



DRIFTWORDS

SERVING THE RIDEAU SINCE 1911 • POONAMALIE TO NARROWS LOCK

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Driftwords

Publisher

Big Rideau Lake Association
Board of Directors

Editor

Dan Wood

Celebrating *Driftword's* 22nd Year

Winter 2002

RIDEAU LAKES WELCOME CENTRE IN PORTLAND

The first of its kind for the Lakes region, the Welcome Centre is slated to open this spring on R.V.C.A.'s Portland Bay conservation area. Strategically located to serve through traffic on Highway 15, this venue will attract visitors for more than regional tourist information. In time to come, it will host a variety of environmental interpretation functions, including *Living by Water* shoreline zone, wetlands and nature walk trail, as well as alternative energy, wastewater technologies and biodiversity displays. In fact it is designed to become a focus for ecotourism.

The United Nations has designated 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism and Canada will host its World Summit in Quebec City, May 19-22. The object worldwide is to support conservation, protection, and restoration of earth's ecosystems. Sustainability and environmental protection is seen as integral to travel and tourism.



Rideau Lakes Welcome Centre

Dissemination of information to raise the level of environmental awareness is central to this project.

It is fitting therefore, and of local interest, that these objectives are shared by the new Welcome Centre in Portland. Its opening will be celebrated at a ribbon-cutting occasion that same May holiday weekend. Look for details in the press and spring *Driftwords*.

The core of the building was constructed late last fall and it will be finished in early spring. In addition to the use of R.V.C.A.'s land, four other

Story Continued on Page 2

Rideau Lakes Welcome Centre....Continued...

partner group contributed the necessary funding: Rural Leeds 2000, Valley Heartland, Westport & Rideau Lakes Chamber of Commerce and the Township of Rideau Lakes. This venture was put together by Rob Hunter, our marketing manager, and his staff who worked closely with Rural Leeds 2000 & Beyond EDC.

BRLA construction personnel provided the labour. The Centre will be managed by BRLA and staffed with the support of Human Resources Development Canada.

Slowing down the through traffic, the Centre will undoubtedly boost local business, as well as encourage more visitors

to Dry Dock and the Rideau Lakes Environment & Information Centre. BRLA is pleased to cooperate with other organizations in this project. It is a very tangible way we can work together and support each other's mandates, while highlighting the environmental ethic for both itinerants and visitors, whatever their destination.

Eastern Ontario Bass Out of Season: Keep'em Off The Hook Meeting



Are you concerned about bass being targeted by pre-season anglers on your lake? If you would like to voice your concern and take action, please come to the ***Eastern Ontario Bass Out of Season: Keep'em Off The Hook*** meeting on Thursday, February 28, 2002 at 7 pm at Dry Dock. Please call Stacy McLean to register or for more information.

BRLA is Attending the Cottage & Country Homes Show by Rob Hunter

The BRLA is proud to announce that it will be exhibiting at the Cottage & Country Homes Show in Ottawa at Lansdowne Park in both the Coliseum and Exhibition Hall on April 19, 20, and 21, 2002. With over 36% of our members hailing from Ottawa this is an important market for the Association to promote itself to the public.

BRLA will be exhibiting its full line of environmentally friendly products, *Wastewater Garden* display and environmental information. The *Wastewater Garden* will be featured each day in a 1/2 hour seminar on the main stage in the exhibition hall.

We will also be having our media announcement covering the Green Municipal Investment Fund (GMIF) funding that will allow the Association to construct a working prototype *Wastewater Garden* at Dry Dock.

Members will find enclosed in this mailing two discount coupons for this exciting show. Show hours are Friday April 19, 10am to 7pm, Saturday April 20, 10am to 7pm, and Sunday April 21, 10am to 6pm.



Common Loon on the Rideau Lake

We look forward to seeing as many members as possible at the show. Come and see us at booth #526 in the Exhibition Hall!

President's Pen

By Richard Bradley

Does membership really have it's privileges?

Starting with this issue of *Driftwords* you will be invited, as an existing member or as a candidate for new membership, to part with \$50 to support the Big Rideau Lake Association for another year. Our fiscal year end is March 31 and the renewal notices will be mailed out in early March.

Renewal is an easy sell for most of our members, many of whom have supported our efforts for years, decades or generations. We lose the odd one because they don't agree with some aspect of our agenda: Why do we present fireworks on Canada Day? Why not more fireworks? Too environmentally fixated. Not militant enough about environmental issues. I have a shoal... Why not a shoal marker? Not enough attention

to the recreation and leisure mandate. On these and other legitimate issues there is a full range of opinion reflected on the board of directors of the Association. The diversity of opinion is essential for the advancement of any volunteer organization. We certainly don't set out to offend anybody.

The Association offers more than a decal, *Driftwords* and a vote at the Annual General Meeting for your membership fee. We give you a voice on matters relevant to the use, enjoyment and preservation of the watershed. The membership fees collected multiply tenfold through our partnership relationships at Dry Dock and the support of private and government employment and research programs. The membership base provides the credibility for our involvement in research, projects and

programs which are much more ambitious than those undertaken by most lake associations.

How can you help beyond the membership renewal? Deliver our pamphlet to your neighbour at the lake and mention the Association in conversation when the opportunity presents itself. Offer your talents as well as your treasures... we have a list of interesting projects waiting for a helmsman. Is that helmsperson? I don't want to offend a potential recruit.

I would be remiss if I did not extend sincere gratitude and thanks to Kathy Rankine for her years of service as the Operations Supervisor for BRLA.. Her contribution has been enormous and we wish Kathy well in the endeavours which take her away from Portland.

Big Rideau Lake Association Board of Directors 2001-2002

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Kathy Rankine Completes Term as Operations



unprecedented period of growth. And her style of leadership was always ‘in the trenches’, never remote. From the delicate surgical implants of large sonar transmitters into lake trout, to the frigid tracking ventures through those blustery November and December days; from her lightning keyboard dexterity that simultaneously grasped and evaluated the meaning of those words, while applying extraordinary computer formatting wizardry, to the development of workable administrative systems; from the hundreds of hours by day and night around the table of

countless meetings with the more than thirty organizations with which BRLA works, to the wise counsel she always gave to the more discrete tasks of management, strategic planning and organization, Kathy excelled.

No one who has worked with Kathy over the years remains untouched: whether seasonal or full-time staff, members or visitors, or the scores of representatives of those other organizations, or that myriad of faceless folks whose contact may have been through the ‘magic’ of phone, fax, email or websites.

It is difficult to imagine a higher level of consistent, professional dedication to her work than that of Kathy Rankine over the past three years and nine months.

Hired as a fisheries biologist in the spring of 1998, within four months she became staff supervisor and the first person ever to be employed by BRLA on a year-round basis. As indispensable as anyone can be, this quiet and unassuming young woman maintained an enlightened and unflappable hand of leadership right up to the moment she stepped out the door of Dry Dock on February 1st.

In short, Kathy has been at the daily centre of virtually every phase in the unique and remarkable development of the Association’s services and facilities during an

BON VOYAGE KATHY



Supervisor

It is a truism to say that the multifaceted work of BRLA **benefits all users of the lake**, regardless of whether they do the decent thing and contribute, at least by their membership! Kathy's efforts simply put a personal stamp of meaning on that fact. Even though they may never have met her, therefore, **everyone who has had any interest in the Rideau Lake** over the last four years owes her a debt of gratitude. In fact, because of the longer term impact of so much of that work, the 'debt' may well persist for a generation.

Kathy is returning to her home area of Fergus and she will be married in July. Our best wishes follow her. And you will be interested to know that she will continue some BRLA project work from her Fergus terminal, as well as in a consultation role in the year to come!

While it is not an exaggeration to say that Kathy has been the heart and soul of BRLA in recent



years, it is further testimony to her achievement that she has been instrumental in fostering those same

qualities in the staff who carry on. It is reassuring to know that we have suffered no setback with her departure. Lots of 'heart and soul' - and continuity - remain!

Winter Staff

Stacy McLean, another of those remarkable fisheries biologists, has taken over as Operations Supervisor. With his 15 year's experience in the business world, **Rob Hunter** is polishing

Geof Hall heads up the innovative Underwater Research department, with the help of **Jeff King**. **Dan Wood's** focus is on membership and *Driftwords*, while **Erika Kiss** is forming an



A more 'serious' staff portrait

procedures and putting together a pool of a talented people in the area of marketing and financial administration. Both Stacy and Rob are set to begin their third year with BRLA. **Sarah Rosolen's** efforts in developing nutrient management programs and the *Sustainable Watersheds* centre since July have been astounding. And **Tracey Alf's** work in administrative services so impressed HRDC that it supported an expansion in our JCP program for 2002.

interlake water quality program. **Paul Biscaia** is assisting with fisheries programs and **Dale Lefebvre** is continuing with websites.

The staff shrunk to a minimum of 11 in January. But there has surely been no 'off-season', and everyone has been scrambling to keep up with their work. With spring around the corner, the process is already under way to hire essential support assistants, as well as good seasonal and field workers. Some of the most demanding and productive programs yet are in the wings for 2002!

Bill S-26 survey results are in by Stacy McLean

The BRLA would like to thank all of its members who participated in the Personal Watercraft Bill S-26 questionnaire that was in the fall edition of *Driftwords*. An amazing 10% of surveys were returned. It was found that 76.2% of respondents support the Bill S-26, and of the 23.8% who do not support the bill, most (92%) agree that more enforcement of pre-existing regulations is needed.

Out of the 43 respondents, 16.3% own a personal watercraft and 83.7% do not. The main use of the personal watercraft by owners is for touring and sightseeing (73.3%) and transportation (20%). Other uses (6.7%) included wake jumping.

Almost all who responded (93%) did state that they had concerns, which are described in the figure on the opposite page. Safety and noise were the primary concerns

with many stating that reckless drivers, and young, inexperienced drivers are the problem.

The Board of Directors of the BRLA will use this information compiled from the returned surveys to help make its decision in regards to the bill. If you have any comments or concerns please call Stacy McLean.

Third loon to die of lead poisoning on Rideau Lake in 2001 by Stacy McLean



An estimated average of 125-187 million lead sinkers are deposited in Canadian waters annually, with **half** of that in Ontario. The average sinker or jig weighs between 0.5 g to 15 g, and it only takes 0.2 g of lead to **kill** a loon.

If you think about it, this is a serious problem as we could lose our entire loon population in one year. Ontario is known for its pristine lakes and everyone who has ever visited a lake will never forget the eerie call of the loon. Loons are a great part of our Ontario lake experience, and

it would be very sad if the call of the loon is no longer heard.

Unfortunately, bans do not prohibit the use, sale, and manufacture of lead fishing weights in Canada. Every government is waiting for the next to do something and some state that there is not enough data. This summer, the BRLA brought in 4 loons to Kit Chubb (Avian Care Specialist) in Verona, and out of the four loons, 3 died due to lead poisoning. In all three of the birds, lead sinkers or jigs were found in their gizzard. When a loon becomes ill, it will find a safe place in the grass or in areas where the vegetation is dense, making it hard for residents to spot it.

If we have had 3 loons die of lead poisoning that we have found, how many died on the Rideau that we didn't find? It is estimated that only a quarter of loons that do die of lead poisoning are found and reported. **So what can we do?**

As mentioned in an earlier article in *Driftwords*, lots! For beginners, if you fish, don't use lead sinkers or jigs. There are many alternatives that can be used. If you can't find them in a store, then bring in your lead gear and exchange them at Dry Dock, Maple Crest Motel and Cabins in Rideau Ferry, or Murphy's Barber and Sport Shop in Westport. You can spread the word about the Take A Little Lead Out! Program to fellow anglers. You can write to your local M.P. and have him or her fight to get the proposed Bill M-414 passed.

Finally, if you do spot a loon behaving differently, please call the BRLA and we will come and find the bird and bring it to Kit Chubb. The more birds that are found, more hard evidence there will be to help ban the manufacture, sale and use of lead in Canada and/or Ontario. So please, let's work together and hope that next year we don't lose any more loons from our lake.

Phosphorus Trends on Rideau Lake by Erika Kiss

Phosphorus is an essential element for all life forms, however, when too much is present in the water, algae and aquatic vegetation can grow wildly, affecting recreational use, as well as the aquatic health. Ontario's phosphorus guideline for the protection of aquatic life is 0.02 mg/L for a nuisance level of algae growth and 0.03 mg/L for excessive aquatic plant growth. In general, Total Phosphorus (TP) levels on Rideau Lake have remained relatively stable over the past four years. With levels all under 0.02 mg/L, there is no major concern with respect to phosphorus for the lake as a whole at this time. However, results from the Lakeside Village Surface Water Quality Study undertaken last year, show serious phosphorus enrichment in the near-shore waters around Portland, and in some tributary streams. The purpose of this study was to monitor storm-water run-off to determine sites and sources of contamination, and propose possible remedial strategies. Due to the lack of rain last season, the sources of the contamination could not be properly evaluated, and this study has been extended to continue monitoring throughout the 2002 season. For more details on this study, please contact Erika Kiss or Sarah Rosolen at 613-272-5136.

SUSTAINABLE WATERSHEDS: Rideau Lakes Centre for Integrating Research, Learning and Advocacy by Sarah Rosolen

The Big Rideau Lake Association has spearheaded the formation of *SUSTAINABLE WATERSHEDS Rideau Lakes Centre*, a multi-disciplinary centre to support integration of research, learning and advocacy in watershed science. This facility will take innovative approaches to share ideas, build the knowledge base and work towards the development of sustainable management models. Supported by diverse national and provincial networks, the Centre will be an important link between research and decision-making.

Research

SUSTAINABLE WATERSHEDS will provide a central location for collaboration of **multi-disciplinary** research programs to gather the scientific information needed to move forward in sustainable watershed management and planning. The Research Program will **expand on BRLA's existing research** under the four departments: **Fisheries, Underwater Research, Nutrient Management and Alternative Technologies, and Environmental Monitoring, Assessment & Planning**. BRLA has been very successful in the formation of key partnerships which have allowed us to develop our research expertise and undertake a range of research projects, including comprehensive annual monitoring of water quality, fish, wildlife, shoreline and wetlands, invasive species monitoring and research, fish habitat research, alternative wastewater research, and an urban drainage study. With the formation of the Centre, these partnerships will be strengthened and new ones created, providing the opportunity to work on projects with both **environmental and economic significance**.

Learning

Education and life-long learning will be key components of the Centre, bringing a greater awareness of the importance of healthy watersheds to the public arena. We will provide community educational outreach to help communicate the lessons learned and promote sustainable watershed management practices.

Advocacy

The collaborative effort at the Centre will create the integrated knowledge base and information-sharing network to help support environmental advocacy and move towards adopting a watershed perspective in policy development.

SUSTAINABLE WATERSHEDS will be innovative in that it will foster collaboration between world-class researchers, educators, private corporations, engineers, regulatory agencies conservation authorities, other non-profit organizations, and the public to improve the global understanding of the importance of watershed protection. This Centre is an important step in building the information base required to move forward in sustainable watershed management here on the Rideau Lakes, as well as other neighbouring watersheds. With watershed science still in its infancy, the Centre will provide a unique learning ground for researchers, educators, policy makers and the public alike.

Underwater Research **By Geof Hall**



Jeff King studies a crayfish

The Underwater Research department was recently formed by the Big Rideau Lake Association, as part of the new *SUSTAINABLE WATERSHEDS: Rideau Lakes Centre*, to address the need for a competent underwater scientific research program. The Underwater Research Department is tasked with investigating many aspects of the underwater environment.

Subsurface studies allow the exploration of many facets of the freshwater environment, in a novel and exciting way. Fisheries studies this year have seen the addition of a lake trout spawning shoal assessment project. By visiting known lake trout spawning shoals, department personnel are able to properly determine the state of known spawning sites.

Characteristics included slope of the shoal, cobble shape and size, depth of substrate, aquatic plant growth, and level of siltation. These operations are in preparation for establishing effective and efficient scientific procedures to survey and assess these shoals. Future field studies will see surveys conducted for new trout spawning shoals.

Zebra mussel colonization of the Rideau system has also been an

important part of projects being undertaken by department personnel. With the introduction of zebra mussels, the health and viability of other invertebrates, such as native clam and mussel species could be in jeopardy. Ongoing monitoring of native invertebrate populations in Rideau Lake will attempt to assess this potential impact. An emphasis on documenting potential predation on zebra mussel populations will also be an important part of this work.

Of significant interest to the department, are projects designed to determine the health and present population dynamics of aquatic plant species. Studies of the invasive aquatic plant species *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Eurasian Milfoil) will continue this coming field season, along with species-specific aquatic plant population surveys.

Rideau Lakes Environmental Foundation: Update on Annual Fundraising Campaign

While there was an encouraging 15% increase in the number of contributors, we still need more total dollars in order to go ahead with the Special Project for our own water testing facilities. Further donations at this time would therefore be appreciated. From the water quality report on phosphorus on page 7, you can see there are no grounds for complacency on this important issue!

More Donations needed...

BRLA is in need of the following equipment. If you are in position to donate any of these items would you please contact the BRLA office.

- ◆ Office Chairs
- ◆ Desks
- ◆ Boats (flat bottom 16 foot)
- ◆ Trolling Motors with foot pedals
- ◆ Motors (9.9 hp and a 40-60 hp)
- ◆ Canoes
- ◆ Microscopes
- ◆ GPS

All in-kind donations that have an independent evaluation are eligible for a charitable tax receipt.

Tip of the Hat!!!



John Rivington for providing a generously discounted appraisal service