

LETTER FROM REDBERRY LAKE, FALL 1989

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Editor's note: *Details of a resort development proposed in 1985 for Redberry Lake's southwest corner were presented in Blue Jay 44:213-221. The Saskatoon Natural History Society, supported by the Saskatchewan society, joined the Redberry Environmental Group in opposing the project and has continued the fight for 4 years. The Saskatoon society commissioned a detailed background study by Bert Weichel, which was used for formulating the group's position papers and for a later formal Ecological Reserve proposal for part of the disputed area.*

The developers' application was finally refused, their subsequent appeal denied and the project eventually dropped. Assisted by Saskatchewan Rural Development, the R. M. of Redberry hired Beak Associates to do a lakeshore management study. Their recently released report emphasizes strongly the critical importance of Redberry Lake for wildlife and the need to incorporate that knowledge into any plans for increasing tourism and other human activity.

Over 188 bird species have been recorded in the Redberry Lake Federal Migratory Bird Sanctuary. Redberry's islands support nesting colonies of Ring-billed and California gulls, American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants and Common Terns. Piping Plovers breed on its islands and shoreline. A large number of White-winged Scoters breeds there. These species all rely on isolation for successful nesting. An estimated 30,000 ducks regularly rest and feed there on migration, as well as large

numbers of geese and swans. There are also substantial upland populations of such native prairie mammals as White-tailed Deer, ground squirrels, Coyotes, Red Foxes and Badgers. Extensive plant studies have not yet been carried out, but early sampling indicates still remnants of ungrazed native Fescue-Spear Grass-Wheat Grass prairie and unusually diverse shrub/forb stands, some at least uncommon in the region.

Connie Gramiak has been an active voice for preservation of Redberry Lake from the beginning of the controversy.

Fall 1989

Dear Natural History Society,

It's time for an update on events at Redberry Lake. The final report on the Lakeshore Management Study conducted by Beak Associates was recently presented to and accepted by the local steering committee. The R.M. of Redberry has been carrying out the study over the past 2 years with the assistance of Saskatchewan Rural Development. Management guidelines based on the report will become a framework for a zoning bylaw for the lake.

The report best states its own objective: "Redberry Lake shall be developed within a sustainable environment-recreation concept which emphasizes protection of wildlife as a basis for successful and long-term recreation development on Redberry Lake. The land allowed at Redberry Lake shall therefore reflect the sensitivity of the wildlife and the potential of the land and water for recreation."



Redberry Lake

Thelma Pepper

This objective offers a compromise between development and conservation based on the currently popular idea of sustainable development. It will be very interesting to see whether this planned compromise offers a workable solution to competing land/water use claims made by individuals and groups with differing perceptions and philosophies about the natural world and our place in it. Those you interested in the idea of sustainable development might want to keep a close eye on Redberry for the next few years to see whether it can indeed accommodate both our own species' needs and the needs of wildlife for maintenance and perpetuation. If this model proves workable we'll all be happy. Does not....?

don't want to get too complicated in explaining Beak's recommendations but, since the report attempts to integrate development and conservation, it is necessarily complex. The study distinguishes five ways in which shoreline areas can be used.

1) **Protected areas** allow no development. Human access is strictly controlled.

2) **Conservation areas** do not allow any development, but they do admit greater human use. Picnicking, viewing platforms, walking trails and the like are envisaged for these areas.

3) **Country residential** areas allow for individual ownership of 40-acre lots but control access and land and water use.

4) **Intensive cottage and recreational use** is allotted to two lakeshore areas.

5) Some **agricultural use** is allowed in specified areas.

According to the plan, the whole lake is divided into four quadrants, each embodying a prevailing land use designation. The *northwest* quadrant containing the Regional Park is designated the primary recreational area, allowing for the most intensive cottage and recreational development. A small conservation area is included in this section. The



Double-crested Cormorant colony

Juhachi Asa

southeast quadrant, which includes the Bible Camp and a 20-cottage lot subdivision, is designated a secondary recreation and country residential area. It contains significant protected and conservation areas important to Piping Plover and other migratory birds.

The *southwest* quadrant, including Gramiak Peninsula and all but one of the lake islands, is designated the primary conservation area. The report recommends establishment of an Ecological Reserve here. No development is allowed in this quadrant though conservation areas allow for some human activity. The *northeast* quadrant is designated a secondary conservation area and includes protected, conservation and country residential categories.

The many boundaries between these differing land use designations look neat and rational on the maps included in the report. They are, of course, largely imaginary, since, if one is walking along the lake, nothing will indicate when one has passed from one designation to

another. The lake area remains an ecological whole and whether each species, including our own, stays and behaves wisely within the allotted designations in the recommended way remains to be seen. Extensive signage and considerable educational effort will be required to acquaint at least our own species with the rationale behind the designations. Will it be possible to persuade us all that caution may sometimes be more important than curiosity?

A boat operator began giving tours of the lake this summer and plans to continue next year. The boat leaves from the Regional Park boat launch. I also hear there are Big Plans to enhance tourism possibilities for Redberry Lake in a more venturesome way. I'm sure we'll hear more about this in months to come. Tourism is increasingly seen as one of the few means available to diversify rural and small town economies.

Bye for now,
Connie Gramiak