



On the Right

Path

Issue #1, July 15, '08

Welcome...

Message from Our President...

Message from our Vice-President...

Message Board...

Sackville Rivers Association Active Programs...

Monthly Calendar...

Articles...

Green Tips...

Environmental Conservation...

Plant of this issue...

Tree of this issue...

Animal of this issue...

Photo Gallery...

Artist's Corner...

Kid's Corner...

Welcome!

Welcome to our community!

As the Sackville Rivers Association celebrates its 20th anniversary, we also celebrate the ability to expand to new levels. As we expand, we grow. As we grow, new members, young and experienced alike, bring new waves of inspiration, wisdom, and fresh perspectives as to how we can improve.

We hope that you enjoy this newsletter. Every issue will include a word from Our President, messages from our Board of Directors, a Message Board so that YOU have a place to communicate with Our Community.

Each issue will also feature an article, or segment, on residential sustainability, or Green Tips, and another on Environmental Conservation.

We have also included animal pictures, drawing sheets and other fun activities for Our Children!

You can always contribute to Our newsletter by sending me your nature pictures, poems, short stories, and any other ideas to improve this newsletter, and Our Community!

Please send your contributions at

mrisebastien@hotmail.com

Please understand that we cannot display all contributions in one issue.
Stock contributions will be archived and possibly used in a later issue.

*Enjoy, and join us **on the right path!***

Sébastien Marquis,

Editor

Message from Our President...

July 2008

It is with extreme pleasure that I'm writing this today as we are getting set to print our first newsletter in years.

As President of the Sackville Rivers Association (SRA), I look forward to the monthly newsletter as means to let you, our members and friends know of the great work and events that the SRA is involved in.

With special thanks to Sébastien who as Editor has the great unlucky job of getting me to write up articles as well as others to keep you informed and amused about the happening on the Watershed. He's looking for those articles—now get your thinking cap on, he will be calling.

In the coming months, many topics of interest will be discussed and talked about, from the Coordinators Corner; our new Coordinators will be letting you know about the Sackville River and events planned for it.

There will be a Bank Full article every month on methods on restoring fish habitat.

There will be an Events Calendar for upcoming events, meetings and general thinks of interest to you our reader.

So as the newsletters roll out I will be looking forward to the many articles and pictures of the SRA Watershed.

As many of you know the SRA has just celebrated our 20 years of restoring the Sackville River on Jun 05 with at least 80 people in attendance. See the great picture of the Past Presidents of the SRA —those are big waders to fill and I can only hope I can succeed half as well as they have in keeping the SRA moving forward.

Welcome aboard.

Walter N. Regan

President SRA

Message from our Vice-President:

Message from our Vice-President, Larry Bell

At our AGM in May, Sébastien Marquis offered to serve on our B.O.D. The Board is very pleased to welcome Sébastien as his broad knowledge in botany and mycology will be a welcome add-on to the knowledge base of the other Board members. Sébastien is also the father of our youngest most active member Owen, who was honored at the AGM with an SRA Hero Award for the most active young member. A definite potential to pass on the “baton” to the next generation of “protector” of the watershed. Sébastien has also taken the responsibility of producing this newsletter, which as chair of the Communication Committee I hope will be an ongoing success. I have felt for some time that the membership would be very interested in continuing to support and actively participate in the activities of the Association if they knew more about the exciting projects in which we were involved.

Please feel free to communicate your ideas, interests, or suggestions for projects to be included in future newsletters. This newsletter is for both your benefit and input on our activities and future projects. We welcome your input.

We now have 6 students carrying out our important summer program of remediation and re-construction throughout the watershed. DFO provided financial support for 2 summer interns, Jeff Bellefontaine and Christena Mac Donald. Both students have worked for SRA in previous summers and we welcome their experience and enthusiasm. The Youth Conservation Corps, through the Adopt-A-Stream Program, has continued their support to SRA by providing 75% funding for 4 new students: Nicole, Rachel, Ryan and Shauna. Above the support to SRA’s remediation efforts and monitoring the Fish Trap, this is an excellent opportunity to participate in the conservation activities on our urban watershed as well as having a meaningful summer job.

We welcome you all and hope you don’t suffer too many bug bites and dunks in the river. Colin O’Neil has also returned to continue his international collaborative research program on the American Eel that has returned to our watershed. His salary is supported by the Halifax Port Authority.

At our AGM we honoured Ernie Hill, known to our Fish Friends and River Rangers students of our grade 4 – 6 school program as “Mr. Ernie”. Ernie has selflessly operated this program on behalf of SRA for many years. His enthusiasm and energetic classroom demeanor has touched over 1600 students during his tenure, and we wish him the best in his retirement to both improve his golf score and have more time to fish on his favorite watershed. We will miss you Ernie. Walter Scott is now taking over the reins of the program.

Walter taught both programs at Millwood Elementary for many years before his retirement and has been volunteering with Ernie for the last 2 years. As the Director responsible for the program, I look forward to working with Walter. The program has suffered from underfunding for several years despite the enthusiasm of students and teachers. We have initiated an ambitious pursuit for expanded funding as a high percentage of equipment is worn out after 14 years of the program. We have been fairly successful so far and will be increasing our school classroom coverage back up to the original level of 12 schools by the Fall with an ultimate objective of 20 schools within the watershed and surrounding areas.

In the Atlantic Salmon Federation, Fish Friends portion of the program, the SRA operates the highest # of classrooms in all of Atlantic Canada. If you would like to donate to this program or know a company that might consider donating a \$500 contribution to our classroom systems, please contact me. In exchange for a \$500 contribution the company logo or appropriate recognition will be attached to the classroom aquarium.

We are initiating a very exciting at our Fish Ladder on the side of the river at Hefler’s Mill. Through the collaboration and contributions of Heflers, NSPC and the Halifax Port Authority we will be installing an underwater camera to observe and monitor the fish accessing the fishway on a 24/7, 365 days a year basis. This “feed” will be available through our website by early Fall. This will not only be of considerable advantage to the research efforts of SRA, but many researchers from N-S universities have expressed an interest in collaborative access to the video feed. It will also be available via password to our membership and the general public. Our FF/RR students and teachers are specially looking forward to being able to watch “their” fish in their natural habitat.

With support and collaboration from Cathy Conrad (Chair of Geography at SMU and SRA Director) we are initiating a “Commons” Ground Green Community Mapping Project. The intent is to bring together the various stakeholder interest groups within the community to develop a map of the public interest highlights of the green, historical, cultural and “commons” ground resources available within the community. This will be accomplished through 1, maximum 2, 2-hour evening roundtable workshops.

Input from all interested parties will then be developed into a digital map with attending background information. Cathy’s cartographic group will then produce the document. This document can then be used to produce tourist brochures, interpretative brochures and panels for use along the trails, specific information packages for the likes of SRA and other community groups. The bigger picture is this was an initiative started by a non-profit foundation in the U.S. Upon the completion of our project, we can file our map with the Foundation and it will be added to the website server along with over 300 communities from around the world. What an opportunity to put Sackville in front of the world.

If you or a group you know would like to participate, please contact me so you can be on the invitation list for the workshop, which will take place sometime in early August.

In our next issue watch for the news on the following exciting developments and projects:

- 1. Stabilization of Walker’s Pit**
- 2. Intensive lidar data mapping of the watershed**
- 3. New financing developments**
- 4. Marine Community Monitoring Project**
- 5. Website update**

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Message Board...

*To contribute to our Message Board, simply send me the message to be posted at **mrisebastien@hotmail.com***

SRA monthly calendar...

There was a rock-throwing party on July 12nd, with others to come, including on July 26th. Please contact the office for details.

SRA office: 865-9238

sackvillerivers@ns.sympatico.ca

The first of many expeditions in 2008 for the botanical survey of our watershed will be held on July 19th (next Saturday). See article 2 pages down for details.

Our Board of Directors monthly meeting will be held on July 21st, at seven o'clock, at the SRA office.

Sackville Rivers Association Active Programs:

River Rangers

Last year, eight teachers in six schools provided their students with an enriched sense of environmental experience and wonder through their involvement with the River Rangers Program of the Sackville Rivers Association.

A field trip to the Little Sackville River gave students an opportunity to observe how fish samples are collected from the river. Students collected and identified aquatic insects, and participated in water quality assessment through silt, temperature, and pH testing.

Back in the classroom, students designed an aquarium habitat that was then used to house many species of river fish for the next six weeks.

Student artwork was featured in displays along the Sackville Trail System, and one school presented student research on local fish species to their peers in a "Fish Fair".

September 2008 will see the program expanded to 11 schools and 13-15 classrooms.

If you have questions, or are interested in finding out more about River Rangers, contact Walter Scott (kwscott@hfx.eastlink.ca) or the Sackville Rivers Association - <http://www.sackvillerivers.ns.ca/> - (sackvillerivers@ns.sympatico.ca, 865-9238)

Botanical survey of our watershed

Starting Saturday, July 19, 2008, we will be conducting a methodical botanical survey of the watershed, starting by the Sackville River Trail, at 9 o'clock AM. We will be starting this survey at the Bedford Mall, near the old Ponderosa.

Come and join us! If you feel like participating in this first of many exercises, bring your lunch, plant books, camera, notebook and pencil, and come explore the marvelous cornucopia of plants, ferns, trees and mushrooms that grow and thrive in our watershed!

***Previous botanical or mycological surveying experience
are not required for this exercise!!!***

We will have maps of the trail at hand to chart the location of the components surveyed, will take pictures of the components found, a rough count of the component population sizes, infestations or parasitic manifestations, and locations that may require botanical remediation.

This will be a summer long project, and hopefully we can cover the entire watershed this summer, so that we may create a databank available on our website for all to enjoy!

Articles...

A Child and Youth Program

As our community expands, more and more families join our association. Unfortunately, as I am made aware of at every event, if our children do not feel entertained, they want to go home... *now!* The downside is that often we would like to participate more or more often, but after all our children come first!

Another consideration is safety; often enough we just don't want them wandering around!

Some members of the Sackville Rivers Association have decided to band together, and offer a safe environment for children 6 to 14.

This group program is called *Green Generation*, and is focused on safety, environmental education, stewardship, and a sense of community. We will even offer SRA Diplomas to those who show interest and exceed!

The *Green Generation* will be separated into 3 groups:

Ages 6 – 9: ***The Sackville Rivers Green Elf's Association***: Learn about safety, how nature is beautiful and why it's important, make new friends, create a sense of group unity.

Ages 10 – 14: ***The Naturalist Apprentices***: Learn about safety, First aid, group responsibility, Open dialogues about nature, learn how you can help your river / community.

Another program that will be launched shortly in our Community will be ***THE S.R.A. JUNIOR LEADERS***, for Our youth, aged 14 to 17 that feel the need to learn how to care for children, learn more about first aid, botany, animals, the watershed, the environment in general, how to help Our environment, discipline, and leadership.

For more information about these programs, or how to contribute, Please contact the S.R.A. Office at sackvillerivers@ns.sympatico.ca .

Green Tips...

Use rainwater to maintain your garden!

Simply place a barrel or other big container under your gutters to collect rainwater. To create a potent fertilizing tea, add a shovelful of your compost turned to topsoil; the most degraded stuff.

To avoid bacterial, mycological or algae growth, simply add the equivalent of a dozen eggshells to the mix.

Mosquito inhibitor:

To avoid mosquitoes from using your water collector as a breeding ground, simply use a screen stapled to the top of the container. Do not let the container fill to the level of the screen.

This will keep the mosquitoes away from the surface of the water, where they deposit their eggs.

Another important tip is to empty your water collector at least once a week, to avoid water staleness or algae formation.

Environmental Conservation...

We all want a picture-perfect property; unfortunately, our plans sometimes contradict those of mother nature!

We do have to take into consideration the changes and maintenance practices that we undertake on our property, as they directly affect our environment. Properties bordering rivers and lakes need special attention.

The plants, trees and fertilizers that we add or remove all bear consequences.

Man-made fertilizers should be avoided; this being said, an environmentally-friendly way of fertilizing your plants and lawn is to take some water from the water body downhill from your property and using that as fertilizer. It contains all the naturally occurring fertilizing elements needed, such as tannin, nitrogen, and other fertilizing elements created by botanical and animal decay. These naturally occurring, LOCAL elements cause LESS disruption in the fragile chemical balance of the water body. Another method is to collect rainwater.

Fertilizer leaching minimization: Do not cut the grass on a green strip of at least 10 feet along the water body. Plant deep-rooted plants and shrubs.

Ducks and other fowl on your lawn: Natural hedging by means of shrubs, such as blueberries, huckleberries, roses, will deter birds as they do not like crossing them and will find another resting/nesting spot.

Green stripping, coupled with natural hedging, not only reduces fowl droppings on your lawn and fertilizer leaching, but also offers **embankment stabilization**, and **reduces the overall maintenance!**

Some of the botanical elements found near your property:

embankment stabilization:

Bindweed, ferns, mint, cinquefoil, cedar, elm

Natural hedging:

blueberry, huckleberry, roses, dogwood, lilac, rhodendron

Aquatic or waterborne remediative plants:

aquatic water-plantain, hyssop, willows, pond lilies, arrowheads

**It is important to remember that
although Bulrush, Scirpus and other reeds are remediative,
they also create fowl habitat.**

Keep to local, indigenous (from the same ecosystem) plants and trees.

Thank you for your attention,

Sébastien Marquis, seb@water-associates.com

Botanist &

Field Personnel,

Water Research Associates

Plant of this issue...

Wild mint:

Botanical name: Mentha canadensis

Common name: American mint.

French name: Menthe des Champs.



Found near lakes, rivers and wetlands, American mint is easier to find by smell, rather than sight, as it usually grows interspersed within water-horehound, that resembles it greatly. One brush of the leg, however, and you know you've passed it!

American mint is a great addition to iced tea, and aids to digestion and reduces flatulence, especially after a fulfilling barbeque!

Therapeutically, mint can be used to reduce skin irritation, rheumatism and aids to heal sunburns.

Mint is not recommended, however, for persons affected by high blood pressure or cardiac problems. Menthol lowers your blood pressure very rapidly, which may cause fainting for those affected with high blood pressure and infants. We do not recommend mint to pregnant women.

Please harvest mint conservatively!

Mint bath

*Add one handful of mint to warm bathwater,
soak for at least 20 minutes, no more than 40 minutes.*

If you don't like sticky leaves:

Boil 4 cups of water,
remove hot water from heat,
add 1 handful of mint and let sit for 20 minutes
before adding this tea to your bathwater.

Mint burgers

1 onion
1 lbs. ground beef
1 slice dried bread, or ½ cup of dry oatmeal
1 cup chopped mint
Salt, to taste,
Pepper, to taste.

Dice and partially cook onions,
separate ground beef, add salt, pepper, mix,
add dry oatmeal or crushed dried bread,
add mint, mix,
cook as desired.

Bon appétit!

Tree of this issue...

The Serviceberry tree:

Botanical name: Amelanchier Medicus.

Common names: Saskatoon, June berry, Shadbush, sugar-plum, Amelanchier.

French name: Amelanchier



Shrub (2-3 meters) or tree (European variety, A. ovalis, up to 10 meters), with thin alternate leaves, with very fine teeth, of a tender bluish/green.

Yellowing or dying leaves early in the summer. The berry is juicy and tangy, white-fleshed, with a 3 – 6 small seeds.

The untrained eye usually confuses Serviceberry trees or shrub for Choke cherry or Black plum. Serviceberries blossom in May. Berries are usually ready for harvest in June/July. Berries are often affected by *Gymnosporangium clavipes*, a microscopic fungus that resembles rust, when Serviceberry trees grow near Juniper shrubs or trees.

Aboriginals prepare “Pemmican” from dried Saskatoon berries mixed to wild meats.

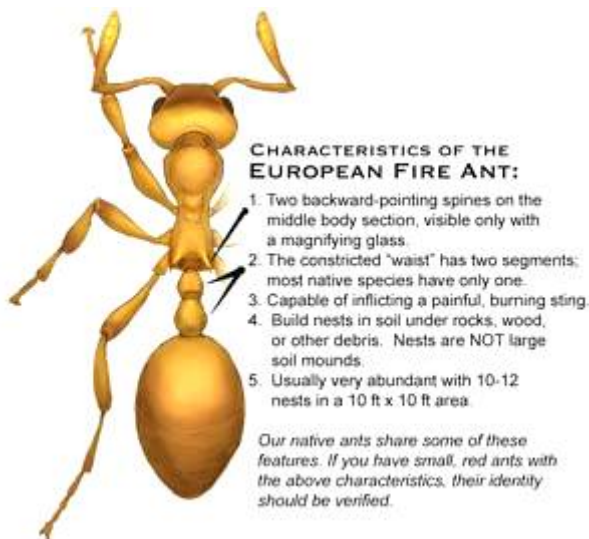
Sustainability tip: After consumption, return the seeds to a green belt, or to the S.R.A. office; we’ll spread them around!!! Any local indigenous berry seed is worth conserving for re-propagation, as long as the fruit was not cooked or preserved in any way.

Animal of this issue...

Yet another invasive species: the *European fire ant*

Myrmica rubra is native to the Palearctic regions of Europe and Asia from Ireland to western Siberia [Czechowski et al. 2000]. In the Old World, *M. rubra* is found from 25° latitude north to the Arctic Circle (66°N) [Elmes et al. 1999]. Based on its native distribution, the potential invasive range of *M. rubra* in North America would span the southern-most inland part of Florida to the north of Hudson Bay in Canada.

In North America, *M. rubra* has been reported in Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Washington D. C., Rhode Island, New Hampshire in the US, and in Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia in Canada [Groden et al. 2005].



Description

Myrmica rubra is a Myrmicine ant, one of 116 species recorded in this genus. There are several species of *Myrmica* in North America. Among the most commonly reported are *M. detritinodis*, *M. incompleta*, *M. emeryana*, *M. brevinodis*, *M. americana*, *M. fracticornus*, and *M. evaneda*, which makes the morphological identification of *M. rubra* complicated. Some of these species are not very common in the northeastern United States and most are rarely found in disturbed areas, which help us to recognize *M. rubra* in the field.

Workers of *M. rubra* are of a reddish-brown color, but the coloration greatly varies between individuals and colonies. Workers are small (4 to 5 mm), their "waist" has two segments, the head and the mesosoma are heavily sculpted, but the abdomen is shiny. The worker's body is covered with fine hairs. The antennae are 12-segmented with a four-segmented club and a bent scape. The propodeum (the first abdominal segment fused anteriorly to the thorax) has two spines pointing backwards, which is one of the main differences with other native ants (not of the genus *Myrmica*) in the northeastern U.S. There are a few morphological differences that help to differentiate *M. rubra* from the other ants within the same genus. When viewed dorsally, the frontal lobes of *M. rubra* look thin and lamellar, laterally developed and do not cover the antennal base, and the propodeal lobes form a 90° angle apically (Francoeur, unpublished data).

If you find European fire ants, please take a few samples in a plastic container and bring them to the Nova-Scotia Museum of Natural History for proper identification. They are presently mapping out their invasive progression in Nova-Scotia.

Photo Gallery...



A busy bee, feeling mighty rosy!



Oh, those warm summer evenings!



Do you know who lives here?

Answer in the next issue!!!

To contribute to our Photo Gallery, simply send me your pictures at mrisebastien@hotmail.com

Artist's Corner...



*As I sit on the bank of my river,
I ponder and wonder:*

*if the water is blue, is it clean?
When the fish are jumping,
how many can be seen?*

*As I sit by the water,
I look at the remediated bank,
and wonder...*

Ferret, July '08

***To contribute to our Artist's corner, simply send me your artwork at
mrisebastien@hotmail.com***

Kid's Corner...

Can you explore this forest
and not get trapped inside?



You're at the beach!