

# RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY



Preserving the Rainy Lake Watershed

## A Lac la Pluie Reflection

Lady Frances Simpson – Diary Entry for June 1, 1830

The rain fell in torrents all night, and until 9 A.M. today: we however were afloat again at 12 P.M.

Breakfasted at 8 O'clock on an Island in Lac la Pluie, and almost immediately after we re-embarked, our Canoe struck on a rock, and sustained so much damage, as to occasion considerable alarm; and it required the utmost exertion of the people to keep her above water, till she reached the Shore. We could receive no assistance from our Consort, as she had started a few minutes before us, and was out of sight; having doubled the point of an Island when the accident took place: & to complete our misfortunes we found on gaining the Shore, that we had neither Bark, nor Pitch on



Lady Frances Simpson by Signe Green

board, to repair the damage, the whole of our stock having been consumed in making good the injury we sustained two days ago. Necessity, however, is the Mother of Invention: a piece of Oil-cloth answered as a substitute for bark; a piece of Twine for "Wattap," (or sewing roots) and the whole smeared over with Butter inside & out, (instead of Pine Pitch) which stopped the leak sufficiently to enable us to proceed, till we reached the Establishment of Lac la Pluie at 12 O'clock, just as a Canoe was being manned to go in search of us: it being apprehended that some accident had occurred from our non-arrival.

*Diary entry from Public Archives Manitoba, Hudson's Bay Company Archives Image used with permission from the Fort Frances Museum*

## New Research Partnerships

In accordance with our mission of preserving and protecting the Rainy Lake Watershed, the Rainy Lake Conservancy continues to help fund important research projects. This year the Conservancy has decided to join with other groups in supporting Lake Sturgeon and Double-crested Cormorant studies.

For the first project, the Conservancy has committed \$2200 for the purchase of a high definition underwater camera to map spawning beds in the Namakan River and in areas of Rainy Lake so far unexplored. Lake Sturgeon are a key component of the Rainy Lake ecosystem and are listed as "special concern" provincially due to historic declines in numbers and threats including the construction of dams which

disrupt habitat and interrupt spawning movements. Although acoustic and radio telemetry have been



Double-crested Cormorant photo by birdsofsanibel.free

used in the watershed to track sturgeon since 2003, at present little information exists about sturgeon spawning beds and nursery habitats, the potential for changes in water flow to affect these habitats and the potential for dams to serve as barriers to migration. Dr. Brian McLaren is directing the Lakehead University study which will address this information gap. Although we are fortunate to have a fairly healthy sturgeon population in the

watershed, we feel it is important to learn more about the conditions required for the spawning and survival

*Research Partnerships continued on page 2*

## Capital Grant Update

Last June, the Rainy Lake Conservancy was fortunate to receive a capital grant of \$11,200 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to purchase audiovisual and computer equipment. With the help of the new equipment we were able to increase awareness about the Conservancy and about the need for conservation at the local level. Utilizing a number of venues in Fort Frances, the portable display unit is helping the Rainy Lake Conservancy get its message out to the public. We use the new laptop computer and coloured laser printer constantly to carry out Conservancy business. In addition, the sound system proved to be very beneficial at last year's AGM and at last summer's MNR sturgeon presentation, especially for those of us whose hearing is beginning to deteriorate. We are very thankful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for this special capital grant. The newly purchased equipment enhances our image as a professional organization and makes the work of our volunteers much easier than in the past.



*Grants Committee member: Phyllis Callaghan*

## Research Partnerships continued from Page 1

The second study, conducted by the University of North Dakota, with support from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Voyageurs National Park, is focusing on the Double-crested Cormorant colony of the Noden Causeway in the North Arm and the Seven Sisters colony in the South Arm. Due to the dramatically increasing numbers of cormorants since the 1970s, there is growing concern among user groups that cormorants may be contributing to a decline of fish on the lake. By determining the diet composition and colony size of breeding pairs, and egg, chick and fledgling production, this study will help provide answers to questions concerning what effect, if any, the cormorants have on the Rainy Lake fishery. The Rainy Lake Conservancy is contributing \$2000 to support isotope analysis and some of the transportation costs related to the project.

Keep posted for upcoming research results of both studies on the Rainy Lake Conservancy website. *Environmental Research contact: Paul Anderson*  
*Government Relations and Networking contact: Dale Callaghan*

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## A Final Note from the President

An old Greek proverb states that a society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit under.



We may not all be literally planting trees but we in the Rainy Lake Conservancy, in working for preservation, are brothers and sisters united in that way of thinking, one that is spacious in going beyond the immediate, short term and exclusively personal.

Soon I will be completing my turn in the office of the presidency of this organization. But before that time, in June, the Rainy Lake Conservancy Board of Directors will be coming together with staff from the Ontario Land Trust Alliance out of Toronto so that we might assess ourselves as an organization. We have come a long way in these 10 years, and it is time again to look deeply into where we have been, who we are, our strengths, weaknesses and needs so that we can continue to be a positive force in the world community.

A mighty thank you to each and every one of you with whom I have traveled these past years.

Blessings to all,

Anne Newhart, President

## In Memoriam

We are saddened by the death on April 7th of Anne Siebert, daughter of Sam and Stephanie White. Anne was a long time supporter and member of the Rainy Lake Conservancy. In California, Anne was a leading force in the Old Towne Preservation Association of Orange. She taught those around her the virtues of patience, perseverance, and respect.

## Travels with Charlie

Perhaps we should name the Conservancy's pop-up display booth "Charlie" after John Steinbeck's book relating his traveling adventures in America. Our Charlie is traveling around town this summer, making at least four trips out of his box. In May his display was the highlight of the Conservancy's booth at the Fort Frances Home and Leisure show. Many people stopped to look at the pictures on the display and to pick up shoreline stewardship and land protection materials, and colorful bookmarks. After the show,



Charlie traveled to the Fort Frances Museum where he will spend most of the summer. In early June he spent two weeks at the Ontario Travel Information Centre in Fort Frances and in August he will join Conservancy members at their

Annual General Meeting. If you get a chance, stop by and say hello to Charlie at the museum or the Annual General Meeting on August 9th.

*Marketing and Media contact: Mary Lysne*

## Sustaining Memberships

Membership renewals often serve as an indicator of the health of an organization. Throughout its ten year history, Conservancy memberships have remained stable or have grown. In the 2005-2006 fiscal year, memberships totaled 164. In 2006-2007 that number rose to 187, and in 2007-2008 that number rose again, this time to 199. The Rainy Lake Conservancy is fortunate to have a strong core of members who take their commitment to conservation seriously. Many charitable organizations are not so lucky! This fiscal year, 2008-2009, the Rainy Lake Conservancy has been especially privileged to welcome 32 new members. At the same time, quite a few of the Conservancy's core members haven't renewed yet. This is not an unusual occurrence – sometimes you need reminding! So here is your reminder: please check your records to determine if you have waited till the last minute!

On a side note, it has always been the policy of the Rainy Lake Conservancy to guard the privacy of our membership list. Our list is not shared with other organizations. You as members have requested this privacy and the Board has honoured your request.

*Membership contact: Don Dickson*

## Annual General Meeting: Be There!

This year, at the 2009 AGM, we are celebrating our tenth anniversary! To help do that, we are very excited and grateful to welcome Rachel Hill as our speaker. She is District Planner, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Fort Frances. Those of us who have already done so and are enthusiastic about her would like you to meet and hear her as well.

During a short business meeting, members will vote to ratify the slate of candidates running for positions on the Board of Directors.

Come. Be enriched. Bring friends or family. Have fun. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and CAKE during the social time following the meeting.

When and where? Sunday, August 9, at La Place Rendez-Vous, Fort Frances.

NOTE: The AGM will start at 2 o'clock (NOT 3 o'clock as in other years) to accommodate those members who may be coming and going from the Namakan, Sandpoint and Crane Lakes area.

*AGM contact: Anne Newhart*

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 9th, 2:00PM**

## Your Generous Donations

The Conservancy remains grateful to all the members who demonstrate their support and help through their financial gifts to the Rainy Lake Fund of the Minnesota Land Trust.

We wish to acknowledge and thank in particular James and Roz Hawley for their continuing generosity with their gift of \$15,000 this past year.

*Cross Border Donations contact: Anne Newhart*

## Centennial Canoe Voyage

The Heart of the Continent Partnership is coordinating a 17-day canoeing expedition that will traverse approximately 500km (310mi) of the historic Voyageurs waterway in the Quetico/Superior region. This journey will commemorate the 100th anniversary of Quetico Provincial Park and Superior National Forest. In a Voyageur canoe stylized with painted images of invasive species, US and Canadian canoeists will travel through Rainy Lake July 3rd and 4th. They are paddling from Little Grassy Lake to Sandpoint Island in Rainy Lake on the 3rd. Early on the 4th, canoeists will paddle from Sandpoint Island to the Rainy Lake Visitor's Center, then participate in the International Falls 4th of July parade before proceeding to the Ash River.

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## Summer 2009 Nature Outing

Time and date: 1:30PM, Thursday, July 30th\*

Location: Goose Portage on Sandpoint Island

We are delighted to have Pam Hawley, Fort Frances museum curator, back for a presentation of the history and lore of this beautiful area.

She will share diaries and perceptions of the early settlers. Since this is the Quetico Superior centennial year, she will also talk to us about the Canadian Heritage Rivers System, of which we are an important part. Pam

has been at the Museum for over twenty years and offers regular programs to schools and public groups on the history of the area. Save this date for a program that is sure to be interesting.

Docking information: this is crown land, so there are no docks. We can pull our boats up on the beach. Boat-pooling would be desirable.

\*Alternate date in case of rain, Friday, July 31st.

Nature Outings contacts: Claudia Horne and Ginny Sweatt



Goose Portage, Sandpoint Island, Rainy Lake

## 6 Water Monitoring Volunteers Needed

Presently the Conservancy is monitoring four sites on the American side of Rainy Lake as well as three on the Canadian side of the lake. Our water monitoring results are adding to a continuous history of the lake's water quality. Kits for this year's testing are arriving now, but we could use some new volunteers. Don't be afraid to volunteer; the job is easy now compared to earlier testing methods. The ideal volunteer is able to be on the lake early in the spring and late in the fall for monthly sampling.

Here are sites that need volunteers:

Voyageurs National Park east of Dryweed  
Sand Bay narrows, Ranier  
Mermaid  
Seine Bay  
North of Grindstone Island  
North of Jackfish Island

If you would like to be a volunteer, please contact Paul Anderson at paanderson@q.com.

Environmental Research contact: Paul Anderson

## Hydroelectric Dam Proposal Update

The long awaited Environmental Assessment Draft (EA) on the proposed hydroelectric dams on the Namakan River is expected to be released in August. Following its release there will be public meetings and a 60-day public comment period. We will inform Conservancy members further when more on this is available. Environmental Research contact: Paul Anderson

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Betty Anne West and Kay Larsen

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### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

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Communications: Mary Lysne

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### DID YOU KNOW?

Visible in satellite images, Rainy Lake contains a large, ancient caldera and a fault line.

### LOVING YOUR LAKE

Prevent spills when filling boat motors. Use a funnel or spout with an automatic stop to prevent overfilling.

### 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)