Spring Lake Environmental Advisory Committee Winter 2011 Newsletter

Message from our Co-Chair

We hope this issue of the Environmental Advisory Committee's (EAC) Winter Newsletter finds everyone well and enjoying the benefits of living in such a wonderful community. This year the EAC has completed several initiatives that are highlighted in our newsletter.

Each of the EAC's projects takes the effort from all of our volunteers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the individuals that helped out in 2011. If you are interested in helping out with one or more of our projects please contact us to find out about the opportunities. The EAC meets every 2 months and as needed for the specific projects volunteers are involved with. It is a great way to learn from each other and about the environment we all live in.

Thanks for reading our newsletter and hope to see you around the village.

-Jason Shewchuk

Loons

Rene Morrissette who has been a member of the EAC since it started six years ago, has been collecting data on the loons at Spring Lake for the past 18 years. He files a report each year with the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey stating how many pairs of loons arrive each spring, how many eggs are laid and how many chicks are born. He has become our local 'expert' on the loons here; he has given us an update for the 2011 summer…….

There were plenty of calls and yodels to entertain us again this year. Again there were four pairs of loons on this small lake. This is unusual and is only possible because of the island that creates four distinct areas for these very territorial birds.

Regrettably, while all four pairs nested and produced eggs, none of the eggs made it to hatching. This is the third straight year we have had nests, eggs and no chicks. Speculation as to the reasons includes the low water levels in previous years and the increasing water level of this year. There is also a strong suspicion that crows may have been part of the problem as some were actually observed eating eggs. Another factor this year may have been a shortage of small perch and feed fish as a result of some winter kill. Supporting this theory, is that one male loon found dead, died due to trying to eat too large a fish, according to the autopsy report. (Rene took the dead loon into Fish and Wildlife for the autopsy).

One highlight this year is that one loon pair actually nested on a loon nesting platform that a member of the Environmental Advisory Committee built during the past winter. The EAC will build another loon nesting platform for use next year in the southwest bay. When you see these nesting platforms, please steer clear of them until they are removed from the lake, just in case there are nesting loons using them again. Let's hope for a better outcome of chicks next year.

Rain Barrels

As you may remember, in 2010 the Village Council in conjunction with the EAC under took the coordination of the ordering and delivery of rain barrels for residents who chose to start harvesting rain water. It is planned that this will occur again in 2012, to offer this opportunity to any new residents or to anyone who previously missed out on the rain barrels. Watch your neighborhood bulletin board this spring for information regarding the ordering of your rain barrel.

Picnic

July 1st picnic was a great success this year. The EAC again had an information table with handouts, contests, a raffle and packets of wild flower seeds which were handed out to all of the children who came and said hello. At the table were application forms for our 2011 Photo Contest.

Photo Contest

Our photo contest closed September 1st with a variety of submissions from the residents of Spring Lake. The

winners of each of the three categories won coffee table books with fabulous photos in them, along with a free copy of the Spring Lake 2012 photo calendar.

Photo Contest winners are as follows for each of the categories:

- ☺ Best Wildlife photo by Christine Mowat.
- ☺ Best Landscape photo by Katelyn Klatt.
- ☺ Best Enjoying the Outdoors photo by Christine Mowat.

Aerators

If you look towards the north shore of our lake in the winter you will probably see a white mist fountain. These two white sprays create open water or polynia as they are known, and are formed by two electrically-run aerators that provide oxygen into the water in the winter when ice covers the lake. Without this aeration, a cold and long winter with thick ice might starve the lake of enough oxygen to keep some fish and other types of wildlife alive. As it is, Spring Lake is known as a eutrophic lake (see our article on the EAC link of the Village website) and like many lakes in our region, it is gradually getting more shallow and producing more organic material which competes for the available oxygen.

A few points we would like to share in hopes more residents will understand the aerating process:

- The aerators are owned, maintained by and the electricity is paid for by the Alberta Conservation Association. The 'ACA' is a not-for-profit organization.
- There are about twenty lakes in Alberta which the ACA aerates. Another lake close to Spring Lake which is aerated is Muir Lake just north of Spruce Grove.
- A volunteer committee of several Village residents helps the ACA install the aerators in the fall and withdraw them once the ice melts in the spring.
- Advisory signs about the lake aeration are placed at a couple of key access points to the lake; safety warning signs about thin ice are strategically placed near the polynia to discourage anyone from approaching the open water areas.
- Some water evaporation does occur but it is minimal relative to the rate that occurs in the 3 warmer seasons with wind and wave action.
- Oxygen levels are taken at various points throughout the lake and at various depths during the winter months; last year's measurements showed a healthy amount of oxygen was present.
- Due to our lake benefiting from increased oxygen levels due to aeration many types of plant life and small invertebrates also flourish. These provide food for not only the fish, but also for the birds, amphibians and reptiles thus the biodiversity of our lake increases.

If you ever see that one of the aerators is not functioning, we ask that you please call the Village Office or **1-877 969-9091.** One of the Village aeration volunteers or the ACA will follow-up.

Who We Are

The Spring Lake EAC is made up of the following volunteers:

- ⇒ Bonnie Flesher, Council Rep. and Co-Chair
- ⇒ Jason Shewchuk Co-Chair
- ⇒ Rene Morrissette
- ⇒ Morey Madsen
- ⇒ Bonnie Hall
- ⇒ Adam Ledwon
- ⇒ Russell Hakes

We can be contacted at **sleac@ymail.com**

We wish you all a safe, active and happy winter!