



June 2025 / Vol 15

## Welcome to the July Edition of Watershed Watch

Summer is in full swing across the Kawartha Lakes, and the season is inviting us all to slow down, explore, and reconnect with the natural beauty that surrounds us. Whether you're paddling across a quiet lake, hiking under a canopy of green, or enjoying the chorus of frogs at dusk, it's clear: water is at the heart of summer in the Kawarthas.

In this month's issue, we're excited to launch Watershed in Focus - a special five-part series that will run through the fall, highlighting the 27 subwatersheds that make up the Kawartha Conservation watershed. We begin with a closer look at five distinct and vital systems: Balsam Lake, Blackstock Creek, Cameron Lake, Cawker's Creek, and East Cross Creek. These waterways help shape not only our landscapes, but our local economy, biodiversity, and way of life. You'll hear from our Director of Integrated Watershed Management, Nancy Aspden, and Aquatic Biologist Brett Tregunno, who bring science and storytelling together to help us understand why these waters matter.

We're also proud to introduce you to some of the incredible summer staff who are helping keep our conservation areas safe, beautiful, and accessible. From trail work to permitting support to water quality monitoring, their passion and dedication are on full display, and their stories offer a glimpse behind the scenes of the work we do every day.

So, whether you're reading this lakeside or in your backyard with a cold drink, we hope this edition inspires you to appreciate, protect, and celebrate the watershed we all call home.

With gratitude for your continued support,

The Kawartha Conservation Team



The Kawartha Lake Stewards Association's Aquatic Plant Guide is a valuable resource that promotes awareness and appreciation of the diverse aquatic plants found throughout the Kawartha Lakes. By helping residents identify and understand native and invasive species, the guide supports responsible stewardship and lake health:

**[AQUATIC PLANT GUIDE](#)**

## INTRODUCING: WATERSHED IN FOCUS – A FIVE-PART SERIES

Beginning this July, Watershed Watch is proud to launch a special five-part series exploring the heart of our region: the 27 subwatersheds that make up the Kawartha Conservation watershed.

From the cold, clear headwaters of the Oak Ridges Moraine to the broad, slow-moving rivers that feed into our iconic lakes, each of these systems plays a vital role in shaping the environmental, social, and economic landscape of our communities.

Over the next five months, we'll take you on a journey across the watershed - profiling different lakes, rivers, and creeks, and sharing how they support clean water, biodiversity, recreation, agriculture, and climate resilience. We'll also hear from our team of experts, including Director of Integrated Watershed Management Nancy Aspden and Aquatic Biologist Brett Tregunno, as they share the science behind the work we do and why it matters.

Together, these waterways tell a powerful story - of connection, conservation, and the shared responsibility we all have in protecting our environment for generations to come.



## FROM RIDGE TO RIVER: HOW FIVE WATERWAYS HELP SHAPE LIFE IN THE KAWARTHA WATERSHED

High summer in the Kawarthas is marked by the scent of pine, the hum of insects, and the sparkle of sunlight dancing across the region's interconnected lakes and rivers. Beneath the surface of this seasonal beauty, however, flows a complex network of water systems quietly sustaining the environment, supporting communities, and revealing the health of the land itself.

The Kawartha Conservation watershed is made up of 27 distinct drainage areas, known as subwatersheds. These subwatersheds, often invisible to the casual observer, form the lifeblood of the region's ecosystems, feeding rivers, filtering pollutants, sustaining fish and wildlife, and buffering communities from floods and drought.

This summer, Kawartha Conservation is launching a new series exploring the unique stories and science behind these waterways. First up: Balsam Lake, Blackstock Creek, Cameron Lake, Cawker's Creek, and East Cross Creek.

Together, they offer a cross-section of the watershed's remarkable diversity, from lakes supporting tourism and recreation to meandering creeks filtering runoff through forests and farmland.

"These systems aren't just environmentally important - they're economically and culturally vital," said Nancy Aspden, Director of Integrated Watershed Management at Kawartha Conservation. "Whether it's tourism in Fenelon Falls, farming near Blackstock, or the quiet protection of a provincially significant wetland in East Cross Creek, each of these subwatersheds plays a role in supporting the region's growth, identity, and long-term sustainability."



## From Summit Lakes to Wetland Creeks

At the top of the watershed sits Balsam Lake, the highest point on the Trent-Severn Waterway. It's a lake of many hats, acting as a reservoir, a recreational hub, and a keystone in the region's water management system. Water flowing from Balsam eventually reaches Lake Ontario, passing through a series of locks and lakes, including Cameron Lake to the east.

Cameron, with its deep waters and thriving fishery, is another pillar of the region's lake-based economy. It supports boating, swimming, and shoreline living while also acting as a mirror to environmental change.

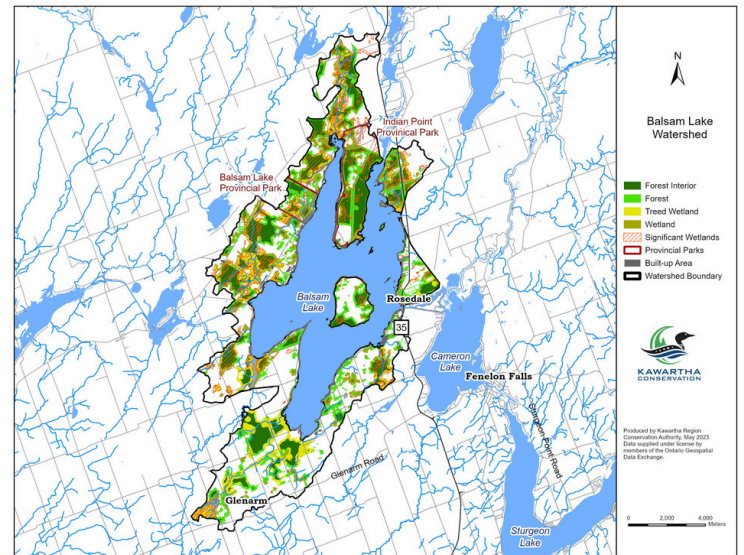
"Monitoring Cameron Lake gives us valuable insight into how shoreline development, boat traffic, and land use in the area are affecting water quality," said Brett Tregunno, Kawartha Conservation's Aquatic Biologist.

"By sampling multiple parameters, nutrients, turbidity,

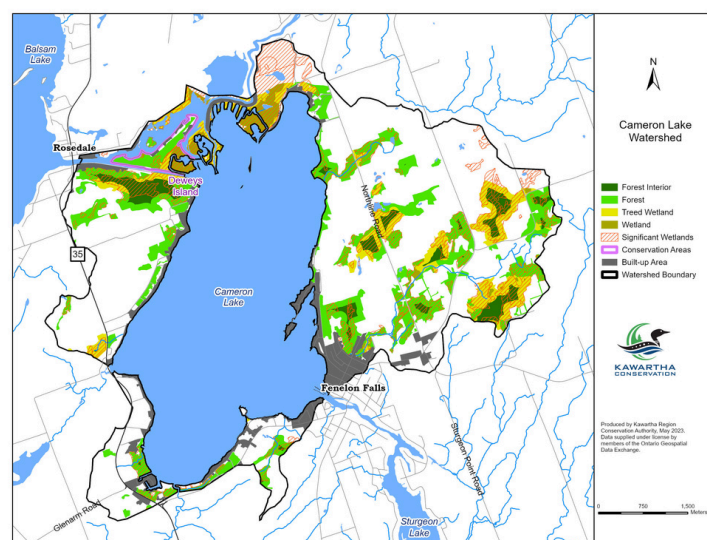
oxygen, we can identify trends over time and respond with stewardship or policy guidance when needed."

Further south, the story shifts to the winding paths of creeks like Blackstock and Cawker's. Less visible but equally vital, these watercourses flow through woodlots, farmland, and wetlands before emptying into Lake Scugog. Along the way, they provide habitat for birds and amphibians, recharge groundwater, and absorb runoff from surrounding land.

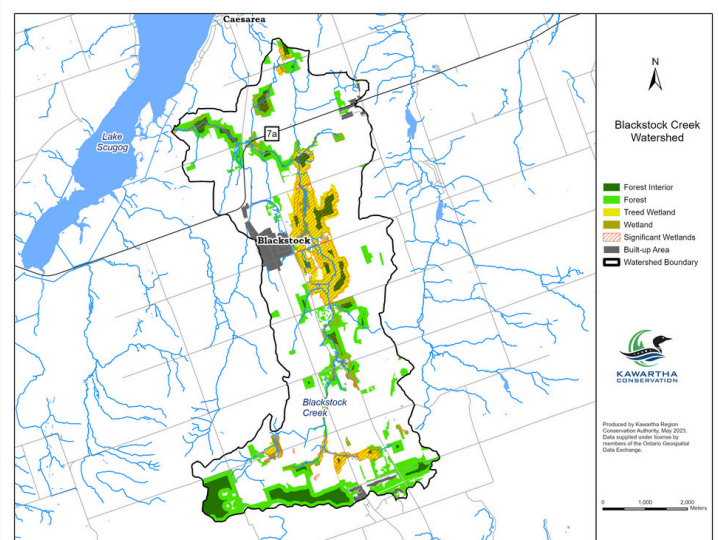
"People might not think of small creeks as crucial infrastructure, but they are," said Aspden. "They act like green arteries, delivering clean water and ecological services across our communities."



Balsam Lake watershed.



Cameron Lake watershed



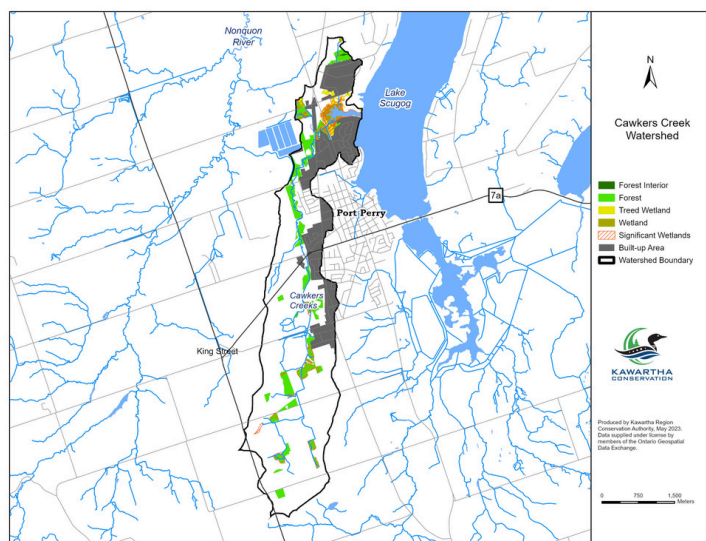
Blackstock Creek watershed

## A Conservation Stronghold

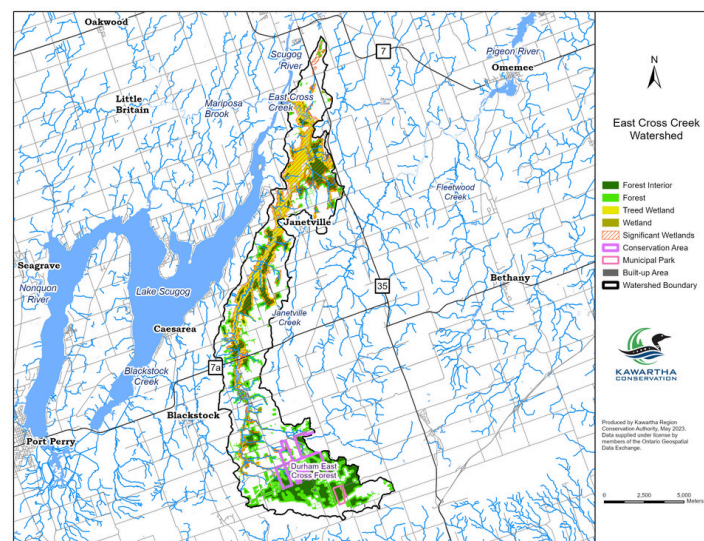
Perhaps the most striking example of that quiet strength is East Cross Creek. Rising from the Oak Ridges Moraine, it drains into Scugog River, just downstream of Lake Scugog, filtering water through dense forests, coldwater streams, and expansive wetlands. More than half of the East Cross Creek subwatershed remains in natural cover - an increasingly rare distinction in Southern Ontario.

“Our monitoring here has shown that water quality remains very high in the upper reaches of East Cross,” said Tregunno. “But as you move downstream, agricultural runoff and development begin to show up in the data, especially with elevated phosphorus levels. That kind of information helps us target restoration work where it’s needed most.”

Each of these systems - lake or creek, large or small - contributes to the health of the Kawartha watershed as a whole. Together, they serve as early indicators of change, barometers of biodiversity, and engines of economic vitality.



Cawker's Creek Watershed



East Cross Creek Watershed

## Looking Forward

In the coming months, Kawartha Conservation will continue to profile additional lakes and rivers, diving deeper into the local and regional stories that shape our watershed. It's a reminder that environmental science doesn't always happen in a lab, it happens in canoes, on creekbanks, and through quiet dedication to protecting the natural world one subwatershed at a time.

“We can't manage what we don't understand,” said Aspden. “This work, this science, gives us the foundation to make better decisions for the environment, for people, and for future generations.”



## JULY 2025 NEWSLETTER – STAFF SPOTLIGHTS

### **Miranda Birks-Jeffery**

#### **Administrative Assistant, Planning and Corporate Services**

#### **What is your educational background?**

I graduated from the Business and Marketing program at Durham College and will be pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration at Trent University this fall.

#### **What inspired you to work at Kawartha Conservation**

I wanted to learn more about the administrative side of a conservation authority and gain experience in a corporate environment. It's exciting to contribute to something meaningful and be part of a bigger mission.

#### **What's your favourite part of working here?**

Definitely the people! I love coming in each morning, catching up with everyone, and learning about all the interesting work happening across the organization. It's inspiring to see so many different pieces come together.

#### **What's something people might not know about your role?**

There's a lot more going on behind the scenes than people realize! From records management, assisting with permitting, communications and administrative support, the work I do helps free up time and space for others to focus on their roles. It's a mix of small and big tasks that make a difference.

#### **What's something unique about the Kawartha Conservation team?**

Everyone is so kind and genuinely interested in each other's lives. I got to tell so many people about the bear I saw over the weekend – it's a fun and supportive environment where we share stories and learn from one another.

#### **What's one thing you hope to accomplish during your time here?**

To learn as much as I can – about the environment, conservation work, and how everything fits together. Every day is a chance to learn, grow, and advance my skills, which will support my future career.



**Nicole Henderson**

**Administrative Assistant, Corporate Services**

**What is your educational background?**

I am currently studying Office Administration at the Executive level through Centennial College

**What is something you've learned thus far about the environment, the organization, or yourself?**

Something fun I've learned about the organization is just how many moving parts there are behind the scenes, day in and day out to keep things running smoothly.

**What is something unique or special about Kawartha Conservation?**

Something special about Kawartha Conservation is the team. The internal team is always super helpful and supportive of one another, creating a great space to work, collaborate, and learn.

**What is your favourite part of the workday and why?**

My favourite part of the workday is coming into the office and seeing everyone I work with, catching up with them after a weekend, seeing what everyone's up to, and learning about all the different things that are happening.

**What interested you in working at Kawartha Conservation?**

I was interested in working for Kawartha Conservation to learn more about the behind the scenes and administrative side of a conservation area and all of the things that go behind it.

**Who or what inspires you most and why?**

The environment I would say inspires me most. To protect it and learn the different ways to have a better relationship with the land while respecting the animals and the ecosystems, to maintain it for future generations.

**What is one childhood experience that sparked your interest in nature or the environment?**

I would say going camping with my family really sparked my interest in the environment. Being outside, going on hikes, experiencing all the trails and things around me made me want to learn more about nature.





## **Adrian Minda**

### **Conservation Area Lands Assistant**

#### **Where are you studying and what is your program?**

I'm in the joint Ecological Restoration joint program at Fleming College and transferring to Trent University.

#### **What made you interested in working at Kawartha Conservation this summer?**

I love being outside and I enjoy gardening, so this job is a perfect fit for me.

#### **If you could share one message about the environment, what would it be?**

Protect it, please. Be kind to it and it will be kind to you.

#### **What is your favourite part of working here?**

The people! Everyone is super nice, and I get to spend my days outdoors – what's not to love?

#### **If you were a wildlife species, which would you be and why?**

A blue whale – they're humongous, and nothing can hurt them... other than pollution (let's keep the oceans clean, please!)

#### **What does an average day look like for you?**

It starts with chugging my smoothie, then heading out to prune, mow, or tackle whatever outdoor task is on the list to maintain the conservation areas. It's hands-on and always changing.



## **Sarah Barre**

### **Conservation Area Lands Assistant**

#### **Where are you studying and what is your program?**

I'm going into my third year at Carleton University, studying Environmental Science with a minor in Chemistry.

#### **What's your favourite part of working here?**

Definitely getting to explore all the Conservation Areas! The scenery is beautiful – it's a great way to spend the day.

#### **What do you appreciate most about your coworkers?**

How friendly and easygoing everyone is. We all get along really well, and I genuinely have a great time every day I come to work.

#### **What's something people might not know about the work that you do?**

How much time trail work actually takes – especially after events like ice storms. Clearing trails, removing fallen trees, and making them safe and accessible again is a big job.

#### **What is one thing that you hope to accomplish during the summer?**

I want to learn more about conservation areas – how to care for them, manage invasive species, and support the environment in practical ways.

#### **What is a hobby or interest of yours that most people wouldn't guess?**

I'm really into playing video games! I spend a lot of time with my friends hanging out and playing online games.

**Kate Cornish**

**Conservation Area Lands Assistant**

**What is your educational background?**

I am currently studying Ecological Restoration at Fleming College, transferring to Trent University as part of a bridge program.

**What's something unique or special about the Kawartha Conservation Team?**

The sheer amassment of all the different skills and knowledge amongst the team. Everyone has a different specialty, everyone knows something different, and we are all here to teach each other.

**What is your favourite part of working at Kawartha Conservation?**

Every day is different, you're going to different conservation areas, you're doing different jobs. Nothing is the same and you're always learning something new!

**If you could teach everyone in the world one thing about that environment, what would it be?**

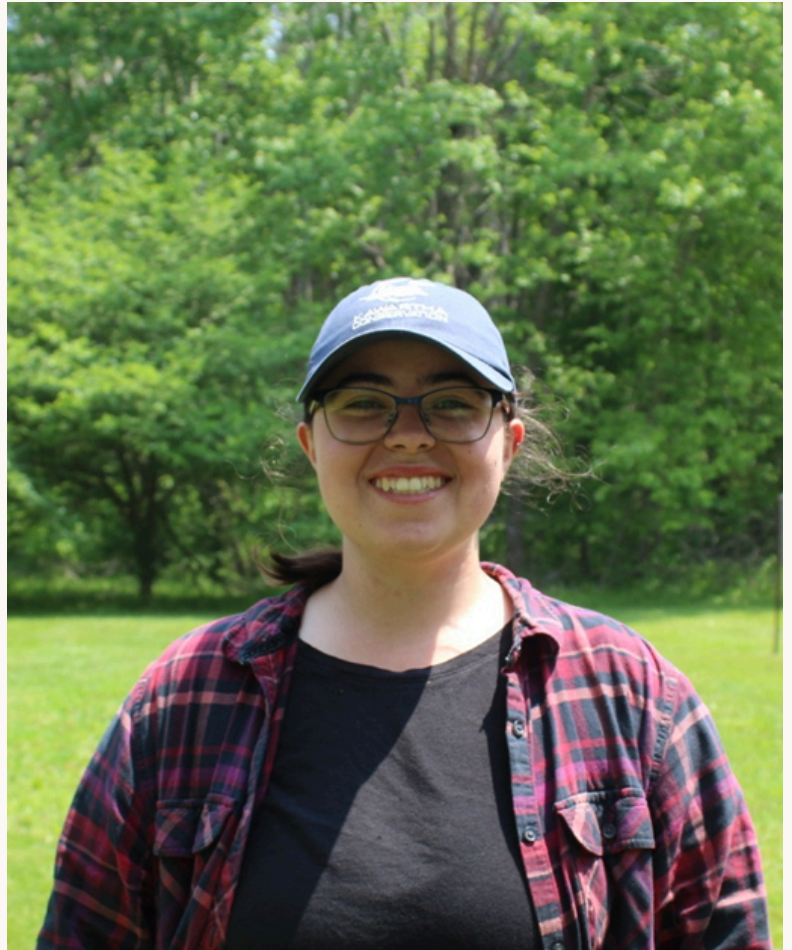
Everything is connected to each other, if you change one thing it is going to have a ripple effect that will change everything about that eco system.

**What does a perfect day off look like to you?**

A lazy morning with a cup of coffee and something sweet, a walk around somewhere with water in the afternoon, and a lazy night knitting in front of the TV.

**What interested you in working at Kawartha Conservation this summer?**

I have hiked here so many times while I've lived in Lindsay, so when I found out I could come work here and get paid for hiking, I immediately jumped at the opportunity.





**Natasha Talbot**  
**Environmental Field Technician**

**What is your educational background?**

I am a graduate of the University of Guelph's Marine and Freshwater Biology program.

**What is your favourite part about working at Kawartha Conservation?**

I like the variety that comes with working with IWM team and of course the team itself is great. Everyone that I've gotten to work with is really knowledgeable, and it is clear that they love what they do which makes it really fun. Also, I love to work with invertebrates so getting to work with Brett and Matt doing biomonitoring has been a lot of fun.

**What is one thing people might not know about the work that you do?**

There are so many different things that can affect the health of a lake or watershed and what is healthy for one lake might not be healthy for another lake. It all depends on characteristics such as depth, how much sun it gets, what plants make up the shoreline, and the margins. There's so much nuance, which is great, but it can also be simple, like the things you think would be bad for a lake, are probably bad for a lake.



**If you could teach everyone in the world one thing about the environment, what would it be?**

Small steps do make a big difference. It doesn't have to be a huge swing, big swings are great and being able to have the funding and resources to do things like the lake health monitoring program is wonderful. But we can also help by also watching what kind of laundry detergent we use to make sure that it's low in phosphorus and maybe not driving everywhere if you can walk.

**What is a hobby, talent, or interest of yours that most people wouldn't guess?**

I guess it depends on how perceivable I am. I play dungeons and dragons quite a lot and I have been playing with the same group for over a year now. I've done other campaigns in the past, so in total I've done at least half a decade of playing dungeons and dragons. I don't know if that would be a hobby people would guess that I have, but I really enjoy it.

**If you were a wildlife species, which one would you be and why?**

I would either be a duck or a seagull because they have all of the modes of transportation. They can walk, they can fly, and they can swim. Seagulls are very versatile, and I guess with ducks I'd have to worry about hunting season. So, a seagull, for versatility.

**Paula Torti**

**Conservation Area Lands Assistant**

**What is your educational background?**

I am a graduate of Fleming College's Conservation Biology and Ecosystem Management programs.

**What inspired you to work at Kawartha Conservation this summer?**

I've always known about Kawartha Conservation; I am familiar with the area and have a lot of great memories of visiting Ken Reid. That familiarity made me want to learn more and gain experience at a conservation authority.

**What's your favorite part of the workday?**

Being outside! Whether it's checking trains or getting them ready for reopening, I love walking through the forest and taking in the scenery – it's absolutely beautiful.

**What's something new you have learned since joining the team?**

I had no idea just how much work goes into maintaining the trails. From spreading mulch, to pruning, clearing fallen trees, and repairing boardwalks – it's a lot more than most people realize.

**What's one thing you hope to accomplish during your time here?**

I want to learn as much as I can – about conservation area maintenance, teamwork skills, and the behind-the-scenes work that keeps these spaces safe and accessible for visitors. I even learned how to drive a tractor, which I never would have done otherwise!

**What's something unique about the Kawartha Conservation Team?**

The comradery! Everyone works so well together, and we genuinely enjoy each other's company. It makes every day more fun and productive.

**What is a hobby or interest most people wouldn't guess that you have?**

I'm a Dungeon Master for Dungeons & Dragons! It's a fun and creative space that I really enjoy.



*For more information on how Kawartha Conservation can help.*

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