

# RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY



Preserving the Rainy Lake Watershed

## A Rainy Lake Reflection

**Persevering on Rainy Lake in the Thirties and Forties  
A Childhood Reflection by Woodsman Floyd Kielczewski as told to Joanna Loney**

I was born during the depression in a two-room cabin on McKenzie Point at the east end of Rainy Lake. The closest nursing facility was in Fort Frances, a 60 mile dog-sled ride away, so the birth was at home, tended by my father.



*Young Floyd carrying a deer home. Photo from A Mother's Survival in an Alien Wilderness by Violet Kielczewski.*

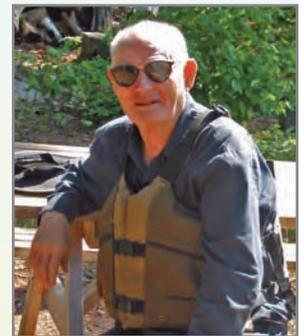
As a family, we worked hard. My parents had thirteen children, so we often fended for ourselves. I started hauling wood at four and shooting small game at nine. My brothers and I also salvaged logs, cut timber, fished, picked blueberries, guided, and of course trapped.

Animals were a big part of our life. We always had lots of sled dogs, and at one point we also kept a bear cub and a timber wolf. We also hunted

deer and moose for food, and my mother made clothes out of hide, and mattresses out of deer hair.

Boats were also important. I worked from our first steam tug when I was ten. When I was eleven, my parents arrived home blowing the horn of a two-story houseboat which they bartered from J.A. Mathew in Fort Frances. We lived mainly on that houseboat for the next few years, at which time we also built a second steamboat – the 47-foot S.S. Clipper. These boats, along with the canoes we built, were important to our livelihood.

My strongest memory, however, was the forest fire of 1936. We were living in an old logging camp at the time, which was three miles into the bush from Finland



*Floyd Kielczewski photo by Brian Johnson*

*Rainy Lake Reflection continued on page 2*

## Studying the Relationship between Moose and Beaver Ponds by Steve Windels, Terrestrial Ecologist, Voyageurs National Park

The threat of climate warming suggests that a northerly shift in the distribution of moose, among other species, is imminent, threatening moose populations in northern Minnesota and southern Canada, including parts of

Northwestern Ontario. Populations occupying the southern extents of their ranges may be at particular risk, where daily and seasonal weather conditions are likely to begin exceeding tolerable ranges. Beavers are a primary driver of



*M.S. student David Morris poses at one of the sampled beaver ponds in May 2011 where a datalogging temperature sensor was deployed to measure water temperature in the pond throughout the summer.*



*Moose may use beaver ponds for many reasons, including to feed on aquatic plants or as thermal refuge from high seasonal temperatures.*

*Photos courtesy of Voyageurs National Park*

ecological change in Voyageurs National Park and other areas in the boreal forest. Beaver-created impoundments create critical wetland habitats for a wide host of species, including waterfowl, fish, amphibians, aquatic plants, and moose. Moose traditionally have used wetlands for foraging on aquatic plants, to escape predators or to avoid biting insects. These wetlands will also provide areas of thermal refuge as summer temperatures continue to increase, further restricting the southern range

*Moose and Beaver continued on page 4*

## A Note from the President



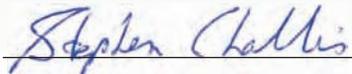
Autumn has arrived, the sweetest time on Rainy Lake in my opinion. My sentiment must derive from the fact autumn is a time of transition, both for the surrounding flora and fauna and for the seasonal occupants – like me – of the watershed. But Rainy Lake won't be far from my thoughts nor from yours!

During the coming winter, much of my "Rainy Lake time" will be spent on the various board and administrative matters the Conservancy faces as we continue the transition from an organization mostly led by our founding directors to one which has several more newer and younger faces at the helm. This will include work (i) to finalize the contract for a prospective administrative and board support staffer, (ii) to examine and perhaps rationalize the organization's committee structure and (iii) to apply to the Trillium Foundation for financial support that can be directed to our staff costs.

Other tasks include the need to further explore and better define our relationship with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and to work to promote the application which is about to come forward for a Canadian Heritage Waterway designation in the basin.

But, all of the work that has been done, and which will be done, will not be sustained in the absence of significant and careful contributions from our members and from others with a feeling of passion for the basin.

Please do not forget about Rainy Lake, or about the Conservancy, in the months ahead. In a sense, they both require an eternal vigilance.

  
Stephen Challis, President

## Rainy Lake Reflection

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Bay. The fire jumped the Pipestone River and was ready to jump the Falls River when we decided to move out of that burning heat to an island. We had already moved our traps, guns and bedding when it finally rained. My mother looked up to the sky and thanked God.

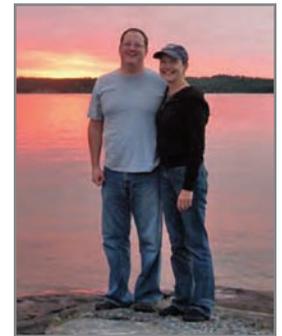
These are a few of my earliest memories. A book about my life living in the bush will be released in March and can be purchased by calling 218-757-3466.

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## From One End to the Other

We are thrilled to report the addition of three new directors for 2011-14: Joanna Loney, Patrick leMaistre, and Barry Sampson. They are helping the Conservancy expand its range representing the watershed from one end to the other.

Joanna grew up in Emo, Ontario, before pursuing study and work roles in Ottawa, Japan and Winnipeg. In the summer of 2010, she and her husband, Patrick leMaistre gave up city life to live year-round at their non-road-access cabin on Clearwater Lake. Joanna works as a freelance writer, trench digger, guide, native landscaper, and hauler. Based out of his remote office on Clearwater Lake, Patrick works as an education specialist for Cisco Systems.



Barry Sampson is a wildlife biologist working out of the Grand Rapids, Minnesota, DNR office. His work includes trapping and tracking mammals such as fisher, marten, wolves and white-tailed deer for population studies. He and his wife Ann are seasonal residents of Rainy Lake.



Meanwhile we note the retirement of Mary Ellis, Paul

Larsen and Phyllis Callaghan from the board. What a huge loss this is to the board! In particular, Phyllis is a founding member of the Conservancy and her contribution to the organization, and more generally to basin preservation, has been enormous. She has worked tirelessly and with great competence at all times. Thankfully, Phyllis has agreed to continue to provide advice and support to the board when called upon.

*Nominating Committee contact: Stephen Challis*

## Every One Counts

With the lake's deciduous trees turning colorful and dropping their leaves to the ground, and the water temperature dropping rapidly, it's easy to be reminded that winter nears on Rainy Lake. It's also a reminder that Rainy Lake Conservancy memberships are up for renewal (our membership year ends July 31). If you haven't renewed yours, please take a moment to do so.

Membership in the Rainy Lake Conservancy has grown consistently over the last five years to now over 200 individual or family members as more and more "lakers" learn of our focused effort. Memberships are a key revenue stream for the Conservancy and thus the scope and depth of our activities are influenced by our memberships. We look forward to your continued support!

*Membership contact: Chris Causey*

## Exploring Watershed Resources

- *Namakan River Hydro Project*: the project remains on hold. We continue to be hopeful that the proponents (Gemini Power and Lac La Croix First Nations) have had second thoughts about damaging this beautiful river.
- *Mining and exploration*: As most of you know, there has been a significant rise in mining activity across Ontario in the last few years including many exploration and advanced stage exploration projects situated in the vicinity of Rainy Lake. Three projects are moving rapidly toward production: the Rainy River Gold Project, approximately 50km northwest of Fort Frances; the Bending Lake Iron Deposit 25km south of Highway 17 along Highway 622; and the Hammond Reef Gold Mine Project located approximately 30km north of Atikokan. We recently provided several pages of comments to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency on the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) plan for the Hammond Reef Project. The Rainy Lake Conservancy supports responsible mining development in our Lake of the Woods/Rainy River watershed. We firmly believe that good decisions for both development and the environment result from good science, so we are very interested in EIS plans and the subsequent actual conduct of the Environmental Impact. We are also monitoring the Steep Rock Rehabilitation project via Environmental Research Committee member Gordon Martin.

*Environmental Research contact: Paul Anderson*

## Annual General Meeting 2011

Another successful annual meeting was held on August 7th at the Rendez-Vous Motel in Fort Frances. Highlights of the meeting included an update on Conservancy affairs by President Stephen Challis and a presentation by Chris Maher, Regional Vice President, Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). Stephen focused on the board's plans to hire a part time office assistant to provide permanent support for ongoing activities of the Rainy Lake Conservancy. He further indicated that his goal for the Board over the next three-year period is to manage the activities and finances of the Conservancy in a way that will ensure the continued stability of the organization.

Chris Maher shared with us his passion for Northwestern Ontario, reviewed briefly the 50 year old history of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and summarized NCC's Natural Area Conservation Plan for Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods. He explained how the development of the plan will raise awareness and provide education about the importance of preserving the natural heritage values of Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods.



## Friends and Partners

On a gusty late August afternoon Phyllis and I were invited to join Kris Larson, Executive Director of the Minnesota Land Trust and Fitz Fitzgerald,



*Kris Larson*

*Fitz Fitzgerald*

Conservation Director, Northern Region, on Wind Song Island, just over the border on the U.S. side of Rainy Lake. Kris and Fitz were on their annual visit to monitor the Wind Song conservation easement that was donated to the Minnesota Land Trust by Henry and Elizabeth Hyatt several years ago. We were impressed by the beauty of this 50-acre island and appreciated once again the foresight and generosity of the Hyatts in donating an easement on part of their property. Dean and Terry Kennedy, the present owners, graciously agreed to our presence on the hike, and led us on an interesting and informative tour of the 18-acre area which is protected in perpetuity by the conservation easement. As well as enjoying the walk, we had the pleasure of meeting the Kennedys, learning about the natural values of the property and gaining firsthand knowledge about what is involved in monitoring a conservation easement. This information will be very helpful when it comes time for the Rainy Lake Conservancy to monitor its first conservation easement, expected to be finalized in the near future.

We got together later with Kris and Fitz on Rest Island where we discussed common goals in the watershed, future directions of our partnership, and the possibility of a visit from the board of the Minnesota Land Trust next summer. We are very grateful for the assistance of the Minnesota Land Trust as we work together to protect this special lake that Minnesota and Ontario share.

*Conservation Easements and Land Securement: Dale Callaghan*

## Making Education Fun

When Conservancy members Joe and April Gauss decided to build loon nesting platforms this summer, their two grandchildren, Sam and Sydney, could hardly wait. Using PVC pipe, wire mesh, metal ties and glue, first one then another nesting platform took shape. Armed with spray cans of camo paint, the kids put on old clothes and had a ball spraying the platforms. They took a skiff to a marshy area and got flat thin grass to weave into the wire mesh. Then they found two protected bays and put one nest in each bay. When the kids asked why they were making nests for the loons, Joe and April explained about how loons' regular nests can be affected by changes in water levels and how a carefully constructed nesting platform can protect both nest and eggs from predators.



NICE GOING, GAUSS FAMILY!

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## Nature Outings An Uncertain Future

On a July day that was too hot even for the Eastern Kingbird to really care that we were near her favorite tree, a handful of hot but happy hikers spent some time enjoying the flora and fauna along the Cranberry Peatlands Interpretive Trail. At the end of the trail, hikers were welcomed with cold beverages and sweet treats. Even the birds got treats in the form of pinecones filled with seed and suet handmade by junior nature outings member Magnus Trembath.



Hikers at the bog (above)  
Magnus with bird treats (below)



On a second outing later in the summer Conservancy members had the opportunity to hear David Driapsa talk about historic architecture in Voyageurs National Park. Following his presentation, attendees hiked the beautiful Oberholtzer Trail in the Park.

Due to low attendance at the past few nature outings, the committee is considering the value and type of outings offered. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

*Nature Outings contacts: Ginny Sweatt, Andrea Trembath*

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## High School Green Expo

Educating students regarding environmental concerns and sustainable practices is what the Fort Frances High School "Green Expo" was all about. In September local organizations supporting environmental best practices were invited to visit with students attending the expo. Board member Candy Ginter's message to the students was that where they live is very special, not only aesthetically but also for its abundant wildlife and natural resources. Let's not take it for granted; it is worth protecting!



Candy Ginter with students

*Marketing contact: Mary Lysne*

## Moose and Beaver

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of moose. A new study that began in Summer 2011 focuses on the relationships between beaver wetlands and moose, specifically addressing the following objectives:

- Modeling aquatic habitat use by identifying and characterizing additional habitat characteristics, such as ambient air temperature, water temperature, and quality and abundance of aquatic forage.
- Identifying aquatic habitat use by moose in terms of season, time of day, and basic habitat characteristics, such as pond size and proximity to various vegetation types.
- Mapping a dynamic moose thermal environment through time, with concentration on the availability of suitable aquatic habitats.

While this project is primarily focused on the interplay between beaver wetlands and moose, it also provides the foundation for monitoring the effects of climate change on wetlands in general, including measurement of fundamental physical (temperature), chemical (soil chemistry), and biological (aquatic plants) characteristics of beaver ponds that are likely to be modified in the face of climate change. This study is a cooperative effort between Voyageurs National Park, Lakehead University, and University of Minnesota-Duluth, with additional support being provided by the Rainy Lake Conservancy and Algonquin Provincial Park.

*Environmental Research contact: Paul Anderson*

## 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)