



Summer 2024 Newsletter

Project Updates

Spring Outmigration

The RST was launched in the beginning of March and was removed from the river at the end of May this year. Volunteers checked the RST each day and counted fish, many days thousands of them! We estimated that roughly 3,000,000 pink and chum salmon left the Tsolum in those three months! With these encouraging numbers, we are planning to shift our focus to Coho salmon, concentrating on restoring juvenile habitat.

Drought Response

The Tsolum is expected to experience severe drought conditions this year. In the coming months we will continue to test the efficacy of our aeration units. These portable solar-powered 'bubblers' will hopefully prevent fish death due to low oxygen conditions. The units can be used to assist adult or juvenile fish; this year we will target juveniles. Our goal is to have teams ready to efficiently and quickly deploy these units when distressed fish are discovered. Hopefully we can improve fish health enough to move them to a safer area, or create passage for them.

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Upcoming Events

- Music Fest - July 13-14
- Guided Walk in Tsolum Spirit Park – August 18
- Black Creek Fall Fair- Sept 7
- Family Watershed Day – Sept 22

Eyes on the Tsolum River Group

The ERT group gathers information including fish and wildlife sightings, water quality data, and general observations about the status of the river and watershed (see recent reports on our website). In April, after a clean-up of an abandoned encampment along Towhee Creek, volunteers were able to rescue coho fry that were stranded in the ponds. Environmental Response Teams are being formed to conduct these rescue operations responsively. To be part of the action, call Allan Chamberlain (604) 815-9324, or email tsolumriver@shaw.ca

Invasive Species Control

Non-native Pumpkinseed sunfish, discovered in Wildwood Marsh in 2022, are continuing to be monitored. They prefer slow moving water, so they may colonize areas where Tsolum coho juveniles spend the winter months. To help prevent the spread of pumpkinseed fish, a fence was installed on Smit creek, the tributary that leaves Wildwood Marsh. We are watching for them in other Tsolum tributaries and the mainstem; so far over 6000 pumpkinseed sunfish have been captured! Bullfrogs are an ongoing concern, but we have had some success controlling them locally in the past few years. We encourage everyone to learn to identify the adults and tadpoles and help in their eradication. Watch for trap-building workshops to be held this fall.

Watershed Health Assessment

TRRS has started conducting riparian assessments. A training session was held in June and volunteers and staff are trekking into randomly selected sites to assess the riparian zone in the mainstem Tsolum and various tributaries. More fish crossing assessments still need to be completed, as well as water quality assessments. Further training sessions will be held in the fall.

iNaturalist and TWIG

To monitor the migration and habitat of Western toads, the Tsolum Wetland Interest Group is using iNaturalist. If you see a Western toad, toadlet or tadpole within the Tsolum watershed, take a photo, record your location and the time and date, and upload it to iNaturalist. It will be filtered into the 'Tsolum Western Toad Project'. We hope to determine where toadlets commonly congregate and migrate, and the dispersal of western toads in all life stages throughout the watershed.

Meet our summer students...both grew up here in the Comox valley!



Amina Turner
and Cole
Lochhead

Amina has a passion for the outdoors and protecting the beautiful ecosystem that surrounds us. She

will be returning to the University of Victoria to complete second year, and plans on working in the environmental sector to foster positive change!

Cole graduated from high school last summer and will be starting a biology related program this fall. He is an avid fly fisher and spends much of his free time in the local waters.

Remember when enjoying the river this summer:

- avoid kicking up silt
- keep soap out of the river and use reef-friendly sunscreen
- do not disturb small fish where they gather- they are taking refuge from the heat!

All fishing along the Tsolum River is prohibited!

Please watch for and respect these signs



