

Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club
Annual Report
2010

The Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club would like to thank Catherine McGuire for typing the annual report and the Fort Frances Chiropractic Centre for photocopying the annual report.

Membership 2010

There were 25 members who did not renew their memberships in 2010.

9 memberships have lapsed. This means that their renewal was due just recently, but it is late.

Our club gained 51 new members during the year.

We now have 280 memberships (152 family, 1 junior and 127 single).

Here is a hint for renewing your membership.

Return your renewal at least two weeks before your renewal date to ensure that you have it to the club well before our mailing dates which normally come at the end of the month.

The mail takes 5-6 business days to reach OFAH in Peterborough. If your membership expires before it reaches the OFAH, you temporarily lose the \$3,000,000.00 insurance, membership in OFAH and membership in the Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club.

If your membership does expire, you are reinstated as soon as the mailing arrives at head office.

As you are aware it takes 4-5 weeks before your card is returned to us (the Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club).

Thank you to Mark Fontana for plowing the road to the ranges.

Our Members are Busy- 2010 Annual Report

Bruce Hamilton has been chair of OFAH Zone A for the past 10 years. He, along with other members of the zone executive, represents our area on the board of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Bruce also sits on the OFAH Provincial Big Game Advisory Committee.

Richard Boileau has been appointed to the Fish Management Council for the Zone 5. OFAH recommended him to the MNR which appointed him to the Council. Roy DeCorte (Aitikokan) is also on the Council.

Brad Houghton is on the Northwestern Ontario Non-Resident Deer Hunter Advisory Committee.

Mike Solomon co-chairs the Northwestern Elk Restoration Coalition. Murray English (Kenora) is the other co-chair.

Leo Korosec looked after the Fish Care Department at the Fort Frances Canadian Bass Tournament and this was his final year to run it after doing so for many years.

Blair Beadow is a member of the Rainy Lake Fisheries Charity Trust.

Ralph Hill is a member on the MNR Stewardship Council.

Chelsea Hill is the student representative.

Jeff Johnston chairs the Rainy Lake Fisheries Charity Trust and also chairs the MNR Stewardship Council. Jeff was awarded the Larry Nault Memorial Trophy for the individual who is deemed to have done the most for conservation in Zone A in 2009. The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters awarded Jeff the Gord Blake Memorial Award. This award honours the OFAH member judged to have done the most outstanding work for conservation as a volunteer in 2009. Jeff accepted the award at the OFAH Annual General Meeting and Fish and Wildlife Conference in Mississauga last March. Congratulations, Jeff!

Henry Miller continues to spend countless hours with the Junior Conservation/Education Program through our local school boards and the Get Outdoors Club. He has taken a countless amount of students and adults alike into the forests, wetlands and nature to teach them about wildlife habitat, how nature works with the seasons and cycles of wildlife, etc. He has done this with enjoyment for decades. His family began the Henry Miller Conservation Award, this is awarded to the classroom which shows the most work to help wildlife. (The secretary had to add in this members' contribution as Henry would not write about himself.)

Jack Hedman was president, past president and vice president of the OFAH for two years at each position. He sat on the round table for one of the committees through the OFAH.

Doctor Recruitment

Our club acted upon a suggestion in the Fort Frances Times that any organization offering an incentive to a doctor considering setting up practice here could help the Doctor Recruitment Committee in persuading that person to come to Fort Frances.

Acting upon this idea, our Board of Directors decided to offer a new doctor and/or spouse a Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club membership each year for a period of three years.

To date there has been no acknowledgement from the recruitment committee.

Seeding Logging Roads

The club has been seeding along logging roads for many years

In 2010, Abitibi-Bowater needed only 35 kilometres of roads in this area to be done.

Ben Wiersema and Jeff Johnston contacted the company, worked out cost per kilometer, and ordered seed.

Jeff Johnston, as he has done for several years, was in charge of the actual seeding. He used his truck to haul seed and his 4-wheeler with a hopper mounted on the back, to spread the seed, which is a reclamation mixture of clovers, trefoil, timothy and other grasses.

Jeff spent 4 days doing both sides of the allotted roads. Others helped Jeff – Blair Beadow and Brian Love on Heron Road and Cornell Road, Bill James on Kerr and Pennasi North, and Henry Miller on Woody Road (northwest Bay area).

Skeet Report 2010

It has been another fun year of skeet at the Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club. The skeet club met every Tuesday evening from 4:30pm until nobody wanted to shoot any longer from late April until September.

Len Noonan and Jeremy McGuire were the Directors in charge of this Department of the Club. However avid shooters Brad Houghton and Jerry Koslucker were the early birds opening up most often.

The regular shooters included members Len, Jeremy, Paul Fischer, Ted Brockie, Rick Johnson, Harvey Perry and his son Kyle occasionally, Brad Houghton, Dave Gustafson (some evenings his 15 year old daughter Jillian attended), Derek Sigurdson and Jerry Koslucker(International Falls). Unfortunately we lost an avid clay buster when Tony Manuge moved out West for a job opportunity.

As unpredictable as the weather some evenings, the scores were rivals with the weather ranging from the mid teens to a perfect 25.

Dan Falloon, our local newspaper sports reporter for the Times, was given a demonstration of the shooting sports at the Club. He tried his hand at skeet, long gun and at the pistol range. Member Rob Dokuchie and Brad Houghton were his instructors and Dan did pretty well for his first time on the Range. His article in the newspaper was equally inspiring.

The annual Shoot Off was held in September on one of those blustery days. It did wreak havoc for our scores however everyone was shooting under the same conditions. Len and Nancy organized a wonderful event as always. The pot luck spread did not disappoint the hungry stomachs come midday. Most of our regular shooters made the event however the scoreboard was down from usual numbers during the season. Brad Houghton pulled off a 25 early in his first round and was able to keep the lead right through with only Ted Brockie being one round behind in the final tally. Len and Jeremy were distant third and fourths, respectively. Brad earned the Hiram Walker Memorial Trophy for the Skeet Club Shoot-Off as well as the R.J. Memorial Award for the advancement and betterment of shooting thanks to all of his assistance at the Club this year. Len Noonan won the Dave Forrester Memorial trophy for the highest overall average of the year once again!!!

Article prepared by Jeremy McGuire.

Deer Cull

Deer at the airport continued to be a hazard at the airport. Although there were no collisions this year, two incidents had occurred in the past couple of years with considerable damage to one plane.

A public meeting was called to attempt to find a solution to the problem. Representatives from our club attended and suggested that a bow hunt might help.

This suggestion was acted upon and the MNR issued a permit to cull the deer.

Special conditions were to apply:

1. Bows only were to be used.
2. Just five archers, whose names were registered with MNR, were allowed to hunt.
3. Up to 15 deer could be harvested.
4. Whenever a kill occurred, the animal had to be tagged and a form filled out informing the MNR of the kill. The Ministry also needed to know to whom the meat was given.
5. No offal was to be left on airport property.

The cull was to begin on August 1st, 2010, but previous to that date we were informed that there was no longer a problem so the cull was cancelled.

In early October, large numbers of deer reappeared. This time, because of the urgency of the situation (airport workers had a hard time chasing deer off runways) firearms would have to be used.

No new permits were issued to other members so the original five volunteers were left to deal with the problem.

Only three animals were harvested because moose season was open and our archers spent much time harvesting moose.

Fortunately, deer learn quickly. After the 3 were killed, the remainder left the airport. Later, a herd of 30 were seen in a field on private property in the vicinity of the airport.

Then early storms dumped over 40 centimeters of snow on the ground and the deer migrated to their winter habitat. Thus, the problem was solved, for the time being at least.

Members involved in the cull were Blair Beadow, Jeff Johnston, Ben Wiersema, Brad Houghton and Jeremy McGuire.

Hare Fecal Pellet Count

This project, simply put, involves counting hare droppings to determine their populations.

Once hare numbers are known, then lynx populations can be estimated because lynx depend almost entirely upon hares for food. From the information, the MNR then can establish lynx quotas for trappers.

Tony Elders, MNR employee, and Jeff Johnston began the project in 2007 which consisted of setting up four stations, two along Turtle River Road, one along Heron Road, and one along Marston Road.

Each station has four sub plots. The sub plots are marked by metal stakes at 10 metre intervals along a 30 metre transect.

Every spring and summer, the pellets within a metre radius of all stakes are counted.

The information is related to the MNR and entered into a data base with the results of all the stations in Northwest and Northeastern Ontario.

Every year, Jeff Johnston, accompanied by Henry Miller, have taken MNR summer student employees to the sites and informed them of the purpose of the project.

In 2010 Hailey Heyens was the lucky student who learned the complicated procedure of counting "bunny poop".

Note: Hailey undoubtedly learned more about moose and moose hunting. This area is Jeff's hunting grounds and he has harvested many animals with his recurve bow.

Cougars

Cougars have been identified near Little Fork, Minnesota, in the past year. These are believed to be immature males looking to establish their territory. The growing cougar population in the Dakotas is believed to be the source of these cats.

It appears that a few have wandered into the Rainy River District.

In 2008, three cougar sightings were reported from the Nestor Falls area.

Then in 2009 an ex MNR employee living north of Stratton watched one walk across his yard, and in 2010 there was a possible sighting on Couchiching Reserve.

In an attempt to get pictures of one of these cats, Tony Elders and Jeff Johnston set up motion cameras each of the past 3 years.

Barbed wire was placed around the area to collect hair. Special scents were used to try to lure the animals close to the camera.

Jeff and Henry Miller monitored the cameras at Nestor Falls and at Couchiching. They were taken down in the fall. Pictures of bears, deer, and falling leaves were taken, but no cougars.

The camera at Stratton station is still in use and a near by resident monitors it.

Annual Report for the Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club
Prepared by the Northwestern Ontario Elk Restoration Coalition

In this report we want to express our sincere appreciation for the continued interest and support demonstrated by the Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club. For more than ten years your club has provided workers, money, and much needed encouragement to our committee, Northwestern Ontario's Elk Restoration Coalition (NOERC). Your club member, Mike Solomon, has been co-chair of the program for most of those ten years and has been proud to represent Fort Frances and the local area.

The most asked question for the ten plus years NOERC has worked for elk restoration is

"How are the elk doing?" This same question in many forms is repeated throughout the region and has no simple answer. We believe the elk are doing as well as can be expected considering that the full allotment was not released here in the beginning.

This release area, called Lake of the Woods (LOW) by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) was supposed to get at least 150 elk back in years 2000 and 2001. As a result of a chronic wasting disease scare the delivery was stopped. LOW received only 108 animals. No amount of effort by NOERC to obtain more elk has worked. MNR remains adamant that no elk be translocated to LOW mainly because of the possibility disease might be spread.

Of the 108 elk received, 104 were released. 73 were radio collared. Monitoring of their number estimates and whereabouts was done variously by fixed wing aircraft and helicopter flights as well as by ground telemetry surveys carried out by Lakehead University Master's program students supervised by the Centre for Northern Forest Ecosystem Research (CNFER) and managed out of the Kenora MNR office. However, the two MNR staff doing the telemetry and camera monitoring in the release area bi-weekly are based in Thunder Bay, meaning that two person/days are wasted each trip, plus travel and accommodation costs. We wonder why our staff from Fort Frances or Kenora is not doing this work?

This counting feature remains in place to date. A few times each year MNR, makes a pronouncement declaring their summary of the LOW elk population. NOERC also continues carrying out camera monitoring in the field in conjunction with MNR. NOERC's Co-chair Murray English works this feature of the program.

For the first few years approximately 25% of the LOW elk were killed by hunters and poachers. At least two heavy fines were applied for the illegal kills. Some elk wandered variously and died by diverse means. 5 elk wandered into the United States. Certainly wolf and possibly bear kills also decimated the herd numbers, as did a couple of heavy snow years. In spite of all this the herd has not died out. New adults and calves have been identified by the MNR and NOERC. MNR has issued an estimate of 25-35 animals as being the existing herd. NOERC places their own estimate as exceeding 100 elk.

How does this discrepancy occur? The position we (NOERC) maintain is that MNR make their calculation based on data gathered from what we consider to be a narrow 1250km² of an area while the actual spread of animals we know exists over a 40,000km² area ranging from the U.S.A. border north to highway #17 and from Lake of the Woods east to Ignace/Mine Centre.

As NOERC Co-Chairs, Murray English and Mike Solomon, have travelled the region, or what might be termed the "catchment area", attending OFAH zone meetings and other meetings, speaking to interested individuals, groups, and various media, promoting the continuation of "elk restoration", the original focus of the program. We continue writing to government Ministers and so-called "government partners" importunately presenting the position of allowing surplus or nuisance elk to be translocated from eastern Ontario to LOW to fill out the allotment the program said we would get to begin restoring elk in Northwestern Ontario.

We also continue to encourage the public to report elk sightings although those who do report seeing an animal(s) don't get feedback so that element of our program doesn't seem to be of much use.

NOERC chairs have tried to determine what impact farmed elk practices in the region might have on the LOW wild herd. We have written government ministers trying to determine how many farmed elk and/or red deer (which breed with elk) have escaped into the wild, possibly spreading disease, or affecting the genetic integrity of the wild elk herd, since that is of primary concern to MNR. Although by law records of all escapes and/or captures must be kept, those numbers are apparently not available to us. We have taken the position with the MNR and OFAH that we are opposed to an elk hunt and instead, that surplus animals be sent to LOW or other release sites that did not get their quota.

There is no short and simple answer to the question; "How are the elk doing? We of NOERC know that recent elk monitoring has shown that the elk sighted were in good physical shape. We believe the fact that some, (numbers become a question), elk of the original release herd are surviving in spite of a somewhat negative support environment is one indication that; "The elk we have are doing just fine".

December 31, 2010

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Bluebird Project for 2010 Annual Report

The bluebird project, a conservation effort by the Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club, was initiated because there were few suitable cavities for nesting, and many of these were taken over by house sparrows and starlings.

By working with elementary school classes, we were able, from 1991 until 2008 to establish 43 trails for a total of 467 boxes.

Results over the years have been good with many bluebirds being fledged each year.

People have reported seeing bluebirds for the first time in their lives, even those who have lived in the Rainy River District for years.

For the past two years, we have begun taking down many of the bird houses.

Henry Miller, who has been involved with the project since the beginning, is finding monitoring, cleaning, and repairing the boxes to be overwhelming.

The boxes, which are along side roads in Alberton and LaVallee Townships, north of Barwick and near Stratton have to be monitored 4-6 times during the spring and summer. It takes about 3 days to monitor them all once – 397 km of driving and 42 km of walking.

The youth of the Get Outdoors Club, Jacob Empey, Ryan Bodnar and Robert Empey, looked after some of the trails this year. Other volunteers also pitched in – Tony Elders, Shirley Morrish, Hailey Heyens, the Stewardship Rangers and Darren Hyatt.

Brush is not cut down along many roads; the bluebirds will not use the bird houses because they need open fields.

House wrens have begun using the bird houses because they prefer the brush. They build their nests of twigs and fill up many surrounding boxes with twigs to deter competition. In addition, they will peck the bluebird and tree swallow eggs and drive these birds away.

There aren't many predators that can reach the eggs or nestlings in the birdhouses except for raccoons, and occasionally a weasel, but there are many predators that may catch the adults.

This year (2010) vandalism occurred for the first time. Someone broke boxes and pulled eggs and nestlings out along two trails.

Results for 2010

55 pairs of bluebirds used the boxes. Of these 43 pairs raised their young. Eight had two broods. The number of bluebirds fledged was 227.

Other birds using the bird houses;

Tree Swallows – 112 pairs, fledged 476 young

House wrens – 12 pairs

Chickadees – 2 pairs

House Sparrows – 2 pairs

Great Crested Fly Catcher – 1 pair

Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club
Youth Education and Conservation
Annual Report 2010

Henry Miller does conservation projects and activities in the local schools.

Classes were taken on snowshoe hikes in January and February for nature study.

These classes were bussed to the Sportsmen's Club property at Frog Creek.

Grade 7-8 from Walker School – Mrs. Bonner-Vickers
Studies included how animals adapt to snow conditions to survive in the winter. They noted the insulation properties of snow. Quinzhees were built to illustrate that concept.

Grade 5 from Robert Moore School – Mrs. Donald
They noted some relationships between plants and animals in the winter. After finding the remains of a deer killed by wolves, they wanted to take chunks of frozen remains back to the school.

Grade 4 from Robert Moore School – Mrs. Beckett
They observed the forest habitat in winter and learned some of the interactions between predators and prey.

Grade 3 from Robert Moore School – Mrs. Fryer
They identified animal tracks to determine the species which lived in the forest.

In the fall;

Grade 4 from Walker School – Mr. Brad Hill
They went to the hiking trail near Wasaw Lake. They identified coniferous trees by comparing the characteristics of red and white pine, black spruce and balsam fir, and jack pine. They walked through a mature forest and a forest which was planted and thinned out and noted the different characteristics.

Grade 7-8 from Walker School – Mrs. Bonner-Vickers
They traveled to Minnow Lake where they practised survival skills, such as shelter building and learned about some edible wild foods. The purpose was to study relationships in an ecosystem, and the interdependence of living things. They examined the biotic and abiotic elements also.

All classes on field trips built fires and cooked lunch. They learned the regulations for building campfires.

Vic Alberts, the bus driver for Dimit Bus Lines donated his services. He also helped out with the lesson.

Thank you to Bob Dimit for his donations.

Birdhouse Construction

Seventy-seven (77) birdhouses were built. Henry Miller and Bob Holmes cut out the bird house parts.

Henry showed the classes how to put the houses together.

Lessons were taught about the types of habitat bluebirds and tree swallows needed and where to place the boxes.

These classes participating were:

Grade 5-6	Robert Moore School	Miss Haugo
Grade 3-4	Crossroads School	Mr. Hands
Grade 4	Sturgeon Creek School	Mrs. Hay
Grade 5-6	Sturgeon Creek School	Mrs. Loughry
EcoClub	Crossroads School	Ms. Kroocmo

Get Outdoors Club built bluebird boxes and wood duck boxes.

Get Outdoors Club - Annual Report 2010

During the winter of 2010, the Get Outdoors Club took part in snowshoeing, cross country skiing and had a sleigh ride. At the end of February they built quinzhees and slept overnight in them.

In the spring they periodically sorted pop cans from garbage and recycled them. They also built birdhouses, and replaced aging one along the bluebird trails.

During the summer, Jason Empey, Robert Empey, and Ryan Bodnar monitored bird boxes and reported the results. (See Bluebird Report for the types of information they recorded.)

The youth also planted about 200 container stock trees. They came out several times to shoot skeet.

In September, they took down birdhouses to dismantle those trails where there is too much brush.

They cleaned out the remaining boxes that other volunteers hadn't done.

Later, the club hiked along the nature trail near Wasaw Lake. They checked the owl box among the jack pines. Evidence in the box suggested that a pine marten had used it.

The wood duck boxes at the beaver pond had not been used, except by squirrels. One had a large wolf spider in it.

Henry Miller, who started the junior club in 1991, has continued working with the youth for 19 years.

The junior club continued for all these years because of the help and dedication of the many adult mentors who kept the club going by contributing their knowledge of the outdoors to the kids.

At the present time the mentors are Henry Miller, Joe Bodnar, Trevor Mills and Allan Empey. Thanks to Linda Empey and Denise Donaldson for their help also. Allan has helped out for 11 years.

Ross Donaldson retired this year after 9½ years with the club.

At the annual meeting in January 2010, Jacob and Robert Empey were awarded the Dino D'Agostini Conservation Trophy for youth doing the most for conservation in 2009.

To The Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club

Re: Fish Management Zone #5

I attended FMZ 5 first meeting on October 28th, 2010. I am representing the OFAH and the Fort Frances Sportsmen's Club. Other stakeholders in attendance represent individuals, tourist operators, businesses, bait suppliers, First Nations and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. The MNR will work as support teams supplying background information, participating with and supporting the FMZ council, preparing draft and final management plans, engaging in public consultation and supplying all needed technical data, maps and information. Council members are from Fort Frances, Emo, Nestor Falls, Kenora, Winnipeg, Vermillion Bay, Dryden, Pawitik and Atikokan.

The purpose of the council is to provide the MNR advice concerning fisheries management within the zone to develop a new fisheries management plan.

The council will identify issues, determine what the public wants from the fishery, develop action plans and educate the public. This process is expected to take 30 months, and will be reviewed every 5 years.

The size of the zone is from the Manitoba border to the USA border, north of Kenora and Dryden to east of Atikokan including Quetico. However the following bodies of water are not included; Rainy Lake, Rainy River, Lake of the Woods, Shoal Lake, Eagle Lake, Wabigoon/Dinorwic Lake and the Winnipeg Rive. These will still be managed on an individual basis.

The main objective is to reduce the complexity of the fishing regulations.

Yours in Conservation,

Richard Boileau