



TIDINGS

Bringing you Quarterly Updates from SSWA



2024 Photo Contest: Grand Prize Winner Land, by Kelly Arsenault

2024 Season Overview

We spent the summer working hard and learning a lot. As a watershed group, our focus is on preserving and improving ecosystems centred around the streams and water bodies on the South Shore. This summer we focused on the Westmoreland River, and finished up some work on the DeSable River from last year. It had been five years since we had worked in Westmoreland, and we were glad to be back.

Some of the activities we did included planting trees in riparian areas to stabilize the banks and mitigate runoff, restoring salmonid habitat in the river system, and conducting monitoring of water conditions, as well as plants and animals present in the river and riparian ecosystems. If you were one of the landowners we worked with this summer, we are sincerely appreciative for your contribution to our restoration and conservation efforts!





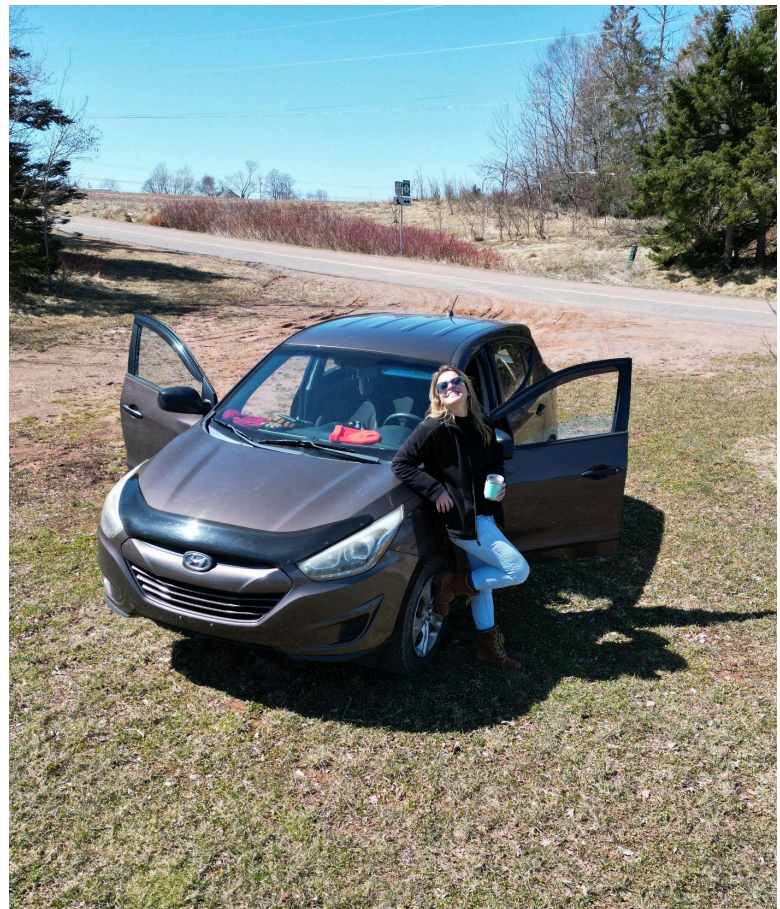
Throughout all of this work, the summer crew was amazing. We are very appreciative of all the hard work they put in this summer. Many of them were familiar faces and we were happy to see them return, as well as watching our new recruit, Ryan, fit in seamlessly. We'd like to extend a huge thank you to Ryan MacDonald, Keiran Wood, Ashton Winn, Ian MacNevin, Nout Geurts, Nicole Lawlor, Fletcher Gibbons, and Romy Munkres. As always, a big thanks to Matt Meenink, our fearless coordinator.

For more information on this summer's field season, check out the 2024 Season Blog on our website, <https://sswa.ca/sswa-blog/>.

Passing the Torch

In April of this year SSWA said goodbye to our coordinator of five years, Juliana Granzoti. She was an incredible force at SSWA, and we are happy to wish her the best on her next venture, starting her master's degree at St. Mary's University. She always brought positive energy to the office, supported us as individuals and also as a team, fed us snacks (to keep us happy), and provided us with entertainment by bringing her dog, Frank, to the office for puppy time. We will miss you Juliana!

In light of this, our long-time field supervisor and wildlife technician, Matt Meenink, has stepped into the coordinator role. He spent the summer learning the ropes and settling into the position. He has been doing a great job and we are excited to see how he grows as our leader for the years to come!



New Developments in the Salt Marsh

This summer SSWA continued our three-year mission to strengthen the salt marsh ecosystem in DeSable estuary. This is our second year working on this project and we are pleased to say that we had a very successful field season! In partnership with UPEI, an honors student who had previously been interested in the project, Fletcher, took it on. They gathered data that will be used to determine the best way to plant smooth cordgrass, a native salt marsh plant. The end goal of this project is to increase the salt marsh area behind the protruding sand spit in the DeSable River to prevent sea lettuce die off, which significantly lowers oxygen levels in the water.



Fletcher's summer activities included long-term monitoring of cordgrass growth in several of our local estuaries, as well as in-lab experiments with ethically harvested grass to see how the plants' growth was affected by using different planting materials. They also spearheaded some excavations for more information on underground grass anatomy which they invited the crew to join in on. Who doesn't love to go by the seashore and dig in the sand? Though we didn't get to see them much in the office as they popped to and from the UPEI lab, they joined us for some field fun and we got to see their progress unfold through photos and growing stacks of data sheets!

The highlight of this project was when the whole crew had the chance to come together to install our brand new coir logs (made of 100% coconut fibre) into the estuary. With all hands on deck, we placed 13 coir logs in rows to slow water flow and deposit sediment. With luck over the winter and spring months, enough sediment will deposit which will give us a brand new bed of material to plant our grass plugs on! After a lot of hard labour, some impressive balancing and occasional nose-plugging (not all field work can be glamorous, you know), the crew got all of the coir logs installed and secured in place. To celebrate, we all posed for an impressive coir log group photo.





With the information gathered from this summer, the goal will be to determine the best way to plant smooth cordgrass in our newly-deposited sediment. By this time next year we hope to have successful plantings which will give us even more information in future years to share with other watersheds and environmental non-profits. For now, we will wait for the oncoming cold months to pass so we can get back out there doing what we do best! Fletcher in the meantime will be analysing and compiling results for their final paper which will be a big deciding factor into which planting methods we can use for our marsh. We wish them luck and are excited to kick off the next year of the project with them!

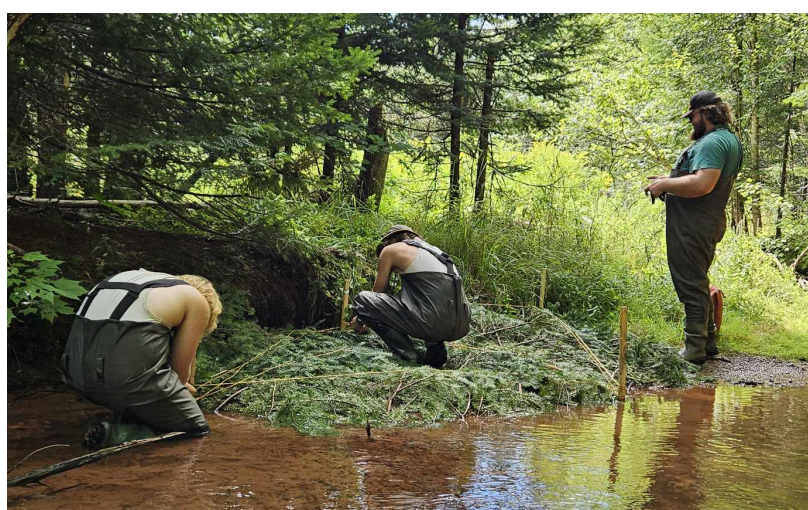
Photos from the Summer



This summer we tried something new. Part of our work is improving and creating habitats for animals in our watersheds, and what you see in the pictures above are duck shelters. They are built to the specifications shared by Delta Waterfowl, and have been proven to be effective. They required some doing to install (see the canoe photo above) but we are hoping for great success for the ducks in our watersheds. If you see one of these tubes in the middle of a pond near you, you now know what they are for!



These photos show parts of our routine watershed restoration work. We use chainsaws to clear large blockages that are impeding fish passage and building up sediment to the point where stream flow is interrupted (photos at left). We plant native trees and shrubs to stabilize the stream banks (lots of plant pots, middle left), and we also put in brush mats (middle right) in locations where the stream is depositing sediment, in order to help those areas become part of the bank.



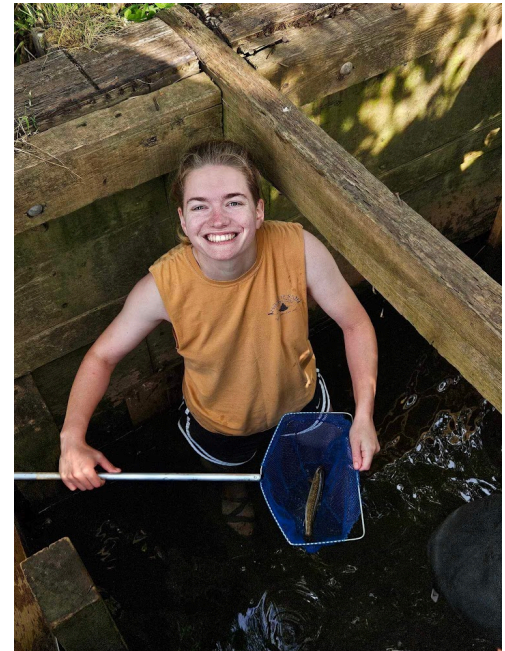
One of the metrics we use to monitor the health of our river systems is fish abundance. We use a machine that stuns the fish through low-level electric pulses so that we can catch them. We then measure the fish, note what species they are, and release them back into the stream system (photos are to the right).





Another technique we use to assess stream health is macroinvertebrate presence and abundance. We use a special net that we drag along the bottom of the stream, preserve the macroinvertebrates we collected and count them to see what the bottom of the food web looks like in our streams. A big thank-you to Ashton, Ryan, Ian and Nout who counted the thousands of macroinvertebrates! As part of these surveys, we also take several types of measurements of the stream to better understand what the habitat is like.

We ran a fish trap in one of our fish passage structures this summer. We wanted to see how many fish were travelling up the fish ladder at Lord's Pond, as we are planning to replace it with a more natural fish passage. We placed a mesh at the top of one of the cells and checked it for fish each morning. It was relatively rare to find a fish, but when we did we would record the length and species and release it upstream.



This summer's Swim for the South Shore event went very well! We had many new entrants as well as some old familiar ones. If you showed up, we are very appreciative. This event is a major fundraiser for SSWA and offers a great opportunity to meet and chat with residents and visitors about our work. It was a wonderful and successful event and we hope to continue to grow going forward.

Thanks and Reminders

Thanks to all of our members and supporters. We appreciate your participation in and support for the work that we do. Feel free to email with any questions for us about the articles in this newsletter or anything else to do with local environmental concerns at sswa@sswa.ca or sswawildlife@gmail.com. A big shout out as well to all of the people who participated in this year's Swim for the South Shore. We were very happy to see so many people come out to support the watershed and look forward to working together going forward!

SSWA is running a project on the iNaturalist app. If you would like to join it, you are welcome. On the app if you select Projects and then search for the South Shore Watershed Assoc. you will find us. We would love to grow this community! Please email with any questions (sswa@sswa.ca or sswawildlife@gmail.com).

We would like to remind you that the 2 Billion Trees project is still running (see the Winter 2023-24 issue of *Tidings* for more information). Planting will begin in the spring of 2025 and will continue for a total of six planting years up until 2031. Each year the goal is to plant approximately 300,000 trees, and if you would like to apply, it can be done over the phone or online at this provincial webpage: PEI - 2 Billion Trees Landowner Application. Expect a response within 4-6 weeks, followed by a scheduled field visit to assess your property. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to reach out: PEI 2 Billion Trees Coordinator, Hailey Blacquiere (hdblacquiere@gov.pe.ca or 902-916-1785) or PEI Watershed Alliance 2 Billion Trees Coordinator, Kassidy Matheson (peiwaprogramcoordinator@gmail.com or 902-940-9239).



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PEI Watershed Management Fund
Skills PEI: Post-Secondary Student Program
Jobs for Youth
Canada Summer Jobs
Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund
Aquatic Ecosystems Restoration Fund
PEI Watershed Alliance

Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Wildlife Conservation Fund

Our deep appreciation to these corporate and major donors, 2023-2024:

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Eric C. Robinson
Hampton Beach Property Owners Association

Irene Sherren
Kevin Murphy
Louise Peckford
Meadowbrook Art Studio
Municipality of Crapaud
Richard Meenink

And for all other donations made to SSWA – so greatly appreciated.

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Written by Romy Munkres, “New Developments in the Salt Marsh” written by Fletcher Gibbons

SOUTH SHORE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

Registered charity #81018-9407-RR0001

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

(NOTE: RENEWALS ARE NOT DUE UNTIL MARCH)

Name: _____ **Phone:** _____

Civic address: _____

Mailing address: _____ **Email:** _____

Membership fee \$ 10.00

Donation \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE SOUTH SHORE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION!

👍 **SSWA issues charitable tax receipts for donations of \$20 or more**

👍 **For e-transfers, email to financial@sswa.ca**

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