



## CONSERVATION COMPANY



www.williamslakecc.org  
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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 7:00-9:00 P.M.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM SPRY PUBLIC LIBRARY  
PROGRAM ROOM  
16 SUSSEX STREET, HALIFAX B3R 1N9

### EVERYONE WELCOME

The WLCC is a non-profit volunteer organization. We welcome everyone who shares the WLCC's mandate to preserve the health of Williams Lake to come to our AGM.

### COME JOIN THE WLCC

The WLCC depends on its volunteers. If you are interested in joining or helping out, please feel free to contact us through our website: [www.williamslakecc.org](http://www.williamslakecc.org). Come to the AGM to learn more about the WLCC and the Williams Lake watershed. We look forward to seeing you on June 11th.



**The Williams Lake Watershed.** All rainfall within the watershed (outlined in red) flows towards Williams Lake. The land recently purchased by HRM (solid black line) and the Shaw Wilderness Park (dashed line) are shown.

## GREAT NEWS FOR THE WILLIAMS LAKE WATERSHED - HRM HAS PURCHASED THE LAND NEXT TO THE SHAW WILDERNESS PARK

On May 10, 2024, Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) announced they had purchased four parcels of land totaling 46 hectares (~113 acres) located to the west of the Shaw Wilderness Park (see map above). HRM stated their intent is to add 36 hectares of this land to the Shaw Wilderness Park. The addition will likely include the portion currently zoned Urban Reserve (UR) (see map at left) and a stretch bordering Williams Lake in the Residential Development District (RDD) zone. HRM will retain ~10 hectares near existing streets and utilities, for potential future uses.

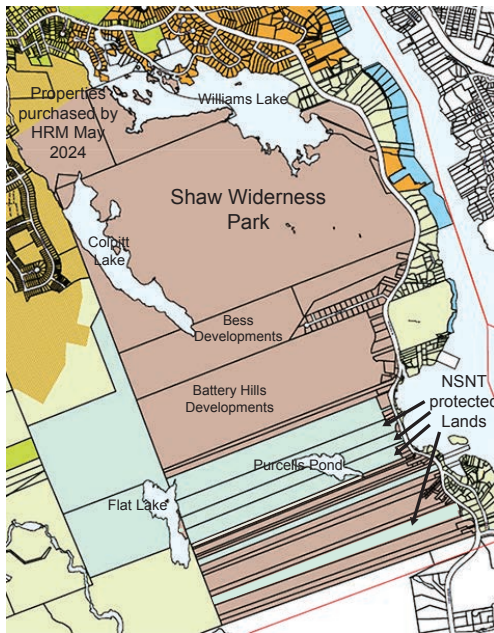
These acquisitions align with HRM's 2021-25 Strategic Priorities Plan in obtaining land to contribute to the municipality's regional wilderness parks, thereby enhancing quality of life for community members while protecting important natural assets.

Adding the land to the Shaw Wilderness Park will involve public consultation and would need to be negotiated with the Nature Conservancy of Canada which partnered with HRM in establishing the original Shaw Wilderness Park lands. More information will be made available once these details are determined.

The WLCC is delighted to hear about this proposed expansion of the Shaw Wilderness Park and that 100% of the remaining undeveloped shoreline of Williams Lake will now be protected. For many years, the WLCC has been concerned about the potential negative impact for Williams Lake if development were allowed to occur on such environmentally sensitive land. The properties acquired by HRM are particularly crucial for protection as they contain the key stream that feeds water from Colpitt Lake into Williams Lake. They also house smaller wetlands and seasonal water courses critical for healthy water flow through Williams Lake and are bordered on their south side by Governor's Brook, a major supply of water to Colpitt Lake.

### FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE WLCC

Check us out on Facebook or on our website where among other things, you will find links to colour versions of this and previous newsletters and a printable membership form.



Legend					
	R-1	Single Family		US	Urban Settlement
	R-2	Two Family Dwelling		UR	Urban Reserve
	RDD	Residential Dev. District		PA	Protected Area
	P	Park and Institutional		WA	Water Access

Current Zoning of properties in the Williams Lake/Purcell Cove Backlands

## THANK YOU

The WLCC would like to take this opportunity to thank Councillor Shawn Cleary for his efforts in raising Regional Council's awareness of the need to protect the Williams Lake watershed and for putting forward the motion to acquire these properties. We also thank Councillor Patty Cuttell for her long-term support, and the Council for agreeing to this purchase.

Additionally, we are grateful to those who had the vision to make the Shaw Wilderness Park a reality, namely, the Shaw family, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Mayor Savage, our Councillors, MLA Brendan Maguire, and last but not least, the members of the Backlands Coalition (BC) and the WLCC. Future generations will get to enjoy this wilderness within Halifax thanks to your support.

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## THE WORK OF THE BIRD TEAM

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Bird walk, Osprey Ridge Trail, Backlands, Spryfield.  
May 2024 (Photo: Cathy Vaughan)

The Bird Team has been very active this year with three projects beyond our annual Bird Survey. Our team is composed of members from the WLCC and the Backlands Coalition (BC), and others. Volunteers this year have included: J. Barss Donham, S. Glazier, D. Hall, F. Lavender, M. Leary, K. McKendry, L. Schiller, C. Slone, C. Smalley, K. Studholme, C. Vaughan, and B. Worm. Our Bird Team media presence is orchestrated by members of the PR Committee of the BC (M. Cranston, J. Escott, I. Inman, and C. Smalley) (social media) and David Patriquin (BC website management) (<http://backlandscoalition.ca>).

### *Ground Nesting Birds: A Public Education Project* (April 1 – October, 2024)

This year, as part of our contribution to stewardship of the Williams Lake Watershed and the Backlands, we will be providing information and local images for four ground-nesting species in several installments, with the first post for each species timed to coincide with the start of its breeding season in the Backlands. Check out the BC social media and web page ([http://backlandscoalition.ca/?page\\_id=6340](http://backlandscoalition.ca/?page_id=6340)) to find out more.

### *Bird Walks: April 26 – May 5, 2024*

Raptors, songbirds, waterfowl, and many other migratory birds consider the Williams Lake watershed, and the adjacent Backlands their home sweet home. They can be spotted tucked into the Acadian forest canopy, diving or dabbling on the lakes and waterways, and flying over the glacier-sculpted granite ridges of the globally rare Jack Pine - Broom Crowberry barrens.

The WLCC spring Bird Walk series, now in its third year, continues to be a popular, educational, and family-friendly outing offered in partnership with the Captain William Spry Public Library. Newbie and seasoned bird watchers are coached by Fulton Lavender, an experienced local birder, on how to identify birds by sight and sound. He also emphasizes the importance of protecting our diverse, natural habitats for the survival of threatened bird populations in Nova Scotia.

Families, newcomers, and other bird lovers from all over HRM attended this year's four Bird Walks. On each walk, participants were treated to over 20 different bird species as they strolled through one of Spryfield's amazing parks – The Shaw Wilderness Park on Williams Lake or the Macintosh Run Regional Park in the Backlands barrens. While migration was only just beginning, we observed over 40 species on these four outings alone!

### *Common Nighthawk Project: Spring 2023 through 2024*

Last year our Bird Team focused on the presence of the Common Nighthawk in our watershed and the Backlands. This species is listed as Threatened in Nova Scotia, having declined 68% across southern Canada since 1970 due to reduced availability of suitable habitat and their insect prey. But, good news! Our WLCC Bird Surveys since 2013 have found evidence of at least one breeding pair of Common Nighthawks in the area.

An important component of the provincial recovery plan for this species is the identification and preservation of key habitat areas - actions consistent with the long-term goals of the WLCC and the BC. After a successful pilot study last summer, our Bird Team is now working with Dalhousie University to assess the extent of Common Nighthawk presence in the Backlands. Two Biology Honours students, supervised by professors Boris Worm and Cindy Staicer (retired), will determine the locations and numbers of breeding pairs as well as the amounts and types of flying insects available to the birds across the landscape.

Thanks to your membership dues, the WLCC was able to purchase the sound recording equipment needed for this work and the Bird Team will incorporate field trips targeting Common Nighthawk into our routine surveys. Citizens and scientists working together may make a difference for this Threatened species. We will report on this exciting project as it unfolds.

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## HOW YOU CAN HELP PROTECT OUR LOCAL GROUND-NESTING BIRDS

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Common Nighthawk

(Photo: Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren)

Help give our hard-working feathered friends a hand, by keeping our feet and our pets on the trail. A simple step (*pun intended!*) that will give them the best chance possible to raise the next generation of songsters. Wondering what a ground nest looks like? When you might spot a nestling? What they eat? Where they will go in the winter? Stay tuned to find out!"

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## REGIONAL MUNICIPAL PLAN UPDATE

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The Halifax Regional Municipal Plan came into existence in 2006 and was intended to be in place until 2031 with reviews every 5 years to allow for necessary updating. However, with exponential population growth anticipated in Nova Scotia, particularly in HRM, Halifax Regional Council decided the plan needed a rewrite. As a consequence the time line to achieve a new plan has expanded.

Introduction by the Federal Government of the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) has added another delay. HAF provides money to municipalities for construction of new housing upon certain conditions being met. This has forced HRM planning staff to focus on the HAF instead of the Regional Plan meeting a specific time line.

At this point, phase 4 of the Regional Plan is expected to be presented to Council sometime in June. The public will have a chance to have input at a public hearing. As for the remainder of the Plan, 3 to 4 years will be needed for all land use by laws and regulations to be drafted and approved by Council.

Over the past year representatives of the Backlands Coalition, some of whom are Board members of the WLCC, continued to meet with planning staff. We have been very pleased with their increasing understanding of the sensitive environmental features of the Backlands which require special consideration. We are hopeful that the portions currently designated as Urban Reserve (UR) will be rezoned to reflect these environmental constraints. We are heartened by Halifax Regional Council's recent purchase of a large parcel of land which contains 100 acres of UR (see *map page 1*) to be added to the Shaw Wilderness Park.

Finally, we are happy to report that a new member has been added to HRM planning staff whose sole task is to assist in the implementation of the Halifax Green Network Plan. We have been asked to meet with this new hire within the month. We very much look forward to this opportunity.



## THE DAM



The Williams Lake dam  
Photo : Melanie Dobson, October 2020

### WLCC DAM COMMITTEE REPORT

written in collaboration with Williams Lake Dam Association (WLDA) representative Margo Kerr

Public Works Minister Kim Masland is moving ahead on her promise to save HRM's recreational Williams Lake by replacing the old, leaky dam. Masland directed NS Build, a crown-corporation, to oversee the rebuilding project and begin investigative work on the dam site.

In December 2023, a geotechnical drilling team was at the dam to collect core samples of stone, silt and bedrock from the shoulder and embankment areas next to the dam for the MECO Engineering company. Their engineers are looking for the depth and permeability of the bedrock to determine how much a new embankment will settle onto the bedrock when the new dam is built. Their findings and options for the design of a new dam on Williams Lake have been submitted to NS Build. This plan will then go to the Nova Scotia Treasury Board and Cabinet.

The dam project is moving ahead and we are appreciative of all the counsel, support and encouragement we have received from government, our political representatives, especially our MLA Brendan Maguire, and lake-lovers across HRM.



Drilling Rig at Williams Lake dam, December 2023  
Photo : Cathy Vaughan

## WORLD NATURE CONSERVATION DAY THINK GLOBAL. SUPPORT LOCAL.

"World Nature Conservation Day is an annual event held this year on July 28, 2024. This day stresses the need for preserving a healthy environment and natural resources to maintain a stable and healthy society. Saving plants and animals that face the threat of extinction is one of the primary goals of World Nature Conservation Day. The celebrations also emphasize keeping the various components of nature such as flora, fauna, energy resources, soil, water, and air intact. In addition, World Nature Conservation Day underlines the need for preserving the environment for future generations. We are therefore tasked with the need to leave a healthy planet for those coming after us to enjoy."

From: <https://nationaltoday.com/world-nature-conservation-day/>

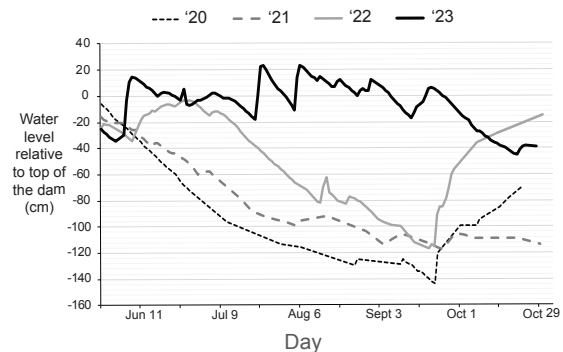
Join. Donate. Support - The Williams Lake Conservation

## WHAT'S UP WITH OUR WEATHER?

Aren't showers historically meant to come in April to bring May flowers? Things seem to be changing. This April was drier than the preceding 12 months. Last July was the hottest month in Nova Scotia since records began in 1871, with August 2022 not far behind (*Ryan Snoddon, CBC News*), and June 2023 was the third wettest ever recorded, followed by an atypical tropical deluge on July 21st (*Alex Cooke, Global News*).

And the impact of these changes on Williams Lake? That rain kept the lake at record high levels throughout the summer of 2023 (*see graph below*). Retaining a high level despite daily loss of water under the failing dam was fortunate for the birds and animals that depend on the lake but changing weather patterns are of concern. We can see what happened in recent summers where rainfall was much lower. Fixing the dam is crucial for making the lake more resilient in future hot dry summers.

### Williams Lake Level 2020-2023 (June - October)

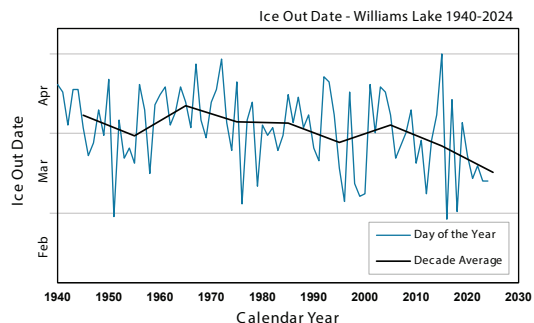


WLCC monitors William Lake levels. Note how the level recovered in late Sept. 2022 due to rain from Hurricane Fiona but not in 2021 when there was little fall rain.

## "ICE OUT" HAPPENING EARLIER?

We all wait for signs of Spring. One of the most significant of these in our area is the date when the ice finally disappears from Williams Lake. A local historian named Charles Rowlings started recording the "ice-out" date in 1940. In the early 1950s the record was passed on to Ken Hall and then to his daughter, Kathleen Hall, who today continues the recording. The ice out date is a collective decision between neighbours and reflects the date at which the vast majority of the ice has disappeared from the main body of the lake.

WLCC Board member Stephen Glazier has analyzed the data, (*see below*). The plot suggests a slight downward overall trend since the start of records, with the average ice out date now about 3 weeks earlier than in 1940. Over the last 20 years a consistent downward trend is observed. We will be watching closely to see if this trend progresses over the next decade.



Date of ice out plotted as a running average per decade (e.g. the average for the decade spanning 1940-1950 is plotted at 1945).

## VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR REMOVAL OF INVASIVES IN THE SHAW PARK

At last year's AGM, WLCC members Leslie Randall and Cathy Vaughan reported on invasive plant species found in the Williams Lake watershed. David Patriquin has since mapped positions of these invasives along Lawson's Brook and the main trail in the Shaw Wilderness Park (see [http://backlandscoalition.ca/?page\\_id=5582](http://backlandscoalition.ca/?page_id=5582)). These species spread rapidly, choking out and replacing native vegetation that our wildlife and pollinators rely on for food. They can block waterways reducing water quality and quantity.

This summer, on Aug. 1st, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, with help from the WLCC, will be looking for volunteers for a one-day session to help remove multiflora rose, barberry, and knotweed growing along Lawson's Brook (rain date Aug. 2nd).

NCC will communicate directly with WLCC and volunteers to organize. A call for volunteers will be posted on the WLCC website and emailed to the WLCC membership.



*WLCC Website*  
 WLCC's website is full of interesting posts on our recent activities. We have stories, historical documents dating back to our incorporation in 1968, information on birds, flora and fauna in the watershed, and water quality monitoring data. Scan this QR code to go to our website.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022-2023

Murray Coolican	Deborah Hall	Katharine Studholme
Michael Conway	Kathleen Hall	Sanja Trussell
Melanie Dobson	Martha Leary	Cathy Vaughan
Stephen Glazier	Leslie Randall	

Philip Howard • Webmaster  
 David Patriquin • Honorary Director  
 Anne von Maltzhan • Honorary Director

## WLCC LAKEWATCHERS TEAM



Katie Studholme and Stephen Glazier take water samples next to the Williams Lake dam for the LakeWatchers program in May 2024. Photo: Stephen Glazier.

LakeWatchers is a HRM lake water quality monitoring program initiated in 2022 and managed by the HRM Environment & Climate Change team. Williams Lake was one of 72 lakes chosen for the program because it was identified as being "susceptible to changes" based on "local land uses and other municipal work." Samples collected in the spring and late summer will be analyzed to monitor physical, chemical, and biological changes to the lake.

Studholme, a wildlife biologist, and Glazier, a physicist, both recent additions to the WLCC board, were keen to use the equipment supplied by HRM which enables them to record water properties and collect samples from different depths – down to 20m in the deepest part of the lake. Salt content is one important property being profiled, providing information on how well water layers are mixing. This influences the ability of deeper waters to support aquatic life.

Our participation in this program will contribute to the LakeWatchers database and add consistent depth profiles to the data the WLCC has amassed over the past 20+ years of monitoring (supported by WLCC membership dues!) This will allow us to detect changes in the health of our lake, see how it compares to other lakes in HRM and inform future preventative measures, if needed.

## WLCC MEMBERSHIP - JOIN US OR RENEW!!

WLCC membership is \$40 per household, \$25 per individual, or pay what you can, and runs from July 1 – June 30. To become a member or to renew your membership go to <https://williamslakecc.org/membership/> and follow the cues, or complete and return the form below.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
 That now you can give a one-year gift membership in the WLCC?  
 Go to <https://williamslakecc.org/membership/>

**Facebook:** facebook.com/WLCCHalifaxNS  
**Twitter:** twitter.com/williamslakecc  
**Instagram:** instagram.com/williamslakecc/  
**YouTube:** youtube.com/@WilliamsLakeCC

### MEMBERSHIP FORM

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY  \$40 per household  \$25 per individual

To: WILLIAMS LAKE CONSERVATION COMPANY  
 c/o 9 Halls Road, Halifax, NS B3P 1P4



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ # of household members: \_\_\_\_\_

Optional emails of other household members: \_\_\_\_\_

Optional donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Williams Lake Conservation Company (<https://williamslakecc.org/membership/>)  
 A registered non-profit community organization founded 1968