



TIDINGS

Bringing you Quarterly Updates from the Watershed



**2022 Photo Contest: Grand Prize Winner!
Blue Heron, by Misty Bernard**

Innovations & insights: a Look Back at 2022 in the Watershed

As we welcome the new year at the South Shore Watershed Association (SSWA), we reflect on the past year that was full of meaningful conservation work, dedicated to restoring and maintaining the ecological integrity of PEI. In 2022, SSWA accomplished several important milestones, including fielding the largest team of staff we have had to date, and welcoming two full time staff members Matthew Meenink, Wildlife Technician (Field Supervisor) and Jennifer Woods, Wildlife Technician (Project Manager). Our dedicated staff members were the

drivers for our new research on headwaters in the watershed.

Assessing headwaters, the uppermost reaches of a stream or river system, is an important step in understanding the health and function of a watershed.

The SSWA team used several techniques to evaluate physical characteristics, water quality, and biological indicators of these headwaters. Now that our database on headwaters has been created, we will use this information to make management decisions to help protect and restore these critical ecosystems going forward.

Our outreach and education efforts continued to reach new audiences in 2022, as we hosted a variety of educational workshops, volunteer days, and community events. We also launched a new website that provides valuable information about the watershed and our ongoing conservation efforts.

Looking ahead in 2023, we are excited to build on this momentum and continue our work to protect and enhance the natural resources of our watershed.

Guardians of the Ground!

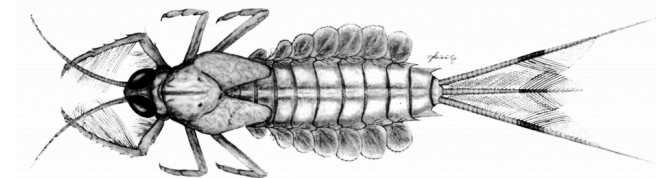


Image retrieved from Penrose Environmental

Often referred to as the superheroes of the aquatic world, benthic macroinvertebrates are small animals that live in or on the bottom sediment of streams, rivers, and other freshwater habitats.

Why are these bottom-dwelling critters so important? Because they are sensitive to changes in water quality. Certain species are adapted to specific types of habitats and water quality, and their presence or absence can provide valuable information about the overall health of the ecosystem.

Mayflies are of the most iconic benthic macroinvertebrates in freshwater ecosystems. They are sensitive to pollution and other environmental stressors, typically found in clean, well-oxygenated water with stable stream beds and plenty of substrate for them to cling to. Mayflies are also important food sources for fish and other aquatic predators, and their presence or absence can impact the overall health of the aquatic food web. Many mayflies were found across the watershed. We will continue to monitor this species over time.

Embracing Change: A New Look for the Watershed

We are super excited to announce a new line of watershed merchandise! For headwear, we have a baseball cap(\$30) in two colors, as well as a toque(\$30). We have two



colors in t-shirts(\$22) as well as two colors of hoodies(\$45). You can view photos and prices of the new gear on our social media. To make an order, contact us through any of our social platforms or us email at sswa@sswa.ca Show us your gear through the hashtag #watershedwear!

Join the Watershed Community!

We want to express our gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the success of the South Shore Watershed Association. Whether you have volunteered your time, made a donation, or simply supported our work, you have helped us make a positive impact on our environment and our community.



We look forward to working with you in the coming year and beyond as we continue to protect and enhance the natural resources of our watershed.

Growing a Resilient Future: How Planting Can Help Our Island Thrive

We probably all have heard by now of the change post tropical storm Fiona has brought to our island forests. Significant tree loss being the seemingly sad reality many landowners are facing.

The good news is that we can make a difference for the future! SSWA provides free trees for members! If you are a member, email sswa.manager@gmail.com to see what species are available and to put in an order. If you would like to become a member, contact that same email, we would love to have you on board for only \$10 a year! If you are planting yourself this spring, here's a couple tips! Planting trees in groups of 5 or more will help build resistance to storms/wind thanks to their intertwining root systems. Pruning your trees regularly helps with the tree's growth and reduces wind resistance increasing your trees survivability. One last thing we would like to mention is the importance of species diversity in planting. Try to avoid planting many of the same species in rows when trying to reconstruct natural forest land. Think of how the forest would regenerate itself naturally and what that would look like. Let's all do our part this upcoming planting season and get some new trees in the ground!

The Importance of Estuaries: Exploring their Role in the Ecosystem

Estuaries have numerous important jobs that most of us probably don't realize. Hopefully we can highlight some of them for you today!

Healthy estuaries are jam packed with biodiversity, and can be super productive when they aren't being hindered by human activity. The first job we want to highlight is that these ecosystems are nurseries for an abundance of species. They tend to have calmer waters, as well as vegetation that provides good shelter from predators. This is good habitat for the

young ones while they learn to swim, hide, crawl, hunt, feed, and work on any other tactics a young fish or crustacean may need for survival. The habitat that estuaries provide, also host many species we have come to love such as salmon, oysters, mussels, trout, and more. So of course, this is great for the commercial fishery here on Prince Edward Island.

The second job we would like to highlight is the buffer they provide during storms and storm surge events. Saltmarshes and seagrass beds can protect our communities and infrastructure (if we don't hinder them) against flooding and the effects of climate change. Estuaries and wetlands alike have the ability to absorb large amounts of water in these flash events. While the vegetation has the ability to dissipate wave energy and slow down the constant attack of coastal erosion our island faces. The third job we want to mention is the ability estuaries have to store carbon. Wetlands like an estuary can capture and store carbon at around 10x the speed of a mature tropical forest! They do this by capturing detritus and carbon to then transfer it down into the sediment on the bottom. By using the same process they also act as a filter for pollutants coming down from upstream heading into the ocean. Thus protecting our oceanic habitats from runoff pesticides.

Here's a good take-away for everyone reading, as long as we treat estuaries with respect and take care of them, they will take care of us and all their interconnected ecosystems too!

SSWA'S WATERSHEDS



-  DeSable River
-  Westmoreland River
-  Tryon River
-  Augustine Cove-
Cape Traverse
-  Seven Mile Bay

More maps: www.sswa.ca

**THANKS SO MUCH TO THE
FOLLOWING CORPORATE
AND MAJOR DONORS
(2021–2022)**

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And for **all other donations** made
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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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