



SPRING HAS SPRUNG

Spring has arrived, and with it, the latest release of the Wheatley River Watershed News! This edition features a recap of our early spring work, two articles of interest, and outlines our upcoming activities. WRIG had its busiest winter-spring season yet, with Maggie McConnell, watershed manager; Tessa Craig, intern; and our top volunteer, Sam Pastoor, one of WRIG's 2020 field technicians.



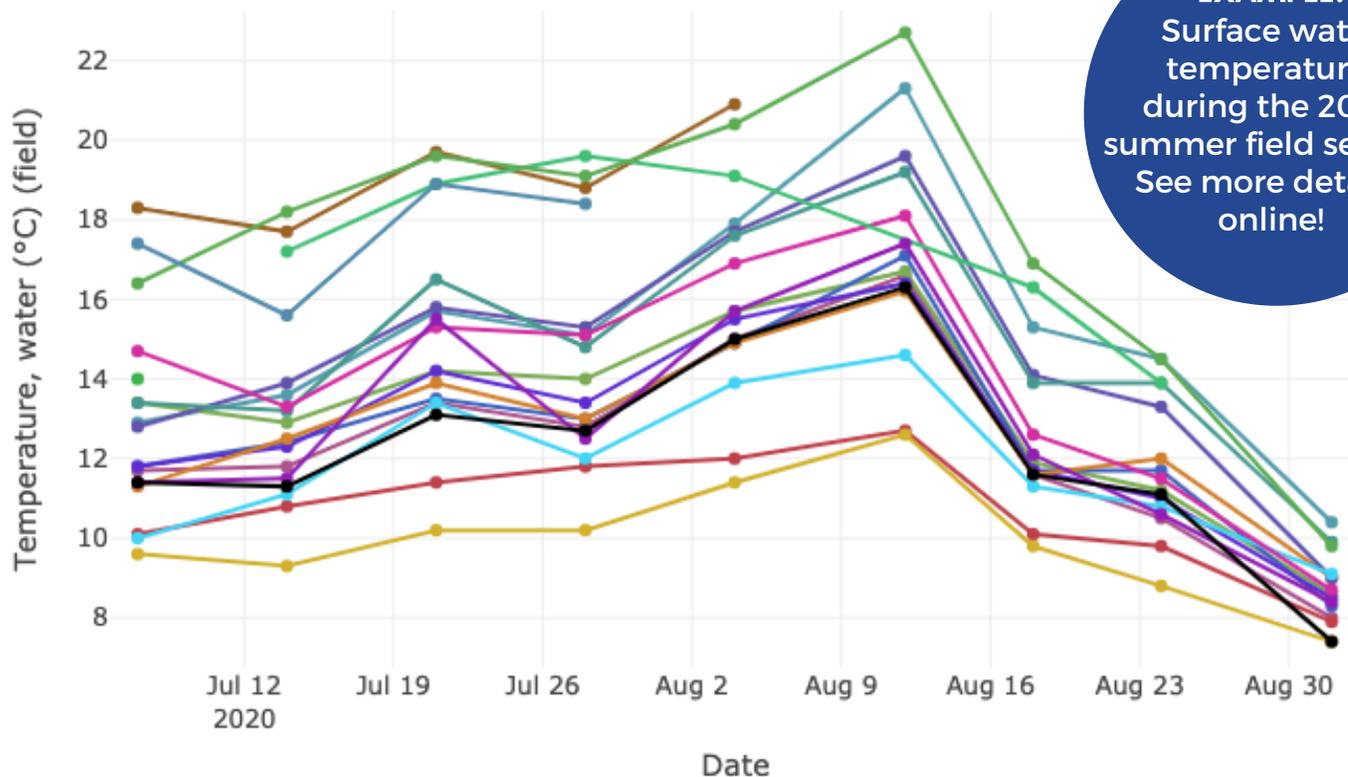
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THE KESTRELS ARRIVED EARLY THIS YEAR! EGGS OBSERVED ON 11/MAY/2021

ATLANTIC DATASTREAM

All eight years of our water quality monitoring data is now available online at [Atlantic DataStream](#), a product of The Gordon Foundation and the Atlantic Water Network. This free, open access, online platform is an incredibly valuable tool for watershed groups, as it facilitates the sharing, visualisation, and analysis of water quality data. If you are interested in the water quality of the Wheatley River and its associated watersheds, check out Atlantic DataStream and contact WRIG (see info on page 6) if you have any questions.



EXAMPLE:
Surface water temperature during the 2020 summer field season. See more details online!

2021/22 Board of Directors

Chairperson:
Renée Pastoor

Secretary:
Peter McDougall

Treasurer:
Hailey Blacquiere

Directors:
Kayla Nieuwhof
Gary Loo
Stewart MacRae
Jennifer Gallé
Matthew Tennyson

2020/21 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WRIG's 2020/21 annual general meeting took place on April 21st, 2021, in the Cymbria Lions Club with 15 attendees. The in-person event, following COVID 19 gathering regulations, was especially exciting after the previous year's meeting was held online via a video conference call. The meeting included presentations of the Watershed Manager's and Treasurer's reports as well as a guest presentation by Tessa Craig: *Developing a Sediment Management Plan for the Wheatley River*. A warm welcome to our two new board members: Jennifer Gallé and Matthew Tennyson. WRIG would like to extend a huge thank you to Mélanie Labelle who has completed her term as a director and who invested countless hours as WRIG's treasurer over the past 6 years. Thank you Mélanie!

RACKHAM'S POND SPONSORSHIP

Are you interested in improving the Rackham's Pond area for your community and giving back to your local watershed group?

WRIG has plans to make improvements to the Rackham's Pond area ... but we need your support! We are hoping to add benches throughout the pond area & along the trail and to rebuild both the dock and the footbridge. If you are interested in sponsoring any of these projects, please contact the Watershed Manager. Your sponsorship dollars will go directly back to improvements in this community space and will include a **commemorative plaque**.

DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

Bench:	\$500
Building Materials:	\$200
Volunteers:	Priceless!

STREAM BANK STABILISATION

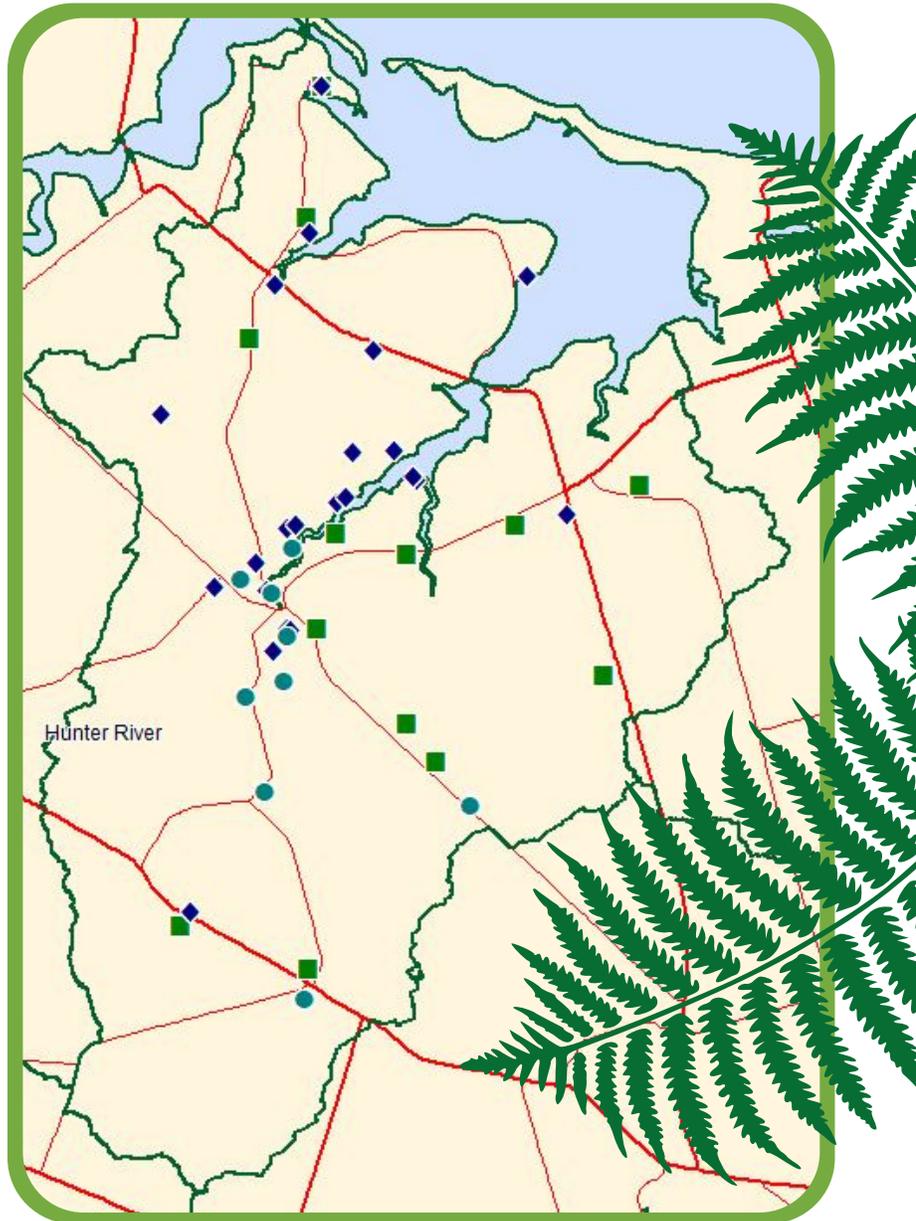
Did you know that certain woody shrubs, such as red-osier dogwood and willow, can be propagated from sections of live stem stuck into the ground? This bioengineering technique, called live staking, is a very useful erosion control tool for conservation groups because it is inexpensive, efficient, and non-disruptive. The aforementioned species are commonly found in PEI ditches, where their continuous mowing produces many tall, straight stems. The stakes are cut into 2-3' sections with angled bottoms and flat tops to facilitate planting (and to make sure they get planted with the right end in the ground!). Earlier this spring, WRIG was joined by the PEI Watershed Alliance and Holland College Wildlife Conservation students to harvest red-osier dogwood stakes. We planted these stakes above Rackham's Pond, in an area where angling activity has contributed to stream bank erosion. In late April, willow and red-osier dogwood stakes were also planted around the pond itself and on eroding cliffs. Once established, these riparian plantings will have many additional benefits, such as providing fish cover, reducing solar heating, and sequestering carbon!



INCREASING NESTING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WHEATLEY RIVER WATERSHEDS

Over the winter and spring, WRIG has been working on a new habitat enhancement project in support of local Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) and American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) populations. While these native species do not currently have at-risk status, they have demonstrated moderate population declines in Canada since about 1970.

With the support of the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund, WRIG was able to construct twenty-four species-specific nesting boxes and install them at optimal sites throughout our watershed. A nest box monitoring program was also developed to track reproductive success and ensure continued box maintenance. The project was met with fantastic community support; four volunteers helped in the construction and installation process and over 30 local landowners connected with WRIG to discuss the placement of nesting boxes on their property. There was such a high level of interest that previously constructed Tree Swallow and Wood Duck nest boxes were also installed. WRIG now monitors and maintains a total of 25 Tree Swallow, 12 American Kestrel, and 9 Wood Duck nesting boxes throughout our watershed! Thank you to the Charlottetown PetSmart for their generous donation of wood chips for the Wood Duck and Kestrel boxes and the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund for enabling the purchase of building materials, as well as much needed equipment, such as a ladder!



TREE SWALLOW (◆), WOOD DUCK (●), & AMERICAN KESTREL (■) NEST BOXES THROUGHOUT WRIG'S WATERSHEDS.

Please contact WRIG (see info on page 6) if you are interested in installing a nesting box on your property, donating nest box building materials, or volunteering with our nesting box initiative.

2021 SUMMER WORK PLAN

We have a number of ongoing activities as well as some new projects for this summer in the Wheatley River watershed area. Some of the regular activities include: conducting headwater surveys (spring & fall), water quality monitoring at 20 sites, planting native trees and shrubs in riparian areas as well as on private properties, and clearing blockages in the streams to enable fish passage.

Apart from these ongoing activities, we will also be focusing on surveying the Wheatley River for sediment problem areas. The overall goal is to develop a sediment management plan that can be used to implement action items over the next 5 years and monitor those actions for years to come. The plan will outline actions to mitigate the impacts of legacy sediment and to decrease source sediment inputs in the Wheatley River system. This year specifically, we will be surveying the stream, taking records, planting in the riparian areas, brush matting in high priorities areas, as well as clearing blockages, as mentioned above. These actions will support brook trout by improving spawning substrate, reducing suffocation and encasement of eggs, reducing scouring of redds (spawning beds), supporting macroinvertebrate density and diversity, increasing riparian buffering, stabilizing stream banks, providing protective cover, and reducing solar heating of the stream. Overall, these habitat enhancement activities will increase the resiliency of brook trout to the impacts of climate change.

WHAT'S ALL THE BUZZ

*Milkweed Plant Sale &
Pollinator Garden Demonstration*



Mark your calendars!

WRIG is having a milkweed fundraiser at 2pm on Saturday, June 19th, at Rackham's Pond. Milkweed seedlings will be for sale (by donation), with all proceeds and donations going to the preservation and enhancement of the Wheatley River and associated watersheds. For more information, please contact the Watershed Manager (see info on page 6).

Thank you to the North Rustico Home Hardware for their generous donation of potting soil that made this possible!

CONTACT INFORMATION

Watershed Manager: Maggie McConnell
Email: manager@wheatleyriver.ca
Phone: 902-963-3198
Website: www.wheatleyriver.ca
Office: 2184 Church Road, Rustico

**A Special Thanks to
Rackham's Pond Landowners:**

Grant & Nancy Rackham
Steven Rackham
Melvin & Debbie Ling
Craig & Michele Ling
Charles & Laura Lipnicki
Phillip & Shirley Weatherbee
Jody Mokler
Susan Axworthy

CORPORATE SPONSORS & FUNDING SOURCES

- Blue Bay Farms Ltd.
- Canada Summer Jobs Program
- Conseil Acadien de Rustico
- Creekfield Homeowner's Association
- Cymbria Campground
- Cymbria Lions Club
- D & B Developments
- ECO Canada Employment Program
- Gallant's Country Food Market
- Island Honey Wine Company
- Lilacs and Lanterns
- Oyster Bed Esso
- PEI Watershed Management Fund
- PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund
- PEI Jobs for Youth Program
- Rassicot Farm
- Skills PEI Student Funding
- Storybook Adventures
- Vanco Farms Ltd.

 [The Wheatley River Improvement Group](https://www.facebook.com/wheatleyriverimprovementgroup)
 [@wheatleyriverimprovementgroup](https://www.instagram.com/wheatleyriverimprovementgroup)



WHEATLEY RIVER IMPROVEMENT GROUP 2021/22 MEMBERSHIP

Would you like to be a part of restoring and protecting our watershed? This is your chance to help; join WRIG's 2021/22 membership! All proceeds and donations go directly back into our community as we work to preserve and enhance the quality of our environment in the Wheatley River watersheds.

Sponsor:	\$100.00
Group:	\$50.00
Family:	\$20.00
Individual:	\$10.00

The membership form is also available online here.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Email: _____
 Add to WRIG's email list? YES ___ NO ___
 Amount enclosed: \$_____

Please mail the completed form and
payment (cash or cheque) to:
**2184 Church Road Hunter River,
PE, COA 1N0**
Or send an e-transfer to:
manager@wheatleyriver.ca
Thank you for your support!