



A NEWSLETTER FOR MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS
June 2010

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Healthy Rivers, Healthy Ecosystems

RVCA is proud of the work, effort and time we invest in the health of our local rivers, lakes and streams. These local waterbodies provide a huge benefit to the municipalities in terms of recreation, drinking water, increased tax revenue on shoreline property, employment opportunities, natural beauty and heritage value.

And one of the key elements of a healthy aquatic ecosystem is the number and kinds of plants and animals that live there. Biodiversity is a strong indicator of the health of any aquatic system. A healthy underwater world is a web of predators, prey, herbivores, algae, insects and bacteria in an intricate and complicated series of checks and balances. If we start losing species or if it becomes dominated by one type of plant or animal, the entire system becomes less resilient and less healthy.

RVCA keeps an eye on the residents of the local rivers with the goal of maintaining the numbers and diversity of plants and animals found there. Biodiversity is the name of this game. Here are a few recent examples. . .

Fish Habitat Compensation

Sometimes, loss of fish habitat during land development is unavoidable. If harmful alteration, disruption or destruction (HADD) of fish habitat cannot be avoided through mitigation or relocation of the work and the HADD is acceptable to Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC), the proponent and FOC may come to a compensation agreement whereby new fish habitat is authorized and created. Recently, the RVCA agreed to the creation of two FOC-approved compensation projects on the Chapman Mills Conservation Area on the Rideau River (Prince of Wales Drive) in Ottawa. Two new embayments of marsh vegetation will be created as spawning and nursery areas for fish although all kinds of aquatic species including insects, frogs, turtles, shoreline birds, mammals and many others will benefit. The cost of this work is entirely borne by the proponent not by the RVCA or the member municipalities. The benefits include new interesting viewing opportunities from the Chapman Mills boardwalk, no net loss of aquatic habitat in the watershed (often a net gain is agreed upon) and assistance to the development community and the economic sector in the valley.

Beaver Management In Perth

First started in 2003 on Kemptville Creek as a pilot project, the RVCA Beaver Management Program includes surveys each year at the request of member municipalities. To date, these include Kemptville Creek, Jock River, Otter Creek, Little Silver Creek, Jebbs Creek, Tay River, Scots Snye and Rudsdale Creek.

The program includes a beaver dam survey to record the locations and general dam characteristics on the watercourse. A database of landowner concerns about flooding as a result of beaver activity is kept. Actions to relieve the problem could include a trapping program to remove nuisance beaver and a dam removal program to return the normal flow of the river. The goal is a reasonable balance between flooding caused by beaver and the needs of people and the natural aquatic ecosystem.

The Town of Perth contacted RVCA with concerns over the quality and quantity of Tay River water in the area of the town's drinking water intake in early June. Below normal spring rains were exacerbated by the presence of several upstream beaver dams.

RVCA sent two crews for two days to complete the survey work. GIS staff prepared the maps with 14 dam locations for the trapper. Stewardship services and biology staff worked with the trapper to determine which dams needed trapping and/or removal. Five beaver were removed and four dams holding back large volumes of water were breached. By June 22, in combination with some welcome rain, the Town of Perth reported intake water quality and quantity was back to normal.

The cost to provide this balanced but direct action on the Tay was about \$2,500. That's a long way from some of the expensive engineering solutions proposed on other waterways in the valley. (jennifer.lamoureux@rvca.ca)

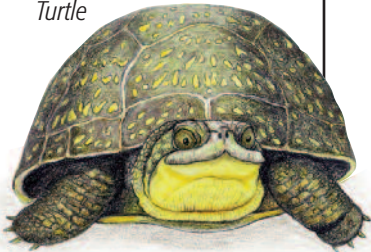
Species at Risk Projects Recently Funded

We have habitat information about several tributaries to the Rideau River from various shoreline and fish habitat surveys over the years. We are now classifying existing aquatic habitat information to identify potential habitat for fish species at risk. Once we have narrowed down the search and have verified the habitat in the field, biology staff will identify restoration opportunities to maintain and increase the preferred habitat for fish species at risk. Two key elements in the aquatic food chain, the Pugnosed Shiner and the Bridle Shiner, are the stars of this show although many other species occupying similar habitat will benefit. (jennifer.lamoureux@rvca.ca)

The Chimney Swift Monitoring project, lead by our colleagues at the Ottawa Stewardship Council, looks for local nesting and roosting sites of this urban-dwelling insect-eating bird. The Chimney Swift is a cigar-shaped aerial acrobat which is seen and heard flying overhead in urban centres in the evening hours. The Canadian swifts have declined by 95% since 1968 and are now on the Threatened Species list. Their annual fall migration takes them back to the upper Amazon basin in South America. (chelsey.ellis@rvca.ca)

Seven of our eight turtle species in Ontario are at risk! Road mortality and loss of suitable habitat are prime concerns. The Turtle Habitat project will identify current and potential turtle habitat within existing public Conservation Areas and lands and then provide improvements such as suitable nesting sites and loafing logs. (kristy.giles@rvca.ca)

*Blanding
Turtle*



Another species in drastic decline in Eastern North America is the American eel. This interesting fish comes in from its "birth" in the Sargasso



American Eel

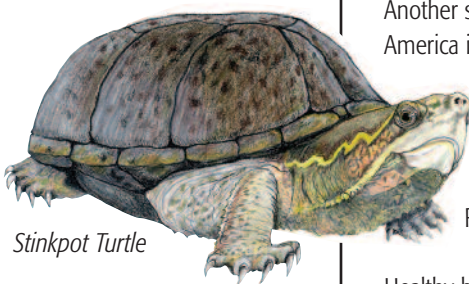
Sea (a region in the north Atlantic Ocean surrounded by ocean currents) and spends most of its adult life in fresh water tributaries like the St Lawrence, the Ottawa and possibly the Rideau River. This project will locate American eels (not to be confused with the parasitic Lamprey) in the Rideau watershed and provide outreach and education for shoreline residents. (michael.yee@rvca.ca)

Healthy biodiversity tends to mean healthy lakes and rivers.

Please give RVCA staff or your appointed member a call if you think we might be able to assist with information or service to your municipality. . . (Dell Hallett, General Manager at 613-692-3571 or 1-800-267-3504 ext 1114).

And as for the heatwave. . .

An average of 147% of the normal rainfall amounts was recorded through June at the five weather stations we use in and around the Rideau watershed. The runoff from this rain caused watershed streams to rebound from unusually low May flows to above average flows for June. No rain to date in July has caused water levels to start to decline again. RVCA will continue to monitor conditions and issue messages as warranted or visit www.rvca.ca/low_water for more details.



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