Environmental Advisory Committee

Winter Newsletter 2023

TO PROMOTE EDUCATION, ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS, AND PROVIDE ADVICE FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE VILLAGE OF SPRING LAKE

Fall Festival – the Fall Festival was well attended again this year. We were able to hand out a few goodies, and have some door prizes. Our flashlights were a big hit with everyone who was able to get one. As usual, our bird house kits were sought after. We enjoy participating in this community get-together every year, having a chance to meet and chat with you.

GFL – we have had many questions regarding what goes into our recycle bags and what does not. There seems to be some discrepancies on web sites, so we contacted GLF to come out to our Fall Festival and help clear up some of the questions. We hope those of you who attended the Fall Festival had a chance to speak with them. We will try to get them out to our community again during the winter for a guest speaking engagement. Watch for advertising on the community boards and Village web site and the EAC link.

Aerators – Having aerators in the lake during the winter months helps to keep the lake healthy and the fish survive. Many years ago before the aerators were being used, there would always be winter kill of most of the trout. They would wash up to shore in the spring and start decomposing which was not a pleasant sight or smell. The Alberta Conservation Association has been responsible for putting in and removing the aerators since they commenced putting them in Spring Lake; they have been doing this for approximately 15 years. In spring it seems there is an unusual amount of weeds, which in once sense there is, however these are the weeds rising to the surface that had died off in the winter months. A bit of wind and a few boats out on the lake, and they wash into shore. The last two years, the Alberta Conservation Association, like many organizations, have been losing staff and their current staff are spread pretty thin. They have approached community groups throughout the province where they currently install aerators to take over the responsibility of putting in and removing the aerators each year. This frees up their staff to help more communities in keeping the lakes of Alberta healthy.

The Edmonton Trout Club has stepped up to the plate and since fall of 2022 have been working hand in hand with the Alberta Conservation Association in installing and removing the aerators. Come spring of 2024, the Trout Club will be fully responsible for the aerators, so a Thank You goes out to them for taking over this task.
Please Note: Safety warning signs about thin ice are placed near the open water and and a snow fence is put up to discourage people and animals from approaching the open water areas. Please pay attention to these safety features and stay away.

Prussian Carp – this past summer, fisher people from the trout club have been catching Prussian Carp; they belong to the gold fish family. These Prussian Carp are extremely invasive and will kill out a lake if they are not caught and destroyed; they do not make good eating. These fish reproduce rapidly, are aggressive and can take over the habitat of native fish. They are a silvery color, sometimes with a faint golden tinge. They can live between five to ten years and spawn several times per year, can live in low oxygen lakes, shallow water and survive cold winters and even being frozen; they will thaw out and continue on as if nothing happened.

These could have been put in the lake via several means. One, they could have been planted by a person, two, they could have come in by waterfowl, three, they could have been brought in on a boat that was in another lake and not cleaned before being put into our lake.

If you are fishing and catch one, DO NOT throw it back. We must ensure that we get these fished out as soon as possible.

Community Speaker – In June we invited Myrna Pearman to give a presentation on Backyard Bird Feeding. Myrna is a naturalist, photographer, educator, and writer who has published several books. Her presentation was entertaining and well attended and enjoyed by all who were there. We are looking at inviting her again and others to present interesting and educational topics that affect our community. Watch for advertising.

Initiatives – The Spring Lake Environmental Advisory Committee has been active since 2005. Over the years we have completed and participated in many activities. Check out our Environmental Advisory Committee link on the Village's web site and you can find a list of all of the activities we have been a part of and have initiated. A reminder that all of our meetings are open to the public, we meet three to four times a year and meet at the Village Administration Building. If you are interested in attending one of our meetings, call the Village Office, leave your name and number and a member will return your call. On that note, if you have any environmental questions or concerns, you can also contact us through email at eac@springlakealberta.com, leave your name, phone number or email address and an EAC member will get back to you. We will do our best to provide you with the information you request or to help address any concerns you have as a member of our community.

Loons – There were again four breeding pairs of loons nesting on our lake this year. Three

pairs nested on three different sides of the island and one pair on the nesting platform put out by the EAC. The three pairs nesting on the island successfully produced one chick each. The pair on the nesting platform did not do so well. Volunteers observing this nest noticed strange behaviour such as getting on and off the nest repeatedly. This suggests that one of the adults may have been a juvenile who could not figure out what needed to be done. Let us hope they do better next year.

At the end of the breeding season adult loons begin to moult. They have to leave for their winter habitat before they lose too many of their feathers. In our area adult loons leave the lake in late August or early September. The young are left behind to fend for themselves. They need to feed themselves to build strength so they can make the trip to the West Coast. They are usually gone from our lake by Thanksgiving. The young will usually stay on the West Coast for three years before returning to find a mate and breed in the general area where they were born.

Fertilizer by-law – this past summer, there were questions and confusion in regards to using lawn fertilizers. There has been a new fertilizer by-law passed this year. If you have questions, please read the by-law or call the Village Office for more information or clarification of the by-law. The best fertilizer you can use is your own compost and grass clippings by leaving them on your lawn after cutting the grass. Aerating your lawn in the spring, over-seeding your lawn, aerating it then spreading compost works well, as well as watering deeply and less often will help produce a lush lawn without using commercial grade fertilizers.

Noxious Weeds – In past years the EAC has been putting information out in regards to the different types of Noxious and Prohibited Weeds within our community. The biggest culprit we had besides Canadian Thistle is the Himalayan Balsam which has flowers similar to an orchid. Since we became aware that they were a prohibited weed and were wide spread in our community, there has been many people working to eradicate this weed in Spring Lake. It is a type of weed that if it gets down to the lake, it will take over the lake. We are happy to say that with residents being diligent in looking for, identifying and removing these weeds, we have gotten a manageable handle on them. This does not mean we can let our guard down, it means we are winning the battle with these weeds. So please keep diligent in looking for and pulling any of these noxious and prohibited weeds that we have in our community.

Creeping Bellflower Himalayan Balsam Toadflax

Bird House Kits – each year a couple of the EAC members get together and cut and

package bird house kits. We enjoy handing them out at the Fall Festival each year. We do ask if you get one of our kits, that once they are built and put up, that a photo be taken and sent into us. We put much time, effort and money into purchasing the wood, cutting it to size and packaging them and once they are handed out, we have no idea if they are being put together and used. This would be a huge help to us in determining if this is a worthwhile project to continue for our community.

Bird Feeding Information - Bird feeders can be made out of a variety of materials you have at home that you can recycle into a feeder such as pie plates for tray feeders, 2 litre pop bottles or milk cartons for use as tube feeders, coconut shells cut in half, or even small plastic pails with holes cut into the sides with small perches attached. If you choose to build a feeder out of wood, rather than painting or varnishing the wood which may make the birds ill, treat the wood with vegetable oil.

Birds enjoy a vast array of foods, which you have at home. You can make your own suet or peanut butter balls by melting peanut butter or lard and mixing in a variety of seeds such as flax, sunflower, ground nuts, peanuts, pumpkin, cantaloupe, melon, or apple. These can also be served on their own on tray feeders. Ensure the nuts are unsalted. Once you have the mixture made, pine cones can be coated with the mixture and hung out for the birds, or you can devise a type of wire basket to hold the solidified treat in. Make sure there are no sharp pieces of wire sticking out to hurt yourself or the birds on.

Did You Know.....instead of composting some foods, you can “recycle” them into snacks or soup? Examples are potato and sweet potato skins can be tossed with oil and air fried or deep fried as you would do French fries, or bake at 375º until browned and crispy.

Another “recycling” tip is to take four to six cups of vegetable trimmings such as onion tops and skins, carrot and celery ends, broccoli stems, mushroom stems, wilted lettuce, with a bay leaf, a variety of herbs of your liking dried or fresh and put in a stock pot, cover with water, bring to a boil and simmer partially covered for an hour, then strain. This makes a wonderful vegetable stock. These trimmings can be frozen together until you have four to six cups for your stock. However, through trial and error, do not use turnip skins as they will over power all of the other vegetable and herb flavours.

It takes a whole community to protect the area we live in, whether it is monitoring the speed on our roads and lake, disposing of debris in the proper containers or avoiding the use of pesticides. One aspect of lake shore protection is to have an awareness of what will damage the habitat of the lake, not just the fish and wildlife aspect of the lake, but also the vegetation that is a part of it. Please, everyone be aware of and think twice of whose home you are disturbing before you choose to “get that view or access”.

Have a safe and warm winter.....Your Environmental Advisory Committee