

# ECO-JOURNAL

Volume 15, Number 4

September/October 2005

## Water quality issues remain

# Simmering outrage over Devils Lake outlet

By Claire Sevenhuysen

This summer, cries of outrage echoed across the province, the country, and even across the border as North Dakota continued to move forward with plans to open the Devils Lake water diversion outlet. Talk of 'eleventh hour' negotiations between the federal, provincial and state governments spread like wildfire, catching front pages and headline news across the country. The most commonly asked question was "How did we let it get this far?"

### Development of the outlet

Devils Lake has no natural inlets or outlets. Therefore the lake level depends entirely on precipitation and evaporation. In the past, the lake experienced very low water levels, almost reducing it to a 'dead' lake as drought and evaporation produced ever-increasing salt concentrations. However, recent years of above-average precipitation have caused it to rise such that farmland, homes, and highways have been swallowed up. Now, the lake threatens the Town of Devils Lake.

Stabilization of the lake level has been a long-term goal for North Dakota, and the recent impact of flooding on communities has made the outlet a political issue. However, what politicians do not reveal is that the outlet could never drain the massive amount of flood waters that have accumulated around Devils Lake quickly enough to recover lost land. The outlet is more likely the first step in resurrecting the 1968 Garrison project, and cementing the political aspirations of the current Governor.

The Garrison project's aim was to divert water from the Missouri River, thereby joining two otherwise separate water ba-

sins. The State accepted a referral of this project to the International Joint Commission (IJC), and it was rejected on the grounds that it could have a detrimental effect on waters flowing into Canada. An IJC review of the Garrison project was mandatory because it received funding from the U.S. federal government, which must adhere to international treaties. North

Dakota was shrewder with the planning of the Devils Lake outlet and prevented federal interference by using only State funds.

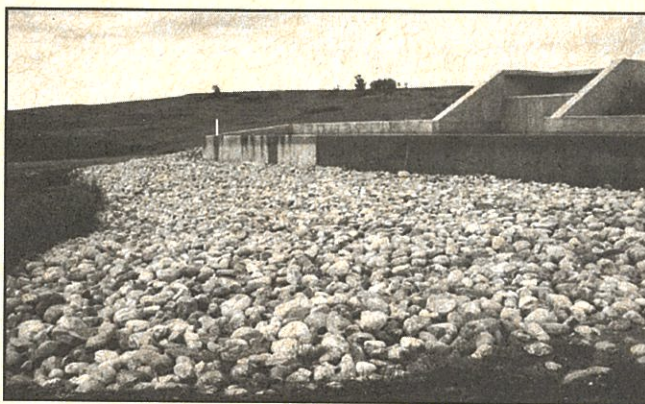
The International Joint Commission (IJC) is an independent organization with representatives from the U.S. and Canada who adhere to the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to resolve disputes over shared waterways. The Boundary Waters Treaty states, "...waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other."

The US government repeatedly refused to rule one way or the other on submission of the Devils Lake outlet project for IJC review, despite opposition from a long list of politicians, environmentalists, scientists, and economists. Provinces and States that border the Great Lakes were also livid with North Dakota's attitude over Devils Lake, as they depend on good international relationships regarding water management and protection.

### Canada declined an unfinished proposal

North Dakotan politicians frequently evoke the argument that Canada refused an IJC referral for the outlet in 2002. In truth, the plan originally proposed by North Dakota was incomplete. It lacked environmental assessment and did not provide a suitable range of options, including an alternate proposal from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Canada declined to send an unfinished proposal to the IJC, not realizing that North Dakota was going to push ahead with unapproved construction of an outlet. In 2003, the Army Corps of Engineers proposed an outlet from the cleaner West end of the lake, and included installation of a sand filter to protect downstream ecosystems from potentially harmful organisms in Devils Lake. This project was deemed financially unfeasible. The current

see "Devils Lake ..." on page 6 ►



Concrete barriers slow outflow into the Sheyenne River, and a gravel bed prevents erosion of the riverbank. Photo by Claire Sevenhuysen.

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Volume 15, Number 4  
September/October, 2005  
(date of issue: October 4, 2005)

## Eco-Journal

is published five times per year by the  
Manitoba Eco-Network/Reseau  
Ecologique du Manitoba Inc. at  
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The Manitoba Eco-Network is affiliated  
with the Canadian Environmental Network.

Individual Subscriptions to **Eco-Journal** are  
available as part of a supporting membership  
to the Manitoba Eco-Network at a cost of \$25.  
Group membership dues are \$40. Advertising  
rates are available upon request.

Canada Publication Mail Sales Agreement  
#40010075, Postage paid at Winnipeg, MB.

The opinions expressed by contributors  
are their own and do not represent the  
views of the Manitoba Eco-Network or its  
member groups.

## Organic farmers set to appeal against class action decision

On August 30, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal released a decision granting the certified organic farmers of Saskatchewan leave to appeal the Court of Queen's Bench decision dated May 11, 2005. This gives certified organic farmers the opportunity to try again to launch a class action suit against Monsanto and Bayer. The May 11 decision had denied class certification under Saskatchewan's Class Actions Act. The farmers are seeking compensation for losses due to contamination of organic fields and crops by genetically engineered canolas.

Judge Cameron agreed that the issues raised by the plaintiffs should be dealt with by the Appeal Court. He agreed that the Appeal Court should examine questions of whether Judge Smith erred in her May 11 finding of no cause of action—an error which cascades through her decisions on the remaining four tests required to grant class certification—and whether she applied an overly rigorous standard for class certifications.

Justice Cameron stated, "I am satisfied the proposed appeal raises some comparatively new and potentially controversial points of law, that it transcends

the particular in its implications, and that it is of sufficient importance to the practice pertaining to this subject to warrant attention by this Court."

Plaintiff Larry Hoffman says he feels encouraged by the decision. "It gives us a chance to argue how the Class Actions Act should be applied. The spirit of the law is to even out the odds between the

Davids and the Goliaths in the world. The lower court decision made it too hard on us Davids, and we think that's unfair. A farmer like me can't afford to take on a big company like Monsanto when it threatens my livelihood and

way of life. But if we can join together in a class action, our combined strength can make it possible to hold these companies accountable for their actions."

"This is great", says plaintiff Dale Beaudoin. "On behalf of a thousand-plus organic farmers we can continue to fight for our right to remain stewards for sustainable agriculture. This is no minor issue. It is a matter of independence and survival for all farmers world-wide."

For the decision and other details of the class action suit, please see <http://www.saskorganic.com>

**ECO**

## Manitoba Eco-Network Monthly Bulletin

As a service to our members, we are sending out a regular monthly email bulletin of news items and upcoming events. If you'd like to receive these bul-

letins, please contact us at (204) 947-6511 or [info@mbeconetwork.org](mailto:info@mbeconetwork.org). We will not share your email address for any purpose.

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# Living on the Wind

## Tracking Manitoba's Migrating Songbirds

By Heather Laird

A Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a tiny bird weighing no more than a quarter, rests in bird bander Alice Davey's hand. After measuring the kinglet and recording data about its age, fat reserves, and feather condition, Alice uses specialized pliers to carefully attach a numbered identification band to its leg. Moments later, the kinglet is set free, its rapid wing beats carrying it back to the safety of the nearby trees. Any day now, this miniscule bird will continue on its migration, an epic journey that will take it as far as the southern U.S. or even Central America.

The kinglet is just one of several thousand birds banded every year at the Delta Marsh Bird Observatory, located at the University of Manitoba's Delta Marsh Field Station located on the south shore of Lake Manitoba. The Observatory's location, on a narrow strip of land between the marsh and the lake, helps to funnel songbirds into one of ten lightweight nylon nets located at intervals throughout the brushy mixed forest. Birds flitting through the undergrowth are unable to see the fine black net against the background of leaves, and some of those flying by will be harmlessly entangled. A bander will retrieve the birds from the nets every half-hour or less to ensure their safety, and banding is cancelled when it's too cold, wet, or windy. Those birds that are captured and released provide invaluable information on the health and status of Manitoba's songbird populations.

### Vulnerable to habitat destruction

Birds are sensitive indicators of environmental health, and vulnerable to habitat destruction in both their breeding and wintering range. It's important to monitor songbirds, particularly as they may provide an early warning of adverse changes to their forest homes. Canada's many songbirds that migrate to the tropics (such as orioles, warblers, and tanagers, to name a few), are susceptible to the effects of clear cutting and inten-

sive agriculture in the rainforest. Supporting less invasive agricultural practices, such as "shade coffee", where coffee plants are grown under the cover of the natural forest, helps protect the birds. But it's not only the tropics where birds are vulnerable—the boreal forest provides nesting sites for many species, and logging, mining, and other human activities are obvious threats.

Bird Studies Canada is a non-profit conservation group that

includes the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network, of which Delta Marsh Bird Observatory is a part. Since its beginnings in 1995, Delta Marsh has become one of the busiest migration monitoring and bird banding stations in Canada (there are 22 stations across the country), and the only one in Manitoba. Its location between the lake and the marsh provides an abundant supply of insects and other food sources, and the ridge of trees along the lake provides a natural corridor for large numbers of migrating songbirds. Up to 75 different species have been banded each spring season, and up to 81 species each fall. Yearly totals for banding average about 7000 individual birds. The

most abundant species include Yellow Warblers, Tennessee Warblers, White-Throated Sparrows and Least Flycatchers.

The banding helps track population trends, and the physical data collected gives some idea of norms for individual species. "Retraps" are birds already banded at Delta that are captured again, and they can provide information on whether locally-bred birds return to the same area year after year (many do). A "foreign recovery" (capturing a bird banded elsewhere) is a rare event with small songbirds, but when it does happen it provides valuable additional information on migration routes.

### Ten years of monitoring

Large amounts of data are needed to understand the complex phenomenon of bird population dynamics, and since banding is so weather dependent, many years of records are needed to get statistically significant information. After ten years of monitoring, Delta Marsh Bird Observatory is well on its way to providing a clear picture of songbird migration in Manitoba.

Delta Marsh Bird Observatory (DMBO) is run as a private, non-profit organization. You can support DMBO by becoming a member, or a volunteer. For more information contact Heidi den Haan at 1-866-770-5372, or e-mail [hdenhaan@dmbo.org](mailto:hdenhaan@dmbo.org)

If you find a bird with a band on it, you can call the Bird Banding Office toll-free at 1-800-327-BAND. You can keep the band, and they will send you a certificate with information about the bird.

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*A White-Throated Sparrow, one of thousands of songbirds banded at Delta Marsh each year. Photo by H. Laird*

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# What's Happening

**Oct. 3-8 International Walk to School Week**—Contact Resource Conservation Manitoba to find out what is going on in your area. [www.resourceconservation.mb.ca](http://www.resourceconservation.mb.ca) or 925-3773.

**Oct. 17-23 Waste Reduction Week**—Reduce waste and conserve resources! Check out [www.resourceconservation.mb.ca](http://www.resourceconservation.mb.ca) for ideas on how to participate.

**Oct. 15 Northern Climate Alternative Building Design Day Conference**—This conference will feature workshops, discussions and displays of Straw Bale Buildings (featuring the grand opening of the new Straw Bale Research Facility), new design approaches and alternative building techniques and heating/energy/waste systems. 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Faculty of Engineering, University of Manitoba. For more information see their website at: [www.alternativedesign.eng.umanitoba.ca](http://www.alternativedesign.eng.umanitoba.ca)

**Oct. 17 Manitoba Naturalists Society**—85th Anniversary Event. Norman Criddle: Pioneer Entomologist of Manitoba by Dr. Neil Holliday, University of Manitoba. 7pm at the Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain, 340 Provencher. Free for MNS members, \$6 for non-members. Call 943-9029 for more info.

**Oct. 19-20 Water For Life Conference**—Presented by Southern Chiefs' Organization and featuring David Suzuki, the goals of the conference are to raise awareness of sustainable water management, provide a forum for sharing strategies to address environmental issues, stimulate community economic development, and achieve a citizen-driven agenda for action. Ramada Marlborough Hotel, Winnipeg. Conference admission ranges from \$100-\$250. For more info call 946-1869 or visit [www.scoinc.mb.ca](http://www.scoinc.mb.ca).

**Oct. 23 Lake Invaders?**—Join members of the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium as they discuss the introduction of exotic species to a changing ecosystem. 2 pm at Fort Whyte Centre. Free with general admission. Call 989-8355 for more info.

**Thurs, Fri, Sat, Sun evenings until Oct. 23 Sunset Goose Flights** at Fort Whyte Centre. Arrive 1/2 hour before sunset for an interpretive talk. Reduced admission after 5pm. Call 989-8355 for info.

**Oct. 24 Manitoba Naturalists Society**—85th Anniversary Event. Secrets of the Bug World with Dr. Pat MacKay and Dr. Bobb Lamb. 7:30 pm at the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

**Oct. 28 Native Orchid Conservation Inc.**—Members Night.

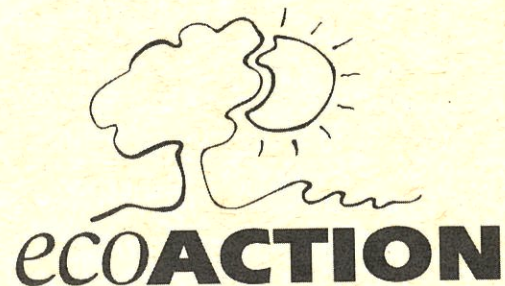
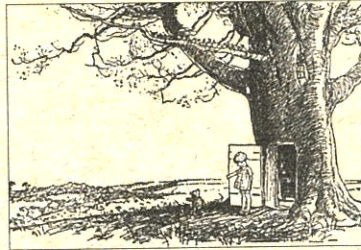
Speaker is Dr. Teller on Glacial Lake Agassiz and its impact on Manitoba's biology. 7:30 pm at 1212 Dakota St. All are welcome to this free event.

**Nov. 10-15 Churchill Northern Studies Centre**—Learning Vacation. Lords of the Arctic: Hudson's Bay Polar Bears with Rupert Pilkington and Markus Dyck. Witness the annual migration of Churchill's polar bears. Every October and November, polar bears congregate in the Churchill area to await the return of their winter hunting grounds. Fee of \$2,000 includes accommodation and meals as well as transportation (by foot, dog sled, helicopter and Tundra Buggy) once you reach Churchill. Limited numbers, see [www.churchillmb.net/~cnscc](http://www.churchillmb.net/~cnscc) or call (204) 675-2307 for more information.

**Nov. 12 Organic Matters on the Prairies**—Focused on healthy soils, healthy lifestyles, and a positive vision of food and farming for the future, this conference explores diverse issues in organics. At Assiniboine Community College, Brandon. For more info call (204) 299-6614 or visit [www.organicmatters.ca](http://www.organicmatters.ca)

**Nov. 18 Nahanni Revered**—A CPAWS National Tour. 7:30 pm at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. See ad on page 8.

**Dec. 5-6 Manitoba Conservation Districts Association**—30th Annual Convention "Celebrating Watershed Successes—Thirty Years and More!" Includes guest-speakers, Conservation District Reports and workshops as well as youth events. At the Keystone Centre, Brandon. For more info contact [mcda@mts.net](mailto:mcda@mts.net) or visit [www.mcda.ca](http://www.mcda.ca). **ECO**



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## Conference and Workshops Organic Matters on the Prairies

By Julie Fine, Organic Matters Events Coordinator

On November 12 and 13, Brandon, Manitoba will open its doors to a fully organic conference and two-day workshop oriented to new and experienced organic farmers and consumers. Assiniboine Community College hosts this one-day conference, trade show and the two-day workshop over the weekend of November 12 and 13. Presented by Canadian Organic Growers, the Canadian Wheat Board, the Organic Trade Association, the Organic Food Council of Manitoba, and the Organic Producers Association of Manitoba, the weekend boasts an impressive array of high profile speakers, local organic fare and informative sessions surrounding the topic of organics.

*Organic Matters on the Prairies* is a one-day conference and trade show on November 12, featuring internationally acclaimed speakers, an expert panel and practical sessions. Dr. Elaine Ingham, the Director of Research and President of the Soil Foodweb Inc., will illustrate to farmers how to enhance fertility and yields by understanding and working with the soil's natural biological organisms. Pat Mooney, the Executive Director of ETC Group, will speak on biotechnology, its impact on organic agriculture and plant breeders' rights. International development experts will explore the question "Can Organics Feed the World?"

### Seasoned organic farmers share wisdom

Practical sessions range from farm-scale composting, low-till organic farming, organic poultry production and food se-

curity. Seasoned organic farmers will share their wisdom and experiences in an informal session. The cost of the conference is \$75 per person and includes attendance along with breakfast, lunch and two snacks. The evening wraps up with an organic gala fall supper featuring fantastic organic food and local musicians.

The *Organic Matters* trade show on November 12 will feature an abundance of organic products. In addition to packaged food, health products and information for consumers, there also will be companies offering services, marketing information and products for farmers including equipment, certification, soil amendment and contacts with key organic grain buyers. The cost of a table at the conference is \$150 for businesses or organizations and \$100 for not-for-profit organizations. Included with the table fee is entrance to the conference for one as well as meals and snacks.

### Gaining Ground workshop

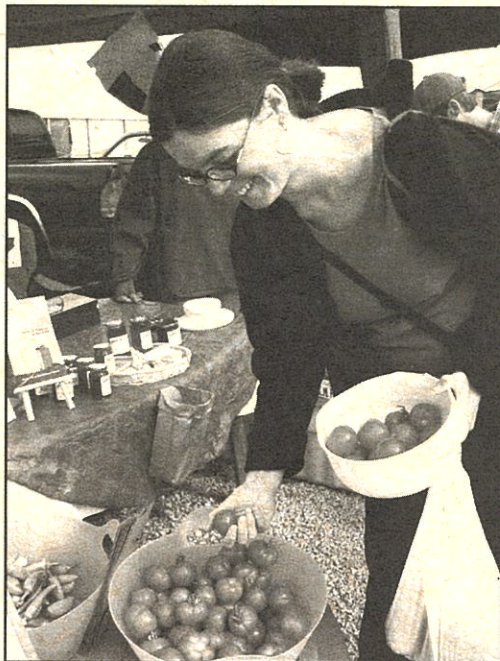
The two-day workshop on November 12 and 13 will be held to launch the new handbook of the Canadian Organic Growers called *Gaining Ground: Making the Successful Transition to Organic Farming*. This participatory workshop

will be a rare opportunity for farmers new to organic agriculture to learn how to manage the challenges of changing from conventional farming practices to organic methods.

The *Gaining Ground* workshop, which costs \$150 per person and includes meals and snacks, will help farmers understand the principles of organic agriculture, plan strategies for transitioning their farm, navigate organic certification requirements, develop record-keeping systems, and learn key organic farm planning skills. The first day of the workshop will overlap with the *Organic Matters on the Prairies* conference, and workshop participants will get to meet and learn from the experience of seasoned organic farmers. After the first day's meetings, participants will have an opportunity to socialize at the evening gala organic supper (the supper is \$40).

For more info and to register, visit [www.organicmatters.ca](http://www.organicmatters.ca) or send an e-mail to [info@organicmatters.ca](mailto:info@organicmatters.ca). You also may wish to contact the *Organic Matters* Events Coordinator, Julie Fine at (204) 299-6614.

**ECO**



Sharon Taylor, happy that organic food choices are becoming more widely available. Photo by Julie Fine

## Manitoba's Lands & Waters

[ManitobaWildlands.org](http://ManitobaWildlands.org)

[EnergyManitoba.org](http://EnergyManitoba.org)



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November 12, 2005

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# Devils Lake

*continued from page 1...*

outlet cost about a tenth of the Corps proposal, and is essentially a drainage ditch which channels water from Devils Lake directly into the Sheyenne River, at the shortest distance between the two.

## Water quality in Devils Lake

Devils Lake water quality data is scarce and often contradictory. Certainly, concentrations of salts, phosphates and pesticides from agricultural run-off are higher in Devils Lake than in waterways in the Red River basin. There have been reports of other toxins, such as mercury and arsenic, and at least two fish pathogens not present in the Sheyenne or Red Rivers. A group of international scientists were recently allowed to conduct rapid testing of the lake water prior to the outlet opening, but the final results have not yet been released. Devils Lake supports a lucrative sport fishing industry, for which popular species of fish were introduced. North Dakotans are quick to point to these recreational uses as proof that the water is safe, but they rarely acknowledge that farmers cannot use water from Devils Lake for irrigation.

## Opposition and the "deal"

This summer, the ground was rumbling with the collective disgust of Manitobans. Nearly two dozen rural municipalities, lead by the town of Gimli, and First Nations groups met with Friends of the Earth Canada to discuss legal options to protect local ecosystems and livelihoods. There were rallies, petitions, and fund-raising efforts in opposition to the Devils Lake outlet.

Meanwhile, North Dakota was chomping at the bit to open the outlet. Weather-related construction delays repeatedly set back the opening, but all the time North Dakota boorishly kept threatening Manitoba that water would flow imminently. With its back to the wall, Manitoba bargained in this terrorist-style climate for any possible concessions from its neighbour.

In response to the opposition, North Dakota hastily built an "interim aggregate filter", all the while continuing to assert that nothing in Devils Lake was cause for concern. This \$50,000 gravel filter is intended to strain out adult fish, fish eggs, and some plants. Manitobans were not fooled by a pile of gravel that was little more than a token gesture. At least it seemed like a step in the right direction.

On August 5, the Premier announced that an agreement had been reached with North Dakota. Four points were outlined:

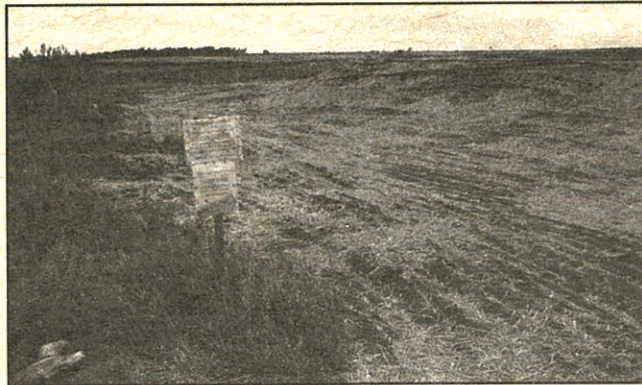
- 1) Should the recent biological survey reveal any harmful biota, "measures would be undertaken to prevent the spread of any aquatic nuisance species".
- 2) Based on test results, "a more advanced filtration system and/or disinfection system" would be built using State and Provincial funds.
- 3) Down-stream monitoring would be established, including development of "a basin-wide early-detection and man-

agement plan for invasive species".

4) North Dakota affirmed that it does not have plans to build an inlet to Devils Lake from the Missouri River basin.

This deal addresses none of Manitoba's concerns. Governments neglected to mention that water will be flowing through the outlet while testing, monitoring and further planning is taking place. Building a more elaborate filter after the water has been released into Manitoban rivers and lakes for more than a year is like closing the barn door when the horse is long gone. Furthermore, it is reckless arrogance to think that anyone can "manage" invasive species. In fact, all these proposals and monitoring are no better than taking a picture of the horse as it bolts through the barn doors. Lastly, reports show that projects designed to transfer water from the Missouri River basin into the Red (or Devils Lake) basin are already on the drawing board in North Dakota.

see "Devils Lake" on page 8 ►



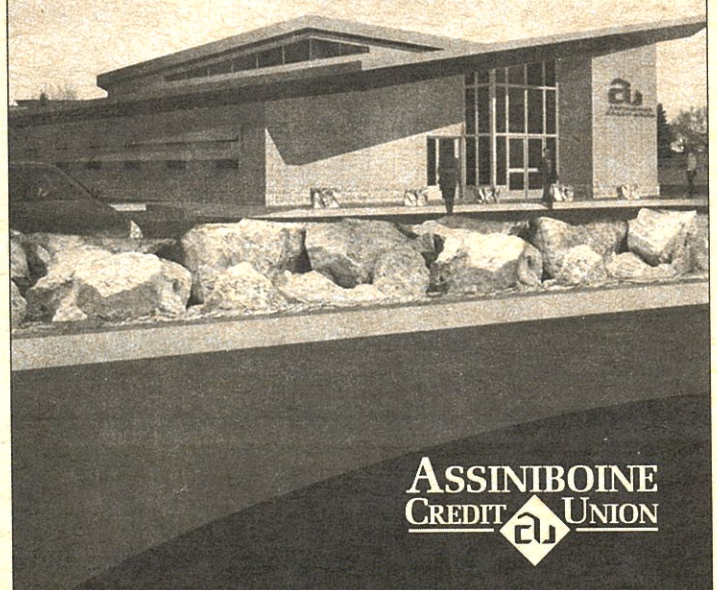
*The outlet cuts like a scar through farmland, with huge earthen dykes along each side. The sign warns that a warrant is needed by any state official or workers. Photo by Claire Sevenhuysen.*

## CSR is in Our DNA

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MAIN STREET AT RED RIVER BOULEVARD



ASSINIBOINE  
CREDIT UNION



# A Foundation for Lake Winnipeg

By Lindy Clubb

About once a week, people tell me they'd like to help Lake Winnipeg, but aren't sure how to go about it. Offering support to people who are making it a priority to heal the water is a good way to help, and that's a role the new Lake Winnipeg Foundation has taken on. The Foundation is aiming at the target of good environmental practices. This summer they've successfully raised seed money from local benefit concerts and memberships—the Lake Winnipeg Consortium will be their first donation recipient—and Al Kristofferson, the Consortium's tireless promoter, thinks it's "a wonderful example of what people can accomplish."

## Partnerships with others

Rick Gamble, the mayor of the Village of Dunottar—a municipality made up of the Matlock, Ponemah and Whytewold cottage communities—sought out a group of people interested in forming a foundation. Although Rick is already a team player, he knew "It will take more than the scientists and government to correct a lot of the problems in

Lake Winnipeg and its vast watershed. We're a public foundation and have the opportunity to place ourselves in a good position for partnerships with other organizations like Ducks Unlimited, Manitoba Habitat Heritage, the newly forming Interlake Conservation District, and fishermen to support in-

centives to restore wetlands and promote water retention on agricultural lands, and to make connections with the First Nations who live by the lake, such as Norway House and Grand Rapids. There's a possibility of more benefit concerts to raise funds for the Foundation and plans to join up with existing Foundations to manage funds in perpetuity," supporting what Rick fondly calls "the beautiful lake."

A long-term resident, Rick knows his way around the lake's shores and its people. He's a conscientious mayor, enjoys a talent

for bringing people together, and has great visions for the lake's future. After persuading his municipality to contribute to the Lake Winnipeg Consortium last year, among other progressive moves, he began thinking about long-term commitments.

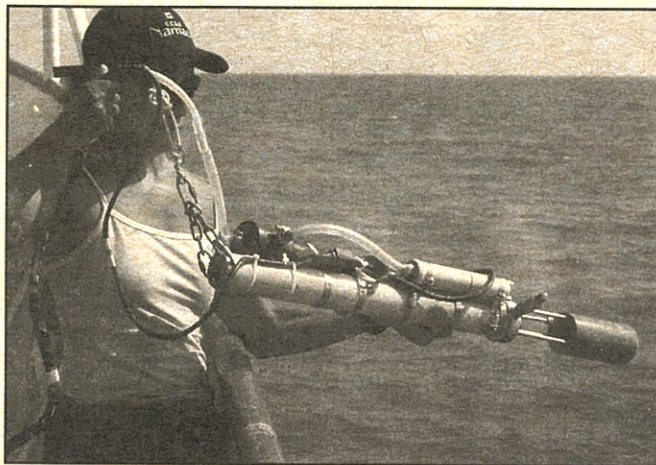
## Providing secure dollars for research

One day, during a local art show, he got into a discussion with Lyle Lockhart, a retired biologist, about the funds that were always needed for the Namao, the ship owned and operated by the scientific volunteers collecting data on the lake. It was an auspicious meeting. As Lyle says, "We can't manage the Lake without a sense of how it works. No one was providing secure dollars for the research and we wanted to help. Then it's up to the government to take the research and regulate nutrients, the main cause of the lake's poor water quality." As Rick says "These researchers were living on a shoestring, so the intent was to raise funds to help them, annually, even in a small way."

A foundation that raises, collects and distributes funds was the avenue to follow, they decided—so off they went. Regular winter meetings led to a board of directors to guide efforts, plans for an annual newsletter to inform their growing membership, education activities, an increasing bank account, and a brochure for public awareness.

The Lake Winnipeg Foundation is already a success. It's generating excitement and momentum as well as new members. I'm joining the Foundation, among other efforts to help Lake Winnipeg. The cost is \$30.00 per year, or \$50.00 for a two-year membership, and I've sent my cheque to The Lake Winnipeg Foundation, 44 Whytewold Road, Box 321, Matlock, Manitoba, R0C 2B0. I urge you to do the same.

**Eco**



*The research ship Namao is owned and operated by volunteers, with support from grants and donations.*

## Employment Opportunity

### Prairie Architects Seeks Green Building Enthusiast



If you are committed to ecological building practices, and the future of healthy cities and spaces, consider joining our team. We are looking for a Sustainable Building Enthusiast who would assist our Sustainable Buildings Coordinator on energy simulations, LEED analysis, and research.

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E: [dudley@prairiearchitects.ca](mailto:dudley@prairiearchitects.ca)



# Devils Lake

continued from page 6...

Unfortunately, it seems that the 'agreement' the province thought it had achieved has no substance. There was no written agreement, nothing binding North Dakota to keep its word. Consequently, despite the fact that water test results are still unavailable, the State carried on as if nothing had changed. Howls of protest erupted from Manitoba as the engineers flipped the switch and water gushed into the Sheyenne.

## Moving forward

On September 23 a ceremony was held in Winnipeg by the Southern Chiefs Organization to mark the day when Devils Lake water reached Lake Winnipeg. Dozens of people turned out to witness the women of the Three Fires Society conduct a traditional water ceremony and offering. Grand Chief Ron Evan (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs), and Beatrice Olivastris (Friends of the Earth Canada) spoke passionately about the need to acknowledge our connection to the earth, and our responsibility to protect precious resources for generations to come.

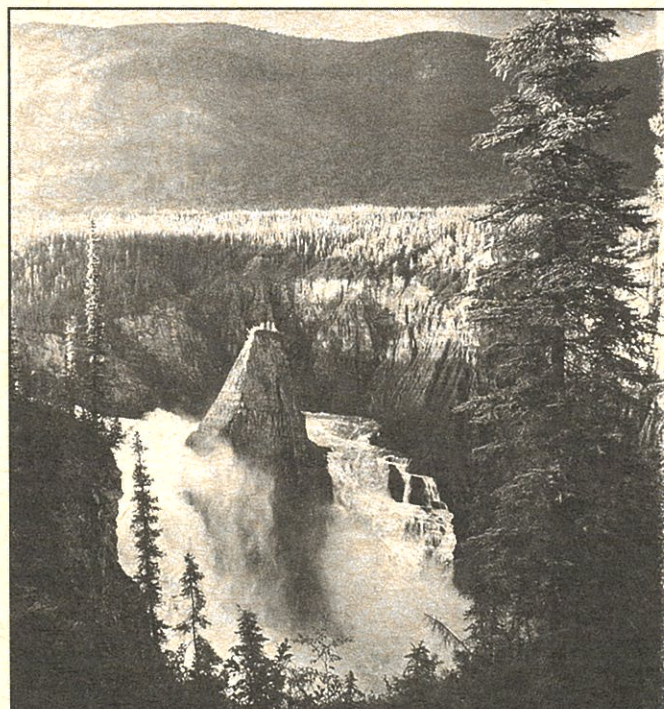
The frustration of many Canadians remains unabated. Many groups are still exploring their legal options to pursue North Dakota for, among others: destruction of wetlands, salination of farmland, violation of Aboriginal treaty rights, inappropriate

review of Canadian concerns, and of course violation of the Boundary Waters Treaty. In the decades to come, all parties hope not to find reasons to sue for damages to the fisheries and tourism industries, but this is a possibility.

There is unfinished business with the Devils Lake issue, and many more challenges ahead. Manitoba may soon be on the hook for part of the cost of building a pointless but very expensive sand filter. Furthermore, this filter may allow North Dakota to argue that Manitoba is 'protected' and therefore has no reason to object to further diversions. Manitobans must prepare for the imminent resurrection of the Garrison Diversion project.

Governor Hoeven's political aspirations and the US administration's disregard for the IJC may have driven a stake into the heart of this long-standing and well-respected treaty that has served both countries for nearly 100 years. A word of warning: Canadians should beware of other trans-boundary water disputes. The Devils Lake outlet may only be a drop in the bucket compared to the kinds of conflicts that will arise over water resources in coming decades. Politically and socially, we need to address our shortfalls in dealing with similar negotiations if we are to protect our economy and ecology.

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MONTHS TO DESTROY.  
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# Green Commute Guide to workplace trip reduction

by Serge LaRochelle, Program Coordinator, Resource Conservation Manitoba

On Car Free Day, September 22, Resource Conservation Manitoba (RCM) launched its latest practical toolkit to help employers take positive steps to curb greenhouse gas emissions—the *Green Commute* guide.

*Green Commute* was developed thanks to RCM's "Going Green" pilot project. RCM staff worked with Commuter Challenge coordinators from four workplaces in Winnipeg who were looking to promote transportation alternatives on a year-round basis. One such workplace was Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC). Results from a transportation survey provided baseline data on current commuting trends, helped to assess the willingness of employees to try alternative modes, and identified barriers for prospective green commuters. Today, RCM continues to work with the Green Citizenship Committee at the PWGSC downtown Winnipeg office to implement their Green Commuting action plan.

Tools and resources developed during the two-year pilot

project have been compiled onto a web-based resource. The *Green Commute* guide builds on RCM's existing *Green Commuting Initiatives* web site designed to promote active and sustainable transportation. From recruiting the right people to preparing a budget, *Green Commute* follows a step-by-step process to help workplaces set up an action plan. The guide provides local, practical examples from a number of Manitoba organizations that have taken steps to help support green commuting options for their employees.

## Practical local examples

The Health Sciences Centre continues to promote green commuting options through their parking office. The International Institute for Sustainable Develop-

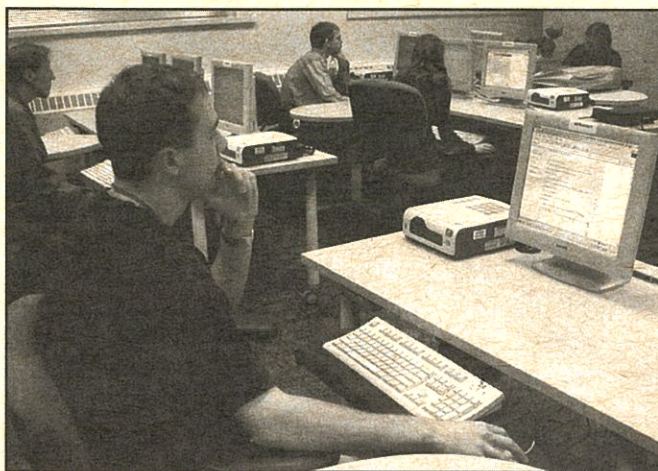
ment has conducted a workplace transportation survey and is working in partnership with RCM to develop a "Made in Manitoba" Greenhouse gas emissions calculator. Manitoba Hydro's Green Commuting Committee has developed an internal *Green Commuting Options* web page and has organized Sustainable Transportation Awareness Month events to prepare for the Commuter Challenge.

To develop the *Green Commute* guide, RCM was inspired by trip reduction resources developed elsewhere in Canada, namely Go for Green's *Walk 'n Roll Guide*, Better Environmentally Sound Transportation's *Go Green Choices* program, and Transport Canada's *Commuter Options* workshop. The guide recognizes the adaptable nature of trip reduction programs by providing local context to transportation demand management measures and presenting them in a way that reflects the specific needs of interested workplaces.

## Growing demand for commuting options

The *Green Commute* guide is RCM's response to growing awareness among Manitoba workplaces and schools of the personal and community benefits associated with active and green commuting. Reduced greenhouse gas emissions, increased opportunities for physical activity, and the community economic development potential of walkable areas are reasons green commuting options are requested by more and more Manitobans.

To consult the *Green Commute* guide, please visit [www.resourceconservation.mb.ca](http://www.resourceconservation.mb.ca) or call Resource Conservation Manitoba at 204-925-3772. RCM would like to thank the Province of Manitoba Climate Change Branch, the City of Winnipeg Civic Environmental Committee and Go for Green for their support of RCM's *Green Commute* guide. **ECO**

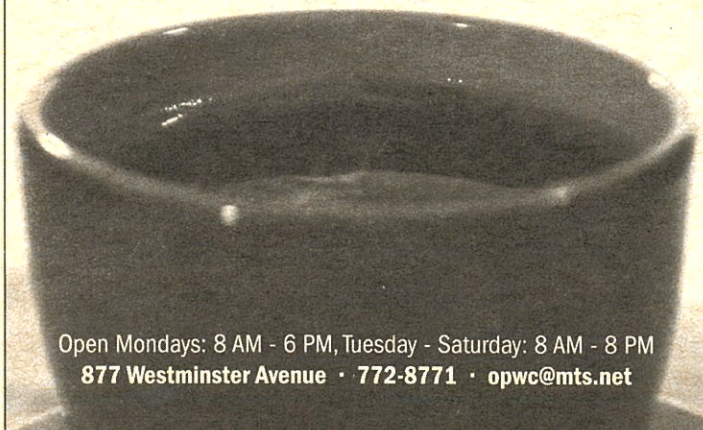


**PWGSC committed resources to an internal commuting survey for all Winnipeg employees. Photo by RCM**

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# Stalking Spiders in Manitoba

By Lindy Clubb

Dr. Rod McGinn talks to the spiders he's trying to photograph, imploring them to stay still and pose in the middle of their webs. He's preparing for a presentation on spiders for a public audience at Brandon University's Goldeneye Field Station in the Duck Mountains, and he needs pictures of his many legged subjects. He gets great ones.

It's a myth that spiders bite. Rod, a Brandon University professor, handles his specimens gently, puts them in lidded plastic cups, and makes sure they go back to where he finds them—no harm done. And he finds them beneath eaves, between branches, below the curled tops of plants, and by buildings. His presentation introduces the audience to the vertical webs of orb spiders, wolf spiders, longjawed spiders and shamrock spiders at night, by flashlight. During the day it's dock spiders and the lovely, dew-filled horizontal webs of grass spiders.

## Remarkable web technology

Spiders are varied in size and have colors ranging from cream and tans to mottled grays and shiny blacks. They have specialized feet to comb their silk, tangle it, and improve it for catching flying prey—like insects as large as darners and bumblebees. Some, like ambushing spiders, have plenty of eyes, and some can't see at all. I admire their patience. I hear they're good mothers.

Their webs alter shapes from 45-degree angles to cupped baskets and from scaffolds to sheets. They use a dragline of

smooth silk to run up and down their otherwise sticky webs, and use their jaws and fangs to penetrate prey and suck out the juices "like a slurpee", as Rod says cheerfully.

Spiders spin their webs by letting a strand blow in the breeze until it catches on a stationary object, creating a line like a bridge. They run across it, testing for strength, and begin their web from the attached side. Radial support lines give them the freedom to roam but prey gets caught on the stickier cross lines. Many spiders consume broken webs for the protein they contain. Why waste nutrients?

They overwinter in cocoons or as eggs, even below the frostline. Most prefer a dark and shady location with high humidity (which helps to explain their high numbers in basements and at the lake) but they can and do inhabit every environment on earth. Spiders were found, surprisingly, on the peaks of Everest. Ballooning spiders were collected from airplanes at elevations of 5,000 feet. They aren't afraid of heights, and there are lots of them. Over two million spiders were found concentrated on one acre of a grassy field and 840,000 species have been counted so far in the world (mostly tropical), but we're still finding new ones. Rod, our 'spiderman' is one of only two experts in that branch of entomology in our province.

So grab a flashlight and check out the closest eave or spruce tree after dark. It helps if you talk to the spiders—they're worth getting to know.

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## Member Group Profile: The Wildlife Haven Rehabilitation Centre

By Dan Diawol, President

The Wildlife Haven Rehabilitation Centre (formerly known as the Manitoba Wildlife Rehabilitation Organization, or MWRO) is a registered charity committed to the rehabilitation and return to the wild of rescued, injured and orphaned wildlife. Inherent in our mission is the promotion of public awareness through education to ensure a peaceful coexistence with, and appreciation for, our wildlife neighbours. We operate 365 days a year under permits issued by the federal and provincial government. Volunteers devote thousands of hours to providing critical services, including animal rehabilitation, education, community outreach, fund development and administration.

### Over 1,800 animals per year

Each year the number of animals admitted to Wildlife Haven increases. Since 1999, annual admissions have exceeded 1,800 injured and orphaned animals. As well we receive approximately 10,000 telephone inquiries yearly about wildlife. The Centre successfully cares for, rehabilitates, and then releases hundreds of injured and orphaned animals and birds every year. The Centre relies on public donations to support our operations, activities, and growing case loads. In the last year, over 2000

animals were received by the Centre. A tremendous amount of money is continually required to pay for food, specialized perching and cage set-up needs, medications, heat, water, air conditioning, cleaning and maintenance of our facilities. We do not

receive sustainable funding from any level of government and we rely on the generosity of the citizens and corporate sponsors of Manitoba.

The Wildlife Haven has a comprehensive education program in which we strive to inspire a sense of personal responsibility for the health and well being of Manitoba's environment and wildlife. We demonstrate how humans and wildlife can peacefully co-exist through presentations to school children and special interest groups of all ages. To assist in the delivery of our message we have several non-releasable Ambassadors that

accompany our educators. Each of these animals has a powerful story about the negative consequences of human interference with wildlife. Our Ambassadors are housed in our education complex and can be viewed when caring citizens drop off injured wildlife. We cannot offer tours of the hospital or recovery areas as this would be too stressful on the animals in our care.

The Centre has a sponsorship program whereby you can sponsor an injured or orphaned animal. When you sponsor an animal, you will help to give it a new chance at life and a better chance for survival in its natural habitat. You can also assist the centre through an annual membership program.

### Plans for new buildings and animal enclosures

The Wildlife Haven Rehabilitation Centre is located on the University of Manitoba's Glenlea Research Station just south of Winnipeg, but we must move from Glenlea by June 2007. In addition to searching for land and making plans for new buildings and animal enclosures, we need to upgrade our hospital, develop an on-site education facility and build a heated overwintering facility for long-term animal rehabilitation. This is a financially demanding undertaking and we are relying on community support to make this dream a reality.

Please help with the ongoing expenses of operating the Centre and make a pledge or donation towards the Centre of the Future. We also always need volunteers in many areas and if are interested, please do not hesitate to contact the Centre.

For more information contact:

### The Wildlife Haven Rehabilitation Centre

Box 49, Glenlea, MB R0G 0S0

Phone: 204-883-2122

Fax: 204-883-2582

E-mail: [mwrocent@skyweb.ca](mailto:mwrocent@skyweb.ca)

Web Site: [www.mwro.mb.ca](http://www.mwro.mb.ca)



*Two orphaned Northern Hawk Owls at the Wildlife Haven Centre. Photo by H. Laird*



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## Getting 'Caught in the Act' during RCM's Waste Reduction Week 2005

# Too Good to Waste!

It's nothing to boast about. Canadians produce the most waste of any country in the world per capita. At 2.7 kg per person per day, we throw out more than our own body weight in garbage every month. It's an amount that's not only unsustainable, it's also unnecessary. Approximately two-thirds of household waste can be either recycled or composted, and if people are conscious about what they are purchasing and using, the overall reduction can be even higher.

Through *Waste Reduction Week 2005* (October 17 to 23), Resource Conservation Manitoba provides municipalities, schools, businesses and individuals with information on how to reduce waste. Now in its fifth year as a national event, the week encourages Manitobans to reflect on their waste disposal and resource consumption habits, and to take action to cut waste.

### An unconventional approach

In Manitoba, *Waste Reduction Week* adopts an unconventional approach to the issue: positive reinforcement. This is achieved through the 'Caught in the Act' concept, first tried here in 2004 with great success. The contest sends 'EnviroSpies' into schools, workplaces and public areas, equipped with prizes, and waiting to pounce on unsuspecting persons who are discovered committing acts of waste reduction.

Last year, EnviroSpies went underground in communities all across Manitoba (including Churchill), and rewarded people for everything from taking the bus to printing double-sided pages. The responses that EnviroSpies received from those who were 'caught in the act' ranged from pleased surprise to outright uncontrolled laughter.

Once again this year, Manitobans all across the province can also 'turn themselves in' by registering on RCM's WRW web site to become eligible for prizes such as re-usable shopping bags, gift certificates, fridge magnets, and energy-saving compact fluorescent lamps.

### EnviroSpies return

Many EnviroSpies from 2004 have already signed up to participate in 2005. They found that rewarding people, instead of chastising, was a uniquely enjoyable experience. It is possible to have fun, get serious, and

make a difference, all at the same time.

For a host of waste reduction tips and more information on the 'Caught in the Act' contest, visit RCM online at [www.resourceconservation.mb.ca](http://www.resourceconservation.mb.ca), or call 925-3775 in Winnipeg, or 1-866-394-8880 toll-free.

*Waste Reduction Week in Manitoba is supported by the Manitoba Product Stewardship Corporation, Manitoba Conservation, the City of Winnipeg, and Manitoba Hydro.*



### The Manitoba Eco-Network

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Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Area(s) of interest \_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer skills \_\_\_\_\_

*Group members are entitled to nominate representatives for a position on the Eco-Network Steering Committee. Group membership is open to any non-governmental, non-profit group which has as one of its objectives the enhancing or furthering of environmental quality, protecting the environment or environmental education.*

A supporting membership includes a subscription to **Eco-Journal** as well as notice of events and regular updates on issues and is open to any individual.

