



Volunteers Needed

The BLESS Board is looking for a few good people to participate on our Nominating Committee for Board Members. This is in preparation for our Annual General Meeting to be held in January, 2007. If you are interested please contact Nicholas Batchelor at: nicholas.batchelor@gm.com

RAMSAR Nomination Process

The first step in having Big Lake become a recognised RAMSAR site has been passed with the Alberta Government's agreement to the process. "I have consulted with my colleague, Honourable Denis Ducharme, Minister of Community Development, who is responsible for the administration and management of Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park, and I am pleased to confirm his support for designating Big Lake,

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Lois Hole Provincial Park benefits from Harvie family donation

Edmonton... The Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park will benefit from a \$6 million donation made by the Harvie family of Cochrane.

"This generous donation will help the Alberta government to continue to fulfill the late Lieutenant Governor's vision for the environment and education of our youth," said Premier Ralph Klein.

The family has set aside \$6 million to establish the Harvie Conservancy Foundation. The Foundation will divide the funds between the Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park and the planned

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We know what we are, but know not what we may be.

Shakespeare

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new Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park near Cochrane.

"Our late father Neil Harvie shared Lois Hole's passion for conservation," said Tim Harvie on behalf of three family generations who have ranched the historic Bow River valley for more than 70 years. "We are pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this park that is an outdoor classroom and wetland sanctuary for our northern neighbors."

The Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park protects an internationally renowned region for the nesting and migrating of waterfowl and shorebirds. It is within easy access of more than one million nearby residents of the City of Edmonton, City of St. Albert, Parkland County and Sturgeon County.

"I would like to express our gratitude for this gift that will help us provide opportunities for Albertans to enjoy and learn about our natural heritage," Denis Ducharme, Minister of Alberta Community Development, responsible for parks and

Bald eagle seen recently over Big Lake.

Photo by Dave Burkhart

protected areas.

Water Quality Monitoring Program

The water quality monitoring program got off to a late start due to delays in funding and receipt of instruments. However, BLESS Board members have participated in taking lake water samples with a biologist from the Alberta Lake Monitoring Society throughout the summer, and we have now completed water quality analyses on our own samples from both basins of Big Lake, at the BLESS platform, at Carrot Creek, Sturgeon River and Atim Creek. The quality of the lake and the streams feeding it are very different, with Carrot Creek probably being the most different of all. It is high in nutrients, warm, with a very basic pH and is much more "hard" than the other

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Sign Posting on New Park Lands

Come out on October 7 for an outing to the new lands most recently added to the Lois Hole Centennial Prov Park. We will be adding some new park boundary signs and removing trash from the park. Please wear boots (hiking boots are good) and appropriate clothing. A pair of work gloves is also advised.

We will meet at the new Park sign on 137 Ave and 199 St (right where 137 Ave curves south), October 7 at 1 PM.

Songbird Migration

The songbird migration through Saint Albert is continuing because of the cool and overcast conditions. I spent 2-3 hours walking the trails alongside the Sturgeon River in the Mission area, and the Red Willow Trails in Lacombe Lake Park this afternoon and found 8 species of warblers, mainly orange-crowned and yellow-rumped, but also found yellow, magnolia, blackpoll, am. redstart, ovenbird, and a number of wilson's.

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and the Parklands surrounding it, in the RAMSAR List.”

“Inclusion of Big Lake on the RAMSAR List of Wetlands of International Importance would support Alberta Government initiatives, such as the Water for Life Strategy and other wetland conservation values, as well as involvement in Alberta-Canada habitat partnerships, including the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and Biodiversity Strategy”, wrote Alberta Sustainable Resource Development Minister David Coumts.

Edmonton Requests BLESS's Participation in MDP

The City of Edmonton is going into a two-year exercise to produce a new 30-year Municipal Development Plan and is seeking input from stakeholders into the plan. This is a very progressive, democratic initiative for a municipality to take, one that will hopefully produce a viable long-term plan that serves the needs of all stakeholders.

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**Let us not look back in anger or forward in fear,
but around in awareness.**

James Thurber

(Continued from page 3 ... Edmonton MDP)

Edmonton has identified BLESS as a significant stakeholder, likely because of the Edmonton Big Lake Area Structure Plan first put forward in 1991. That ASP projected a 2200 acre development designed to add some 27,000 more people to the area between the shores of Big Lake and the Yellowhead Highway from 199 St to Edmonton city limits at 231 St. The 1991 ASP has so far languished but it is only a matter of time before we begin seeing development in that area. This is our opportunity, as stewards of Big Lake and Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park, to have effective input into ensuring the least possible impact to our natural area and promoting the principals of sustainable growth.

The Edmonton MDP development process comprises three stages:

Stage 1 (the remainder of 2006) will establish the values and principles upon which the new MDP policies will be based.

Stage 2 (January - July 2007) will explore different growth scenarios and establish goals, targets and indicators.

Stage 3 (July 2007 - June 2008) will develop the draft plan. Stakeholders

are invited to participate in stages one and two and provide feedback on the draft policies developed in Stage 3.

W hat is life? It is the
flash of a firefly in the
night. It is the breath of the
buffalo in the wintertime.
It is the little shadow which
runs across the grass and
loses itself in the sunset.

Crowfoot (1821-1890)

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There was also a sharp-shinned hawk, a yellow-bellied sapsucker, golden-crowned and ruby-crowned kinglets, swainson and hermit thrushes, clay-colored and swamp sparrows, white-throated and white-crowned sparrows, and an oregon junco.

The walk alongside the Sturgeon River was quite interesting because I saw an immature sora flying upriver, and he landed on some duck weed, and then swam across the river into some tall grasses. There were also a number of mallards, gadwalls, blue-winged teal, am. wigeon, lesser scaup, common goldeneye, and coots on the river.

Dave Nadeau, Saint Albert

Road Progress Update

As you can see from the photo above (courtesy of Matti Koivula) the bridge over the Sturgeon River is nearly finished. The extra pillars are not intended for monuments to the builders, city fathers or provincial potentates, they are to hold another bridge span should it ever be needed. In the mean time they may make excellent nesting platforms.



Construction of the road bed continued with the paving of the extension from 184 St near the Yellowhead Trail north to 137 Ave in Edmonton in mid-summer. Grading and packing of the roadbed has been finished for the section north of 137 Ave towards the bridge. On the other side of the bridge the road bed is nearing completion towards Villeneuve Road, while the intersection of the WRR and Meadowview Dr. is still underway.

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streams.

So far we have not seen results from the ALMS sampling of the lake. Another fall sampling is planned for October and then perhaps one or two will be taken through the ice on Big Lake to collect winter water quality samples. We plan on continuing the monitoring plan through at least next summer.

None of the samples indicate serious pollution, however, the number of samples is small yet. The major result to date is the start of a data collection program that will tell us more about the nature of the lake today so that we can detect any future changes as the landscape around the lake is altered, as surely it will.

The monitoring project has been completely funded by an Alberta EcoTrust Community Grant.



Park Planning in St. Albert

At this time Recreation (Dept.) is considering the Lois Hole Provincial Park in all planning for the future update of the Red Willow Park Master Plan and the Riel Park Redevelopment Master Plan, which has already begun. In August the Planning Dept invited the Manager of the Fish Creek Provincial Park as well as Provincial staff to discuss the logistics of integrating a Provincial Park into the Region.

themes and associated activities for our young participants and had the program off to a flying start by early July.

Throughout the summer Jessica kept residents informed as to what was going on down at the log cabin with regular reports in the local press. Her efforts bore fruit, total attendance was up yet again this year and the number of children who enrolled in the Young Naturalist program also increased over last year's number. Most surprising was the increase in those who graduated as Young Naturalists, up 36% from 2005 despite the bar for graduation being raised. This year Jessica increased the minimum number of successfully completed activities required to graduate from 9 to 21. Even at that, six hard working young-

Summer Nature Program

The BLESS Summer Nature Program enjoyed another resounding success in 2006. The annual environmental education program was fully funded this year with grants from Environment Canada's EcoAction fund, the Alberta STEP program and TD Friends of the Environment.

This year BLESS directors hired Jessica Cobb, an Education student at the University of Alberta, to develop and run the program. Jess started in mid June by developing weekly educational



sters managed to complete the Young Naturalist Program twice under the guidance and motivation of our popular facilitator. Organized groups of children from St. Albert and Edmonton also visited the log cabin this summer to partake of the free activities.

Several volunteers helped make this year's program a success. Of particular note was Kelsey who came out every Thursday to help run activities and look after the aquarium critters. Other volunteers who pitched in regularly were Ben and Jacques and several members of an Edmonton youth group. Thank you volunteers, your contributions were invaluable and significant to the success of the program.

The Summer Nature Program is arguably one of the most important initiatives BLESS undertakes every year. Children are both the beneficiaries and the future of our natural heritage and education is the tool that engages and enables. If we manage to steer our budding young stewards down the road towards preserving and protecting our natural areas we accomplish our mandate as an organization.



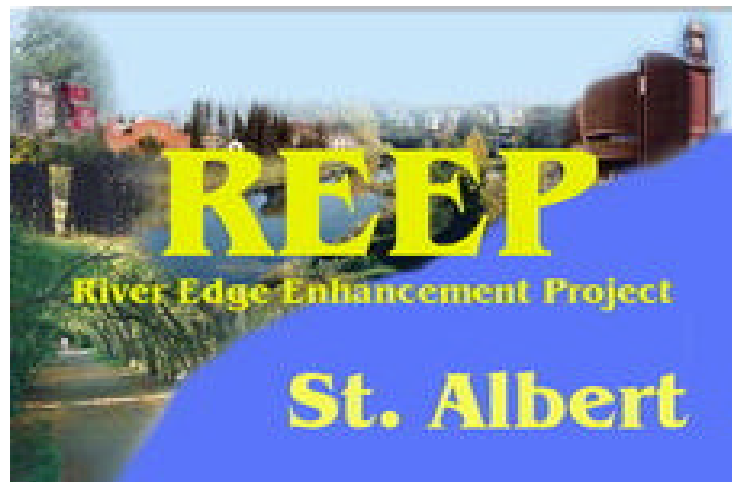
REEP Progress

On Sept 28 members of the **Paul**

Kane Environment Club involving two Paul Kane teachers and seven students spent upwards of an hour and a half doing some extensive weeding of "Site B" at Berrymore Flats. Subsequent to the weeding, they planted an additional 13 trees and shrubs filling in a few spots where either plants had been lost or a vacant space persisted.

Kevin Veenstra and staff brought down a couple of large garbage pails of wood chips which were spread around but 15 or 20 more of those pails will be required to adequately cover the site to reduce weeds.

The Paul Kane students, all young ladies, worked hard and did a great job preparing the site for the winter months coming up. Thanks again to the City staff for bringing the mulch and for taking away the pulled weeds.



Dan Stoker

