



Haliburton-Muskoka-Kawartha

# children's water festival

## 2023 Final Report

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Youth Leadership in Sustainability class (Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB)  
U-Links Centre for Community Research  
Water Depot ~ Minden

The logo for KINARK features the word "KINARK" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A green swoosh underline starts under the 'K', goes under the 'I', 'N', and 'A', and then curves upwards under the 'R' and 'K'.

... Thank you! Together we are making a splash!



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### **Mission statement from HMK Children's Water Festival Strategic Plan 2011:**

*The Haliburton-Muskoka-Kawartha Children's Water Festival is a unique approach to inspire children to become wise stewards of water and related systems through educational, fun, and hands-on activities.*

### **Land Acknowledgment:**

*With respect and gratitude, the HMKCWF acknowledges that we educate within Williams and Robinson-Huron Treaties First Nations territories as well as the unceded territories of the Algonquin Nation who have all stewarded local watersheds since time immemorial.*



## Overview

The 2023 Haliburton-Muskoka-Kawartha Children's Water Festival (HMK Children's Water Festival or HMKCWF), the flagship project of Friends of Ecological and Environmental Learning (FEEL), was held on Thursday, October 5th at the Kinark Outdoor Centre. Nine schools from the Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) as well as families with Haliburton's Home School network attended. In total 315 grade 4-6 students and more than 65 supporting staff and parent volunteers enjoyed the festival. Kinark offered a great location for this outdoor event in a central location to the TLDSB region, experienced staff support and greater accessibility than other outdoor locations and we augmented with a wheelchair accessible porta potty this year.

The Fall Festival once again actively inspired and taught elementary students about water ecology and stewardship - knowledge they can bring back to their homes, classrooms, and communities. Students had fun while engaging in experiential outdoor learning, visiting, in small groups, some of the 39 interactive activity stations learning about all things water!

Activity stations were animated by volunteers through the revival of partnerships with Trent University students and the Kawartha Pine Ridge Youth Leadership in Sustainability class. Also supporting in various capacities were 14 community volunteers and 4 older elementary students with a couple adult leaders from the Haliburton Home School Network who adapted and led 2 different activity stations. Ten other partnering organisations joined us as "Guest Presenters" to offer activities of their relevant focus.

The HMKCWF continued with public programming throughout the summer with the posting of our "Water Storybook Walk" in Haliburton's Head Lake Park. This program was developed and delivered throughout the month of August in partnership with the municipality of Dysart and the Dysart branch of Haliburton County Public Library. We engaged with youth and families at a booth during two public events in the park promoting the Water Storybook Walk, while offering two other activity stations for families to engage with. Our launch event was offered in partnership with Haliburton Farmers' Market and the closing event was with the Haliburton Lions Club's *Stories in the Park* event.

In July we offered our first ever 'mini' Children's Water Festival in partnership with the Kushog Lake Property Owners Association (KLPOA). Together with their volunteer members, we offered 6 different activity centres to families who live, cottage, or were visiting the lake. This experience has offered a template to build on through future partnerships with other Lake Associations.

Another major project of 2023 was adapting the storage of HMKCWF program equipment. In October, volunteers moved and stored our mobile activity centres and signage into a shed that was built for these purposes at Kinark. We were also happy to receive notice of receiving funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation for a trailer which will provide improved storage and ability to mobilise our programs!

## The 2023 Fall Festival

We hosted another successful and engaging Haliburton-Muskoka-Kawartha Children's Water Festival (HMK Children's Water Festival or HMKCWF) for elementary students at Kinark Outdoor Centre on Thursday, October 5th, 2023.

### Registration

While we were not able to confirm sufficient funding to run the 2-day Fall Festival we had set goals for, by the spring of 2023 we had sent digital invitations to schools to register interest should sufficient funds be raised. Invitations were emailed to past participating teachers and all elementary schools of the Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) in early June. Support from the TLDSB communications department ensured that all elementary schools within the TLDSB were delivered these invitations.

Twenty teachers from 17 schools responded to invitations, expressing interest in bringing over 800 students to the Fall Festival. This was more than we could feasibly support given funding secured and volunteer availability.

The HMKCWF steering committee determined that schools would be selected fairly with a lottery system that still allowed for representation from all 3 regions of the school board district. Attendance was also to be limited to grade 4-6 students (vs. the previous inclusion of grade 3 students) and an aim to have one bus per school inclusive of supporting teachers/staff/parents (a goal to reduce emissions).

As a result, nine schools from TLDSB and families from Haliburton's Home School network attended, bringing 315 grade 4-6 students with 65 supporting staff and parent volunteers. Several of the schools in attendance brought representative students from multiple classes, including special needs classes who appreciated Kinark's facilities and experienced staff geared towards accessibility. All attendees were enthused to bring the learning and inspiration they gained back to share within their schools and families.

This year's festival brings the total number of students we've inspired as water stewards - since our festival started in 2005 - to 15,700.

## Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to the success of the HMK Children's Water Festival and its expanding programs. In 2023, our 96 volunteers included 5 members of our steering committee. These advisers regularly join monthly meetings year-round about plans and major decisions for the HMKCWF Programs. Additionally, six members of the FEEL board of directors contributed leadership time and skills in: financial management for the project, meeting with the HMKCWF contracted coordinator periodically through the year, running a native plant sale fundraiser, and administrative assistance for the project.

Seventeen volunteers helped run our first 'mini' Children's Water Festival organised in partnership with the Kushog Lake Property Owners Association in July.

Volunteers supporting the 2023 Fall Festival at Kinark were coordinated in partnership with U-Links for Community Based Research. Activity centres were animated inspiringly this year by 21 students and supporting staff of Kawartha Pine Ridge's Youth Leadership in Sustainability class, making it their fourth year of participation with us. Trent University's 1st year Environmental and Resource Studies Program returned to partner by involving 30 of their students. These Trent students gained credit and valuable work experience through animating activity centres with us as a part of their post pandemic revival of applied studies in community placements. Fourteen community volunteers helped in various roles both on the festival day as well as in set-up and take-down for the event. This community volunteer support included John Watson, Environmental Manager of Dysart municipality, bringing his expert adaptations to our "Reign in the Garbage" activity. Seven volunteers, both older students and a couple parents with the Haliburton Home School network, supported the adaptation and facilitation of 2 activity centres. Finally, a combined twenty-two people of the 10 different "Guest Presenters" also facilitated engaging and educational activity centres at the Fall Festival.

Online volunteer registration and feedback forms for volunteers were further developed and applied this year. Volunteers provided greater feedback than in years past which will prove particularly useful in improving and updating our activity centres and volunteer supports for next year.

Volunteer incentives/rewards in the form of reusable water bottles, coupons, cloth shopping bags, and snacks were appreciated thanks to donations this year by Kawartha Credit Union, Ontario Power Generation, and David Dollo of Minden Foodland. Thanks to On-Point Caterers for the lunch provided (at a sponsored rate) to volunteers and guest presenters at the October 5th festival at Kinark. Water donated by the Water Depot in Minden was appreciated by students and volunteers alike.



## Activity Centres

The 2023 HMKCWF Fall Festival offered 36 different activity centres for participant groups to choose from, a chart for which is provided below. Twenty-seven of these educational centres (program equipment ranging from small bins of equipment to large models with accompanying digital and hard-copy facilitation guides) are owned and maintained by the HMK Children's Water Festival project of FEEL. Funds from the Ontario Wildlife Foundation, as well as other donors, permitted the HMKCWF steering committee to develop, improve, and maintain these in preparation for the festival. Ten activity centres were made available through the involvement of "Guest Presenters". Listed below are the guest presenters who were involved with the 2023 HMK Children's Water Festival, most of whom have been valuable partners in the past:

1. Bancroft Stewardship Council - "Creeks and Critters" activity & "Shoreline Do's & Don'ts"
2. Haliburton County Emergency Medical Services - providing on-site first aid
3. Haliburton Fire Management Centre (OMNRF) - "Haliburton Forest Fire Crew"
4. Kawartha Conservation - "Wonderful Wetlands"
5. Muskoka Watershed Council - "Wash Out!" on flood management
6. Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters - "Atlantic Salmon Loss and Restoration"
7. Township of Algonquin Highlands Fire Services - "Algonquin Highlands Fire Trucks"
8. TRACKS Youth Program - "River Race"
9. Turtle Guardians - introducing wild turtles of the region and their habitat and conservation needs
10. U-Links Centre for Community Research – "Bugs in the Mud" through their Woodlands and Waterways project

The return of TRACKS (TRent Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge and Science) Youth Program, and their "River Race" activity, brought back to the festival an activity with a valued Aboriginal perspective of water stewardship or '2-eyed seeing' approach. Travel costs for TRACKS facilitators were gratefully sponsored by Ontario Power Generation this year.

Activity centres - and the messages relayed from them - are relevant to learning expectations of the Ontario Curriculum. To assist teachers we provide, within their Teachers Guides and on our website specific to grade 4-6 curriculum, links to each activity centre offered and group them into the following themes: Water Conservation, Water Attitudes, Water Technology, Water Protection and Water Science. It is recognized that many of the activities could belong to more than one of the five themes listed. The activity centres available to the 2023 HMK Children's Water Festival participants are listed below:

**WC:** Water Conservation **WA:** Water Attitudes **WT:** Water Technology **WP:** Water Protection **WS:** Water Science **CC:** Climate Change

Activity Centre	Theme	Location	Map #
Atlantic Salmon Loss and Restoration	WP & WS	The Pines	32
Algonquin Highlands Fire Service	WT	Eagle's Nest (Outside, bball courts)	23
Beaver Fever	WP	The Pines -The Challenge Course	29
Blooming Jeopardy	WP	The Pines	36
Bugs in the Mud	WS	Waterfront (Under Open Shelter)	7
Creeks and Critters *	WP	Waterfront	9
Earth in the Balance	WP	Baseball Diamond / Dining Hall Field	13
Froggy ... You are Outta There!	WP	Baseball Diamond Field	22
Haliburton Fire Crew	WT	Waterfront	6
How Wet is Our Planet? Grade 8 Students led	WS	Dining Hall (Under Open Shelter)	38
It's a Trout's Life	WP	Waterfront	2
Just Dam It!	WP	Waterfront ( craft cabin porch )	1
Lather Up!	WC	The Pines	33
Migration Headache ( 2 Groups @ once)	WP	Baseball Diamond Field	35
Osprey Survivor	WS	Below Dining Hall (Outside)	16
Peat's in a Bog !	WS & CC	Eagle's Nest	24
Pioneer Water Race *	WA	The Pines	34
Polar Melt Down!	WP & CC	Eagle's Nest (Inside Upper Level)	27
Reign in Garbage! ( model )	WP	Eagle's Nest (Inside Upper Level)	24

River Race	WP & WA	Field below Dining Hall	18
Rolling Through the Shed	WP	Baseball Diamond (Hill Beside)	15
Round You Go, H <sub>2</sub> O!	WS	Waterfront	3
Shoreline Do's & Don'ts *	WP	Eagle's Nest (back porch)	28
Stream Savers	WP	The Pines	37
How much is in it? - Grade 8 Students led	WC	Dining Hall	38
The Great Swim Off	WP	Waterfront	5
The Power of Water	WT	Behind Dining Hall (Under Shelter)	12
Tread Lightly *	WA & WP	By Dining Hall	11
Turtle Guardians	WP	Dining Hall (downstairs)	18
Turtle Trauma	WP	The Pines	21
Unwelcome Guests	WP	Baseball Diamond Field	20
Up on the Watershed	WA & CC	The Pines	31
Wash Out!	WA	Waterfront	30
Water Hero Scavenger Hunt	WA & WC	Throughout Festival Grounds, Finish at Water Hero Headquarters	16
Water Runs Downhill	WS	Eagle's Nest ( / In Front of)	26
Water Storybook Walk *	WP	On trail between Field and road to waterfront	10
Wonderful Wetlands	WP	Waterfront	4

The activity centres offered at this year's festival are a portion of the approximate 50 that were inventoried in 2022 and assessed both for suitability to take to school yards, public events in the future, and in preparation for storage adaptations this year. Following the 2022 festival at Kinark, our activity centres were moved to new storage locations, some retired and some repurposed. As a thankful recipient of the Local Initiatives Program grant from Haliburton County Development Corporation (HCDC), and in partnership with Kinark Outdoor Centre, we have built a new storage shed at Kinark and established a financially sustainable long term lease for HMKCWF program equipment and signage there. In follow up to the Fall Festival, our volunteers, with assistance of Kinark staff and coordination of the HMKCWF coordinator, moved our program equipment and signage into this new space. Custom built shelving has begun to be used (as pictured below) and will be further developed in 2023.

In the fall, we also received good news of being approved for a capital grant with the Ontario Trillium Foundation for the purchase of a trailer. This will allow for better covered storage of program equipment and the further development of mobile programs in 2024.





## Follow-up Programs with Schools

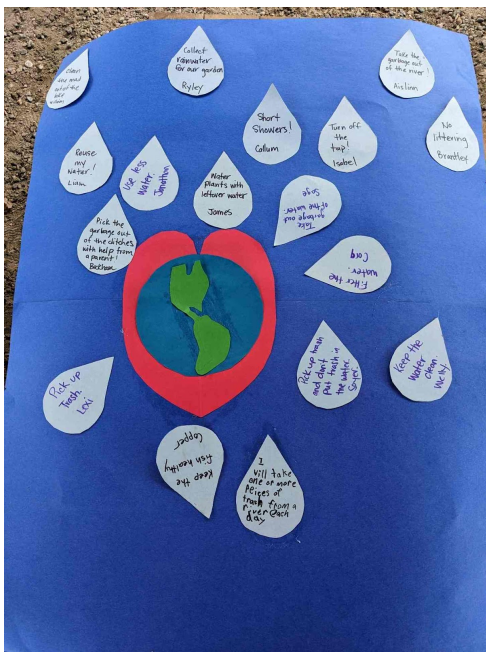
### Big Splash Award and Water Heroes Contest

Learning offered through the HMK Children's Water Festival is not limited to the in-person experience at Kinark Outdoor Centre. As a part of this year's follow-up activities, students from TLDSB will be reporting to others in their classes and school about what they've learned, inspired to dive deeper into research on their ecological connections with water.

In addition, attending classes are invited to participate (and involve others in their schools to participate) in the HMKCWF "Water Hero Challenge". Students will brainstorm and explore - through the knowledge they've 'soaked up' - ways we can protect and conserve water, then send in these ideas to festival organizers through a predetermined channel. Students, in follow-up activities, are encouraged to pledge to make a specific change in their actions to conserve or protect water more.



The school which enters the most "water saving" ideas wins the opportunity to have their name engraved on the Big Splash Award and host said award at their school in follow-up to the in-person Fall Festival. At Last Forest School in Haliburton had the most entries into our Water Hero challenge and were awarded the trophy for the year ahead. They have also earned priority access to register for the 2024 Fall Festival.



This year, through updates to the "Water Hero Challenge" program aimed at involving more classes and students, prizes were also available to the class which sends in the most responses. Prizes such as coupons donated by Kawartha Dairy were given to the students and schools who registered the most significant actions they are taking to improve their water stewardship this year. Water-friendly prizes have also been donated for these individuals by regional sponsors including reusable water bottles from Algonquin Outfitters and reusable straw sets from Sustain Eco-store of Huntsville. This Water Hero contest runs from our in-person Fall Festival, through to a promotional period at World Water Day in March until the end of Earth Week in April, and is open to all elementary students of the region.



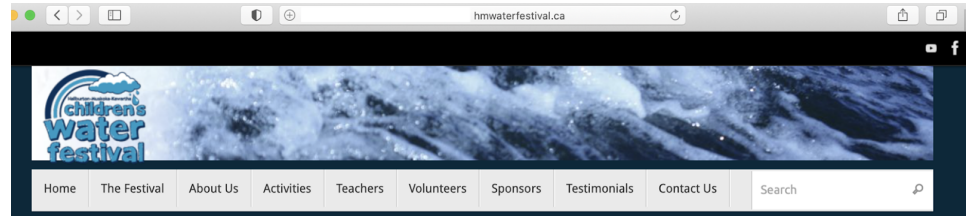
## Websites

Teachers are supported with resource guides that have been developed over the 14-year history of the festival.

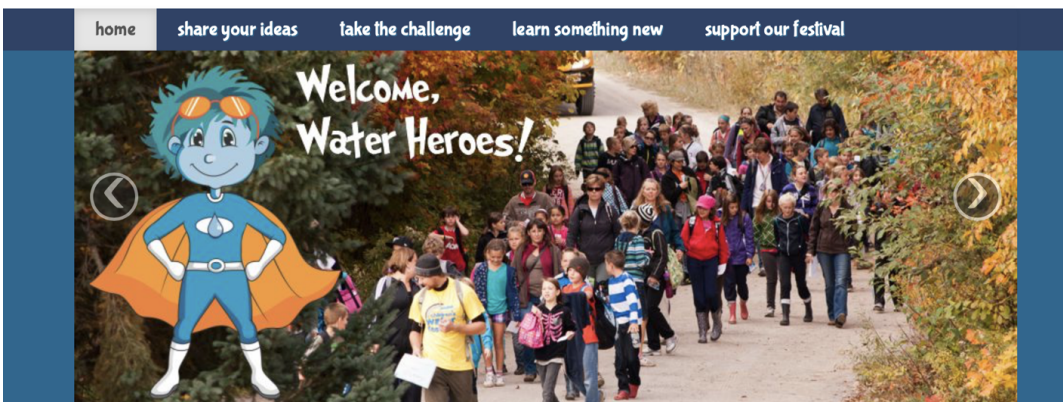
These resource guides offer tools for including water as an essential topic in curriculum-linked activities and multiple subjects. These guides and resources are available year-round on HMKCWF websites: [www.hmwaterfestival.ca](http://www.hmwaterfestival.ca) and [www.waterheroes.ca](http://www.waterheroes.ca). The water heroes website offers additional student-led activities.

Resources and many pages of these websites were updated through 2023. Updating our online resources has been recommended to expand on in the next year as well as longer-term development of on-line programs and resources.

We increased our outreach on [Social Media](#) via our Facebook page ([@H20Festival](#)) and Instagram account ([feel\\_education\\_outdoors](#)) through 2023 and will be further developing strategies for this in 2024.



## Water Heroes



## Public Education

### Water Storybook Walk & Public Events

Our new activity centre “Water Storybook Walk” was developed in 2022. This series of signs, displaying *Follow the Water from Brook to Ocean* by Arthur Dorros, includes water stewardship steps we can all take, including some suggested by students in past programs. We shared the Water Storybook Walk with residents and visitors to Haliburton Village throughout the month of August this year through its posting in Head Lake park. This program was developed and promoted in partnership with the Municipality of Dysart and Dysart Branch of Haliburton County Public Library. This activity centre is one we are looking to adapt to partner with the TLDSB and others to make available for both schools to set-up on their grounds for periods of time and for hosting at more public events in the future.

The Water Storybook Walk was also one of four different activities offered to families with our presence at 2 public events through the summer. At the beginning of August we partnered with the Haliburton Farmers’ Market and the Dysart library branch to engage with families. We also participated in the Haliburton Lions’ *Stories in the Park* event at the end of August.

### Kushog Lake Property Owners Association’s (KLPOA) Children’s Water Festival

On July 22 we hosted our first “mini” Children’s Water Festival in partnership with a Lake Association. We ran 6 different activity centres animated by a combination of 16 KLPOA and HMKCWF volunteers and 2 program contract staff. About 30 children as well as accompanying adult family members participated in this half-day event. Much was learned in preparation and running of this pilot program that we look forward to applying to future Lake Association partnerships.





Feedback from KPLOA:

*Joining up with HMK Children's Water Festival was an excellent opportunity for Kushog Lake Property Owners Association to teach our future Lake Stewards the importance of protecting and conserving our lake. The children, and the adults accompanying them, learned something new about our lake and based on the comments we received have a better appreciation of how important lake conservation is to us as humans and to all the living things in and around the water. The volunteers who helped us all felt it was a worthwhile endeavour and not only had fun but learned something as well. One of my goals as President of the association is to continue to foster a sense of community on the lake. This and other events we have on the lake help with that. Children attending made friends with other children they might not otherwise have met and may become lifelong friends sharing time together on the lake. There was bonding between the adults, both parents and volunteers as well.*

*As an association we are very aware of the importance of preserving and protecting our lake and the life around it. We send out notices regularly on lake health and what property owners can do to help maintain a healthy lake. I started to think about how we needed to start teaching our children, our future Lake Stewards on lake health but it would have to be a fun experience. After a brainstorming session with Stephanie from F.E.E.L. we decided to take on this pilot project and introduce a Children's Water Festival to a lake association. For F.E.E.L. and the HMK Children's Water Festival it was a chance to reach out to more children in the community than just the event they do in the fall and for us, KLPOA, it was an opportunity to teach our children the importance of looking after the lake where they cottage and spend time at during the summer. I truly believe it was a worthwhile endeavour and a mutually beneficial one to both partners.*

*- Susan Harvey, KLPOA  
President & co-organizer of this event*



## Budget & Supporters

The HMK Children's Water Festival steering committee would like to thank all our partners, financial supporters, and volunteers that have been - and continue to be - vital in making our programs through the past year a success! With this support, we were once again able to offer young learners quality outdoor water stewardship educational experiences free of charge. We are ready to expand on our programs and outreach in upcoming seasons and years.

The overall budget (detail in charts on page 15-16) for the HMKCWF this year was just over \$105,000. About 73%, just over \$ 77,000, were in kind contributions by partners, reducing the funds spent to just over \$28,000. We had more, and a greater variety of, financial contributors than in any previous years with 18 funding/sponsorship partners and individual donors contributing about 21% of the overall funds required in the budget. While the TLDSB did not provide any funding at the board level this year, 5 of the 9 schools in attendance were able to contribute just over \$750 collectively in a 'pay what you can' approach to making the Fall Festival happen.

Supporters of the HMK Children's Water Festival were acknowledged in many ways including thank you letters, posting of logos and/or names on the HMK Children's Water Festival website (<http://www.hmwaterfestival.ca/sponsors/>), social media announcements, as well as logos and/or names listed on various guides and publications distributed to teachers and volunteers, and displayed on signage at all our events.

Since 2005, the HMK Children's Water Festival has been successfully bringing free water education to elementary students from the TLDSB area. During this time, while there have been some consistent financial supporters, there is a need to update and expand this list of reliable sources of funds. The FEEL board, HMK Children's Water Festival committee and contract coordinator will be engaging with partners to strategically plan for more sustainable funding through 2024 and the expansion of programs and outreach.

We have set goals for 2024 of minimally raising the approximate \$40,000 required to run a 2-day Fall Festival at Kinark and will continue with growing our connections with schools and families at public, specially arranged group events, and online programming.



## Media

HMKCWF and our programs such as our spring Water Hero Big Splash Contest and donation drive were represented in a few key media pieces this year. Samples/links are below. This outreach through media was an improvement from last year that will continue into the new year with media partner relationship building.

*The Highlander article by Lisa Gervais below:*



Ethan Smith looks for water bugs at the Haliburton, Muskoka and Kawartha Children's Water Festival Oct. 5 at Kinark Outdoor Centre. See more coverage on page 12. Photo by Lisa Gervais.

### All things water

Kinark Outdoor Centre was once again used for The Haliburton, Muskoka and Kawartha Children's Water Festival Oct. 5. The outdoor fall festival saw 350 Grade 4-6 students from nine Trillium Lakelands District School Board schools take part. Co-ordinator Kara Mitchell said they learned all about water and related environmental stewardship. "Through fun, hands-on activities, children made important connections between the health of water, supporting ecosystems and our own health." Mitchell said the event is hosted through a partnership of local charity FEEL (Friends of Ecological and Environmental Learning), Kinark and U-Links centre for community-based research. There were also about 75 volunteers on site. To get involved in future festivals or programs offered through the year, go to [hmwaterfestival.ca](http://hmwaterfestival.ca) or [waterheroes.ca](http://waterheroes.ca).

Top: William Morrison checks out one of the 39 stations. Middle left: Water heroes, Josie Wilcox and Kenzie Dunn. Middle right: The Haliburton fire crew led students through their paces. Above: Renley, from Muskoka Falls Public School, holds a catfish at the 'it's a trout's life' station. Photos by Lisa Gervais.

## Naturally Yours



The Water Strider relies on the surface tension of water to stay afloat. /TIM BANO Special to County Life

## Bugs in the Mud

RICK WHITTEKER  
Special to County Life

Have you ever thought it was raining but looking up, there is only clear, blue sky? What might appear like raindrops on water is the result of the movement of a small insect called a Water Strider. Their jerky motion can turn calm waters into a torrent of tiny ripples, like a soft rain without the clouds.

The Water Strider is like a miracle bug, seemingly walking on water. The trick is that each of its spindly six legs are tipped with tiny water repellent hairs that trap air and allow them to skim along the surface. It is the surface tension of the water that keeps them afloat. Turbulent water is not friendly to Water Striders; they are only found in calm water.

On bright days, in shallow water, you can see their magnified silhouette on the lake or river bottom. Their shadow gives away their presence; when still, the Water Strider is almost invisible. Predatory, they wait for a meal, usually an insect, to drop into the water. Using their two short forelegs, they grab their victim and pierce it with its needle-like mouth parts and suck out their life juices! Yikes!

Have you ever noticed a small, black beetle creating a wake on the water's surface? The zig zagging Whirligig Beetle is a shiny, black, oval-shaped beetle about one centimeter long. Capable of 50 to 60 strokes

per second, this fast, erratic, surface swimmer makes things difficult for predators to hunt them.

Whirligigs swim half submerged with compound eyes that are divided into two parts which allow them to look below and above the surface at the same time. While also adapted to swim underwater, the Whirligig Beetle traps air under its wings creating a bubble that forms at its hind end ... like submerging with a full scuba tank!

Joining other aquatic critters, this beetle spends its larval stage on the lake or pond bottom. This water-body bottom habitat called the benthic zone.

Looking at some critters in the benthic zone, I recently facilitated a program called, Bugs in the Mud, part of a special event for the Kushog Lake Property Owners Association and funded by Haliburton County Development Corporation through their Local Initiatives Program. Hosted by Jim and Nicole Warner on Kushog Lake, the idea was initiated by Susan Harvey who was looking for fun activities for children and families that involved learning about lake health, stewardship, and some critters who share the lake-front habitat.

About 30 children and adults participated in this event organized by the Haliburton-Muskoka-Kawartha Lakes Children's Water Festival. In small groups, rotations were set to participate in six different learning centres with themes like invasive species,

see page 3

## Naturally Yours

from page 2

blue-green algae, water pollution and aquatic invertebrates (animals without a backbone).

Bugs in the Mud is an activity that introduces kids and adults to the unique critters of the benthic zone. They are called benthic macroinvertebrates because they live in the benthic zone but can be seen with the naked eye! Benthic macroinvertebrates are good indicators of water quality: some are tolerant and others intolerant of toxins and other pollutants, disturbance, oxygen levels and temperature.

These critters spend part, sometimes even all their life underwater. Because of this long-term contact with the water, their presence is largely determined by the quality of water where they live. Some resilient critters that can survive most conditions including scuds, sow bugs and midges, while some of the less tolerant like mayflies, dragon and damselflies and caddisflies need to live in pristine waters.

Although less flashy than the whirligig or the strider, there is one aquatic larva that always captures the attention of program participants. This critter falls under the decidedly unscientific title of a creepy crawl! Dragonfly larvae or nymphs emerge slowly from the muck of a dip net like something prehistoric. Predatory in both its nymph and adult stages, the drab looking dragonfly



The exoskeleton or exuvia of a Dragonhunter dragonfly found on the Gull River. /Submitted by Rick Whitteker

nymph prowls the water bottom looking for prey.

Like something out of the movie Alien, these nymphs are equipped

with a retractable jaw. This lightning-fast appendage can spring forward

to capture prey such as minnows and tadpoles. Spending up to four years in

this larval stage, the mature nymph will eventually crawl up onto a dock post or plant stem and moult for the final time when the adult emerges. Wiggling out of the nymph's exoskeleton, called an exuvia, the adult can take several hours to dry off and pump blood through its body and wings. Most adults have one or two weeks to live and, in some cases, up to eight weeks if they can avoid fly-catchers and vehicle radiators. Eating and mating take up all their adult phase before they perish.

Other critters collected from our shoreline dip net were leeches, sow bug larvae, scuds, mites, snails, minnows, tadpoles, Water Boatman, Backswimmers, and a Predaceous Diving Beetle. We also found a damselfly larva. Not as robust as the dragonfly nymph, they have three breathing filaments behind their abdomen whereas the dragon fly nymph's breathing apparatus is inside their abdomen.

The Bugs in the Mud program is a great way to engage kids and adults in learning about the common critters in our lakes and waterways. Providing a good indicator of water quality with fascinating adaptations, these macroinvertebrates are part of the complex aquatic web of life. Once past the "ick factor", there is so much interesting life below the water's surface. And on the surface, keep an eye out for small waxes and rain drops ... even on sunny days.

16 Minden Times • WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 2023

# Water Hero spring campaign launched

For more than 13 years the Haliburton, Muskoka and Kawartha Children's Water Festivals (HMKCWF) have inspired local children to take care of waters' health through fun, hands-on activities. Mostly this has been through an annual Fall Festival for elementary school children but in more recent years the group have developed online resources and Water Hero programs available for young learners and teachers, year round. Through Covid they've adapted towards also offering activities at public events.

FEEL (Friends of Ecological and Environmental Learning) the charity that the Children's Water Festival is the premiere program of, recently learned that a few major partners over the years, will not be able to provide funds this year. In order to host the Water Festivals planned for elementary school children in the fall, and families in the summer, the charity is launching a spring "Water Hero Donation Campaign".

Local folk who can and regional businesses are invited to join our water hero team this spring, to pool together resources for local children and waters.

Contributions to the HMK Children's Water Festival program :

- Help keep fun, outdoor water learning events available to children of the local regions; Haliburton, Muskoka and Kawartha Lakes

- Help us overcome a \$13,000 funding shortfall this spring to run planned programs
- Support hundreds more local elementary students attending our hopefully two day festival in the fall and keeping this free of charge to schools and families

- Help us share with families at public events this summer
- Support local children, their learning about life-giving water and so the health of local watersheds for future generations too

**To Donate:** Contributions of \$20 or more send another local student to our Fall Children's Water Festival and can receive a charitable receipt. \$450 will send a local class.

Creative Sponsorship packages including different recognitions in our communities can be arranged with local business water heroes contributing \$100 or more.

Pledges for funds to be sent later in the year are also greatly appreciated until June 21.

Donations can be sent via e-transfer by arrangement, by Credit Card or Papal on our CanadaHelps account online or mailed to; HMK Children's Water Festival (FEEL), P.O. Box 1292, Haliburton, ON K0M 1S0.

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