lobster and other local flavors while capitalizing on the tourist market.

Work for this event began in June 2013 when we solicited donations of live lobster from fishers of North Lake, Souris & Naufrage Harbours. We were overwhelmed with the donations received and cannot thank you enough. Without your support this event would be virtually

impossible.

Holding an event for the first time poses many challenges but with a tremendous volunteer effort, we were able to serve nearly 300 sit in and take out plates.

Upon arrival, guests were treated to smoked salmon and mackerel on crackers and those who were brave enough slurped down a Colville Bay Oyster.

Perhaps one of the highlights was the homemade seafood chowder prepared by Paul Gallant featuring a variety of local seafood flavors. This was literally served until the last drop.

The main course featured local shelled lobster served

with homemade potato salad, coleslaw and a fresh roll. Dessert was shortcake drizzled with homemade blueberry sauce made from wild, local blueberries.

There was a 50/50 draw, door prizes, silent auction as well as photograph displays, wildlife displays, wood carving demonstration and locally made sea glass jewelry for sale.

This event would not have been so successful without the tremendous effort from our Board of Directors, staff and many community members. Our appreciation for your efforts cannot be praised enough.

Be sure to watch for this event again in August 2014, you won't want to miss it!



Thank You to our Donors & Sponsors

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all who donated to this event. Without your support, this would not be possible.

Lobster Donors:

Fishers of:

- North Lake Harbour
- Souris Harbour
- Naufrage Harbour

Thank you to the buyers at the stands for your cooperation in coordinating donations and pick up.

Meal Donors:

- Colville Bay Oyster Company
- Lavon Paquet
- MacPhee's Save Easy
- Omega
- Paul Gallant
- Purity Dairy
- Rollo Bay Holdings
- Sheltered Harbour Cafe
- Sobey's Montague
- Souris Co-op
- Tim Hortons
- TJ's Fish Market

Silent Auction & Door Prize Donors:

- Atlantic Salmon Federation
- Cahill Septic & Excavation Limited
- Chris Collier
- Delta Prince Edward
- Jasper Wyman & Sons Limited
- Mermaid Marine
- Quality Inn & Suites Charlottetown
- Renee's Sea Glass
- Trout Unlimited
- Vernon d'Eon Lobster Plugs

Did you know....

Last year we were the Parade Marshalls in the 2012 Town of Souris Christmas Parade in honor of our 2012 Canadian National Recreational Fisheries Award.

Watch for our float in this year's "33rd Annual Town of Souris Christmas Parade" on December 7th, 2013.

Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation

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About Us

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

The goals of our organization include:

1. The protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife and their habitat
2. Watershed planning, protection and restoration
3. Education of the general public on environmental issues
4. The promotion of outdoor recreational activities
5. Improved communication with our stakeholders to create a more informed community at large.



President's Comments

Brian MacDonald

It is sad to drive through our backyards and meander down wood roads to find truckloads of household waste dumped in easy offloading sites. Much of this waste could have been disposed through our weekly Waste Watch collection or taken to a local IWMC site and disposed of at no charge. It is highly probable that most of this was dumped on a property without the landowner's knowledge, and now they have become legally responsible.

It costs \$205 for a regular household, \$95 for a seasonal cottage, and \$120 for an extended seasonal cottage in taxes for weekly cart collection. Also included are monthly recyclable collection, spring & fall cleanup and Christmas tree collection. In addition, all appliances, household furniture, tires, 20 pound propane tanks, and batteries, to name a few can be brought to IWMC sites for free disposal. It baffles me why anyone who is paying for this service in their taxes fails to use it. When electronics are purchased, an environmental handling fee is charged. This allows you to dispose of electronics at no cost.

I highly encourage everyone to take advantage of these services and do your part to eliminate dumping, especially in our delicate ecosystems.

Coordinator's Comments

Fred Cheverie

Souris & Area Wildlife Branch has been very fortunate throughout the years in hiring field staff with strong work ethic and a passion for improving the environment. Our two field supervisors, Michael Jacklyn and Tony Meade, lead the on ground restoration projects. Both have a keen sense of observing and understanding the complexity within our various ecosystems. Their input is invaluable as they experience first-hand the interactions within our diverse environment.

Sandra Meade has been with us for the past three years and is a terrific worker with a flair for photography. She is responsible for documenting most of the field work. These photos are important in documenting progress and sharing with the community at large on our website and Facebook.

We were able to hire five students through various programs this summer. Kelsey Cheverie and Tyler Holland, both engineering students at UNB, were tremendous workers with a real passion for the environment. High school students Colby Mooney, Derek Reynolds and Joel Dunphy spent their first summer working with us. All proved to be hard workers with a keen interest in learning environmental enhancement techniques.

The quality of these workers makes my life relatively easy; the hardest part is attaining money to subsidize their wages.

Interested in making a donation to the Souris & Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation?

Simply fill out this form and mail it to us

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 City: _____
 Province: _____
 Postal Code: _____
 E-mail: _____

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Cheques may be made payable to the PEI Wildlife Federation in order to issue an official charitable tax receipt.