

The Chain Letter

of the



Dedicated to the care and preservation of our lakes, for the enjoyment and safety of all

July 2010

Volume 13, Number 3

WCOLA - OFFICERS

President: Bill Downing 326-4730 wdowningster@gmail.com
Vice President: Lloyd Adams 326-2130 ladams_94@msn.com
Treasurer: Jean Koewler 326-4302 dikoewler@q.com
Secretary: Arthur L. Merrill 327-5492 artgaro@northlc.com

ADVISORY COMMITTEE (includes officers above)

Bill Berg 326-4253 terblbrg@uslink.net
Dick Chambers 326-2809 dicknpat9@msn.com
Nancy Ellsworth 326-8056 nellsworth1@cox.net
Susan Hawkinson 327-2533 susanondoan@msn.com
David Lick 326-6837 SusanLick@msn.com
Susan Lick 326-6837 SusanLick@msn.com
Roger Linder 326-2266 mlinder@msn.com
Sherry Miner 326-0589 siminer797@msn.com
Diane Rutherford bluefinger51@hotmail.com
John Zimmerman Sr. 326-1020 jzim29@comcast.net

Editor: Chris Friedlieb 326-8971 peterchris2@msn.com

Publisher: John Zimmerman Jr. 327-3188

jzimmerjr@gmail.com

Updates noted in **Red** – please update address books!

Visit our
web site www.wcola.org
Add your items to it by sending to Mark Miner,
mminer@minergroup.com

JULY 2010 LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Now we have the month of perfect lake weather, or so we hope. Water is warm enough to keep from shocking the swimmer, but still refreshingly cool. Bad storms go someplace else, surface of the lake is placid and flat. And the food from our gardens, or from the Farmer's Market in Grand Rapids, is unbelievably full of taste. Fresh home-grown lettuce, sweet corn, tomatoes—aah!

Mentioning taste: **DON'T MISS THE PICNIC!** Where else can you go to sample the masterpieces from WCOLA kitchens?! Stir up, mix up, bring your favorite dish to share, and try some of your neighbor's vegetable or dessert contribution. You'll be glad you did. I'll try to bring Betsy's favorite recipe for baked beans, and hope I can do as well as she used to.

Looking back: As far as I am concerned, the Solstice Observation was a rousing success, even though quite a few people wrote later and said they stayed home because of the lowering dark clouds and lightning to the west and the radio's constant refrain of bad weather coming. It threatened for hours and finally produced the promised rain. I sat on the dock for about 45 minutes, with the aforementioned beverage, and chatted with several people who stopped by, but when the sprinkles started, we moved up to the terrace in front of my house. The coolers and snacks moved, and continued moving about, as weather developed, and at last we all moved into the house, then sat, or stood, chewing munchies and drinking water or soft drinks or whatever. All told there were about twenty-five people there, getting to know each other, laughing, enjoying the Solstice.

The general conclusion was "Let's do it again next year!" The usual Summer Solstice items are summer herbs, and fire. We had a candle lit, and I'd decorated tables with potted herbs from Beier's, smelling pretty, and that was the extent of the celebratory objects. It was mostly very quiet, which suited me fine. The ensuing Fourth of July with its fireworks and explosions makes lake quiet particularly valuable. If you have ideas about what we could do next year to observe the day, please let me know! Maybe regattas of muscle-powered boats in the middle of each lake? Maybe rain on my terrace? Let me know!

Bill

Special WCOLA Events

Matching Funds Opportunity – Jean Koewler shared with us at the June meeting that a donor who wished to remain anonymous had contacted her and pledged up to \$1,000 (**WOW!**) in matching funds dedicated to the Chain of Lakes water testing initiative.

First – here are the facts:

- WCOLA agreed last year to fund testing in a method suggested by Dr. Bill Downing – in order to comply with the protocol of the Federal and State water authorities
- Requires intense testing for two years (2010 and 2011) and then two years off
- Provides an excellent baseline against which to assess future changes
- Allows us to compare to other lakes

Now the Financials:

- Funding is estimated at \$3068 this year and another \$3068 in 2011
- We set up a special fund for this purpose – in addition to dues and our CD
- We are asking all members to consider making contributions to help accomplish this important task

As mentioned, one member (**THANK YOU!**) has pledged up to \$1000 to use as matching funds – to incent the rest of us to give. That means for each dollar we contribute to this special fund – that donor will also give a dollar. There is only one limit: The funds have to be pledged prior to August 1, 2010. So hurry up - we have only 3 weeks until the deadline and wouldn't want to miss the opportunity to receive every dollar of the matching funds – so please consider giving something. If you do – **make checks payable to WCOLA – and mark on them "Special Water Testing Initiative"**. Contributions can be given to any WCOLA officer at the Picnic on July 17th or sent to Jean at the address on the outside of the newsletter.

Upcoming Meeting Dates for 2010

Saturday, July 17 - Evening picnic (6:00pm) Our 20th Anniversary Picnic – with **Karen Craiglow** and the **"Slappin Leather Dancers"** demonstrating line dancing and teaching steps to those of us brave enough to join in. See Hospitality report for details and make sure to join us!
Friday, August 20 – Ice Cream Social (6:00pm to 8:00pm) Held with Wabana Township and open to all WCOLA members as well as residents of Wabana Township

Saturday, August 21 (coffee, treats, at 8:30 a.m.)
9 a.m. Program: Mary Shideler, "Kayak Lady" who will talk on her completed goal of kayaking on every one of Itasca County's 1000+ lakes

10-11 a.m. Meeting

Saturday, Sept. 18 (coffee, treats, at 8:30 a.m.)

9 a.m. Program: To Be Determined

10-11 a.m. Meeting

All Meetings will be at the Wabana Town Hall and will last 1 (one) hour!

Minutes from the June 2010 meeting will appear in the August Newsletter

Committee Notes since Last Meeting

(If you are interested in participating in any of these committees, Please contact the Committee Chair)

Membership (Alida Zimmerman) – The Membership committee has been busy with distribution of the new membership brochures. To encourage membership we have been speaking with individuals on the lakes, putting brochures in the boxes at the Public Boat Landings and trail entrances to the Joyce Estate. Some of the resorts on the Chain of Lakes have also agreed to have the brochures on the front desk or in each of their cabins. We have made good progress at collecting the names and contact information for Public Officials and businesses that might be interested in receiving our newsletter. We have also started to make phone calls from our data base to update information, get email addresses from those who have not supplied them in the past and encourage those who have not yet renewed to continue their membership with WCOLA.

There are always more people and places to contact... **Have you asked someone to join?**

Hospitality (Kathleen Wilson) - **20th Anniversary of the WCOLA Picnic!!!**

On July 17th at 6:00 pm you are invited to come to the Wabana Town Hall to enjoy good food, good friendship and a good reason to celebrate. The Wabana Chain of Lakes Association will be holding it's 20th annual picnic!

This year – in keeping with our efforts to save money – the picnic will be a potluck event. Please bring a dish to pass. Beverages will be provided.

As well as food, you are encouraged to bring your dancing shoes / boots. **Karen Craiglow** will be joining us with the **"Slappin Leather Dancers"**. They will be doing a demonstration of line dancing

and will then ask us (any who are interested) to try and learn a few steps. We will be our own entertainment!

There will also be some wonderful door prizes this year as well as organized, outdoor games for the kids (and adults)!

So, be sure to bring all of your children, grandchildren and summer visitors to the 20th annual WCOLA picnic.

Look forward to seeing you all there!

BETSY DOWNING BIODIVERSITY REPORT

Here is Jessica Coburn's summary of her findings – anyone interested in a full copy of her report can send an email to the newsletter publisher.

Summary

During the summer of 2008, insects were collected from Wabana, Trout, Little Trout, Buella, Pickerel and Little Wabana. The channels between Wabana and Little Trout and Little Trout and Trout were also sampled. The sampling was habitat based and many sampling methods were used including bottle traps, emergent traps, scrubbing, leaf packs, macrophyte box samplers and dip nets. Insect specimens were preserved in 70% ethanol and identified to the greatest degree possible given the skill of the identifier and the condition of the specimen. The greatest number of specimens was collected at Wabana and Pickerel Lakes and the greatest diversity (number of families) was also found at these lakes. This could be due to the sampling techniques and habitat based sampling method used. The highest number of specimens were in the order Diptera (flies) and the order with the greatest number of families was also Diptera.

WCOLA History Series

The Bear Tree Story - (material and photographs written and provided by the descendants of Horace Willard Barber)

Thanks to the connection made by Roger Linder on behalf of WCOLA and the History Committee – we have made contact with William (Billy) Schwartz – whose ancestors, the Barbers and Robertsons homesteaded on the south side of the channel between Trout and Little Trout lakes.

Their homestead extended to the north shore of Bluewater – where the Bible Camp is now located. Many of you will already have heard of at least one of the Schwartz ancestors – though you may not remember the name. I am sure you will remember the story of the man shot in the channel from his boat at dusk one evening during September 1925 – as he and Anton Haglee were returning from work at the Joyce Estate. The man shot was Will (Horace Willard) Barber – and the man who shot him was



Will and Laura (Robertson) Barber and their daughter Pearl Etta Barber about 1900

William H. Robertson – his brother-in-law. More on that story and many other interesting things about these early homesteaders – but today we will take a look at an earlier event involving Will Barber and a run in with a momma bear on September 1st 1924.

Here is a brief description written much later from the oral history passed down in the family by Will's great-great-grandson:

THE BEAR TREE

Back in September 1924, my great—great-great grandfather became famous around these parts. Even in Northern Minnesota it's news when someone gets chased up a tree by a bear.

Everybody who knew him called him "Will". He had traded his blacksmith shop in Iowa for some land, sight unseen, here in Minnesota. So, now he was a blacksmith and a farmer.

He and his wife and their two young granddaughters, Edith and Virginia, lived in a log cabin high up on a hilltop. From there you could see Bluewater Lake, Big Trout Lake and Little Trout Lake.

One day, as Will and his small companion — a dog — were walking down a cow path to fetch their cows, they came eye to eye with a huge black, mother bear. She was mad because Will and the dog were standing between her and her three cubs. The bear chased the dog into the woods and killed it. Will, Barber, scared into action, tried to escape by climbing up a sapling nearby. But it bent under his weight, throwing him right into some bushes.

By that time, the fierce-looking bear was back. Will took his cane and gave the bear a hard blow on it's nose before he turned to go up a 7" around popple tree. People had always said that bears couldn't climb up small trees....Will was about to find out that they were terribly wrong!

That black bear followed him straight up all twenty—five feet. Will pulled and tugged on a dead limb to use as a club. The bear caught his left foot, tearing off the heel and part of the sole of his boot.

Then she got a hold of his right foot, biting clear to the bone. Five times Will beat that mean bear away before she decided to join her three cubs.

He waited in that tree a long time to make sure she was really gone. It was a long ways for him to hobble home. From there, he telephoned his nearest neighbor, Robert Kells on Wabana Lake. Mr. Kells responded at once and took Will Barber to the town of Grand Rapids where a Doctor Russell dressed his injuries. I bet Will had to buy a new pair of boots!



The Home of the Barbers as it looked in the 1970's (sits on the south side of the channel between Big and Little Trout lakes)

I heard this exciting story from Will's granddaughter, Virginia, who is now my Great— grandmother. She



Here is Laura Robertson (Will Barber's wife) – taken in December 1937 – at the base of "The Bear Tree".

was only three when this all happened. After she was grown up, they took many trips into the woods to see the Bear Tree. The claw marks reached way over her head!

My great-great-great grandfather must have told the story of that day many times. I'm glad that I heard it so I can tell it too. But most of all, I was proud to learn that Will Barber and I share something else.

Great grandma looked in her family date book and found out that Will Barber was

born on January 3rd, 1872. Exactly 110 year later, I was born (January 3rd, 1982). It makes this story seem even more special to me.

by: Adam Metzger
age 8 (December 1, 1990)

Plaque To Mark Fight With Bear

When William Barber, living fifteen years ago near Bluewater lake, had a fight with a bear, he little knew that he was making history, even though he came off second best in the battle.

One of the projects at the Day Lake CCC camp is to mark with suitable plaques events of local significance or historical interest. The fight between Barber and the bear is included in that category.

It will be remembered by those who recall events of 1924 that on September first as Mr. Barber was going after his cows, a big black bear pounced on his dog and killed it, then chased him up a tree. The bear also climbed the tree, and caught one of Mr. Barber's feet in her mouth, ripping away the boot and mangling the foot. Only after repeated blows on the bear's head with a broken limb of the tree was Mr. Barber able to drive her away and hobble to his home, where he summoned aid. He was laid up in the hospital for some time.

The tree still shows the deep scratches made by the bear's claws as she climbed, and the plaque to be put up on the tree will tell the story. The location is near the Bluewater road, and will be indicated by a marker at the side of the highway.

Later News Coverage about the Bear Tree event (newspaper name and date not noted)

Does anyone know if that plaque was ever put on the tree? Or if the roadside marker was there (or is still there)? Any idea if the tree is still standing and where it is?

Quite an interesting story – and one his family remembers and retells to this day.

In future issues, we will take a look at the shooting story, photographs of the homestead building as it stood in the early 1900's, and many of the other interesting material that the Schwartz family has collected over the years about our lakes and chosen to share with the WCOLA membership. I hope that others of you reading these history pieces will think about what photographs you may have tucked away – or stories you can tell that will add to the local history of our area – if so, please contact John Zimmerman (jwzimmerjr@gmail.com or 327-3188) or Roger Linder (mlinder@msn.com or 326-2266

WCOLA Water Testing - 2010 and 2011

Keeping our special lakes as pristine and beautiful as possible for our enjoyment and for our children is something we all care about. Testing water quality and knowing what is going on in our lakes is critical to maintaining their quality.

Please consider making a donation to the WCOLA Testing Fund – and remember that we have matching funds available between now and August 1st. Thank you for thinking about it and thank you for actively supporting WCOLA.



*The Chain Letter of the
Wabana Chain of Lakes
Association*

July 2010

There is a lot of great material inside, Announcement for our 20th Anniversary picnic, History and photo's of the Barber / Robertson Homestead on the channel between Trout and Little Trout lakes, the Biodiversity Study summary, Bills letter, committee announcements and upcoming important dates.

Our Next Association Meeting will be:

July 17th, 2010

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WABANA CHAIN OF LAKES ASSOCIATION
Jean Koewler, Treasurer
32040 Wakeman Bay Trail
Grand Rapids, MN 55744