

RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY



Preserving the Rainy Lake Watershed

A Rainy Lake Reflection

Building a Family Cabin by Delsie Cumming

While vacationing on Rainy Lake with Kate and Bill Noden, Kate and I were on a blueberry expedition. She led me to the top of a rock and told me to look out over the lake. The view was breath taking. I was excited and could hardly wait to talk to my family about building a cabin on the site. The next morning I took my husband Bob to the site and I began showing him all the possibilities that would exist. For example, there was a natural staircase that one could scamper up. There was the hint of a beach. There was a sheltered harbour, and you really couldn't see another cabin. Bob agreed, and by the next spring we owned the site.

Bob and our sons found four large cedar trees in the swamp and hauled them to the building site. Skinned and laid out, they would dry over the course of the next year and become the beams for the rafters of the cabin.

All the summer of 1966, our family would travel to the lake on Friday nights, work all weekend, and return just before dark on Sunday night. We

removed brush, built a crib dock using beach rocks as ballast, collected loose pulp logs, and felled pine trees for our larger beams.

During the year of Canada's centennial, we began building our cabin. Before the frost was out, we dug to bedrock for the footings. Blocks and cement, lumber and nails, stain and tools all came across the water in our boat *Mother's Worry*.

We didn't have electrical power or skill saws so every board was cut by a handsaw. We stained the walls while they were still on the ground. Once the walls were assembled, we had a crew up to raise the walls.

Next came the roof. The cedars that we had hauled from the swamp a year earlier were lifted into place. Then the rafters, laid out, nailed together, and lifted into place. By August our roof was in place and we had purchased six windows from Eaton's catalog. An old door from the original Noden cabin became our front door. By the end of August, we were tucked in. Using our own hands and hearts, we had built our family cabin.

Rainy Lake Cormorant Research

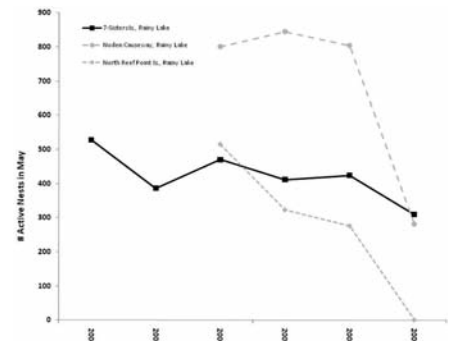
by Steve Windels, PhD

In 2009, Voyageurs National Park, with financial support from the Rainy Lake Conservancy and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, conducted double-crested cormorant research and monitoring on the Ontario portion of Rainy Lake. These activities included:

1. Identification of breeding colonies and counts of nesting cormorants. Two colonies were identified as having actively breeding cormorants from aerial surveys in early June 2009: Seven Sisters Islands and an unnamed island near the Causeway. An additional colony off Reef Point that had been occupied in 2008 was not utilized by breeding cormorants in 2009 (see Figure). Two other colonies were identified by water after the breeding season:

one in the North Arm and another in Northwest Bay. All five of these known colony sites will be surveyed from the air in 2010 by VNP staff.

2. Survival, diet, and health of cormorant nestlings. In cooperation with a graduate student from North Dakota State University, Jake Randa, we also collected information on chick survival and health in relation to what they are eating. Jake



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will compare results from the Rainy Lake colonies to others in Minnesota and North Dakota. Chick predation by gulls and eagles was very high in 2009 on Rainy Lake, and the Seven Sisters colony did not fledge any chicks. Data analysis is in progress but we expect preliminary results to be included in a 2009 Progress Report due in Summer 2010.



Banded cormorant chick

3. Chick banding. VNP staff, with assistance from the OMNR office in Fort Frances, have been banding cormorant chicks in Rainy Lake since 2008. Each chick is weighed, measured, and affixed with an aluminum numbered leg band and a plastic colored leg band (orange band with white letters in the format Number-Letter-Letter). We banded over a 100 chicks in 2008 but less than 30 in 2009 because of heavy



Double-crested Cormorant chick band

predation. Recovery or sightings of banded chicks allow scientists to better understand cormorant migration patterns and movement between breeding colonies. Several chicks banded from Rainy Lake have been recovered in the wintering grounds in Texas and Mississippi, primarily as a result of being legally shot by permitted aquaculture facilities. Banding will continue in June/July 2010.

Lake Sturgeon Research

The Rainy Lake Conservancy continues to support studies to better understand the Rainy Lake watershed's environment. We are pleased that Professor Brian McLaren, natural Resources Management, Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, encourages his students to use Rainy Lake as a research study area. Currently two Masters candidates, Matt Lebron and William Halliday, are studying Lake Sturgeon habitat on Rainy Lake and the Namakan Reservoir using special underwater cameras that the Rainy Lake Conservancy donated on behalf of this project. Please contact Paul Anderson at info@rainylakeconservancy.org for more information.

Environmental Research contact: Paul Anderson

A Note from the President




I'm happy to report that Rainy Lake is as beautiful as ever this spring despite the low water. Over the winter most of us have pursued our own lives far from the frozen lake. Several directors, however, have spent a great deal of time and

energy in preparing a formal response to the Ojibwe Power and Energy's Environmental Report on the proposed dams at High Falls on the Namakan River. Fortunately we have been joined and supported by Voyageurs National Park Association and the Quetico Foundation as well as other organizations as we look for alternatives to this project. The next step in the process is to respond to OPEG's final Environmental Report which is due to be released this summer.

Members of the Easement Committee have also worked on preparing a conservation easement agreement with the White family. Unfortunately, Sam is no longer with us to see his dream of the easement on Echo Island come true. Stephanie and his children are, however, committed to carrying out his wishes to protect the island and we hope to see the easement completed this year. We will greatly miss Sam, a good friend, an able leader and a dedicated conservationist.

As you read this newsletter, you'll learn of the conservancy's summer plans and projects. I thank you, our members, our directors and our volunteers for supporting the conservancy and making it the strong organization it is. May you all enjoy the best of summers on our beautiful lake, enjoying the company of your family and friends. As I return to the lake each year, I think of the words of John Bourroughs who said: "I go to Nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in tune once more." What better place than Rainy Lake for that soothing and healing to take place!


Dale Callaghan
President

Ecological Gifts Program

Canada's Ecological Gifts Program provides a way for Canadians with ecologically sensitive land to protect nature and leave a legacy for future generations. Made possible by the terms of the Income Tax Act of Canada and the Taxation Act in Quebec, it offers significant tax benefits to landowners who donate land or a partial interest in land to a qualified recipient. Recipients ensure that the land's biodiversity and environmental heritage are conserved in perpetuity.

The Ecological Gifts Program is administered by Environment Canada in cooperation with dozens of partners, including other federal departments, provincial and municipal governments, and environmental non-government organizations.

In December, 2009, the Rainy Lake Conservancy received notice from Environment Canada that it is now certified to receive ecological gifts. This ability of the Conservancy to accept eco gifts will allow Canadian donors of land or conservations easements to receive the best Canadian tax benefit available for their gift to the Rainy Lake Conservancy. It is a positive step forward for the Conservancy.

To date, over 800 ecological gifts valued at over \$500 million have been donated across Canada, protecting over 134,000 hectares of wildlife habitat. More than one-third of these ecological gifts contain areas designated as being of national or provincial significance, and many are home to some of Canada's species at risk.

Dale Callaghan, President

A Fond Farewell to Samuel W. White, Jr.

Founding president, past president, board member, advisor and mentor, Sam White will be sadly missed by the members of the Rainy Lake Conservancy. Sam was an avid supporter and champion of conservation, bringing his vision of land protection to the Rainy Lake watershed. Leading by example, at the time of his death Sam was working to protect his family's Rainy Lake summer home, Echo Island, with a conservation easement to keep it in the same rustic state as today. Sam loved life and lived it with intelligence, enthusiasm and fun. To be greeted by Sam was always to be greeted with a smile and a twinkle in his eye!

Friend and neighbor Paul W. Larsen



April 23, 1919 - February 15, 2010

Save the Date

Mark your calendars now for the 11th Annual General Meeting for the Rainy Lake Conservancy. Plan to be at the Rendez-Vous in Fort Frances at 2:00 pm on Sunday, August 8, 2010.

This year we are pleased to welcome Brian McLaren as guest speaker at the August AGM. Brian is an Associate Professor, Department of Natural Resources Management, Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. He is presently supervising two post graduate students conducting Lake Sturgeon research on Rainy Lake and the Namakan River. The Rainy Lake



Lake Sturgeon tagging on Rainy Lake

Conservancy is proud to have funded the purchase of an underwater camera which has been put to good use in these studies. We are looking forward to an exciting presentation of the research done to date and also to sharing with Brian his passion for the Namakan River and

Rainy Lake. Brian says that he fell in love with our area a few years ago when he was introduced to Rainy Lake through his graduate students who were working at Voyageurs National Park. Now completely hooked, he hopes to continue working in our watershed for years to come.

Come and get the latest news of Conservancy activities, see your fellow supporters of Rainy Lake and enjoy a beverage and appetizers prepared by the capable staff of La Place Rendez-Vous. Please note the 1-hour earlier start to accommodate our members coming long distances.

AGM contact: Kay Larsen

Cross-Border: Welcome and Thanks

The Rainy Lake Conservancy warmly welcomes Kris Larson to his new position as the Executive Director of the Minnesota Land Trust. We have had harmonious and fruitful relations with him in the past in another capacity and are well pleased to have the opportunity to work with him once again now that he is at the helm of the Minnesota Land Trust.

We are again more than grateful to all of you who have generously donated to the Minnesota Land Trust/Rainy Lake Fund and would like to give special thanks to James and Roselyn Hawley for their donation of \$5000 this past winter.

Cross-Border contact: Anne Newhart

Nature Outing and Field Trip

This summer Conservancy members are invited to participate in two great field trips.

Cranberry Peatlands Interpretive Trail (the bog) is the venue for our first outing. Andrea Trembath will be our expedition leader. Come and learn about the plants and animals inhabiting the bog as you meander along the boardwalk leading into this special place. Plan to meet at 2PM, Sunday, July 18th in the parking lot of the Ontario Travel Information Centre directly across the street from the border entry building in Fort Frances. Some car pooling will be utilized. If you have questions, please contact Andrea at 807-274-4770.

The second outing is a geology field trip sponsored by the Rainy River Valley Field Naturalists. Geologist Peter Hinz of the Ontario Ministry of Mines in Thunder Bay will lead this field trip east of Fort Frances on Saturday, July 24th. Along the way, you might be able to see sandstone, conglomerates, granite, molybdenum, a nugget vein and a copper mine. Attendees will meet at 8:30AM in the east parking lot of the Fort Frances Memorial Sports Centre on Scott Street in Fort Frances. RSVP to this invitation by calling Mary at 807-274-6069 or e-mailing info@rainylakeconservancy.org.

Nature Outings contacts: Ginny Sweatt and Andrea Trembath



Cranberry Peatlands Interpretive Trail

Mary Lysne

Winners in the Holiday Parade

New Board member Andrea Trembath and her family organized, built, entered and drove a Rainy Lake Conservancy float in the Fort Frances Holiday Parade late last November. It was tastefully decorated with trees and a canoe in a wildlife scene. Adding to our presence in the community, the float featured a large banner containing the Rainy Lake Conservancy logo. Would you believe our float won first place in the non-profit category?

Marketing contact: Mary Lysne



Prize-winning float

Ed and Betty McLeod

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Newsletter Editor: Mary Lysne
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DID YOU KNOW?

The bodies of walleye and bass are not designed for rapid elevation changes. 50% of walleye experience mortality caused by barotrauma after being brought up from 12-13 metres. For responsible fish conservation, consider limiting your fishing to depths less than 10 metres.

From charts provided by Darryl McLeod, MNR, Fort Frances

MISSION STATEMENT

To work with property owners, governments and local communities to preserve and protect the natural beauty, historic features, and ecological and recreational values for present and future generations, particularly within but not restricted to Rainy Lake.

[Visit our web site at www.rainylakeconservancy.org](http://www.rainylakeconservancy.org)