

SMRA NEWS

SPRING, 2008

Volume 19, Issue 1



Long time members of the St. Mary's River Association Frank Jordan standing and Tom MacIntosh. Seen here at our Annual General Meeting May 27, 2007.

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Frank Jordan and Tom MacIntosh have been residents of Sherbrooke for many years. Both these fine gentlemen love to talk about the old days and life along the river. Tom spent many a day fishing and can tell lots of tales. Tom and Frank have contributed much to the Association over the years. We thank them for all the time and effort they have shown us over the years. Tight lines, gentlemen!

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ST. MARY'S RIVER ASSOCIATION

The St. Mary's River Association is a charitable, non profit organization providing leadership and engaging partners to enhance, protect and promote the St. Mary's River as a healthy ecosystem for Atlantic salmon and other native animals and plant species as well as a rich community resource.

Our vision:

"Health for the river, the Atlantic salmon and our community."

SMRA News is a publication of the St. Mary's River Association as a service to our members.

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the St. Mary's River Association, the editor or the publisher.

Memberships, suggestions and comments are welcome. Address all correspondence to:

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Our website is:
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(see ad on page 27)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Mark Pulsifer

If anyone had told me in 2003 when I first joined the SMRA that I would be writing this I would never have believed it probable. And yet, here I am in 2008 writing my first president's report. Many of you do not know me, but for now let me introduce myself by saying that I have been working as a wildlife biologist in the St. Mary's area since moving to Antigonish from the Annapolis Valley twenty years ago. In that time I have had the opportunity to work in and around the river on several occasions, but it wasn't until I started managing the Wood Turtle Project that I came to really appreciate her. Over the past five years and literally hundreds of hours of walking, and wading I have experienced this river in all her moods and seasons; and now I know what many of you have always known, that the St. Mary's is a unique and special river, and very deserving of our attention.

Unfortunately, major salmon rivers such as the St. Mary's are under threat. Over the past few years we have come to realize that salmon in Maine, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia are under increased pressure from habitat loss, parasites, disease, invasive species, and a weakened gene pool. Global warming is the latest threat to our rivers and their salmon.

Water levels in the St. Mary's are always a concern, but rains in 2007 helped keep water levels elevated. Although salmon returns were disappointing for many rivers in the north-east, our salmon angling season was fruitful with several fishers enjoying good water and relatively good numbers of fish. Although the season ended on July 15, we should be encouraged.

Since it's beginning in 1979, the SMRA has always been deeply committed to the conservation of Atlantic salmon, and the local recreational salmon fishery. This will remain a primary focus. That being said, the SMRA has adopted a broader philosophy that recognizes that the health of the St. Mary's River is affected directly and indirectly by all land use practices in the watershed. The health of the river is inextricably linked to the entire landscape, not just what happens around the river itself. We will continue to be watchful for activities in the watershed that may affect the health of the river, and will continue to actively seek out partnerships with other conservation groups on projects within the watershed that help conserve salmon, habitat, and maintain the health of the river and watershed.

This past January the SMRA entered into an exciting new phase with the hiring of Dr. Sean Mitchell as Executive Director. Sean comes to us with over 20 years experience working as a salmonid ecologist, conservationist, and teacher. He will be responsible for promoting our philosophy and message, fundraising, and overseeing a variety of conservation projects. Sean can be contacted through the SMRA office and I am sure that he is happy to share his thoughts, and listen to yours.

I know that there will be challenges over the coming years. The St. Mary's River appears healthy but it is not immune to the effects of poor land use and recreation practices. We have to remember that the St. Mary's watershed is a working landscape, and everything that happens in the watershed ultimately affects the river. Realistically, the health and protection of the St. Mary's cannot be the sole responsibility of any one

group, it requires a concerted and cooperative effort amongst all land users, government, industry, private land owners, and the general public.

I believe that each of us should try to play some role, no matter how small, in the stewardship of this precious resource. Stewardship in one of the pillars of species and habitat conservation, and for us it is both a philosophy and a practice. One of the more important projects that we continue to support is the Nova Scotia Nature Trust's St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Project that protects significant natural areas on the river.

All conservation associations rely heavily on a dedicated and hardworking Board of Directors, membership and volunteers who help guide decision-making and take part in association activities. Ours is no exception, and I want to personally thank all of you who make my job easier and give so much of yourselves to the St. Mary's.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS ANNUAL MEETING

The annual general meeting of the St. Mary's River Association will be held on Sunday May 25, 2008 at 2pm at the Association's Education & Interpretive Centre, 9494 Highway #7, Sherbrooke, NS

Items on agenda:

**Guest speaker
Annual reports
Financial reports
Election of officers & directors
Plans for the coming year**

All paid up members are eligible to vote at the meeting. Memberships will be available for those wishing to join or renew their membership.

REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR By Sean Mitchell

These are exciting times for the St. Mary's River Association. We are embarking on a large-scale, multi-year watershed project to assess and restore the terrestrial and aquatic environments, and linkages between these environments, within the watershed. This ambitious project has been in development for three years and we are now in a position to turn the ideas into realities. The goal is to work in conjunction with local residents and landowners, government agencies, industry and special interest groups to (i) understand the historic conditions and current environmental state of the watershed, (ii) develop a common vision of where the watershed should be in the future, for environmental, social and economic benefit, and (iii) undertake identified restoration work to drive the current conditions to those envisioned.

I am currently working with the Board of Directors developing a work plan to determine how we are going to accomplish this task in the coming years. The work plan, a "road-map" to follow, will be presented at the SMRA Annual General Meeting. We intend to kick off field work this summer by initiating long-term sampling and monitoring of water temperature, water quality, channel erosion, and sediment movement. In addition, we will also conduct habitat and fish surveys of streams, lakes and the estuary of the watershed. These activities will provide some of the required background information on existing environmental conditions of the river, and will be necessary as part of informed decision-making and defining a future vision.

The St. Mary's River Association has begun the first step of a long journey, which, I believe, will result in the well-planned and sustainable use of the resources of the watershed to the benefit of the local environment and the people of the watershed.

MEMBER OF THE YEAR Dale Archibald

Each year our Board of Directors select a member to recognize for their outstanding contribution to the community and to the SMRA. This year Dale Archibald was selected. Dale has been a member for over 25 years. He has twice served as president from 1989-91 & 2004-06. He started the museum in 1990 and looks forward to assisting in upgrading and expanding current displays. Dale started fishing the St. Mary's in the early 1960's with his father Percy Archibald from Glenelg. Dale currently lives in Antigonish with his wife Jacinta. They have four kids, Shanon, David, Drew and Liam.

Congratulations Dale!



Dale Archibald receives plaque from Mark Pulsifer at AGM 2007

STATUS OF THE SEA RUN TROUT FISHERY IN THE ESTUARY OF WEST RIVER ANTIGONISH'S SPECIAL TROUT MANAGEMENT AREA by John MacMillan and Reg Madden, Inland Fisheries Division,**Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.**

Sea run brook trout populations have been in decline throughout their range with an especially apparent decline in the Southern half of their North American distribution which includes Nova Scotia. Trends in Nova Scotia's total catch of brook trout, as well as the results of a 2006 study on Moser River, suggest that changes have occurred in trout fisheries across the province. The two most common reasons cited to have impacted our trout fishery are habitat loss and over fishing. To address the concern regarding over fishing, the Inland Fisheries Division of Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture initiated a new approach through the use of Special Trout Management Areas on a number of specific rivers and lakes in 2001. Objectives of the regulations put in place for Special Trout Management Areas were: 1) to improve the size and number of trout caught, 2) to reduce the time required to catch a trout, and 3) to sustain trout fisheries. The success of new angling regulations often depends on the ability of the habitat to support increased numbers of larger and older fish and the impact of exploitation on the targeted fish population. The migration of sea run brook trout to salt water is believed to satisfy a need for more food and space. The general migration pattern involves swimming to the estuary in spring and returning to freshwater in early summer. During a short time spent in salt water, brook trout can double

their weight after feeding on the abundance of fish and crustaceans present in estuaries. The cost of the seaward migration, however, increases the risk of predation that often leads to large mortality rates. While in salt water, brook trout are known to travel throughout their native estuaries and some trout will migrate to neighboring river systems. The fast growth and larger size of sea run trout make them a desirable catch to anglers. Recreational spring fisheries for sea run trout are characterized by high rates of retention and the use of bait. New regulations were developed in 2001 based on previous spring creel surveys that revealed very few sea run trout lived beyond three years of age or grew to a length greater than 35 cm.

Based on advice from the public Recreational Fisheries Advisory Councils, the West River of Antigonish was approved as a Special Trout Management Area in 2001. The West River watershed contains geology that is conducive to cool water streams that are naturally buffered from acid rain and is considered to be a productive trout habitat that would support larger, longer-lived fish. The 2001 regulations for West River sea trout included a delayed opening to 15 May, gear restriction to lure or fly only (no bait), and a reduced daily bag limit of one fish with a total length greater than 35 centimeters or 14 inches. The Special Trout Management Area includes a portion of the Antigonish Harbour estuary that is shared by both the West and South Rivers of

Antigonish. The portion of the Antigonish Harbour that is located on the South River side is under general fishery regulations (five trout bag limit, bait permitted and an open date of 15 April).

Darryl Murrant, Hatchery Manager, and staff of the Fraser Mills Fish Hatchery conducted an angler creel survey in the South River region of the estuary in 2006 and 2007. The creel survey included angler interviews to determine catch per hour, the size and age of the catch, angler effort, and harvest.

Creel survey data collected in 2006 and 2007 was compared to ten years of creel survey data collected prior to the implementation of the West River Special Trout Management Area. Catch rates of large brook trout (>35 cm or 14 inches) were greater in 2006 and 2007 compared to catch rates from ten years of creel surveys from 1991 to 2000. Changes in catch rate are often used to detect changes in abundance, however, temperature plays a large role in the activity of trout and is one of the reasons suggested for higher catch rates in delayed opening fisheries compared to early opening fisheries.

The mean angler effort over the first month of the season was much greater in 2006-07 in the South River portion of the estuary compared to the angling effort in 2000 when the entire estuary was open on 15 April and under general angling regulations. The perception of anglers who raised concerns about a recent increase in angler effort and catch in the South River portion of the estuary at the Recreational Fisheries Advisory Council meetings was

correct. Angler effort may continue to increase in the future as anglers are often attracted to sites where large trout can be captured.

The percentage of trout greater than 35cm in length changed from 20% in surveys prior to 2001 to 50-60% in 2006-07 surveys. The percentage of five year old brook trout in the anglers catch was zero in previous surveys and was 10-15% in those of 2006 and 2007. A five year old sea run brook trout can reach a length of 55 cm and a weight of over two kilograms or about five pounds. The increase in the number of large and older brook trout is probably the most important result to be highlighted from this survey. Previous assessments of sea run populations including angler creels and trapping in South River Antigonish indicated brook trout aged four years were scarce and brook trout aged five years and older were absent. These findings were in agreement with other trapping studies on River Denys and Lake-O-Law Brook. Migration studies indicate that sea run trout from West River were capable of migrating throughout the estuaries and beyond the estuarine border of the management area. The increased length and older age structure of the trout caught in the spring of 2006-07 suggest that the level of exploitation, prior to the implementation of new regulations on West River sea trout, had an impact on the number of older and larger trout in the population. Fluctuations in trout populations, however, are common and often related to environmental changes from flood events or drought conditions.

Additional factors that may relate to an increase in the size and age structure of the catch of South River anglers include milder winters and increased enforcement in Special Trout Management Areas. Milder winters

result in below average ice thickness and ice cover in Antigonish Harbour and reduced access to the popular fishery for smelt that is conducted through the ice in estuaries. An illegally retained by catch of trout during the smelt fishery has been reported by anglers and Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada enforcement have increased patrols during the ice fishery and trout fishery. Reduced access and increased enforcement have probably discouraged illegal harvest of sea run trout. Improved catches of sea trout in spring may be related to a reduction in the assumed trout by catch during the smelt fishery combined with an increase in enforcement in Special Trout Management Areas.

Is the current level of angler effort and catch during the spring fishery in the South River portion of the estuary sustainable? Additional study is planned to clarify the impact of spring exploitation in the estuary on the West River sea run trout population. A greater frequency of sampling would help to increase confidence in estimates of catch and harvest. Sea run brook trout appear to be sensitive to exploitation and environmental change. The implementation of new regulations in the West River Special Trout Management Area that were designed to protect first time and second time sea run migrants seems to have been very beneficial to the sea run trout fishery. In productive habitat, exploited brook trout populations seem to be able to respond quickly to regulations that protect young fast growing trout. Future studies with the valued support of volunteer organizations, universities

and departments such as Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Antigonish Town and County Angler's Association, St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Trout Research Cooperatives will contribute to a better understanding of the current status of the trout resource and how selected trout fisheries are responding to new regulatory approaches.



Join other friends of the St. Mary's River in helping our Association protect, preserve and restore this wonderful river and our heritage.

Membership dues are payable April 1st of every year. Current fees are:

<i>Junior</i>	<i>\$5.00</i>
<i>Regular</i>	<i>\$20.00</i>
<i>Contributing</i>	<i>\$50.00</i>
<i>Corporate</i>	<i>\$200.00</i>
<i>Sponsoring:</i>	
<i>Gold</i>	<i>\$500.00</i>
<i>Silver</i>	<i>\$300.00</i>
<i>Bronze</i>	<i>\$100.00</i>

Membership can be renewed by mailing a cheque to P.O. Box 179 Sherbrooke NS B0J 3C0. A charitable donation receipt will be mailed to you as well as a membership card. New members are most welcome. Makes a great gift!

NOVA SCOTIA'S L2F (LEARN TO FISH) PROGRAM

By: Tara Marshall, Inland Fisheries Division, Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture

In April 2007 Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture, Inland Fisheries Division focused on year two of their L2F program. This initiative was launched in 2006 to promote and develop the sportfishery. The L2F workshop is an interactive, informative program for youth ages 8-12 providing them with the education and skills needed to enjoy this healthy, recreational activity.

The goal for 2007 was to bring this program to youth all over the province. Fifteen L2F workshops were held in conjunction with schools, boys and girls clubs and science/nature camps. The program has two main components: the classroom presentation consists of an introduction to freshwater sportfish of NS and how to identify them, environmental aspects of freshwater resources including habitat requirements, human impact and an appreciation of Nova Scotia's aquatic environment, and angling education (fishing basics made easy). Introductory equipment and tackle procedures are explained in the classroom and each student learns how to assemble their own fishing rod from knot tying to attaching spinners and bobbers, and an outdoor lesson consisting of a hands-on sportfishing workshop at a lake nearby. Once arriving at the local pond or lake, youth experience safety-based casting demonstrations and hands-on casting assistance of both open and closed faced reels. Additionally, at the lake youth learn to put a worm on a hook, how to set the hook when a nibble is felt on the line, and reeling in their catch. We encourage youth to release their catch back to the water unless they wish to take it home for the table. Many lakes involved in the program are part of our division's hatchery enhancement program. The

angling education program recruits the next generation of stewards of our aquatic resources, by teaching safe and ethical angling skills to youth.

L2F workshops began in late April and finished up at the beginning of September. The majority of events were held during the school year but participants in boys and girls clubs and science/nature camps took advantage of the program during the summer months.

Schools that participated in the program were Humber Park Elementary, Mulgrave Memorial Educational Centre, Falmouth Elementary, Rockingstone Heights, and Admiral Westphal Elementary. Community groups that took part were: Port Morien Wildlife Association (youth fishing event in the community of Port Morien and Birch Grove), Universal Negro Improvement Association (youth fishing event in the community of Glace Bay), Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Pictou County, Trenton Summer Day Camp, Cape Sable Island Nature Camp, Bedford 1st cub pack, and youth in the community of Brooklyn, Hants County.

L2F workshops are made possible with the help of partnerships with Shakespeare Fishing Tackle, HRM Community, Culture & Development, Metro Transit, community groups; youth group clubs, sportfishing organizations and teachers.

Survey results from science teachers explained that concepts and vocabulary were easily understood and complimented their units on *Interactions with Ecosystem* and physical education teachers found the program re-enforced the initiatives for healthy physical activity. Youth group leaders and day camp counselors found the program fit well with the science/nature curriculum and cubs were certified in their fishing badges.

We are looking forward to an exciting 2008 with 26 L2F workshops booked.



THOUGHTS FROM HEN'S ISLAND

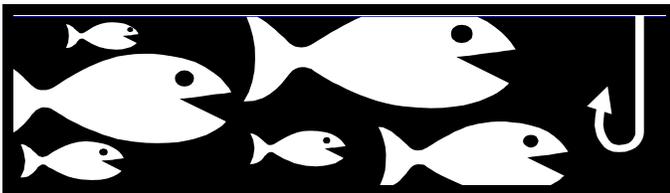
I recently came across this quote from Aldo Leopold: *"That the situation appears hopeless should not prevent us from doing out best."* Aldo Leopold grew up in rural Iowa in constant contact with the outdoors—the fields, trees, meadows, creeks and rivers. He is considered to be the father of wildlife management and was a lifelong fisherman and hunter. He would have been very content in the St. Mary's River Valley and very comfortable with those who cherish the rivers, lakes and brooks of Guysborough County. His words, 'that the situation appears hopeless should not prevent us from doing out best', were directed at another audience but how appropriate for you and me in 2008! Indeed, the situation 'appears to be hopeless' and will require our collective efforts (our very best) to reverse some disturbing trends in the St. Mary's River Watershed.

The Book of Proverbs states: *"Where there is no vision the people perish."* It can also be aptly said that where there is no vision the river and its wildlife will perish. Do you and I have the vision for what the St. Mary's can

become? I believe that with that vision in place and our collective 'very best' we can ensure the St. Mary's does not perish.

As I think about my vision for the St. Mary's I think of the words of Henry David Thoreau, the noted American philosopher and naturalist: *"Many go fishing all their lives, without knowing it is not the fish they are after."* When I think about a vision, my memory takes me to the 'back run' at Hen's Island. I am seated on my favourite 'perch' on the riverbank. The sun is slowly disappearing in the western sky, and the sounds of crickets and sparrows are echoing their last chorus of the day. Just when I think it can't get more peaceful and tranquil, a doe and two fawns inch their way toward the river. The water reflects the wonder of it all! And then, as if on command, a majestic Atlantic salmon twists out of the depths of the pool and reaches heavenward. Then I remember the words of Henry David Thoreau, 'it is not the fish I am after' but rather a vision of what can be!

. Ole Hook Bill



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ST. MARY'S RIVER ASSOCIATION LOTTERY WINNERS 2007

**Indicates proceeds given back to SMRA with our thanks!

Our \$1200.00 grand prize winner was Gordon Steedman...Congratulations

January 2007 150.00 Kenny Silver 100.00 George Archibald ** 50.00 Linda & Owen Duffy 25.00 Judy & Charlie MacInnis 25.00 Norm Kelly 25.00 Pat King 25.00 John Cameron	May 2007 150.00 Bob & Lois Kelly 100.00 Willy Wong 50.00 Harris Miller 25.00 Gerry Doucet 25.00 Ron Clark 25.00 Don MacLean 25.00 Barb Crosby	September 2007 150.00 Terry Croft 100.00 John Cameron Sr 50.00 George Archibald ** 25.00 Bill & Brenda Carpan 25.00 Wendy Brown ** 25.00 Gerry Doucet 25.00 Winston & Tim Sawlor
February 2007 150.00 Sandy Barnhill 100.00 Norm Kelly 50.00 John Hamilton 25.00 Jack Duffy 25.00 Maudie Mathews 25.00 Wayne MacDonald 25.00 Sean Mitchell	June 2007 150.00 Willy Wong 100.00 Bill Fraser 50.00 Peter Archibald 25.00 David Eshbaugh ** 25.00 Charles Widgery 25.00 Walter Smith 25.00 Marjorie Widgery	October 2007 150.00 Pat King 100.00 Colin Coady 50.00 Tim Nobes 25.00 Linda & Owen Duffy 25.00 Dale Archibald 25.00 Wayne MacIntosh 25.00 Tom MacIntosh
March 2007 150.00 Dan Smith 100.00 Gary Baudoux 50.00 Barb Eshbaugh ** 25.00 Kurt Mueller 25.00 Flo Duffy 25.00 Bill Fraser 25.00 Bob Bancroft	July 2007 150.00 Irene Hodder 100.00 Pat King 50.00 Walter Smith 25.00 Steve Eshbaugh ** 25.00 Bill Fraser 25.00 Jack Duffy 25.00 David Eshbaugh **	November 2007 150.00 Gary Baudoux 100.00 Ron Clark 50.00 Bill Fraser 25.00 David Surrette 25.00 Irene Hodder 25.00 George Archibald** 25.00 George Archibald**
April 2007 150.00 Paul D'Entremont 100.00 John MacPherson 50.00 James Surrette 25.00 Winston & Tim Sawlor 25.00 Gerry Doucet 25.00 Robert Sidler 25.00 Gwen Robar	August 2007 150.00 George Archibald ** 100.00 Patty Douthwright 50.00 James Surrette 25.00 George Archibald ** 25.00 George Archibald ** 25.00 Brian Mailman 25.00 Aleah Anderson	December 2007 150.00 Maudie Mathews 100.00 Patricia Douthwright 50.00 George Archibald** 25.00 Jocelyn & Earl Ellis 25.00 Irene Hodder 25.00 Parker Wong 25.00 Norm Kelly

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MAYFLIES MADE EASY

by Stillwater Slim

Nova Scotia is fortunate to have many mayfly hatches throughout the trout season. Southern Guysborough County's first mayfly hatch of the season occurs around mid-May, when the rivers and lakes warm up sufficiently. This water temperature also awakens our speckled trout, starved from their winter inactivity. This happy coincidence can create some of the most exciting fly-fishing opportunities of the season.

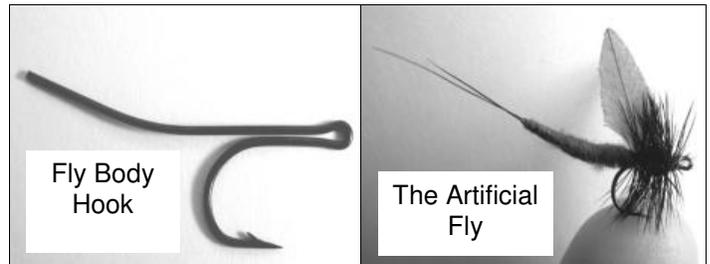
A remarkably realistic artificial dry fly can be easily tied on the Partridge Yorkshire Fly Body hook, available in sizes 10 – 16. The following pattern is a great imitation of Nova Scotia's early mayfly.

Hook – Partridge Yorkshire Fly Body Hook, size 12
 Thread – Black 8/0 UniThread
 Tails – Two black, tapered, paintbrush bristles divided
 Body – Black or dark dun grey synthetic dubbing (like Superfine Dry Fly Dubbing)
 Wings – Dun grey hen hackle cut (or burned, using a disposable lighter and a brass wing-burner)
 Hackle – Dark dun grey

The fly is tied in two stages:

- 1) With the eye of the hook held by your vice, tie on the tails and body then tie off the thread.
- 2) Turn the hook around so your vice grasps the hook by its bend. Tie the wings and hackle, and tie off the thread at the head.

If you try this fly during our spring mayfly hatch, I think you will find it very effective.



SMRA LOTTERY

Tickets will once again be on sale at our Annual General Meeting on May 25, 2008. The cost is \$120.00 each, payable up front or 12 post-dated cheques. There are 85 chances to win with 7 draws per month. 1st prize \$150.00, 2nd prize \$100.00, 3rd prize \$50.00 4th—7th prize \$25.00. Grand prize \$1200.00 in December. Total \$6000.00 in prizes.

This is a great fundraiser for the Association and helps to defray the operating costs of the Education and Interpretive Centre. The next lottery starts January 2009.

**Don't miss your chance to win,
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Dining room hours: 7:00 am — 9:00 pm

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ATLANTIC SALMON FEDERATION UPDATE By Sue Scott, VP Communications and Lewis Hinks, Regional Director, NS

Founded in 1948 by individuals who were committed to the environment, this year Atlantic Salmon Federation is celebrating our 60th anniversary. Since 1983, ASF has shared our programs and milestones with a remarkable network of Regional Councils, made up of dedicated volunteers in affiliated organizations like the St. Mary's River Association.

One of the most exciting milestones has been the Conservation Agreement with Greenland fishermen that brought the commercial fishery for salmon to an end in 2002 for five years, and was renewed in 2007 for another seven years.

While commercial fisheries are no longer a threat to North American salmon, too many are killed in the

recreational fishery. ASF's programs promote release of both grilse and salmon and reward anglers and camps that practice and encourage this. In Nova Scotia three outfitters, Cape Breton Fly Fishing Adventures, Green Highlander Lodge, and Tight Lines Guide Service, have been recognized as part of our Live Release Rewards and Recognition Program.

ASF's research on the marine phase of the salmon's life is progressing admirably. The 2007 season findings indicate that there exists significant smolt traffic through the Strait of Belle Isle (the northern exit from the Gulf of St. Lawrence). Water temperature along this route may be lethally cold to migrating smolt, grilse and salmon. Migrating behaviour appears to be quite different. There are synchronous

arrivals of salmon from different rivers into the Strait of Belle Isle, indicating a strong pressure on these fish to get together during migration. The \$30 million Canadian Endowment that will provide funding for Atlantic salmon conservation and restoration has been invested, and some interest is expected to be available to fund projects in the spring of 2008.

ASF's Fish Friends Program has approximately 70 schools participating in 2008, with 6 new schools involved. ASF developed this program in 1992 and, since that time, more than 270,000 students throughout the Atlantic Region, Quebec and New England have learned valuable lessons about fish, ecology, environmental sensitivity and the importance of caring for fresh and saltwater resources. Some of



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SMRA would be glad to receive *in memoriam* donations from friends and family of people whose angling experiences on the St. Mary's River contributed to their enjoyment of life. We will provide *in memory* cards and send them to family and friends acknowledging that a donation was made in memoriam by you. A tax receipt will be issued to the donor.

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Your donation, in a loved ones name, will help us in our continuing efforts to help the Atlantic salmon.

these young people have moved on to careers in science and are working to solve some of the environmental problems facing us today.

Introducing young people to angling and conservation programs is another goal of ASF and our Regional Councils. ASF has developed the Magic on the Rivers Program to support this effort. The program introduces students to fly casting and tying, reading water and scales, live release techniques, river etiquette, ethics and safety, proper ways to handle salmonids and some restoration techniques. The St. Mary's River Association has held Magic on the River sessions for several years with great success. The program has also been introduced to Chester Area Middle School and to Cheticamp youth by the Cheticamp River Salmon

Association.

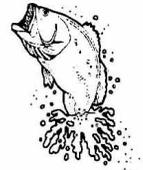
Finally, the West River Sheet Harbour acid rain mitigation project continues to work very well. Water chemistry has improved and remains stable with excellent pH levels for salmonids. The lime doser is operating perfectly. The Nova Scotia Salmon Association (NSSA) purchased and operated a smolt wheel for the first time in the Spring of 2007 to help assess the success of the liming program. An estimated 3476 smolts left the West River system in 2007. This number is much higher than was anticipated and bodes well for the future of the river.

ASF wishes the St. Mary's River Association every success with their conservation work in 2008 and we look forward to continuing to work with you.

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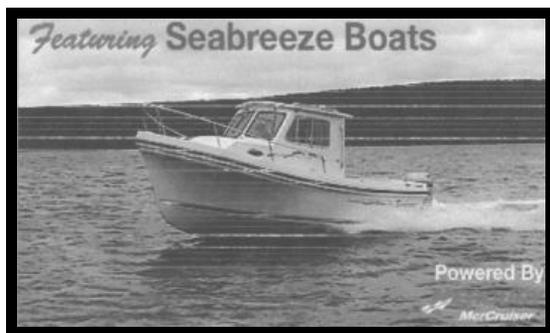


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SALMON ASSESSMENTS ON THE ST. MARY'S RIVER by Jamie Gibson and Heather Bowlby, Fisheries and Oceans Canada

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the St. Mary's River Association collaborated on four salmon assessment programs in 2007. Similar to past years, the smolt migration monitoring program and the kelt survey took place during the spring, the electrofishing survey for juvenile salmon occurred during the summer and the adult seining program was carried out in autumn. We would like to thank all of the volunteers who contributed their time and expertise to help these programs run smoothly.

The smolt wheel at Glenelg Bridge was deployed in late April and was fished from May 1st until June 4th. High water levels caused the wheel to turn sideways in the channel on May 18th and the wings, which help direct smolts into the trap, had to be removed until May 21st.

Smolt Monitoring: 2007

Smolt catches were high near the beginning and end of the monitoring period, but were relatively low in the middle. In total, 775 smolts were captured, marked and released back upstream. Of these fish, 42 were recaptured as they passed the wheel a second time. Making an adjustment for the days when the wings on the wheel were not working, these values suggest the smolt wheel was catching 5.4 % of the smolts, and that

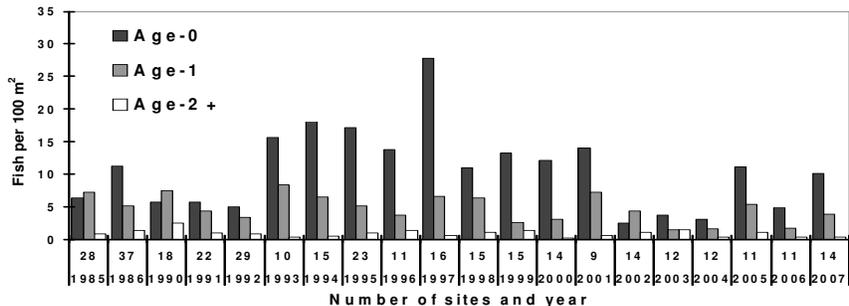
16,110 smolts (statistical range: 12,735 to 20,835 smolts) emigrated from the West Branch of the St. Mary's River in 2007. This is lower than the previous year's estimate of 20,300 (statistical range: 14,300 to 31,100 smolts). Eric Jefferson (DFO, Dartmouth) read the scales from a sample of the smolts to determine their age. As in previous years, most of the smolts (92%) were age-2 and the remainder were age-3.

Electrofishing Results: 1985 - 2007

Electrofishing surveys took place at 14 sites on the St. Mary's River in 2007. For the entire river, the average density was 10.1 fish/100 m² for fry and 4.2 fish/100 m² for parr (age-1 and age-2+). These estimates are higher than in 2006 but are similar to

densities of juvenile salmon in both 2006 and 2007 have been higher on the East Branch than on the West Branch. As was the case in 2006, water levels were good for seining adult salmon during the fall. Cumming's, Indian Man and Sutherland's pools were seined on September 25th and 26th, and 94 adult salmon were captured, marked and released back into the river. When these pools were seined again on October 9th and 10th, 105 salmon were captured, of which 58 had been marked on the first trip.

These values suggest that the seining captured 55% of the salmon, which is a result similar to 2006 when water levels were also good for seining. Based on these values, 170 adults, 20 salmon and 150 grilse, were estimated to be in the West Branch of the St. Mary's River. This is a decrease from the 2006 estimate of 240 adults.



Carole Gartside

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DFO began a live gene bank program on the West Branch of the St. Mary's River in 2006 in order to help maintain the genetic diversity of the river as the population declines. In 2006, a total of 289 parr and 25 fry were collected from several locations in the river and are being held at DFO's Coldbrook Biodiversity Facility. These fish are being grown to the adult stage, and when they mature, they can either be spawned in captivity or they will be released into the river and allowed to spawn naturally in wild. A second parr collection took place in 2007, when 286 parr were collected from 6 sites (Indian Man Brook, Cross Brook, Archibald's Brook, Barren Brook, the Main stem above Caledonia and South Brook). Some of the parr collected in 2006 are expected to mature in 2008, and most fish from both collections will mature by the fall of 2010.

It is not known why, but the at-sea survival of both smolts and adult salmon from rivers along Nova Scotia's Atlantic coast is low relative to survival observed in the past. This means that proportionally less salmon survive to an age when they can reproduce, leading to population declines. The St. Mary's River live gene bank program helps by allowing juvenile salmon to reach maturity without going to sea. As a result, the number of salmon that die each year is reduced and more fish are then available to reproduce, either in a hatchery or in the wild. Population size may therefore be increased using these methods. However, this increase in population size is not without costs and risks. Natural selection occurring in the wild will result in the removal of salmon with lower fitness (salmon that are less likely to survive and reproduce) from the population. When salmon are raised or bred in captivity, this selection pressure is relaxed and animals with lower fitness may then contribute genes to the next generation that lower the overall productivity of the population.

Therefore, although the population is larger in size, its ability to naturally increase in size may be comprised.

Live gene bank programs are designed to minimise these and other genetic impacts on populations, but our understanding of both the importance of these impacts, as well as the extent to which these impacts can be reduced, is still limited. In the case of Nova Scotia's Atlantic coast rivers, live gene banking is being used as a short-term intervention to slow population declines while assessing the impacts and allowing time to research the causes of the declines. We hope that continued consultation with SMRA about how best to achieve these goals will help to maintain salmon in this river. We are getting ready for another year of salmon assessment in 2008. As always, we welcome your participation and thank you again for volunteering to make the programs run smoothly.

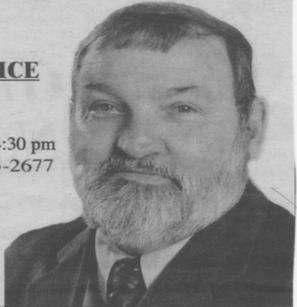


St. Mary's River Atlantic salmon in their temporary home at DFO's Biodiversity Facility in Coldbrook, NS

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ST. MARY'S ACADEMY STUDENTS VISIT

Local students from St. Mary's Academy visited the Education & Interpretive Centre in June. The students had a guided 30 minute tour of the Centre followed by a scavenger hunt to see how well they listened. This was followed by watching a tape on the river which interested the students. All told, they spent 45 minutes here. After lunch a second class visited.

ST. MARY'S RIVER AS HERITAGE DAY PROJECT

St. Mary's Education Centre student MacKenzie MacKeen, Waternish, shows his St. Mary's River Heritage project. During the summer, it was on display at the Interpretive Centre.



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NATURALIST CLUB

The St. Mary's River Association is looking for interested individuals to form a naturalist group in our area.

Interested persons should call 522-2099 or email us at stmarysriver@ns.sympatico.ca

FUNDING PARTNERS

We are very grateful to receive funding from our generous supporters, without who's financial assistance, much of the work of the St. Mary's River Association would not be possible. Thank you to the following:

- The Elizabeth Wakeman Henderson Foundation
- The David & Faye Sobey Foundation
- Habitat Stewardship Program—Government of Canada's Species at Risk Fund
- Strachan Donnelley
- Shell Environmental Fund
- NewPage (formerly StoraEnso Port Hawkesbury)
- NS Power Corporation
- Adopt a Stream Program
- Provincial Employment Program
- Service Canada- Summer Career Placement
- Neenah Paper
- St. Francis Xavier University

To all our volunteers, a great big thank you goes out to you as well. Without your generous contribution of time and energy, we would not be here.

THANK YOU!

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

EDUCATION & INTERPRETIVE CENTRE SUMMER REVIEW by Joanne Mailman, Manager

Hi everyone. As we gear up for what will no doubt be an exciting 2008 season, I reflect on a busy past year. 2007 saw over 2700 visitors come through our door from near and far. It never ceases to amaze me, how far people come for a vacation. Someday I'd like to get a map of the world so visitors can place a thumbtack to indicate where they are from.

In May we partnered with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust for a community BBQ. In the morning we had a bird walk as well as a wood turtle walk. In the afternoon SMRA held it's annual general meeting.

This year we hired Kyle Strongman and John Tyler Langille as our summer students. They both enjoyed talking to our visitors and answering their many questions. Both Kyle and John Tyler are fisherman and lots of flies were tied. On July 29, George Archibald hosted a bird walk. We are

so lucky to have George take time out of his busy schedule to share his passion for birds and nature with us. George was selected by Nature Canada for the Pimlott Award, presented annually to a Canadian who has made outstanding contributions to conservation. Congratulations George!

Teaching and hands on learning is what the Centre is all about. This year's Magic on the River Day Camp was held Wednesday, August 8th. We partnered with the Sherbrooke Recreation Department, Megan Myers and Kyle Biggar from the Wood Turtle Crew and Jocelyn Ellis, Association Director. Sixteen eager to learn kids took part in a Fly Tying Workshop, Nature Hike, and Wood Turtle Presentation. Paper turtles were colored and placed upon the wall in the museum. We all learned a lot and had a great time. Somewhere in amongst all this activity we were able to slow things down

and have everyone enjoy a nutrition break

We are glad to see that more and more people are becoming interested in the Association and the St. Mary's River. There are many new requests for memberships and we encourage all of you who have not already joined to do so.

Our gift shop has lots of new things and for those of you interested in scrap booking, we have lovely albums that are both different as well as beautiful. We also have locally made jewellery and birdhouses as well as many books. Lots of great ideas for gift giving.

Next summer we plan to offer similar programs so keep an eye out for the announcements.

Finally, I welcome all of you to come see us. There are always new things to see and we'd love to show you around!



Taking a well deserved break from the days activities.

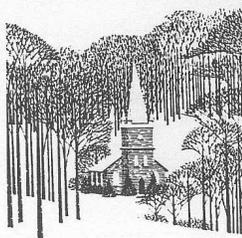


The community enjoys a wonderful BBQ on May 27, 2007 at the Centre before the AGM



Jocelyn Ellis talks to the kids before the nature walk in Stone Wall Leisure Park

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THE NOVA SCOTIA NATURE TRUST – Working with Landowners to Protect the St. Mary's River by Lauren Allen, Conservation Projects Coordinator

The success of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust's *St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Campaign* continues, with the Nature Trust poised to acquire a spectacular property on the West Branch of the river this spring in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia. This exciting acquisition, supporting old-growth hemlock forest, will represent the third area on the river protected through our campaign. A critical complement to the St. Mary's River Association's watershed planning and in-stream salmon conservation efforts on the river, the Nature Trust's land protection efforts will help to ensure that the beauty and natural values of the St. Mary's River are preserved for future generations of anglers, outdoor enthusiasts, and residents (human and otherwise), to enjoy. Stay tuned for news of a community event celebrating the protection of this exceptional wilderness area this spring!

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust is the province's leading land conservation charity, and the only organization dedicated exclusively to working with landowners to protect the places Nova Scotians love. With over 70% of the land in the province privately owned, the Nature Trust's land trust approach is essential to protecting the province's natural legacy. Since 1994, the Nature Trust has succeeded in protecting over 3,500 acres of outstanding conservation lands.

In 2006, the Nature Trust launched the *St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Campaign*, an initiative to permanently protect some of the most exceptional natural areas on the river. Aside from its scenic and recreational values, the St. Mary's is also very important from an ecological

standpoint, supporting some of the province's last old-growth forests and important habitat for nationally threatened wood turtles and viable habitat for Atlantic salmon.

On May 27, 2007, over 60 people came out for "River Days", a day of exploration and learning on the St. Mary's River, held by the St. Mary's River Association and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. Attendees participated in guided walks led by "Turtle Guy" Mark Pulsifer and Nova Scotia Bird Society member Ken McKenna, followed by a presentation about the Nature Trust's *St. Mary's River Conservation Legacy Campaign*. Afterwards, everyone enjoyed a BBQ back at the SMRA Interpretive Centre. It was great to see such a large turnout at the event. Thanks to everyone for coming out, and to Mark and Ken for leading the walks!

The Nature Trust would like to thank our project supporters: the David and Faye Sobey Foundation, the Elizabeth Wakefield Henderson Charitable Foundation, Environment Canada's EcoAction Community Funding Program, the Canadian Wildlife Federation, the Donner Canadian Foundation, ExxonMobil, the Habitat Conservation Fund, Enterprise Rent-A-Car Foundation, Sage Environmental Program, The McLean Foundation, the St. Mary's River Association, and the many individuals who support our project.

For more information on the Nature Trust, the campaign, or becoming involved, contact Lauren at 1-877-434-LAND or lauren@nsnt.ca, or visit www.nsnt.ca.

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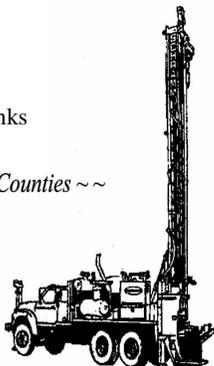
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Avid birders on the River Days Bird Walk, led by Ken McKenna

NS BIRDERS ARE PUTTING THEIR PASSIONS FOR BIRDING ON THE MAP! By Becky Stewart and Ivy Austin

Ask the average person what they plan to do this summer and the response will likely be something along the lines of, “go to the beach” or “put in a new deck”. However, ask a birder how they plan to spend their summer vacation and they’ll likely tell you that they “are going to finish their square” or “bump up their number of confirmations.” What is this strange language you ask? It is the language of the Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas volunteer and there are more than 700 of them out there, combing the Maritimes, looking for evidence of breeding birds.

The Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas is a five-year, volunteer-based project to determine the distribution, abundance and status of all birds breeding in NB, NS and PEI. A first Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas was conducted between 1986 and 1990, and the resulting publication (a book describing breeding bird distribution with maps and text) has been heavily relied on by environmental consultants, policy makers, researchers and areas wildlife managers to delineate of conservation priority and make effective conservation decisions. Today, this first Atlas is still the most comprehensive and up-to-date source of breeding bird distribution information for most Maritimes bird species. But, over the past twenty years land-use patterns and other environmental factors have changed and these changes have inevitably affected bird distribution and abundance as well. Current information is needed to direct future conservation policy and protect critical habitat for our Maritimes bird species. Field work for the second Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas began in the spring of 2006 and will continue through 2010. Already, volunteers have spent an astounding 17,000 hours surveying for breeding birds and more than 74,000 individual bird records have been submitted to

the online database (36,500 of those records are from NS—thank-you to all who have dedicated so much time and effort to the project!).

So how does the Atlas work? The entire Maritimes have been divided into 1,774, 10 by 10 km, squares which volunteers systematically survey, spending a minimum of 20 hours in each square, searching for breeding birds and covering all habitat types. Participants record all bird species, as well as all breeding evidence observed. Breeding evidence ranges from a bird singing in suitable nesting habitat during the breeding season (considered evidence of “possible” breeding) to finding a nest with eggs (“confirmed” breeding). Up-to-date species and effort maps, plus real-time data summaries, are available online (www.mba-aom.ca) and enable participants to see where different bird species have been found and which squares have been surveyed. Following the project’s completion in 2010, the website will continue to be maintained and will serve as an extensive database of breeding bird information that can be queried for numerous research, conservation and educational purposes. Already many stories are beginning to unfold, from new breeding records (e.g., Purple Gallinule, Sandhill Crane and Le Conte’s Sparrow) to distributional changes. Turkey Vultures, which were recorded as “possible” breeders in 7 squares during the first atlas, have been detected throughout NB and 3 Turkey Vulture nests were found in 2007! The Yellow-throated Vireo, previously detected in one square during the first Atlas, has been found in all three Maritimes provinces. Palm Warblers, which breed in bogs and other areas with low conifers, were absent from northwestern NB during the first Atlas. This time around, they’ve been found breeding in many northern NB

squares. Other species are showing signs of population declines. Barn Swallows have been detected in 42% less in squares already surveyed squares in comparison with the first Atlas. And some rarities, like the Loggerhead Shrike, Louisiana Waterthrush and Sedge Wren (all detected during the first Atlas) are still waiting to be found.

However, these stories are just the beginning and, over the next three years as more volunteers finish surveying their squares, many more stories are sure to develop. Of course, it’s not too late to join this important conservation effort. If you enjoy birdwatching and don’t mind recording your observations, please give us a call at 866-528-5275 or visit our website www.mba-aom.ca. Thank-you again to current volunteers and supporters—without you there would be no Atlas!

The Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas is a cooperative project of 700 Maritimes birders, Bird Studies Canada, Environment Canada, the provincial governments of NB, NS and PEI, Nature NB, the NS Bird Society, and the PEI Natural History Society. Current supporters include: Environment Canada, NB Department of Natural Resources, NS Department of Natural Resources, PEI Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry, NB Wildlife Trust Fund, NB Environmental Trust Fund, NS Habitat Conservation Fund, the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, Atlantic Industries Limited, Jacques Whitford, Bird Studies Canada Baillie Fund, Shell Environmental Fund, BMO Nesbitt Burns, NS Bird Society, The John and Judy Bragg Family Foundation and several other anonymous and individual donors.



DENIZEN OF THE RIVER by W. Hardy Eshbaugh

The St. Mary's River is home to both brook trout and Atlantic salmon. Very soon many area residents and visitors will be haunting the banks of the river in search of these two elusive residents of the river. And it is the fisherman who is most likely to encounter one of the rivers most secretive summer residents and denizens. More will hear its call than will see it. Well before dawn an unearthly sound will rise from the marsh grasses at Silver's Pool, the Meadow Pool, the Crows Nest, in the Stillwater, the Ford, and at Archibald's Brook. This call cannot be described but the many common names of the bird that makes it allude to its uniqueness - "thunder-pumper", "stake-driver", and "mire-drum". The American Bittern is probably very common along the St. Mary's River wherever there are freshwater wetlands with tall, emergent vegetation. Folklore dating back to the eighteenth century tells of residents of a Connecticut town gathering on the Sabbath to rid

the nearby swamps of this unwanted resident. This fear of the American Bittern can be traced to the Bible where it is associated with evil and desolate places. The call is low, resonant, and composed of 3 syllables described as "pump-er-link" and "dunk-a-doo." It is preceded by a series of clicking and gulping sounds repeated up to ten times and can be frightening in the early morning when a male tries to attract its mate. The American Bittern is secretive and seldom seen and its mating call can be heard for no more than 4 weeks. Fishermen and canoeists are the people most likely to flush this species from its hiding place in the wetland vegetation. It stays so still and stretches itself into such a thin profile that it often defies detection by a viewer less than six feet away.

If you cannot find this bird ask Bill Carpan or Jack Duffy where you might find it. They have seen it often in their travels around the river.



American Bittern attempting to hide -
Picture from Wikipedia



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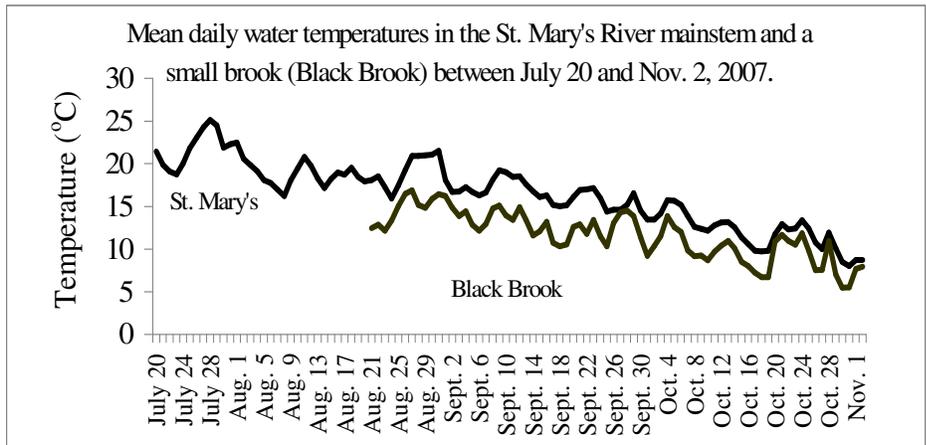
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ST. FX HONORS STUDENT CONDUCTS RESEARCH by Derek Wynberg

As part of a St. Francis Xavier University Biology Honors project, research was conducted in four St. Mary's River tributaries throughout the summer and fall of 2007. Due to the importance of water temperature to the distribution of fish, I deployed temperature data loggers in Black Brook, Barren Brook, and the main branch St. Mary's with the intentions to monitor daily and seasonal fluctuations. Mean daily temperature data for the smallest (Black Brook) and largest (mainstem river) are shown in the figure below. In 2007 mean daily temperatures remained below 25°C, but this year was also a cool summer. Surprisingly, the temperatures within the small brook (3-5 m width) were quite similar to the much larger mainstem (>20 m width). This monitoring was done as a part of a larger project aimed at determining how fish diversity changes along a stream length. The main purpose of the study was to determine the patterns of distribution among various fish species throughout different sized streams. A total of 13 sites within Castley, Cross, Black, and Barren

Brooks were sampled using minnow traps and fyke nets. I found a total of seven species: brook trout, Atlantic salmon, white sucker, creek chub, three spine stickleback, blacknose shiner, and American eel. By far, the dominant species in this study was the brook trout with catches as high as 14 individuals within a 24 hour period in the smaller streams. This however, may be due to the variable efficiency among

sampling methods. The data collected has shown some interesting trends but more research needs to be conducted in order to adequately analyze the state of the St. Mary's River Watershed fish distribution. For more information concerning this study please contact: Derek Wynberg at x2002tcm@stfx.ca



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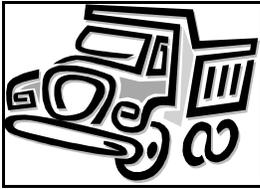


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ADOPT-A-STREAM ON THE ST. MARY'S RIVER by Amy Weston

The SMRA now has an overall plan to address fish habitat problems in the branches and tributaries of the St. Mary's River. The St. Mary's Watershed Fish Habitat Management Plan was prepared by Bob Rutherford, the Nova Scotia Salmon Association's Adopt-A-Stream Chair and a leading expert in fish habitat restoration in the Maritimes.

ways to address the severely over-widened channel in the main river and the lower sections of the West Branch. Rutherford makes no bones about how challenging this effort will be. However, opportunities for large-scale work may come along, particularly with respect to habitat compensation for major industrial developments.

upstream from the highway crossing. Road crossings often impact negatively on stream hydrology, shifting meander patterns until the thalweg (i.e. main flow) becomes less distinct. This widens and flattens the stream bed, and reduces pool frequency. At low flow conditions water is spread very thin across the entire channel, increasing summer temperatures and winter ice production. Habitat restoration in these tributaries involved thalweg development in heavier substrates, the installation of digger logs and deflectors, clearing of plugged culverts, and bank stabilization.

The plan, presented to the Association at the 2007 AGM in May, looks at the land use history of the river as well as current impacts, and offers an assessment of the aquatic and riparian habitat of the watershed, highlighting particular problem areas. It also proposes an ambitious Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation Plan, making specific habitat restoration recommendations for each stretch of the main river, its branches and tributaries. In particular, the plan describes

The plan also makes recommendations for smaller-scale work needed in tributaries, which is where project efforts for the past two summers have been focused.

In 2007, the SMRA field crew worked on a number of tributaries to the West Branch, including: Indian Man, Clarks, Sutherlands, Hattie, and Glencross brooks. Assessments were made from Hwy 348 downstream to the confluence and for 1-2 kilometres

Across the province, the Adopt-A-Stream program supported 20 community groups working on habitat restoration in 50 watercourses in 2007. Approximately 110,000 square meters of in-stream habitat was restored and more than 66,000 square meters of

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HABITAT RESTORATION REPORT 2007

This year with the financial assistance of the Adopt a Stream program, Shell Environmental Fund and StoraEnso Port Hawkesbury we were able to do work on Indian Man Brook, Clarks Brook, MacDonald Brook, Hattie Brook and Glencross Brook. A total of 10 digger logs were installed, 7 pools formed and 1 artificial bank created. Pools were deepened and thalweg cleaned out. Trees were also planted. The work team consisted of Wayne Croft and Donald MacIntosh.

SMRA SMOLT WHEEL PROJECT

One smolt wheel was anchored at Glenelg Bridge. Volunteers collected data, which was sent to DFO. This project could not have taken place without the support of the Department of Fisheries, the Turtle crew and our dedicated SMRA volunteers. Thank you to all who helped out.

riparian habitat was protected by live-stock fencing, bank stabilization and the planting of 13,525 trees. The Nova Scotia Sportfish Habitat Fund contributed \$222,500 to these projects, funds which community groups matched \$2 for every \$1 with cash and in-kind services.

The year 2008 marks a decade since the NSSA took on the operation of the Adopt-A-Stream program. It is a milestone not only of persistence, but of continuous and steady progress, with close to a million square meters of fish habitat in Nova Scotia's streams and rivers restored thus far.

For more information about Adopt-A-Stream visit the NSSA website www.novascotiasalmon.ns.ca or contact: Amy Weston, NSSA Adopt-A-Stream program manager Tel: (902) 644-1276 Email: amy.weston@ns.sympatico.ca



**Wayne Croft and Donald MacIntosh
Indian Man Brook habitat
restoration project completed in
2007**

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BOB CLOONEY by John E. Twelves

While in the Navy during WW II I met Bob Clooney's elder daughter. We were married in 1947 and I became her tax deductible dependant while I studied and passed to become a medical doctor. In our early years in practice we drove to visit her family in Sherbrooke for two weeks every year. I had fished for bass and pickerel in Ontario with my father and caught the occasional brookie, but after watching old Bob play and land a St. Mary's salmon (with a fly yet) I was hooked.

I remember well his patience as I used one of his rods, an old fly line, and a nearly bare, useless fly to learn, to some minor degree, how to cast a line. "A zorro you are not!" was his favourite comment as I bullwhipped that nearly defunct line. However, after two weeks of practice I could lay out a fairly gentle line without snapping off the fly. But did I actually fish? No, Bob said I was not near readiness for the real thing.

The next year when we arrived, Bob had for me a new nine foot fibreglass rod, a forward tapered floating line, anew reel, and a small box of flies he had tied for me. That year I was taught how to read the river and present the fly. I caught no fish but Bob told me I had raised twenty or so to the fly without recognizing the fact. Oh well, there was next year.

Over the next two years, in the two week increments, I was taught to see the fish rise, then to hook the taking fish. How difficult it was to not pull too soon in order to set the hook. Finally he taught me how to play the fish and land it to release or gaff it for food. But this story was not meant to be about me but about old Bob. He and Sarah had six children. A boy, Robert and a girl, Pearl, both of whom died in childhood, and Lawrence, Russell, Winnifred and Nora, who survived and are all still living.

Bob was born on the outskirts of Sherbrooke on a farm owned by his father. He had no formal education, working on the farm and logging in the bush until WW I broke out and he enlisted in the Canadian army and served in Europe with the 106 Rifles of Truro until the war ended. Just before going overseas he met and married a nurse, Sarah Renaud of Truro. He was decorated with the Military Medal for bravery in action.

It was after the war when Bob learned to fish and hunt as he worked in the woods lumbering. Wages alone were insufficient to supply the family's food needs and fresh, pickled, smoked and dried fish, deer and moose were always there all four seasons in plentiful amounts.

I don't know when Bob decided to become a St. Mary's river guide but he sure knew a host of very important sports fishermen, especially from the United States: a mayor of New York City, congressmen from Maine, entrepreneurs from Massachusetts, and Ted Williams, the famous Boston Red Sox baseball player.

There are so many treasured experiences I could recount but the one most important of all is the St. Mary's salmon that he caught. No one knows the exact date but it was before I began to fish with him that he hooked, played and landed the record 33 ¼ pound salmon that still stands as the river's record fish taken on a fly rod.

He was most humble about his catch but he zealously watched Dan MacIntosh's attempts to overthrow his record. They were both river guides and antagonists but secretly admired and respected each other.

Bob died in Sherbrooke in 1968 and his children met at his funeral. Russell and I were in uniform and it was with the deepest affection and respect that we saluted him as he was lowered into his beloved Nova Scotia soil.



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Pictured here is Bob Clooney and his big catch

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FIVE YEAR WOOD TURTLE PROJECT WRAPS UP Mark Pulsifer, Project Manager SMR Wood Turtle Project

Over the past five extremely good years, seventeen summer students have traveled thousands of kilometers, counted and marked several hundred wood turtles, spoke to hundreds of residents, led dozens of field trips, and completed nine university research projects. In that time, student researchers and volunteers spread the word about the St. Mary's River Wood Turtle Project, and the uniqueness of this very special place, throughout five countries and three continents. Now, the St. Mary's River Wood Turtle Project has come to a close. As hard as it is to accept, I suppose that it had to come to an end sometime. Now, it is time to move on to other pursuits that will help us to better understand the St. Mary's River and the critical role that it plays in the day to day functioning of the watershed.

On behalf of all of us who worked on the project, I want to say a sincere thank you to all the wonderful people, and organizations who shared part of

themselves through their funding, generosity of spirit, enthusiasm, time, and encouragement.

Stewardship has always been a recurrent and central theme of the wood turtle project and the residents of the St. Mary's community have embraced it and made the wood turtle project their own. I would venture to say that there is scarcely anyone in the watershed who hasn't heard of wood turtles by now, and that is a good thing. The St. Mary's Wood Turtle Project has become a model for others, and its successes are in large part due to your participation and support.

Thank you once again for everything.

Sincerely, Mark, Jody, Lauren, Sarah, Melanie, John, Dianna, Julia, Reid, Marchell, Haley, Stephanie, Kyle, Meghan, Louise, Dean, Megan, Jeff, Kristen and Lake.

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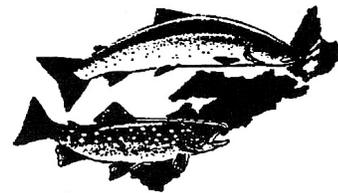
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