



RIPARIAN READS

Newsletter of the Kennebecasis Watershed Restoration Committee

Spring 2026

*Flower buds of red-berried elder
Photo by Ellen MacGillivray*



Manager's Message

People are often confused when I tell them that I don't work for the government but rather a non-profit. They ask, "So where does the money come from"? I quickly lose them when I try to explain. It can be complicated to understand all the various avenues in which non-profit organizations like the KWRC are supported. When I throw out the term "leverage up", people imagine me jacking up a car but that isn't close. I want to take a minute to explain the funding challenges that the KWRC is currently facing, thanks in part to the current economic landscape.

We have been in operation since 1994 and have been very successful at finding funds to support our work. This past year we had 20 different revenue streams, and had over 20 organizations, governments, businesses, and individuals donate funds to us. This diversity is one reason why the KWRC has been able to survive over the past 30 years, plus our ability to demonstrate strong use of the funds we receive and how they are benefitting not just the ecosystems but the communities we serve.

In 2026 we are facing a challenge as some of the funding sources we have leaned on in the past are changing, being reduced, or cut altogether. Consequently other sources are facing so much pressure that it is unlikely they will be able to fund everything they wish. This means that the capacity we have built in recent years is likely to shift or be lost and this will be detrimental to the local ecosystems and communities. We frequently receive calls about a number of things and have striven to provide consultation or assistance where we can. Now we face the possibility of no longer being able to help landowners stabilize eroding streambanks, or provide schools with in-house presentations and learning opportunities. If you notice a change in water quality, or a fish kill in the watershed, we might not be there to check it out and help you report it to the proper government department.

Don't get me wrong here, I realize everyone is in a similar situation but here at the KWRC we strongly believe that investing in healthy rivers and ecosystems

is a wise and worthwhile investment. We would ask you to consider how much a healthy environment and clean water are worth to you? How much would you be willing to contribute to river restoration if it meant you could continue to fish there for generations to come? A healthy environment is being cast aside for the benefit of more development, mining, and other such ventures. Is this a good trade?

We encourage our readers to investigate how much of their tax dollars go towards a healthy environment versus, say, business development, tourism, or governance.

The KWRC obviously holds a bias regarding this issue and while we are facing challenges, we have faced similar scenarios in the past and persisted through them, and we will continue to work hard to overcome the current challenges. We would love to hear what your thoughts are on this issue—feel free to send us an email!

~ Ben Whalen
Project Manager



What's in Your Garden? Conservation-Minded Spring Cleanup

With warmer weather in sight many of us are itching to break out of hibernation, get those green thumbs moving, and get to work preparing our yards and gardens for a new growing season. While some Spring tidying is never a bad thing, you may want to consider doing things a little differently this year: though you may not see them, your yard is home to dozens of insect species bunkered down for the winter months—and they're still snoozing away, just waiting for the right moment to come out of hibernation and get down to business pollinating our crops and gardens.

adults until summer. Unfortunately, there is no perfect time when traditional garden cleanup can be done with zero harm to pollinators, but don't let this discourage you—there are many ways you can reduce your impact while still having a beautiful outdoor space. Here are just some of the ways you can make your yard more welcoming to pollinators this spring:

1. Delay raking, mowing, and mulching for as long as possible

Delaying these activities will give as many pollinators as possible the chance to emerge from hibernation or pupation. Whether this means waiting until after that 10°C mark or holding off until later, the longer you delay, the more pollinators will benefit.

2. Do less

When you do begin your spring cleanup, consider adopting a balanced approach to gardening. Focus less on intensive jobs like raking, mulching, and edging—which negatively impact soil-bound critters—and focus more on lower impact activities like selectively pruning branches and removing leaves only where they may smother young plants.

3. Leave some litter

Pollinating insects overwinter in leaf litter, hollow stems, dead wood, and soil. Rather than disposing of yard litter, consider leaving some leaf piles and hollow stems in inconspicuous areas to protect a portion of dormant pollinators. Even after insects become active, debris piles continue to provide shelter and habitat for many insects and larvae, helping to protect them from cold temperatures, harsh weather, and predators.

The Goldenrod Soldier Beetle—a beneficial garden insect that acts as an important pollinator and valuable predator of aphids and other pests.



Photo: Jeff C. Clements

Now here's the big question: to help pollinators, how long should one wait before starting yard work? You may have heard the common adage that gardeners are good to go after temperatures are consistently above 10°C, however, the reality is a bit more nuanced. Just like plants, different species of pollinators emerge at different times through the season. For example, many species of mining bees first become active from late March to May, while soldier beetle larvae don't pupate into

4. Embrace native plants

Early native blooms are crucial food sources for newly emerged pollinators that need to fuel up. Flowers and shrubs like native violets, serviceberry, pussy willows bloom in early spring. Some pollinating insects even depend entirely on certain species. For example, the caterpillars of fritillary butterflies feed exclusively on violets.

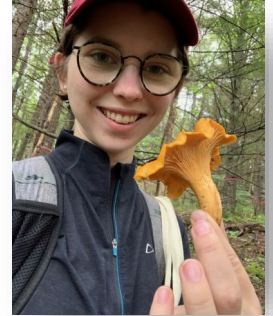
The Great Spangled Fritillary—a native butterfly that feeds exclusively on violets as a caterpillar



Photo: Jimmy Dee

When done properly, conservation-centered spring cleanup can be a mutually beneficial practice, protecting crucial pollinators and biodiversity while reducing a homeowner's time and monetary investment in their yard. This spring, consider extending a helping hand to the pollinators using your yard as habitat, and be creative with it—choosing native species that bloom at different points throughout the year can be highly rewarding for you as a gardener and homeowner, too! You never know the impact you could be making on your local ecosystem.

~ Rebecca Mader
Biodiversity Coordinator



Supporting Native Biodiversity with Habitat Boxes

Have you ever kayaked, fished, or hiked along the Kennebecasis River and noticed one of these boxes? These are duck or bird boxes installed by the KWRC!



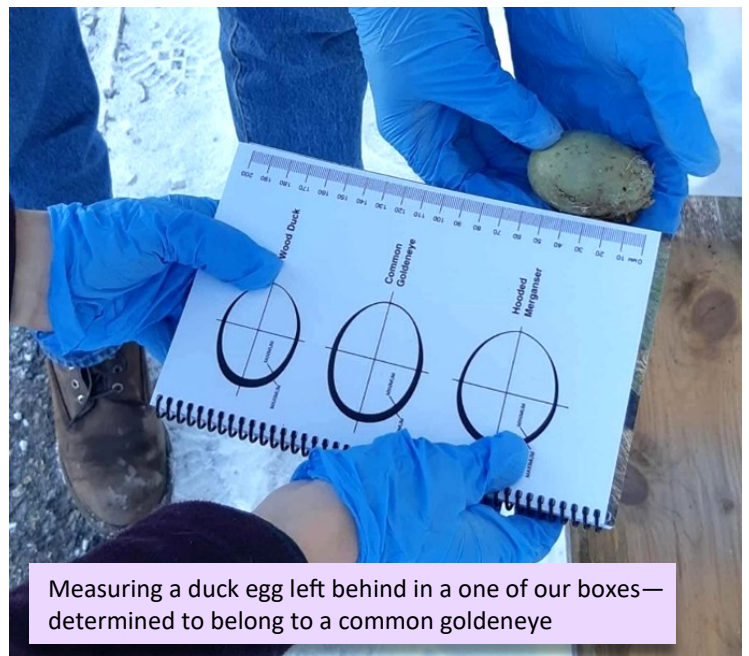
Bird box habitat

Duck boxes are important structures for cavity nesting ducks like wood ducks, common goldeneyes, common and hooded mergansers, and buffleheads. Naturally, these ducks would nest in cavities of rotten trees and logs (oftentimes excavated by woodpeckers!) along shorelines. Due to modern practices

of shoreline 'cleaning' and the removal of dead trees, these nesting habitats have become harder to come by. Duck boxes can also provide nesting habitat for other wildlife like songbirds, and mammals like red and gray squirrels, which may use them as shelter in the winter. Our bird boxes are smaller, providing nesting habitat for smaller birds while keeping larger predators out.

Duck and bird boxes are a great tool in our restoration toolbox, as waterfowl and songbirds play an important role in the health of river ecosystems. Ducks are excellent nutrient cyclers, they help maintain genetic diversity through moving seeds and small aquatic life across

wetlands, and they help keep the ecosystem in balance, acting as both predator and prey. Change in bird diversity can act as a bioindicator of shifts in habitat quality and ecosystem health along the river, which can provide insight into the success of our river conservation work. These nesting boxes are a great way to get communities involved in river conservation work as well. We have partnered with local schools and hosted workshops showing how to build and maintain duck and bird boxes, with the goal of bringing awareness and knowledge to the roles waterfowl and songbirds play in river health.



Measuring a duck egg left behind in one of our boxes—determined to belong to a common goldeneye

This winter at the KWRC, we have been replacing old duck and bird boxes with sturdy new boxes and checking the old ones for signs of use. The signs we look for, and have found, are down feathers, eggshell fragments, and even whole non-viable eggs. So far, we have found evidence of wood duck and common goldeneye eggs in our duck bodes, and even found remnants of gray squirrel nests. We have also found evidence of use in many of our bird boxes and have even seen some iNaturalist

posts of tree swallows using them. As the winter comes to an end, we will ensure that our resident and migrant birds have safe and warm nesting options along the Kennebecasis River.

~ Nolan Boyd
Restoration Coordinator



The Value of Summer Students

Our 2025 summer students—Julia, Ben, and Reese



Spring is officially here, and it is one of my favourite seasons to use iNaturalist! I look forward to discovering all the spring ephemerals, insects, amphibians, and birds. But most of all I am hoping that this spring will bring lots of April showers and much more rain throughout the summer months. The drought last summer had a significant impact on our watershed. Droughts can lead to loss of habitat and impact water quantity and quality. Water levels were very low last summer, making it difficult to carry out some of our monitoring activities.

Throughout the summer months our monitoring activities include the deployment and retrieval of temperature loggers in our lakes and rivers, lake and stream assess-

ments, monthly collection of water samples at several sites, measuring water parameters, and monitoring for cyanobacteria throughout the watershed.

It would be quite difficult to do all this work without the help of our summer students. Thankfully, every year we are able to secure funding to hire summer students to help us carry the workload through the busy field season. Though the benefits for us are huge, the opportunity also provides meaningful summer employment to students and allows them to make a positive impact in our community and for our ecosystems.

Our summer staff help monitor the Kennebecasis watershed in all the ways I mentioned above, as well as restore ecosystems, and educate the public through activities and events. Our summer students learn many valuable monitoring skills such as proper water sampling techniques, habitat assessments, identification of different plants, fungi, and animals using the iNaturalist app, how to properly deploy temperature loggers, the visual characteristics of cyanobacteria, and how to measure pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature, conductivity, and total dissolved solids.

Thank you to all our students who have helped us with our goal of restoring the Kennebecasis river watershed back to a sustainable ecosystems, and for your assistance in monitoring the impacts of those efforts. We are currently seeking applicants to fill our summer positions, so if you would like to be a part of our team this season, head over to our [website](#) for details!

~ Kate Vey
Monitoring Coordinator





As the weather warms, keep an eye out for New Brunswick amphibians emerging from hibernation. Frogs, turtles, and salamanders will soon be on the move toward their breeding habitats, which means they may be found in large numbers crossing roads on the first couple of warm, wet nights this spring. Keep this in mind while driving down wooded roads or when traveling near water sources. Take your time to avoid fatalities. Although it may be tempting to help them across, it is best to avoid handling them due to their sensitive skin, and it's important to keep yourself safe on the road as well!

My Co-Op Experience at the KWRC

I am so far very pleased with my experience at the Kennebecasis Watershed Restoration Committee. As a high school senior, I am always looking for ways I can expand my knowledge of possible career choices. I chose this organizations for my co-op program hoping to gain a better understanding of our environment and how I can contribute to improving it.

During my first three weeks with the team, I've been highly involved in countless tasks in the office and around the watershed. My favourite days are when I get to explore work in the field. All the hands-on learning has been especially valuable and very informative. I've discovered plenty of new information regarding river restoration and habitat monitoring.

With the KWRC, I have many opportunities to perform wildlife restoration tasks. One of my first projects was taking down old bird and duck boxes and putting up new ones. I've also opened and evaluated the inside of used



Jennie and Nolan showing off a brand new duck box!

boxes, finding duck eggs and bird nests. The team has taught me how to cut willow, monitor snowpack, and collect water samples as well. These tasks have helped me understand how much effort and consistency is required to properly care for and restore natural habitats.

In the winter we collect pieces of green willow branches to be stored until spring. I'm expecting to lead a willow staking event in the warmer months to demonstrate the power of the plants' regenerating roots. I'm fascinated by the utilization of willow to stabilize eroding riverbanks. This has shown me how simple, natural solutions can have a major

impact on protecting ecosystems and preventing further environmental damage.

I'm given the chance to view non-profit, environmental work from every angle. Beyond fieldwork, I've been able to contribute to the KWRC's communications by helping create social media content and designing posters for community programs. Reading on river restoration and talking to the team has helped

guide me through the unfamiliar territory.

This experience has been wonderful as someone who thrives outside and has a passion for bettering our waterways. I have learned that every part of an ecosystem plays an important role, and it is essential that we pay attention to changes in order to protect our natural environments. This experience has reinforced my love for being outdoors and shown me how I can turn that passion into something purposeful and impactful.

I've been introduced to a couple of species identification

apps. Using them opened my eyes to the number of amazing creatures that are constantly around us. It has made me more aware of biodiversity and how even small organisms contribute to a larger ecosystem. I love that there is no limit to the expansion of our knowledge about the environ-

~ Jennie Dougan
Co-Op Student



From Fields to Streams: Strengthening Our Ties with the Farming Community



A fenced riparian setback to allow for a healthy river and ecosystem growth

For years, the KWRC has worked side-by-side with agricultural producers to protect and enhance the environment. By partnering with local farmers, we have successfully implemented the following on agricultural lands:

- Streambank stabilization
- Stabilized fording sites
- Alternative watering systems
- Culvert and bridge installations
- Riparian livestock fencing
- Riparian tree planting
- Riparian buffers
- Habitat enhancement

In the fall of 2024, the KWRC added an Agricultural Stewardship Coordinator to our team. This role has greatly increased our ability to help farmers adopt Best Management Practices (BMPs) and navi-

gate funding opportunities, such as the Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program through the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture, and Fisheries.

In 2025 alone, the KWRC was able to partner with five farms for restoration projects: Brownsville Farm, the Dunn family, Pascobac Farm, Shipley Farm, and Walkerville Farm. Restoration work included riparian tree planting, establishing riparian setbacks, installing livestock fencing, removal of woody debris, rotational grazing, and alternative watering.

Over the past year, the KWRC has enjoyed connecting with the community at events like the Kings County Agricultural Fair, where we gave a presentation about “Farmers Fighting Climate Change” and hosted a hands-on benthic macroinvertebrate demonstration. The KWRC also participated in Nature NB’s “Cultivating Connections: Stories of Farmers Protecting Nature” movie screening event, where we had an info booth showcasing the environmental work completed in cooperation with our 2025 farm partners.



Our 2025 Mycoblitz event at Passekeag Holdings along the Kennebecasis River

The KWRC has hosted events, including a volunteer tree planting event at Brownsville Farm, a mycoblitz at Passekeag Holdings, and a “Farmers Helping Fish & More” tour where we showed interested parties the environmental work done at three partnering farms (Lonsview, Shipley, and Walkerville Farms).

The KWRC has also been busy networking with industry through working groups such as Maritime Bobolink and the Wolastoq/Saint John Agroecosystem, and recently attended the New Brunswick Soil and Crop Improvement Association’s “47th General Meeting and Technical Workshop”.

The KWRC was contracted by Living Lab NB to conduct pollinator and soil health monitoring at Passekeag Holdings, and we have been active in

sharing agricultural educational material (e.g., BMPs, project work, webinars, etc.) via social media and presentations, including a “Curbing Plastic Pollution in the Kennebecasis Watershed” presentation on agricultural plastic waste at Belleisle High School.

While we are proud of what we have accomplished so far, we are always looking for more ways to support our farmers. If you have ideas on how the KWRC can better serve the agricultural community, don’t hesitate to reach out!

~ Megan Thorpe
Agricultural Stewardship Coordinator



Be the Change in Your Community—We Can Help!

The hints of warm weather that come with early spring naturally make me want to spend more time outside, and I know this is true for most people. But spring also has a renewing energy that boosts feelings of creativity and motivation, which run a little deeper than just a desire to get out more. For me, there is a fresh desire to connect with my community, including my local ecosystems. The latter can be done in my own yard; as I contemplate my garden plans, I think about how I can simultaneously support local biodiversity, like songbirds and pollinators. Luckily, it doesn’t have to require more than simply leaving things be (see “What’s In Your Garden?” above). But getting involved on a larger scale can seem daunting. How would one even start? The KWRC can help with that, as we have many upcoming opportunities for you to get involved and make an impact on the environment and in the community. Plus, volunteer contributions help us leverage funding, so you would also be supporting your local non-profit!

Earth Day Events: Online or Clean Up in Hampton

Earth Day is coming up, and the KWRC will be hosting our 3rd annual Earth Day Bioblitz online! To participate, download the iNaturalist app and join the project “Kennebecasis River Watershed”. Any observation you upload that’s within the watershed boundaries will be automatically uploaded to the project. Get out exploring and see what you find! Additionally, if you’re feeling a little more social, we are collaborating with the Town of Hampton to host a Clean Up for Earth Day event on

April 25th from 2 till 4pm in the Town Square, where the KWRC will be present to guide participants through the iNaturalist app, for a two-in-one afternoon of bettering the community and contributing to wildlife conservation through uploading observations.

Anglers’ Social

If you’re an angler, the KWRC is planning an Anglers’ Social for May 1st, where we’ll be present somewhere along the Kennebecasis to discuss all things river & fish related! Keep your eyes on our socials for more details.

Volunteer Garden Planting

Here’s an opportunity to get your hands dirty, beautify greenspaces in the watershed, and support pollinators! We will soon be shaping up our gardens and planting native species. Keep an eye out for details—it’s looking like late May and early June. Whether you’re an experienced greenthumb or an absolute amateur, we are always happy to have the help of volunteers of all ages!

Bioblitz Series: Birds, Bugs, Plants & Fungi!

We are planning a series of bioblitz events, which are a fun, simple way to connect with community members and learn from local experts. Participants will join us at one of our restoration sites to help document the species there. This is a series of four separate events, starting on June 8th with birds, as springtime songbirds are sure to be active. All are welcome to attend for an evening of bird watching! Bring your phone, and a pair of binocs.

Other Events

We are also planning to host our annual Beginner's Fly Fishing Workshop sometime in June, as well as a Youth Angling Day Camp this summer, though we also offer that as a free course online. It is our hope to also offer the Ripples & Roots Nature Camp for high schools students again this year, where campers will have the opportunity to learn all kinds of hands-on field skills!

All the events I've mentioned and more can be found on the [events calendar](#) on our website. We have decided to pre-populate it with everything we have planned, so that you can mark down the dates you're interested in, and also to help people understand the breadth of what we offer. So don't be discouraged if the events shown don't have a lot of details attached to them just yet—following us on social media will be your best bet for staying informed, or you can subscribe to our [volunteer form](#) to receive direct emails about upcoming opportunities.

It should be mentioned that many of the events are dependent on funds



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as well; they are aspects of projects that we have proposed to our funding partners, and we currently await approval of these projects to bring the events to fruition.

This is all to say that if you're feeling motivated this spring to get out, get involved, and make an impact, we can be that stepping stone. Some of our events allow you to make a direct contribution to our work, while others simply offer a chance to enjoy scenic private property or learn something new. Either way, your participation matters—it demonstrates your support of our non-profit, it demonstrates your support of the environment, and it demonstrates to other community members that it's okay to get involved! Whether you want to make new community connections or spend more time outdoors, I encourage you to follow us on social media and join us for our next event!

~ Ellen MacGillivray
Education Outreach
Coordinator

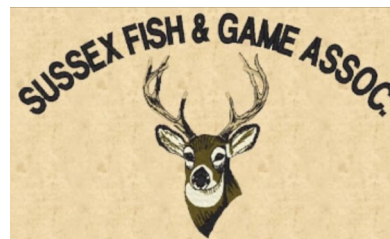


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