



WINTER IS NEAR

After a very busy summer, it's nice to slow down a little and enjoy autumn! We had another successful and productive season but it's definitely feeling like winter is near. In this edition of the Wheatley River Watershed News, we give you a recap on one of our recent stream restoration projects, a summary of the summer tree swallow banding work, a look forward to our upcoming events... and so much more!

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GREAT EVENING OF GIVING BACK

We were so honoured to be one of the 10 recipients of \$5000 during the Great Evening of Giving Back!

We would like to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Cymbria Lions Club for their generous donation to our group.



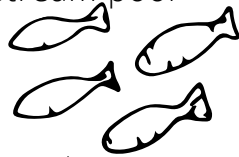
The Cymbria Lions' support is invaluable and will greatly enhance our efforts to protect and preserve the Wheatley River watershed areas. We are truly grateful for their continued commitment to our community!

PROJECT RECAP: MILLBORO ROAD FISH PASSAGE IMPROVEMENT



Stream crossings are a major anthropogenic cause of disrupted connectivity in rivers and streams. Not only can crossing structures cause significant damage to the stability of the banks of a waterway, they can also hinder fish passage making it impossible for migratory species to reach valuable habitat and spawning areas in the upstream reaches of the river.

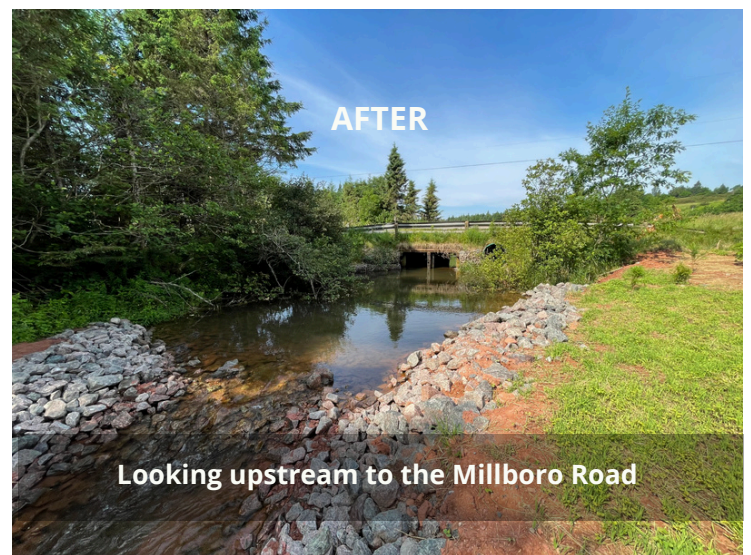
Prior to the completion of this project, fish could not access the river upstream of the Millboro Road crossing along the Little Bungay Branch due to an approximate 14-inch drop from the culvert to the downstream pool (see photo on right).



Our goals with this project were to re-open fish passage, establish connectivity along this branch and to the main branch of the Wheatley River, as well as to improve riparian habitat.



In June of this year, we worked to restore fish passage at this particular crossing by realigning the downstream channel and building a series of rock pools (see photos below). The rock pools gradually raised the water level in the stream enough to backfill the culvert and remove any elevation distance at the crossing. The banks were then stabilized with rock and the old stream bed was decommissioned. We finished by seeding & mulching the disturbed area after construction and by revegetating the riparian area with native trees and shrubs to provide habitat & cover and to mitigate erosion.



WRIG would like to thank the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) for generously funding this project and supporting the work of our watershed group. We would also like to acknowledge the overall project support provided by the PEI Department of Transportation & Infrastructure.

TREE SWALLOW MONITORING

by Sarah MacWilliams



Tree swallows are small songbirds that can be found in open areas in or near wetlands. They migrate from wintering grounds in Florida and Central America, and nest in Spring and early Summer.

IDENTIFYING FEATURES
Males: distinctive teal-blue colour with white bellies
Females: duller black-brown colour with hints of blue, white bellies

In the 2024 season, WRIG built and installed 10 tree swallow nesting boxes with special adaptations for frequent monitoring and banding. The boxes were installed on the properties of local landowners, and were selected based on conditions that would be best suited for successful nesting. From May to July, WRIG summer students visited each box 2-3 times/week to monitor for nesting activity. If eggs were found, then the nests were monitored more closely for hatching, allowing us to estimate the optimal timing for banding. Eight of the ten boxes were successful and had a full nest and chicks this season!



- Banding was completed in partnership with PEI Fish & Wildlife. WRIG staff had the opportunity to help with banding of both adult tree swallows and chicks, wherein each bird was weighed and given a band (a tiny bracelet) with a unique number (see photos below).
- These band numbers and information will be entered in The North American Bird Banding Program database, which is used internationally.
- With these data, we can track population productivity, lifespan cycles, migration and breeding patterns. Additionally, there is potential for recapture if they return to the PEI in the future.

In total, our group banded 42 tree swallow chicks this year!

WRIG staff will continue to monitor and maintain current tree swallow nesting boxes. We will also make adjustments if needed to ensure optimal nesting conditions. WRIG plans to install 5 more banding boxes in the community, to hopefully be used by the tree swallows in 2025!



UPCOMING EVENTS

PHOTO *Contest*

The Wheatley River Improvement Group is excited to announce the return of its photo contest!

We invite you to showcase the beauty of this stunning watershed area and have the chance to win **PRIZES**

There are two entry categories: **LANDSCAPE** and **WILDLIFE**

Please submit your entries via email to:
manager@wheatleyriver.ca by
February 1, 2025



Photos will be judged by professional photographer John Sylvester!



2025 WINTER WOODLOT TOUR

We are very pleased to have been awarded funding for this great event once again this year! We are in the process of securing an ideal site and nailing down a date. Stay tuned for details coming soon!



WRIG would like to thank the Wildlife Conservation Fund for continuing to support watershed groups and funding this annual event!

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office: 2184 Church Road, Rustico

 [The Wheatley River Improvement Group](#)

 [@wheatleyriverimprovementgroup](#)

**A Special Thanks to WRIG's
2024-25 Board of Directors:**

Renée Pastoor - Chairperson
 Peter McDougall - Secretary
 Hailey Blacquiere - Treasurer
 Kayla Nieuwhof
 Jennifer Gallé
 Matthew Tennyson
 Melissa Boudreau
 Stephen Loo
 Ben Versteeg
 Craig Ling

CORPORATE SPONSORS & FUNDING SOURCES

- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- Blue Bay Farms Ltd.
- Bluefield Acres
- Canada Summer Jobs Program
- Clean Foundation Internship Program
- Conseil Acadien de Rustico
- Creekfield Homeowner's Association
- Cymbria Campground
- Cymbria Lions Club
- D & B Developments
- Gallant's Country Food Market
- Island Honey Wine Company
- Lingdale Farms
- Oyster Bed Esso
- PEI Jobs for Youth Program
- PEI Watershed Alliance
- PEI Watershed Management Fund
- PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund
- Rackham Electric
- Red Oak Farms
- River's Edge Enterprises
- Skills PEI Student Funding
- Vanco Farms Ltd.



WHEATLEY RIVER IMPROVEMENT GROUP 2024-25 MEMBERSHIP

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

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

The membership form is also available online here

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!

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