

McKenzie Wetland

In 2006, the Regional Municipality of York and the Town of Aurora partnered to reconstruct St. John's Sideroad while preserving and improving the natural wildlife habitat of the McKenzie Wetland.



History of the McKenzie Marsh



Mr. Gord McKenzie -1978

The area currently covered by the McKenzie Marsh was swamp forest before the area was settled in the 1800's. After settlement, the area was cleared for farming and despite spring flooding, eventually became a grazing area for cattle.

In 1973, the McKenzie family of Aurora, in conjunction with Environment Canada and Ducks Unlimited, constructed a dam at the north end of the marsh's floodplain, creating a permanent highly productive wetland habitat teeming with wildlife.



Wet culvert allowing animal passage

Root wads

Vertical wall and culvert crossing

St. John's Sideroad before Improvements

St. John's Sideroad had a number of features that required improvement:

- Narrow shoulders and lack of lighting did not permit safe walking or biking.
- Little water circulation between north and south sections of wetland.
- Runoff of oil, dirt and other sediments directly into the marsh.
- High loss of animals crossing the road.



St. John's Sideroad before construction -1996

Timeline for Improvements

- Environmental Assessment planning process began in 1996.
- Approval to proceed with project was received in 2002.
- Construction began in the summer of 2004.
- Construction completed June 2006.



St. John's Sideroad under construction -2005

St. John's Sideroad after Improvements

The project provided for the protection, restoration and enhancement of the sensitive ecosystem of the McKenzie Wetland including the following features:

Wetland Enhancements

- New, larger, wet culverts installed to permit better water circulation and safer animal passage under road.
- New dry culvert with fencing installed to permit safe animal crossing under road.
- Curbs and gutters installed with special treatment to catch and treat road runoff.
- Root wads installed throughout the marsh to allow for multiple safe nesting sites and important cover for fish.
- Vertical walls support the roadway and minimize intrusion into the marsh. These walls also prevent animals from easily accessing the road surface, thereby reducing animal loss.



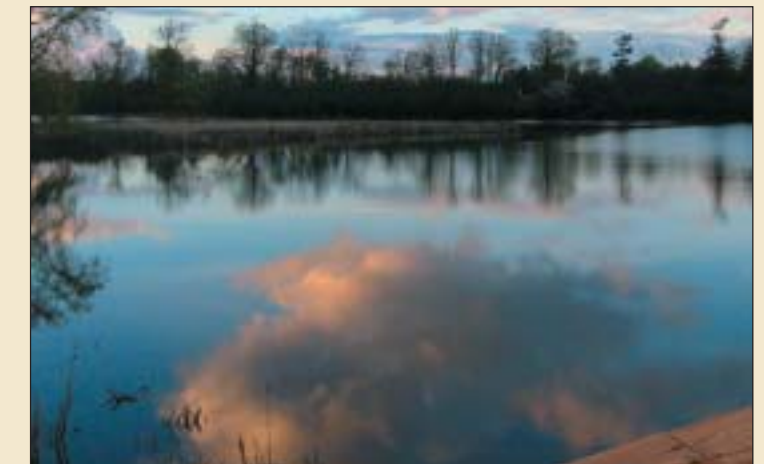
A family of ducks enjoying the wetland

Community Enhancements

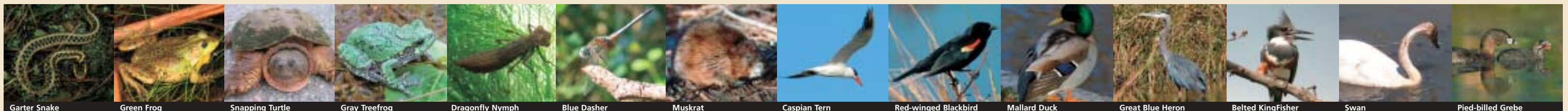
- A wooden boardwalk with benches and a sidewalk was constructed along the length of the marsh allowing people to walk, bike and enjoy the natural habitat. The boardwalk now forms part of the Nokiidaa Trail System, linking it to the Holland River Trail System.
- Antique-style light posts were installed along the boardwalk for illumination.



St. John's Sideroad after construction - 2006



Animals that make their home in the McKenzie Wetland include:



Garter Snake

Green Frog

Snapping Turtle

Gray Treefrog

Dragonfly Nymph

Blue Dasher

Muskrat

Caspian Tern

Red-winged Blackbird

Mallard Duck

Great Blue Heron

Belted Kingfisher

Swan

Pied-billed Grebe