

RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY



Preserving the Rainy Lake Watershed

A Rainy Lake Reflection Ober, My Friend and Mentor by Bob Hilke

I knew Ober for as long as I can remember and was spellbound as a young boy listening to his stories of traveling in the wilderness among Indians and moose. I often wondered if the stories could be true!

Ober first invited me to join him on a canoe trip in 1950 when I was 13. For me it was a big event as we visited Indians in the Red Gut Indian Village and paddled on our 4 day trip into the Sawbill Lakes north of the village. Ober could see I loved the experience and it became the first of many trips over the next 13 years. Ober's infectious enthusiasm for wilderness travel



Ernest Oberholtzer camping at Nueltin Lake
1963 photo by Bob Hilke

and preservation impressed me as it did others and rubbed off on so very many who met him.

I know of no other person in this area who knew the Rainy Lake watershed as well as Ober. He understood its intrinsic value at a time when most people thought only of its development and exploitation. With his ability to influence others toward this same appreciation of wilderness, he gained support for some of the greatest conservation movements in the country. He is appropriately thought of as the

"Father of Conservation" in this area. A highlight for me was to observe Ober relating to his fellow

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What is a Conservation Easement?

Since its formation, RLC has promoted the concept of conservation easements. Simply stated, a conservation easement is a legal agreement that allows you to conserve the land you love into the future while still maintaining use and ownership. It now appears that RLC and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) will work together to develop an easement program, starting on the South Arm of Rainy Lake. Five RLC property owners are interested in donating easements to NCC.

Many of our members, however, do not understand what a conservation easement is.

Here are a few questions land owners often ask, with simple yes or no answers:

- Are conservation easements voluntary? **Yes**
- Do I still retain ownership of my property? **Yes**
- Are future owners of my property bound to the terms of the conservation agreement? **Yes**
- Will the land trust that holds the easement

ensure that the terms of the agreement are enforced? **Yes**

- Is this a legal agreement that is recorded in the records at the Ontario Lands Registry Office? **Yes**
- If I put some or all of my land into conservation, are there possible tax benefits? **Yes**
- Can I put an easement on part of my property and still build on other parts? **Yes**
- Do I have to have a survey and appraisal done on the land in question if I want a tax benefit? **Yes**

Generally speaking, conservation easements restrict uses, development or practices which would damage the natural or cultural features of your property. They are tailored to meet your needs and the goals of your land trust partner (NCC).

Look for more information on conservation easements in future newsletters.

Easements contact: Dale Callaghan

Docktalk Comes to Rainy Lake

Ten Rainy Lake Conservancy property owners participated in the “Docktalk” program this past summer. The program is designed to provide personalized one on one support to shoreline property owners to aid in their efforts to be good stewards of the lake.

The program is a joint effort of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Lake of the Woods District Property Owners Association and the Federation of Ontario Cottagers Association. The service provides an educational option for cottage owners to focus on control of invasive species, reduction of toxins in the environment, habitat enhancement, onsite water and waste disposal systems and shoreline naturalization. Kelli Saunders, coordinator, presented information on the program to the Rainy Lake Conservancy Board and interested members at the August board meeting. She emphasized that collectively we can make a difference in preserving the quality of Rainy Lake. Fellow coordinator Charlie Madden provided onsite visits to volunteers’ properties. Rainy Lake property owners reported that the visits were most beneficial. *Kay Larsen*



Kelli Saunders with Docktalk P.Larsen



Docktalk display P.Larsen

Rainy Lake Reflection continued from Page 1

Wilderness Society members at their annual meeting held on Mallard Island in 1956. They were among his closest and most loved friends.



Bob Hilke on Isle Royale, 1953
photo by Ernest Oberholtzer

Ober would be happy to know Voyageurs National Park protects a part of this area. He would also be impressed by what the Rainy Lake Conservancy is doing by practicing responsible ownership of private lands.

Not only do I have the greatest respect for Ober as a gentleman and great conservationist, but also as a true explorer. This I realized on our trip into the Barren

Lands in 1963 where 51 years earlier Ober had made the original maps of that uncharted land.

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President’s Message

Hello fellow stewards of Rainy Lake!

As your new RLC president, in September I represented the Conservancy at the Heart of the Continent conference and met with other folks who share our passion to be stewards of land and water and who represented their organizations from both sides of the border. The purpose of the meeting was to begin to explore the possibilities of how the various organizations might gather around a common vision, cooperate, be a resource to each other and together enhance the service to the lands and waters across organizational and national boundaries.



An already existing partnership that provides RLC with guidance and support, the Ontario Land Trust Alliance is offering educational workshops at its annual meeting near Toronto, November 2-4.

Seeing with Both Eyes: Balancing Traditional Aboriginal Knowledge and Contemporary Science – incorporating both ways of knowing in order to properly care for the environment is the theme of Rainy River First Nations’ ManOMin conference. It will take place April 10-12, 2007, in International Falls. I’ll be there (universe willing) and would be delighted to be joined by others members. For information, visit www.manominconference.ca.

On another local note, as the Fort Frances Museum’s new permanent exhibit develops, RLC has an opportunity to have a voice for the history of conservation in the area.

Lastly, on the topic of connections and web making, I am grateful that we have had excellent press coverage this summer on the bog opening, Docktalk, and the AGM, in addition to our own advertising on radio and in local newspapers.

Take care and enjoy the winter!

Anne Newhart, President

As the newsletter goes to press, we are saddened to report the passing of Iris Eberhardt who was a committed supporter of the Rainy Lake Conservancy from its beginning.

Editor

Cranberry Peatlands Grand Opening

One of the major goals of RLC's \$48,900 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant was achieved with the opening of the Rainy River Valley Field Naturalists' Cranberry Peatlands Interpretive Trail in July 2006.



Grand opening ceremony is enjoyed by members of RRVFN, RLC, NCC, donors and guests

RLC worked in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and RRVFN volunteers to plan the trail and the official opening, design and produce the interpretive pamphlets, and help raise funds for the project. Located 12 km west of Fort Frances, the trail will give the public a chance to understand the value of wetlands and nature, and will provide an opportunity to attract tourists to the area.

Grants contact: *Phyllis Callaghan*

Dynamic Members Meeting

Outgoing president Dale Callaghan presided over the well-attended 2006 RLC Annual General Meeting held at La Place Rendez-Vous on Rainy Lake. Members were treated to an excellent presentation by area biologist Darryl McLeod. He covered topics ranging from the Rainy Lake Fisheries Charity Trust and the Crossroute Forest plan to trumpeter swans and invasive species.

Members voted to expand the size of the RLC board of directors from 11 to a maximum of 18 in order to incorporate the addition of any executive officers wishing to serve on the board. The new board of directors now includes Paul Anderson, Dale and Phyllis Callaghan, Stephen Challis, Don Dickson, Bob Hammar, Trish Hogan, Claudia Horne, Paul and Kay Larsen, Gordon Martin, Ed McLeod, Anne Newhart, Kate Peterson, Donna Romyn and Ginny Sweatt. A special welcome goes to Stephen Challis, Ed McLeod and Kate Peterson who are new to the board.

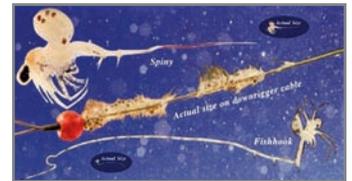
Mark your calendars for our next opportunity to get together in the same room to socialize and learn as we conduct business: **Sunday, August 5, 2007, at La Place Rendez-Vous.** If you are beginning to think about your schedules for next summer, treat yourself and plan to be around that weekend for the event.

Anne Newhart, President

Rainy Lake Environmental Update

The following is a brief overview of the current environmental status of Rainy Lake. In general, the overall situation is positive with many organizations including MNR, DNR, MPCA, Environment Canada, and VNP working cooperatively to monitor conditions and research issues. At the same time, issues and concerns do exist and new problems surface regularly.

- Preliminary 2006 water sampling results indicate continued good water quality for Rainy.
- The Rainy Lake Conservancy is working with various other organizations to make satellite remote water monitoring an operational tool to help monitor Rainy and the surrounding watershed.
- In recent years high walleye abundance is being documented for Rainy Lake. The very positive results were reported by Darryl McLeod, local area biologist with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, at the Rainy Lake Conservancy's annual general meeting held in August. The walleye comeback in the North Arm has been particularly outstanding.
- Foreign species invasion is a growing problem in all watersheds. As an example, Spiny Waterfleas



New invasive species: *Rusty Crayfish and Spiny Waterfleas*
Photos from the Ontario MNR / University of Minnesota Sea Grant Program

and Rusty Crayfish were found in Rainy Lake last summer. Spiny Waterfleas compete with small fish for the same zooplankton. Small fish generally do not eat them due to their long spiny tails. They can shift the natural balance of a lake's plankton community, disrupting food web dynamics.

- The larger Rainy River/Lake of the Woods watershed has several issues. Water quality and algal blooms in Lake of the Woods remain an issue. A water power project is being discussed for the Namakan River. This project could disrupt fish migration. On a positive note, the Jackfish Bay sewer project is underway on the American side of Rainy Lake.

Environmental Research contact: *Paul Anderson*



A few of the 46 people who attended the Annual General Meeting in August

Beaver Bafflers Prevent Bog Flooding

Early in the development of the Cranberry Peatlands Interpretive Trail, it became apparent that beaver dams were causing the water levels to rise in the bog, often making the trail and boardwalk too wet to use.



Hauling beaver baffler drain pipe

I. Milne

To combat this problem, last June young volunteers from the Fort Frances Sportsmens "Get Outdoors" youth club "baffled" the beavers by installing large diameter drain pipes through the beaver dam, leaving one end of the pipe in the deep part of the pond and the other downstream, far away from the dam. Distance between the outlet and the dam is important so that the beavers won't be attracted to the sound of running water and try to dam up the baffler's outlet. Once the pipes are installed, the water flows through the dam and downstream rather than creating a pond upstream of the dam which could flood the trail. The beaver baffler had the desired outcome. With the water level in the bog reduced, the trail now provides consistent access to the bog.

Grants contact: Phyllis Callaghan

Nature Outings

We all love the loons on Rainy Lake. The plaintive sound of their call and the sight of the adults with their young are part of the wonder of this lovely place.

This past summer's nature outing was an endeavor to add nesting sites that would not be destroyed by fluctuating water levels. On August 30th, the docks at Red Pine Island were abuzz with activity as participants sawed, glued, fitted pipe together and assembled loon-nesting platforms.



Assembling loon nesting platforms



Bob Hammar and Paul Larsen gluing

Afterwards, our hosts Ginny and Harry Sweatt treated us to a delicious lunch. Everyone had fun and we hope that this project will have positive results for the loons. Reports indicate that platform use has resulted in higher reproduction rates on other lakes. Next spring we will place our platforms in carefully selected, sheltered places, away from historically active nesting sites. Then the choice to use them will be up to our beautiful, feathered friends.

Many thanks to outing co-chairs Ginny Sweatt and Trish Hogan; to Ginny and Harry Sweatt for their hospitality; to Paul Larsen for ordering and overseeing the materials; and to all who participated in the event.



A completed loon nesting platform

Nature Outings Committee: Claudia Horne
Trish Hogan and Ginny Sweatt

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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