



President's Message

by Donna Tucker

Welcome Spring – that period of delicious anticipation for “opening” is here. It won’t be long until we are surveying our properties for any surprises from winter that Mother Nature may have wrought, putting our docks and gardens in, cleaning up boats, reuniting with friends and neighbours and thinking ahead to summer.

The West Carling Board has been active over the winter to keep abreast of activity in Carling and to start planning for our activities this summer.

Carling Council has just completed the budget process. WCA closely monitored the budget process and offered a total of more than 20 recommendations and questions at three separate points in the process (written input in November and February and verbal input at the public meeting in February). Our suggestions included ways to improve the clarity of the budget information for residents, recommended development of multi-year budgets linked to a strategic plan and increased bylaw enforcement resources, and requested greater clarity related to Township cash reserves. WCA will continue to advocate for a Financial

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Editor's Message

by Tom Betts

Whew, now that was a winter! And a winner! Even at my western Pennsylvania home, we had snow covering the ground from early January until early March, with just a few melt-offs. That, I think, is a modern-day record for us.

These conditions allowed for a much-overdue winter trip to the cottage this year, something my good friend and cottage neighbor Damian Cooper and I always hope for. Some winters it works out, others it does not. This year, it did.

For two nights and the better part of three days in mid-February, the two of us and my 12-year-old golden retriever, Ellie, enjoyed ourselves immensely in the winter wonderland of Georgian Bay. There is just no match for the quiet and tranquility that snow and a frozen lake can provide. And skiing on a frozen Georgian Bay has to be in the top five of an extensive list of my “favorite outdoor activities.”

Conditions had been poor in recent years, so I was really looking forward to this winter trip north. It had been too long. Sadly, but not unexpectedly, I could tell within minutes of slipping on the skis that

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Advisory Committee that includes residents to assist Council by offering expertise throughout the fiscal year, similar to a successful model in place in a neighbouring municipality.

Carling Council Projects

From a staff update at the March 28th Council meeting we have learned about the planned use of the Township owned property across from the ball diamond on Carling Bay Road. This is the proposed site of the new firehall. We are hearing that soil samples of the site have been done and that a request for proposals will be sent out soon. There was also discussion about possibly developing some of that land for residential use.

WCA continues to monitor the progress of the regional pool project and while it is making steady progress, concerns about financing remain. There is an update included in a separate article in this newsletter.

Pancakes Islands Docks

WCA continues to be interested in restoring the Pancakes docks to enable access to the island picnic park. We followed-up with our MPP Graydon Smith who had been the Minister of Natural Resources. Although Graydon has moved to another portfolio, we have been assured that he will be briefing the incoming Minister, Mike Harris, and continuing to work toward a solution to the dock issues on Georgian Bay.

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my deteriorated and painful left knee (which has since been replaced!) was going to restrict my movement and severely limit the distances I could go. And it did. On most of our outings, I had to send a reluctant Damian on ahead of me, as I just could not keep up.

However, far better to have seen Georgian Bay in the winter, and to have skied on the lake at least a little bit, than to have missed it altogether. I still got to witness the quiet and sheer beauty of winter; I was plenty happy watching Damian glide silently over the frozen lake; I was able to enjoy another snowy trip to the cottage with sweet Ellie; and Damian and I talked the nights away, first over dinner at their cottage, and the next night at ours, in both cases with a cozy fire to add some warmth to the chill that was all around us.

I would suggest that good times in the winter make spring and summer times at the cottage even better – it is the contrast in the seasons, I believe, that highlights the best of any of them.

As we move toward the next newsletter, please feel free to share your own thoughts and experiences with our readers. Articles on any topics and of any length are always welcome and help to create a more interesting and informative newsletter. Photographs and artwork are welcome too. The deadline for submissions for the summer newsletter will be June 10. Please email anything to tcmbetts@gmail.com.



Photo by Tom Betts

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Floating Homes

Carling has now had three of these structures appear over the past year. Two of them are available for rent in Sand Bay north of Dillon and the third one, which vanished in the fall, was resident in one of the back bays on the western side of Franklin Island last summer. This remains a complex issue in that the controversy is whether the structure is a building or a vessel. WCA will continue to work with the Georgian Bay Association at a provincial level and locally with Carling Township to find solutions.

Township Zoning Bylaw

Carling Township will begin revising its zoning bylaw this year to align with Carling's Official Plan, provincial legislation, the strategic vision for the Township and needed controls on development. When the Township Official Plan was revised several years ago, WCA provided significant feedback to Council and is now exploring the best way to have input into the proposed bylaw revision. We are planning to collaborate with our "sister" ratepayers' associations and form a working group to review the draft zoning bylaw.

Advocacy for Improved Docking and Parking Facilities for Water Access Properties

Parking and docking access at several Carling locations continues to be a challenge. WCA will continue to advocate for creative solutions. Please let us know if you have concerns and we recommend that you get in touch with Council if you are experiencing parking and/or docking issues.

Engaging Younger Members

The membership survey that WCA completed in 2022 confirmed that our membership leans to a seniors' demographic. Bluntly put - we need to attract younger folks to our membership and to our Board. We have seen the number of Associate Members rise since we created the category several years ago. We granted voting rights to Associate Members last year to make membership more attractive. We continue to seek ways to encourage younger members and ask that you assist with any suggestions you have. Consider signing up your children and grandchildren as Associates to help WCA build membership and carry on a 100 year plus tradition.

The WCA Board is very interested in hearing from you to learn how we can best meet our member's interests and concerns. What kinds of activities and issues would you like to see WCA engaged in this year? You can reach us at info@westcarling.com



Gorgeous days like this one are mere weeks away. Enjoy the anticipation.

Photo by Tom Betts

Cottage Opening 2025 – The Barbecue

by Larry Moses

There is no argument from Georgian Bay Cottage Foodies —The Barbecue is the heart and soul of cottage life.

Can you even imagine a cottage without one? I cannot.

There is something about that curling white smoke, coming from a barbecue, as it provides a holy incense to the fresh Georgian Bay air. This pleasant smell automatically raises one's culinary spirit and anticipation of the greasy cheese hamburger, barbeque chicken, or slathered sauced ribs, grilled vegetables, grilled salmon, spicy Oktoberfest-style sausages, or the kids' favourite — hot (stadium) dogs.

For these reasons, when we start our 2025 cottage season, our Barbecue will be ready to start the 2025 cooking season as well.

But now let us mentally go back to the fall of 2024 – right there, close to the cottage kitchen door sat the mighty Barbecue. A Barbecue that was dirty, tired, worn out, and depressed – a Barbecue fully clogged with black grudge from an earlier spring and summer of heavy usage.

The thermostat was hardly functioning.

Flare ups of grudge continually altered the cooking temperature and cooking timing.

The starter was only intermittently starting and then only by a mysterious and magical process known only to a few (which was, of course, very frustrating).

Now at our cottage our Barbecue was speaking to us in stereo – the BBQ said “I want to be cleaned to function,” but the BBQ also said “I do not want to be cleaned, or I will lose that amazing smoky taste that only accumulated burning grunge can create.”

To the outside observer the solution of our cleaning dilemma was simply, “Buy a new barbecue.”

Now this model of Weber Genesis Barbecue sells for more than a thousand dollars at your friendly Parry Sound hardware dealer. (No wonder they are friendly!)

Surprisingly — the new online, retailing explosion plays right into our hands and our research says that we can buy a replacement new thermostat, replacement grilling bars, and drip shields for a grand total of less than \$150.00.

Looking closely on the mechanics of new parts installment we discover that it can be completed in approximately five minutes!

So, when we closed the cottage in October of 2024, we had completely refurbished the BBQ and now it sat totally poised for action in 2025.

Remember the Boy Scout Motto: “Be Prepared.” And at our cottage we are! “Who wants to wait two weeks for BBQ chicken. Eh!”



All photos by Larry Moses



Update ...

the Regional Pool Project

by Donna Tucker

The pool project continues to make steady progress, but overall financing remains a concern. The installation of the actual “pool” is slated for this summer with completion scheduled for May 2026. The projected budget remains at \$39.5 MM with 95% of costs confirmed. The last phase of the sewer hook-up encountered some issues but the agenda from the March 12th Pool Board meeting indicates that the additional \$195,000 is within the proposed budget. There is a proposal to seek costing on structural accommodations for a donor wall and timing equipment required for a competition pool that were never included in the budget.

The Steering Committee report from the February 12th Pool Board meeting notes that “the requirement for additional cash flow was anticipated by the partner municipalities during the construction of the facility.” The need for a “construction loan” was never discussed with the public at the meetings in Carling when the pool project was presented. Borrowing for the project was specifically prohibited by the 2021 partnership agreement and is now permitted by a change that was made to the Partnership Agreement in February 2024 to allow bridge financing for construction.

Last summer, when the project was short of funds, the Pool Board approached the participating municipalities for a cash infusion. Carling provided an interest free “loan” of \$157,500 which as of the end of March had not been returned despite the promise that the funds would return by the end of 2024. According to Councillor Doubrough (March 25th) the return of the \$157,500 will depend on the finalization of a

formal loan agreement and the project’s cash needs. Faced with a second request for a cash infusion, “Carling has held off remittance of the second cash flow request which was \$157,500 and advise they are waiting for the line of credit to become available” (Pool Steering Committee Report February 12, 2025). It appears the other four participating municipalities (Parry Sound, Seguin, McDougall and Archipelago) did provide funds in response to the second ask.

On March 25th this year, Carling Council passed a resolution to authorize a loan guarantee of \$1,549,180 taking a portion of a \$13.5MM line of credit shared among the five remaining partners of the project (excludes McKellar and Whitestone). This amount puts Carling’s share of the loan guarantee at 11.5% even though the original agreement signed in 2021 puts Carling’s share of the “burden” at 10.5%. Carling and the other remaining four municipalities have picked up the share of the loan guarantee that would have fallen to the Township of McKellar.

At the March 25th Council meeting Carling’s Chief Administrative Officer explained:

- The loan is needed to cover the gap between when construction expenses are paid out and reimbursement from the government grant is received.
- The loan is needed to cover the gap between funds available to the project \$32MM (total of grant and the original commitments of the municipalities) and the current projected cost of construction (\$39.5MM) which is meant to be covered by fundraising.
- The loan is also intended to cover any lag in fundraising.

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Pool, from page 5

- It could take another three to four years to achieve the fundraising target and should fundraising not be successful, long-term financing would be needed.

Fundraising stands at \$1.2MM which is well below the goal of \$10MM (\$5MM for capital and another \$5MM to cover the projected operating loss) despite assurances from the Pool Board that fundraising would be wrapped up by September 2023.

Even if fundraising is spread over the longer term, the concern about the affordability of this project does not go away. More than two years ago, the Pool Board acknowledged the need to raise \$5MM to cover the projected operating deficit. The actual amount of the operating deficit remains in shadow as much is dependent on membership revenue. Now, debt must be factored into the overall operating cost. WCA will continue to monitor the progress of this expensive project and to lobby Council to stay within the limits of Carling's original financial commitment to the project for both capital and operating costs.

Underused Housing Tax

A reminder to any property owners who are required to file a return relating to the Underused Housing Tax (UHT): The deadline is April 30, 2025, even if claiming an exemption.

Spend Your Summer Working at Killbear Provincial Park!

Looking for the ultimate summer job? Killbear Provincial Park is hiring students for the 2025 season! If you have a summer residence or cottage in Carling or the Parry Sound area, this is your chance to work in one of Ontario's most stunning parks.

Why work at Killbear?

- ✓ Gain valuable experience with Ontario Parks
- ✓ Work in a beautiful outdoor setting
- ✓ Be part of an amazing team
- ✓ Make the most of your summer in nature

Apply Now!

Applications must be submitted online through the [Ontario Public Service Careers portal](#). **The application deadlines are April 5, April 29, and June 2.**

[Apply Here](#)

NOTE: Limited staff housing is available—students with local accommodations should mention this in their application.

Help us spread the word! If you know a student looking for a great summer job, share this opportunity with them.

For more information, feel free to reach out to:

Louise Seymour | Senior Park Clerk
Killbear Provincial Park, 35 Eddie Ramsay
Parkway, Nobel, Ontario, P0G 1G0
P: 705-342-5492 **C:** 705-774-
2475 **W:** [OntarioParks.com](https://www.ontarioparks.com)

Opening Blues

by Bruce Davidson

I'm sure we all have our special tales of woe when it comes to facing the task of opening up our cottages in the spring or early summer after a blustery cold Georgian Bay winter. I've had more than my share of ordeals and have heard from or seen quite a few other problems encountered by neighbours. Therefore, I can say with a high level of confidence that anyone who claims to be so well organized as to have nothing go awry on opening day is probably not the guy you want to buy Florida real estate from.

On a frequency basis I would rank plumbing and water pump issues so far out in front of the others that a disaster not related to water almost seems like a vacation. Well, not exactly. I can't say I enjoy the prospect of climbing up on a ladder and attempting to replace missing roof shingles in high winds with a storm coming, for example. Nor do I relish the opportunity of ripping off portions of exterior cladding damaged by wind, ice, or squirrels only to find that my precious replacement pieces carefully stowed under the cottage on elevated cradles have been mercilessly chomped and/or defecated upon by porcupines. But I have no problem firing up the chainsaw to remove trees that have fallen over the pathway. Mind you, even that macho fun is often spoiled when you discover that some jerk (can't be me, I'm not that stupid) forgot to drain the gas last fall and the beast won't start. Meanwhile the ice cream is melting in the boat and a chorus of colourful epithets are raining down on my beleaguered ears.

But enough of all that mundane stuff. Last year I had a problem quite unique in my experience. One that can best be appreciated by water access people who have had a long

drive in traffic and only a few hours available to deal with the inevitable plumbing problems that lie ahead before dark. And we certainly don't want our very special ladies to be venturing out in the rain at night to do their business, do we?

Well last year I decided to open before the Snug Harbour Marina for the first time ever by anyone at our place going back a full century. The reason that such a wild notion was even possible was that my wife had persuaded me to buy a pontoon boat the previous summer in the off chance that our stilted walking styles coupled with an inability to step down more than 6 inches and bend the knee more than 10 degrees might not be just a passing phase. "Contrary to your every instinct maybe we should try do something sensible for a change," she pleasantly observed. So, with considerable difficulty I swallowed my pride and bought a pontoon boat from our dear friend Tami Perks. We then stored it at Larry's Marine over the winter in order that they could install some new flooring. And Perry of Larry's Marine was willing to launch our boat before Gilly's was open, wonder of wonders. Thus arose a perfect opportunity to make history. Naturally I was all over it. Who doesn't want to make history? There was, however, one teensy little problem: **the great unexpected.**

You see, when you use the same style of boat for decades and are the only driver you do certain things like tying and untying the same lines in the same places in the same manner every day. You never think about doing anything differently or paying attention to certain extraneous details. Alas, therein lieth my doom. I backed out from the slip at the Government Dock in our new *party boat* as usual but promptly heard a sudden thwack followed by a sickening

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shudder. My first thought was that I had hit some submerged object like a deadhead or, horror of horrors, Irma's pet snapping turtle *Roughy*.

Naturally I stopped instantly and looked around for telltale terrapin body parts. Thankfully, seeing nothing of that nature and urgently needing to get to the cottage I then put the motor back into gear and casually idled out through the inner harbour on the way to open water. Big mistake as it turned out. Who knew? When we reached the spot where it's ok to *give 'er* I confidently pushed the throttle forward and guess what? The motor died. No groaning, no sputtering, just simply quit.

Despite heroic efforts on my part (if I do say so myself) and an outpouring of obscenities worthy of a drunken sailor, nothing would get that usually reliable Yamaha to make a peep. And could I raise the motor out of the freezing water to see what the problem might be? Nope, not a chance.

Eventually on close inspection peering down through the murky waters I realized that I had backed up over the overlooked portside tie line, which had not been properly secured on the boat. The heavy-duty poly line was now wrapped like a vise around the propellor shaft anchoring the motor firmly in the down position. And me with no knife, no way to raise the motor and no chance of surviving more than a few seconds in the icy water anyway. Half a kilometer from the dock in the middle of the channel, with fading light and not a soul around.

Fittingly at this instant I also recalled that all the emergency gear such as anchors, paddles, flashlights and flares was safely tucked away in our storage shed back on the island. "*Now isn't that just perfect you*

**#/@+^ moron,*" I muttered to myself under my breath.

Finally, just at my darkest hour Lady Luck decided that she had had enough fun for the day. Capriciously she allowed a chilly west wind to arise which remarkably caused us to drift almost directly back to the outside of the Government Dock wherefrom we had left some half hour earlier. I quickly took a septuagenarian leap (less generously described by a kid as a *fairly fast shuffle*) off the boat, secured the lines and blessed the wind Gods for having taken pity on us.

With further good fortune we discovered that our excellent friends Tom Betts and Damian Cooper were already up this early in the season and had their cell phones on. On hearing of our plight, they came together to our rescue. The first thing Tom did when they got within earshot was to apologize for only having a tin boat in the water. That's Tom. It took two trips to get Joy and I and all our assorted junk across in Tom's boat just before dark. Saved in the nick of time. Hallelujah!

And to think I spent all winter eagerly awaiting Opening Day!

Editor's Note: Bruce ... you have reminded me of some things that can (and have) gone wrong at our Open-Up:

- ✓ No power at the cottage
- ✓ A grouse crashed through a window
- ✓ Year of the mouse invasion – where did they all come from, and why?
- ✓ A weasel found a way in, pursuing the mice, but didn't find a way out
- ✓ The deck collapsed – yes, the deck
- ✓ The outboard motors won't start
- ✓ The pump won't prime
- ✓ The hot water tank element is fried
- ✓ Beavers have created an apartment complex using our docks
- ✓ Deer have eaten every tasty oak twig

Congratulations to WCA Champions of the Bay – Richard Wilson and Don Clement

In the Spring edition of GBA Update, you will read about the inaugural Champion of the Bay Award. This award recognizes and honours outstanding community volunteers who actively steward Georgian Bay to promote environmental well-being. WCA is very proud of our 2024 winners.

Richard Wilson

Richard has done outstanding work in Carling to map and cut phragmites and to partner with Georgian Bay Forever to organize annual phragmites cuts. Richard is a tireless advocate of the Bay, chairing the GBA Lands and Forests Committee and serving on the GBA Aquaculture Committee.

Don Clement (In Memoriam)

Don's dedication to Georgian Bay and the preservation of its environment was apparent to all who knew him. He had a long history with the Bay that he could trace from his teenage summers to his later adult years when he became a permanent resident of Carling. Don was always ready with stories of adventures on the Bay, tales of the more colourful characters of Carling or descriptions of encounters with local wildlife. Don's particular interest in ospreys has inspired WCA to seek out locations for new osprey nest platforms.

We urge you to nominate someone for 2025! Each association reviews their nominations and selects their own Association Champions. These Champions will then become eligible for the overall GBA Champion of the Bay award.

Help Shape the Future of the West Carling Association!

Do you love Carling and Georgian Bay? Are you passionate about preserving our community and environment? Join the West Carling Association (WCA) Board of Directors! As a board member, you will share your expertise and leadership to support our mission. Whether you have an interest in environmental and municipal advocacy, organizing social events, or enhancing member communications, there is a role for you.

Why Join?

- Gain hands-on experience with a not-for-profit board.
- Make a tangible impact in your community.
- Connect with like-minded individuals dedicated to Carling's future.

About WCA

*The West Carling Association is a dynamic member-driven organization dedicated to enhancing and preserving the quality of life, environment, and sense of community through effective association management. We advocate for projects and practices that preserve property values and benefit the community as a whole, while contributing to larger initiatives through membership in the Georgian Bay Association. Established in 1921, we proudly represent **300+ members**.*

Commitment

- Virtual board meetings: ~ nine times per year (two hours each)
- **Annual in-person members' meeting:** Summer in Carling

Interested? Submit a brief letter of interest to info@westcarling.com or contact **Donna Tucker at 416-414-8833** for more details.

Electric Shock Drowning

by *Richard Wilson*

“It’s like standing in a bathtub full of water while you use an electric hair dryer.”

It is now mid April, and we are only weeks away from putting docks in the water and launching boats. We are likely six weeks away from even the heartiest of swimmers entering the bay, so I believe there is still time to get this message out.

Swimming near a marina with electrified docks is a really bad idea, period. If you remember nothing else from this article, remember this. For the curious, please allow me to share a bit of information, and clear up some misconceptions about the mechanics and risks of a phenomenon now known as Electric Shock Drowning (ESD).

We generally think of water as a conductor of electricity, and it is, to a degree, but not as much as you may think. Salt water is highly conductive, while fresh water (like our bay) is about 15 TIMES LESS conductive than salt water, or, for that matter, the human body. I know I am starting to remind you of grade 10 Physics but stay with me here.

What this means, is that in fresh water, an electric field potential (yup, that’d be volts) can be established that has no flowing current (electrical current that is, some call them amps). If something that is a better conductor than the water, such as a human body, enters the field, an electric current will flow through that thing. And if that thing does happen to be a human body, it could be fatal. A voltage potential of 6 volts (think 4 AA batteries) is enough to induce a current in a human body. A current of around 20 milliamps (ya, more physics, sorry ‘bout that), can cause muscle paralysis, while 60 milliamps is likely to cause cardiac arrest. To put it in perspective, a 100W lightbulb

has a current around 800 milliamps flowing through it, so we are not talking about a lot of current here.

People with glazed-over eyes, may wish to stop reading now. For the rest of you, I will explain a bit more about how to recognise the potential (yes, that is an excellent pun if I do say so myself) for a dangerous situation.

You have probably already said to yourself, “I see three prong plugs, CSA certifications and GFI plugs everywhere, so what’s the big deal? All these safety systems should protect me, shouldn’t they???” True, they are the norm, and they are all a good idea, but not comprehensive. The diagram at the end of this article, borrowed from Boat US, shows a typical scenario. Subject to a lot of movement and vibrations which can break a wire, or corrosion which can block a connection, today’s boats are a maze of wires and connections. A 120V system ground can have a broken wire or a poor connection which can ground out to the hull. The 120V system also often shares a ground with the 12V system which also goes to the hull and engine. Any of these can provide an electrical path to the water for our errant current to leak into. Similarly, a metallic dock frame or even a swim ladder can bring an electric field to the water.

You will now recall from paragraph 3, that the fresh water around the boat will not likely conduct that electricity back to shore to trip the breaker, or, it does form a circuit with a high resistance, so shazam, a lethal field is now created. The field can even be intermittent (like only when the port bunk reading light is on). If an unsuspecting swimmer swims into this zone, their body becomes a more conductive path for stray current, and the fatal scenario is complete.

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Electric, from page 10

The field causes a current to flow through their conductive body.

What are the odds?

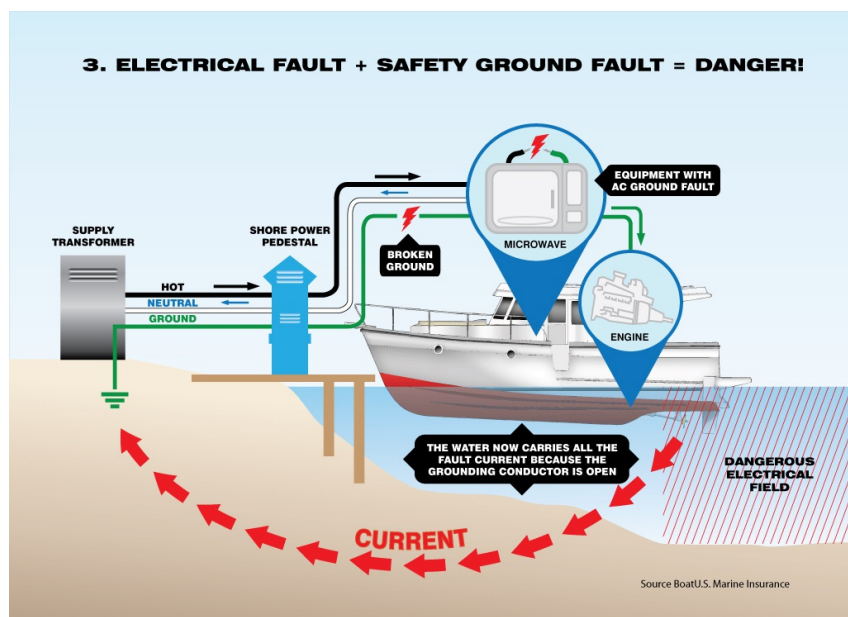
Since 1999, when his son succumbed to ESD while swimming off their sailboat moored in a marina near Port Townsend, Washington, Kevin Ritz has been advocating through the Electric Shock Drowning Prevention Association. They track mishaps that show signs of ESD and estimate that 60 confirmed and 200 suspected fatalities due to ESD have occurred in the U.S. since 2000. Most of these are around marinas, but not all. Which brings us to the next message in this article.

Who amongst us has an electrical cord near the water? That bubbler around the dock? The electric winch on the metal framed shore docker welded up by your brother-in-law? The motion light in a tree? The cord you use to charge the battery for your fishing motor? There is a proliferation of electric boats, hydrofoils and PWC (for good reason). The number of docks with electrical pedestals has grown, and so should our awareness of the hazard of Electric Shock Drowning.

So what can you do?

As far as marinas are concerned, trusted organisations, (including 2 U.S. states that have regulated it) all suggest not entering the water within 150ft (50 m) of any electrical power source. It doesn't matter how excellent the circuitry around the marina is. One bad boat plugged into it can make the whole system into a silent killer. Should you have power in place at your own dock, make a habit to de-energise it before anyone enters the water. In fact, think about making the non-energized state the norm. Only plug in your cords or devices when required. Make sure all circuits are properly grounded and inspected routinely. Some suggest using the TEST button on your GFI receptacle before each use. Beware of unregulated devices (like that battery trickle charger you bought on Amazon), and never fully trust even the certified stuff.

The Electric Shock Drowning Association website (electricshockdrowning.org) contains a lot of background information on this topic which will help you make safe decisions around the water.



Journaling at the Cottage

by Tom Betts

About the time that my parents purchased our cottage on Georgian Bay in the summer of 1998, a good friend of mine – Gregg Rinkus – offered the sage advice to me of starting, from Day 1, a cottage journal. Gregg and I had made a few camping trips to Georgian Bay in the 1990s, and he was well aware of the exciting adventures that were no doubt in my future now that I would be spending a good deal more time “up north.”

I took his good advice, and I ran with it. And now, nearly 27 years later, I think I am still running. In fact, the journals have turned into something of an annual marathon!

The “cottage journal” for our cottage has evolved into a massive annual volume that documents in detail each of the ten or so trips that we make each year from our Pennsylvania home to our Georgian Bay escape, and the daily adventures that we enjoy during our time at the cottage. The 2024 edition – contained in a large 3-ring binder – weighed in at a record 9.8 pounds!

There are, of course, many different ways to maintain some sort of cottage log,

and no method is better than any other. Is it simply for guests to leave a short note about their stay? Or perhaps a spot for the cottage tenants to jot down some deep, inner thoughts in the spirit of Sigurd Olson or John Muir? After all, listening to the yodel of a loon from across the dark lake, or drifting off to sleep to the spirited singing of a whip-poor-will can inspire some colorful

writing. A journal can also be used to record important events or unusual experiences, or maybe to display a photograph or two of a beautiful sunset or an exceptionally large fish that someone has caught.

In our case, I am guilty of following in the footsteps of my father who believed that any hobby worth doing is best done to extremes. As a result, I have chosen to include virtually every recordable detail (and maybe more) in our version of the cottage journal.

Our situation may be different from that of many cottagers, as we make multiple trips up to the cottage from Pennsylvania each year, staying for a week or more before returning back home to tend to matters there for a few days. As such, our trips to the cottage might appear to be more of a series of summer



Six of the 27 journals which document the Betts family's cottage years on Georgian Bay

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Journaling, from page 12

vacations, and the cottage journal then is, in a sense, a series of trip scrapbooks pieced together.

Our format is simple: each winter, a large three-ringed binder is acquired for the upcoming cottage year, and a cover photo is ceremoniously selected from hundreds of Georgian Bay photos that I have taken during the previous cottage season. During times at the cottage, daily entries are handwritten on notebook paper and serve to record the activities of the day – where we went in the boat, what island we had lunch on, what wildlife was seen, what fish were caught, and perhaps what overdue cottage projects were tackled. Each day has its own entry, because each day is a new adventure and there is always plenty to write about.

After each cottage trip is completed (whether a couple days or a couple weeks) a number of photographs taken during the trip are selected and printed, and then inserted into the journal in photo sleeves. Each photo receives a detailed and dated caption. As such, each trip to the cottage has written entries to tell our story of adventure, and photographs to illustrate those special moments. The front of the journal contains general pages for recording the weather conditions of each day, and “fish pages” for recording any success by the cottage anglers.

While it may seem like overkill to many, it is so fascinating to be able to look back over 27 years of cottaging and to read the entries from a variety of authors, young and old.

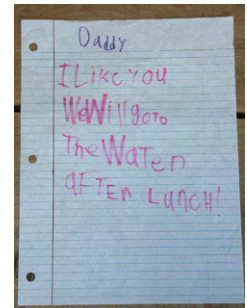
The writings of my dad are extra special now, since we lost him in 2014. In the early years of our cottage, he and my mother would often be there alone, especially in May and September when Cyndy and I were in school teaching. Those entries paint a picture of those days when they were on

Georgian Bay and I was in Pennsylvania.

Curiously, though my father taught literature and poetry at the college level for nearly 40 years, his journal entries are often blunt and to the point. There are almost uncountable (and sometimes unbelievable) reports on fishing trips, with plenty of detail on the locations fished, the sizes of any fish caught, lures that were used, and weather conditions. But mixed in with this are entries like these from the year 2000:

“Macaroni for supper. Watched the Pirates shut out Atlanta, 2-0.” Or this one: “Dreary morning. Jane weeds. I read. Swim at noontime. More reading. Telephone goes out. Phone returns.” That’s my dad!

Equally precious are the early scratchings of my daughter, who was introduced to the cottage when she was eight weeks old and immediately fell in love with Georgian Bay. Madison is nearly 26 years old now, so her early writings in the pages of the cottage journal are irreplaceable, like the one shown here from the 2005 journal.



We have always enjoyed playing evening games at the cottage, and it was during one of these that my wife learned first-hand and then wrote about my father’s reputation as a card player. Consider this good-natured entry, from July 10, 2000: “Now for any of you who has played cards with Doc, you need to read no further because you know what I am going to say: HE CHEATS!” I guess it was a dead giveaway when she spotted what he later claimed were “unnecessary” cards on the floor, partially hidden by his feet. He used a similar technique with Scrabble tiles, especially the high-stakes “Q.”

see **Journaling** on page 14

Journaling, from page 13

In addition, it is fun to look back on gracious notes from cottage guests, the details of once-in-a-lifetime fishing trips, photos of pets who have come and gone, and reports of cottage events like birthdays, engagements, and anniversaries. Our journals have missed little during our 27 summers on Georgian Bay, and they are a priceless resource for remembering so many great days in cottage country.

Of course in the pages of all these journals are moments that would be better forgotten – outboard motor breakdowns, leaking pipes during spring Open-Up, periods of unpleasant weather (a common event when guests visit), cottage maintenance projects which didn't go according to plan, encounters between the local porcupine and the cottage pooch, and a variety of other unexpected and undesirable events. But this is all part of the cottage experience, is it not?

The Pandemic year threw something of a curve ball at us. How could we document time at the cottage if there was no time at the cottage? Lucky for us, our wonderful neighbor friends came to the rescue. Damian Cooper and Doug Hoover regularly supplied photographs of our cottage and of the surroundings so that our lovesick hearts could know that our cottage was there waiting for us to return, someday. And other wonderful neighbors shared “missing you” messages with us, helping us to get through a tough time. So even for 2020, there is a Cottage Journal, albeit a bit less bulky.

If you are new to cottaging, starting some sort of cottage journal may pay rich dividends in the future, helping to keep wonderful memories alive for generations to come. And if you have been cottaging for years with no journal, it is never too late to start.

Wildflower Wonders

by Tom Betts

The 30,000 Islands of Georgian Bay come alive with wildflowers in the springtime, and a parade of dozens of beautiful species marches by month by month right through to the late fall.

But I might appreciate the early flowers just a little bit more, because they offer fresh color and beauty after a winter of vivid white and usually more than enough gray.

One of my favorite early bloomers is the pale corydalis (*Capnoides sempervirens*), a unique and captivating member of the poppy family.

Found throughout most of the Appalachian mountains and much of Canada, the pale corydalis is easily recognized by its unusual drooping, tubular pink and yellow flowers, and the blue-green deeply-cleft leaves with their waxy appearance.

Around Georgian Bay, pale corydalis can be seen blooming early in May, and it will continue to bloom throughout much of the summer. The plant finds footing in the many cracks and crevasses that typify the local geology, and the nodding flowers hanging over a rock ledge can provide quite a show.

This spring, keep an eye out for the pale corydalis and other early-season beauties in your outings.



Photo by Tom Betts

Creature Feature: The Northern Spring Peeper

by Tom Betts

As the snows of winter melt off and the days become a little bit brighter and a little bit warmer, it is only natural to begin to “think spring.” And while there are many harbingers of spring, certainly one of the most famous and one of the most cherished is the calling from swamps and small ponds of the spring peeper.

Pseudacris crucifer is a tiny, well-known but seldom seen frog of the eastern United States and Canada. Weighing in at just 4 grams or so and typically measuring 25-35 mm in length, the spring peeper makes up in its singing what it lacks in its size. When the breeding season begins in the springtime (typically as temperatures approach 14 or 15°C), peeper calls can be heard at great distances, and the combination



of hundreds of frogs calling from the same area can be nearly deafening to a close observer.

The spring peeper often goes unnoticed, even to those actively looking for it. It is so small, remarkably camouflaged in the woodlots and marshes it inhabits, and active mostly in low-light conditions. However, a spring peeper is easily recognized – it is tan to light brown in color with large toe pads for climbing, and it will typically have a fairly obvious dark brown X-mark in the middle of its back. The Latin name *crucifer* (meaning cross-bearer) refers to this characteristic field mark.

During courtship in the springtime, the

expanding vocal sac of the male is visible, as he emits a loud high-pitched chirping sound and attempts to attract a mate. The sound of dozens of males singing from the same area has been likened to distant leather-strapped sleigh bells, bouncing along a country lane. The chorus of “peeps” can be heard as far away as two or three kilometers! To many, it is a welcome sound after the dreary and dark days of winter.

After mating, a female will lay up to 1000 eggs, singly attached to sticks or plants in the water, and the tiny tadpoles will hatch out in 6-12 days. Metamorphosis occurs in about three months, and the adult spring peepers (eating a variety of small insects and worms) normally will have plenty of time to prepare for winter.

Peepers survive extreme cold thanks to a liver which can flush their system with a glucose cryoprotectant. This keeps the frog from freezing and also aids in protecting the heart and other vital organs. When considering that the peeper’s range stretches far to the north where winter temperatures are brutal, this adaptation most definitely holds a place in the category of extraordinary.

Like many amphibians, spring peepers appear to be suffering from the impacts of climate change. While much research is yet to be done, some studies have shown that warmer temperatures are shifting emergence and breeding into an earlier time period when food sources are not yet available, thus affecting reproductive success.

