

RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY



PRESERVING THE RAINY LAKE WATERSHED

A Rainy Lake Reflection

Bruce Caldwell – A Career Dedicated to the Lake

Spring 1954, early in the ice break up, Bruce Caldwell was camped on the shores of Northwest Bay. He and his helpers had set and were monitoring a box net to collect walleye spawn. One evening, a local native fisherman paddled through the leads in the ice to the camp. As they played cribbage together, the man waxed lyrical about the lake and its environs. Hearing of Bruce's origins in Napanee, Ontario, the fisherman said, "Once you taste the water of Rainy Lake you won't want to return to southern Ontario." "He was right," said Bruce, "I tasted the water that day; I've had a soft spot for the lake ever since."

Bruce stayed on Rainy Lake as a conservation officer, working his way up through the ranks until, in the early 1960s, he was appointed District Fisheries Management Officer at the provincial Lands and Forests (later MNR) office in Fort Frances. Bruce, and other staff having overlapping interests, monitored all aspects of the



Mooneye from Iowa DNR

lake's fishery, aquatic wildlife, and water quality. For 30 years Bruce had a unique chance to observe Rainy Lake's evolving ecology including: the mystifying disappearance of Golden Shiner minnows, the arrival of invasive species like Rainbow Smelt, and the introduction of Giant Canada Geese (a subspecies). Bruce and his team were the first to document the presence of Mooneye, a relative of the Goldeneye, in Rainy Lake at Spawn Inlet and Seine River.

Bruce and his staff initiated water testing on Rainy Lake. He noted that water testing was not done on Rainy Lake in a systematic way until the late 1960s. Thereafter it was done every few years, at 6 set locations, according to standard criteria: depths, oxygen, Secchi disc, Chlorophyll, and TDS (total dissolved solids). Those early baseline records are located in the Fort Frances offices of the MNR.

As told to Stephen Challis

(Note: Stephen Challis worked as a summer Lake Survey Technician for Bruce and the MNR in the 1970s.)

Sustainable Forever

By Ilka Milne, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Northwest Ontario Program Manager

Rainy Lake Conservancy and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) took on exciting challenges for the 2004-2006 Northwest Ontario Conservation Partnership*. First, we have been working on how to use Bill 119 and our partnership with The Nature Conservancy (US) to develop a conservation easement strategy which is true to our respective organizations' missions and true to our landowner partners' desire to leave a natural legacy sustainable forever. But this is coming to life during a difficult time for conservation easements. With The Nature

Conservancy (TNC), the world's largest environmental organization, overhauling their easement program in response to a critique from the US Senate Finance Committee, land trusts are examining their practices on every level. For example, they're investigating how well an easement protects the values they've sworn to protect for the public good, and whether they have the financial and personnel capacity to monitor the easement in perpetuity. I am honoured to be working with the Rainy Lake Conservancy and its members to create a win-win-win agreement among

* See Spring 2005 RLC newsletter for an introduction to NOCP.

Water Quality via Satellite Imaging

The environmental research committee continues to focus on monitoring the water quality of Rainy Lake and the Rainy River Watershed.

An exciting new project for 2005 is RLC's participation in a large study using satellite imagery to remotely monitor key water quality parameters on large northern lakes, including Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods. In this cutting-edge technique, water samples are compared with satellite images taken at the same time. If the technique proves to be successful, daily satellite images could be used to monitor anomalies such as algae blooms, spills, and septic tank leakages. It could be a quick way, in real time, to evaluate a lake's water quality. Check later this fall on our RLC website for the latest status and test results.

This summer RLC again participated in the Voyageurs National Park/Academy of Certified Hazardous Materials Managers lake characterization study. This is a



A volunteer checks in her boat's samples



Volunteers collect samples

massive effort involving dozens of volunteers handling hundreds of samples throughout two intense weekends. Namakan Reservoir was sampled this year; Rainy Lake was sampled in 2004.

It costs approximately \$300 per site to analyze the samples collected for one of RLC/MPCA's joint monitoring programs. Three additional sites are ready for

sampling when money for those sites becomes available.

Jesse Anderson, research scientist with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, provided us with a current status report covering Rainy Lake at the RLC 2005 Annual General Meeting. Preliminary test results indicate the water quality on Rainy Lake appears to be pretty good. Jesse's presentation will be posted on the RLC web site this fall.

*Environmental Research contact: Paul Anderson
paanderson@usfamily.net*

Bug Zapper Resident

This clever green tree frog spent the summer living by a great food source: the well of a bug zapper.



Tree frog by Claudia Home

President's Message

Greetings on a warm, peaceful autumn day – a good time to review RLC's accomplishments over the summer and to welcome the new board and executive. As you read the newsletter, I think you'll agree that your board members, executive officers and volunteers have done much to forward the goals of the conservancy this year.

Apart from committee reports available at the AGM, members will be interested to know that:

- Donna Romyn, an accounting technician for Stewart, Sande and Zimmerman Chartered Accountants in Fort Frances, is our new treasurer, replacing Peter West who retired after many years of faithful service. Thanks to the firm for donating this service and to Donna for her keen interest in RLC.

- Kate Miller is the new Superintendent of Voyageurs National Park. Kate takes over from Barbara West, who is now superintendent of Chaco National Historical Park in New Mexico. We will miss Barbara's steady support, but look forward to working effectively with Kate on issues affecting Rainy Lake.

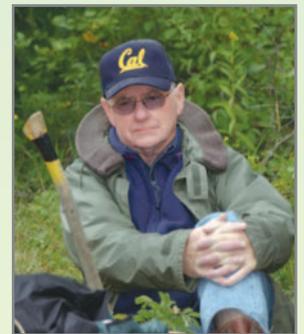
- In late August, Phil and Carolyn Wallis (nee White) gave a stimulating presentation to the executive committee and a few RLC members interested in conservation easements. We are fortunate that Phil and Carolyn have offered to share their years of conservation experience with us to help develop a program for land conservation on Rainy Lake.

- Tim Heinle, a successful fundraiser for Camp Koochiching, recently spoke to the board about how we could establish an endowment fund for RLC and about fund raising in general. He has kindly offered his help and expertise should we need him.

- The search is on for a new president and for directors to replace those whose terms will be up next spring. Please contact us if you can serve. We need you!

Have a good winter and get in touch if you have questions or suggestions.

*Dale Callaghan, President
Rest Island, Rainy Lake*



President Dale Callaghan

AGM 2005

The Rainy Lake Conservancy AGM was held at La Place RendezVous in Fort Frances, August 7, 2005. Over 50 members and guests were in attendance.

All who attended were happy with the meeting room, availability for boat docking, and car parking.

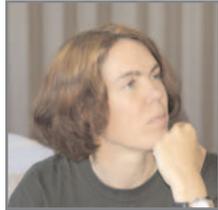
President

Dale Callaghan

ran a good meeting. Our two speakers, Ilka Milne and Jesse Anderson, gave well prepared, visual presentations on lake water quality and land conservation stewardship. Dale reviewed some of the goals RLC has achieved over the last two years.

We hope to see more of you at the 2006 AGM. It will be held at the RendezVous again, on Sunday August 6th. There are rumors that next year there will be a fantastic door prize! Be there.

Article by Norma Eberhardt. AGM contact: Dale Callaghan



Speakers Ilka Milne from NCC and Jesse Anderson from MPCA

Membership Report

RLC ended the 2005 membership year with 161 members. We are especially pleased to welcome several new members from the North Arm of Rainy Lake. This year we introduced a new category of membership: the corporate member. Congratulations to Betty's of Fort Frances for becoming our first corporate member in this new category.

Once again we acknowledge the great help provided by Don and Rhoda Dickson in tracking memberships, writing thank you notes, and sending membership cards. Their assistance is invaluable.

If you're looking for gift ideas, consider giving an RLC membership as a gift to a friend or family member. Downloadable membership application forms are available on our web site.

Membership contact: Paul Larsen

Sustainable Forever

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landowners, TNC and NCC for future generations.

Second, while private leadership is a cornerstone for NCC's conservation vision, scientific basis is just as fundamental. By early winter, we will release biodiversity 'hot spot' mapping for Northwestern Ontario. The Nature Conservancy is hosting planning sessions to develop Rapid Protection Plans for the conservation focus areas. One of these is the Border Lakes area which includes Rainy Lake.

With these two products put together, RLC, TNC and NCC will have the technical, spatial and strategic information for conservation on Rainy Lake.

Oaks, Bogs and a Purple Plant

Good things are happening for conservation in Northwestern Ontario, thanks in part to the \$49,500 Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) grant that RLC received in 2004-2005. Grant funds help support the Nature Conservancy of Canada's (NCC) Fort Frances office where Ilka Milne, program manager, is hard at work preserving land from Thunder Bay to Kenora. OTF funds have also been used this summer to hire two student interns who helped launch the Volunteer for Nature (VFN) program in our area. The first VFN event was held at the NCC Oak Grove Property where, one square meter at a time, volunteers catalogued plants. The second was held on Rainy Lake, where six RLC members and other local volunteers cleared Purple Loosestrife from a muddy bay on Gross Island.



A volunteer in the muck

Although beset with flooding and beaver problems, the Rainy River Valley Field Naturalists' bog walk, funded by the OTF grant, is going ahead. Ducks Unlimited has supported the bog project by underwriting the cost of a large interpretive sign which will be installed at the bog this fall. Local high school students have also offered to help by collecting and identifying bog species and using their GIS/GPS skills to map trails.

Grants contact: Phyllis Callaghan

To Market, To Market ...

Marketing efforts throughout the past year focused on efforts to establish RLC's image locally to more accurately reflect our mission, vision, and policy statements. For example, we are publishing our policy statement in the local newspapers this fall to clarify our stand on hunting and fishing which, by the way, is as follows: *To support, where applicable, the traditional uses of Rainy Lake including fishing, hunting, trapping, recreation and appropriate existing commercial activity.* RLC also recently joined the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce.

This summer, CBC and the Fort Frances Times interviewed Paul Anderson about the new cutting-edge technique of using satellite imagery to monitor water quality on area lakes. Subsequent articles appeared in the paper, and the live interview with Paul was broadcast on CBC. In addition, *Cottage Life* interviewed Phyllis Callaghan this fall for an upcoming article on island life in that magazine.

Marketing contact: Mary Lysne

Nature Outings

Standing in the big boots left by nature outings chair Claudia Horne, co-chairs Trish Hogan and Ginny Sweatt put together a lovely walk on the Beaver Pond Trail in Voyageurs National Park. Park



Beaver Pond in VNP Mary Lysne

Naturalist Lee Grim, who led the walk, gave a running dialogue on the geology of the boreal forest. At the beaver pond Lee talked about how and why the history of man is so intimately linked with the history of beavers. We're sorry so many of you missed this outing – our e-mail publicity apparently was a bit late or slow.

A number of RLC members took advantage of the summer's second outing: a tour of Oberholtzer's Mallard Island. It was a privilege to be guests at this soul refreshing, historic place.



Jean Replinger, Mallard Island

We are already off to a quick start for next summer – plans are underway to assemble loon nest platforms (thanks to meisterbuilder Paul Larsen) followed by a picnic lunch and trail walks at Harry and Ginny Sweatt's Red Pine Island. Date, time and cost TBD.

Nature Outings advisor: Claudia Horne

Article by Ginny Sweatt

Cormorants Come Under Scrutiny



DCCO nesting site VNP photo

The increased numbers of Double-crested Cormorants (DCCO) in area lakes have prompted the Voyageurs National Park (VNP) to undertake a study of these large, black waterfowl. Of particular interest is what the birds are eating and how their diet impacts fish populations in the lake.

To begin the study researchers assembled VNP's data about the distribution and breeding population of cormorants from 1973 to 2005 and discussed what they wanted to learn about the birds. After reviewing and organizing this material, they produced tables, diagrams, reports, protocols, and presentations, coming up with a research proposal for determining the potential impact of cormorants on VNP resources. The research will:

- Identify the species composition and size of fish comprising the Double-crested Cormorant diet during spring and fall migration and the breeding season
- Determine the ratio of breeding and non-breeding birds during the ice-free period
- Identify the foraging range and locations of aggregations of cormorants.

Aerial surveys and on site visits will be used to help gather data. Results of the study will be available later from VNP.

Article by Naturalist Lee Grim, Voyageurs National Park

Great Books About Rainy Lake

Do you have a favorite book about Rainy Lake? What do you consider excellent resource material for the watershed? Is there a local book you can't live without? How about area books for children? We would like to put together a list of your great Rainy Lake/watershed books. When we get enough suggestions, we'll publish the list on the website and make it available to RLC members. Send your recommendations to info@rainylakeconservancy.org or drop RLC a note in the mail.

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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