



# WHEATLEY RIVER WATERSHED NEWS

## WINTER IS COMING!

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 summer shoreline clean up efforts, a special article all about river otters, a look forward to our upcoming Winter Woodlot Tour event... and so much more!

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## WRIG'S ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST



WRIG's photo contest has returned!  
We want you to capture our stunning  
watershed area

There are two entrance categories:  
LANDSCAPE and WILDLIFE

Photos will be judged by professional  
photographer John Sylvester

PRIZES available!

Submit your entries via email to:  
[manager@wheatleyriver.ca](mailto:manager@wheatleyriver.ca) by  
**February 1, 2024**



## PROJECT RECAP: SHORELINE CLEAN UP

In the aftermath of hurricane Fiona, the PEI Aquaculture Alliance partnered with the PEI Watershed Alliance to coordinate efforts to clean up our beautiful Island shoreline. The Wheatley River Improvement Group, along with all other Island watershed groups, received special funding to dedicate to cleaning up debris from beaches in each of our watershed areas. In addition, our staff recorded areas containing “large coastal waste” and reported these findings to the Watershed Alliance. This allowed for a coordinated effort to prioritize removal of large debris by machinery during a less sensitive timeframe for wildlife. WRIG would like to thank the PEI Aquaculture Alliance for funding this Island-wide shoreline clean up initiative!



**Map of South Rustico, Cymbria and Oyster Bed Bridge, showing the sections of shoreline where WRIG cleaned up beach debris (yellow lines) and a summary of WRIG's work shown to the right of the map (green bubbles)**

**LENGTH OF  
SHORELINE WALKED:  
6.65 KM**

**NUMBER OF HOURS  
SPENT CLEANING UP:  
22 HRS**

**AMOUNT OF BEACH  
DEBRIS REMOVED:  
322 KG**





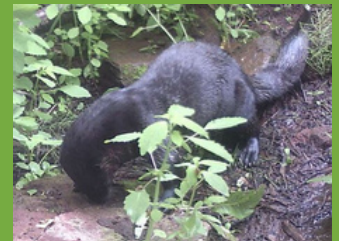


## RETURN OF THE RIVER OTTER

by Hailey Blacquiere

If you grew up on PEI, then like many of us, you may hear 'river otter' and immediately think: "That's a mainland animal - we don't have those here." Incredibly, that is no longer the case! Over the last three years, in not only one location, river otters have been seen in troupes back on the island for the first time since their presumed extirpation by trapping in the early 1900s.

Since then, river otter sightings have been chalked up to lone individuals having swam across the Strait from Nova Scotia or New Brunswick- one river otter was mistakenly trapped by a beaver trap in 1973, and three more in 2016 under the same circumstances. The current population likely did, in fact, originate from NS or NB. It is theorized that PEI's tighter trapping regulations, especially within watershed zones, have paved the way for the re-establishment of the river otter. The Kensington North Watershed Association has been collecting field camera footage of these river otters (see photos below). It has seen members interacting in ways that support them being a family group. At least one mother with juveniles has been recorded, which would indicate that the present population is breeding on the island. While it will take time to reach a stable population, it is exciting to see this species re-establish themselves of their own volition.



Photos from Kensington North Watershed Association's field cameras

Encouragingly, another group of otters has been documented recently in the Morell River by their watershed association, and a group in the west had sightings as well! As of 2023, PEI is estimated to support a total of two dozen river otters, though this number is difficult to determine without further monitoring. Staff from the PEI department of Forests, Fish & Wildlife have developed a monitoring program to better understand the otter population, and WRIG is happy to be partaking in this initiative! WRIG has 2 field cameras (see photo on right) installed in locations where local residents have reported potential sightings. These cameras are checked about every 2 weeks and will be left in place to capture photos of wildlife through the winter and into next spring. To help monitor for these animals, please report any potential otter sightings to your local watershed group or directly to Fish & Wildlife.



One of WRIG's field camera locations



## UPCOMING EVENT: WINTER WOODLOT TOUR

Saturday, January 27, 2024: 9 AM - 1 PM

### 2024 Winter Woodlot Tour

#### Glasgow Hills Trails

98 Glasgow Hills Drive, New Glasgow

A free, family-friendly event aimed at celebrating Island wildlife, forest ecosystems

and sustainable woodlot use

Snowshoeing - Hot Apple Cider

Sleigh Rides - Forest Management -

Watershed Management - Birds of Prey - and so much more!

Piper's Restaurant will be open for a post-adventure bite



**WRIG would like to thank the Wildlife Conservation Fund for continuing to support our watershed group and helping fund this annual event**

### PEI 2 Billion Trees Program

Do you want free tree seedlings & planting labour?

#### Trees:

- Reduce noise pollution
- Buffer Wind
- Increase privacy
- Create wildlife habitat
- Shade waterways
- Mitigate climate change



Apply using the link below, then provincial forestry staff and/or PEI Watershed Alliance staff will evaluate your site and goals to determine your eligibility as well as the suitability of six different species available: white spruce, white pine, eastern hemlock, white birch, yellow birch, and red maple.



Visit this webpage to learn more and apply through their portal:

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/pei-2-billion-trees-landowner-application>

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Watershed Manager: Maggie McConnell

Email: [manager@wheatleyriver.ca](mailto:manager@wheatleyriver.ca)

Phone: 902-963-3198

Website: [www.wheatleyriver.ca](http://www.wheatleyriver.ca)

Office: 2184 Church Road, Rustico



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



[@wheatleyriverimprovementgroup](https://www.instagram.com/wheatleyriverimprovementgroup)



[@wrigpei](https://www.tiktok.com/@wrigpei)

### A Special Thanks to WRIG's 2023-24 Board of Directors:

Renée Pastoor - Chairperson

Peter McDougall - Secretary

Hailey Blacquiere - Treasurer

Kayla Nieuwhof

Jennifer Gallé

Matthew Tennyson

Melissa Boudreau

## 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
- Oyster Bed Esso
- PEI Aquaculture Alliance
- PEI Jobs for Youth Program
- PEI Watershed Alliance
- PEI Watershed Management Fund
- PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund
- Rackham Electric
- Red Oak Farms
- Skills PEI Student Funding
- Storybook Adventures
- Vanco Farms Ltd.

## WHEATLEY RIVER IMPROVEMENT GROUP 2023-24 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

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, C0A 1N0**

Or send an e-transfer to:

**[manager@wheatleyriver.ca](mailto:manager@wheatleyriver.ca)**

**Thank you for your support!**