

Conservation Update

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority

June 2018

Fish Surveys Underway in the St. Clair River Area of Concern

Fish surveys are underway in the St. Clair River Area of Concern (AOC). This is the third year of a 3-year Grow Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) that supports stewardship, monitoring and outreach in the AOC. The project has been a partnership between the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) and the Friends of the St. Clair River community group. To date in 2018, fish surveys have been completed at 11 sites. SCRCA crews have observed 35 different fish species including three species at risk.

Enbridge and SCRCA Complete Eight Year Naturalization Project

Since 2011, the SCRCA has been working with Enbridge to complete a series of stewardship projects on 34 hectares of their land holdings in St. Clair Township. The partnership has resulted in the creation of 1 hectare of wetland habitat, 2 hectares of tall grass prairie and the planting of 62,000 trees.

Many of the trees planted over the course of the project were grown from local tree seed sourced through the Authority's tree seed collection program. Enbridge has provided financial support to assist the SCRCA with developing a sustainable tree seed collection program in Lambton County.



To mark the completion of the 8-year naturalization project, 17 Enbridge staff joined SCRCA forestry specialists to hand plant 900 tree seedlings on one of their properties near Wilkesport.



A grass pickerel (left) and green sunfish (right) are just two of the species of fish observed by SCRCA biology staff in the St. Clair River AOC this field season.

Camp St. Clair!

Our campgrounds are open and filling up fast! Almost all seasonal campsites have been filled and the Victoria Day weekend helped kick off what promises to be another great camping season.



Pools at all three campgrounds will be open in June.

To make a camping reservation, contact one of our three campgrounds directly:

Warwick - (519) 849-6770
A.W. Campbell - (519) 847-5357
L.C. Henderson - (519) 882-2280



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"working together for a healthy environment"

Thames-Sydenham and Region Release First Annual Progress Report

The Thames-Sydenham and Region Source Protection Region was established as a result of the Walkerton water tragedy of 2000, which claimed the lives of seven people and sickened over 2,000. To protect municipal sources of drinking water, the *Clean Water Act* was passed in 2006 and 19 regional Source Protection Committees were established in Ontario to develop local policies. In its first report to the Government of Ontario, the Thames-Sydenham and Region outlines progress of policy implementation during the first two years of the Source Protection Plan.

Implementation of the Plan in the Thames-Sydenham and Region is progressing well, with 84% of significant drinking water threat policies being implemented or are in progress. Of the 1,054 existing threats identified at the time of the Plan approval, over half have been addressed through policy implementation or have been confirmed to no longer exist. In addition, a total of 41 risk management plans have been established to regulate significant threats in the region.

For the full progress report, visit:
www.sourcewaterprotection.on.ca.

Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race

As a result of the unusually harsh spring storm experienced between April 14 and 16 this year, the annual Sydenham River Canoe and Kayak Race was cancelled. The race scheduled for April 22, 2018 serves as a fundraiser to support conservation education programs offered by the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority.

High water levels and localized flooding resulted in site conditions at both the start and finish lines being unusable in time for the race.



Standing water was still covering the parking lot area at the starting line on Friday, April 20, 2018. Conditions at the finish line located at Shetland Conservation Area were also similar.

Buchanan's Wetland Fish Surveys

SCRCA biology staff visited Buchanan's Wetland in Tilbury, Ontario to conduct a fish survey and identify species present within the wetland. Buchanan's Wetland is located at the junction of the Thames River and Jeanette's Creek. Work was recently completed by Ducks Unlimited Canada to improve habitat within the wetland including channel and pond excavations, upgrades to dikes and the removal of invasive species.

Nine different fish species were identified through both seining and the use of minnow traps. The fish captured included species that prefer both warm and cool waters with some having the potential to become permanent residents of the wetland (e.g., bluegill). Others were likely migratory.



Yellow Perch



Bluegill

Buchanan's Wetland has more than 2.5 hectares of open water habitat suitable for fish. The connection it has to the Great Lakes via the Thames River will provide spawning habitat to many species that use vegetated wetland habitat for reproduction. As the connection has existed for only a short period of time, it is expected that additional species will find and use the habitat in the future.



Buchanan's wetland

Foundation Supports Conservation Authority

The St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation raises funds to support programs and projects for the Conservation Authority. The Foundation held its Annual General Meeting on March 18, 2018 and elected Duncan Skinner as President and Norm Giffen as Vice President.

In its budget, the Foundation committed \$219,250 to support Conservation Authority Programs including:

- Conservation Education – \$60,000
- Scholarships – \$3,000
- Memorial Forest Tree Planting – \$7,000
- A.W. Campbell Recreation – \$8,000
- Watershed Report Cards – \$10,000
- Conservation Intern Position – \$8,000

Tomorrow's Greener Schools Today

For the second year, the SCRCA has partnered with Lambton Public Health to plant trees with students across Lambton County through the initiative "Tomorrow's Greener Schools Today."

More than 130 students from six different schools planted 68 trees around their schools. The program aims to provide much needed shade in local schoolyards, provide sun protection and encourage students to become stewards of the environment.

Funding for this initiative was provided by TD Friends of the Environment Foundation (TD FEF) with support from the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund.



Students and staff from Brigden Public School planted trees in their schoolyard alongside Tim Payne, SCRCA Forest Management Specialist, and Martina Jackson, Health Promoter with Lambton Public Health.

Denning's Memorial Forest Dedication

The annual Strathroy Denning's Memorial Tree Dedication Ceremony took place on Sunday, May 27, 2018. Established by the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation and Denning's Bros Funeral Homes, the program sees donations made on behalf of families served by Denning's which are used to support conservation education and tree planting efforts throughout the region.

The 2018 event was held at the funeral home on Metcalfe Street in Strathroy to commemorate Denning's 93rd year in business and celebrate the grand opening of their new building. Over 300 people attended the service.



A sycamore tree was chosen for the 2018 Denning's Memorial Forest Dedication in Strathroy. Guests adorned the tree with yellow ribbons in memory of their loved ones. The tree was planted at Centennial Park following the service.

Eastern Foxsnake Workshop

Early this spring, SCRCA biology staff hosted an Eastern Foxsnake Research and Monitoring Workshop.

The workshop was geared towards local researchers and experts from southwestern Ontario to discuss issues affecting the species and share current research findings. Topics discussed included snake fungal disease and its impact on Eastern Foxsnake populations and the development of a long-term monitoring protocol. The workshop was a great success! Participants recommended that additional workshops be organized to assist with the protection and conservation of this endangered species.



Next Conservation Authority Board Meeting

Thursday, June 28, 2018 1:00 pm
Mooretown Sports Complex

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