

Station Manager's Report - 1996



Thanks

I would like to acknowledge the help and input from an ever-growing number of people and organizations over the past year. I especially thank Pat Gutoski in the campus office, Doreen Greening, Shirley Dinwoodie, and Heidi Mead for domestic help, and Mike Shaw, Leslie Goodman and Gordon Goldsborough for their assistance with flood relief and clean up.

Staff Developments and Appointments

Dick Convery passed away in February after a lengthy illness. Fortunately, Curt Code (1995 summer assistant) was available so he was hired from February until the end of April. Four university students were then hired to help with operation of the station over the summer. Thanks to Steven Ellis, Mike Goodyear, Michelle McDonald and Jodine Zirk for help repairing the flood-related damage, leading school groups, helping researchers, and undertaking all the painting and scraping! In October, Jeff Gowler was hired as a Technician-4 on-site maintenance person for a term of seven months ending April 30th 1997. Our fourth cook/housekeeper position became vacant as Ardith Hamilton moved to Gladstone in September.

I speak for all the staff in wishing Gordon Robinson all the best in the future and sincere thanks for his many contributions to the station over the past eight years. We welcome Gordon Goldsborough to the helm; the crew look forward to good relations and many more successes in the years to come.

Improvements to the Facilities and Property

- Construction of our new seminar, library and office building on the former site of the Convery residence (which was moved to Warren, Manitoba) started on September 16th. Les Garnham Construction, who handled the renovation of Murray's Cottage a few years ago, is the chief contractor.
- The summer road along Lake Manitoba was resurfaced. The winter road was graded and resurfaced, and a new directional sign for the winter road was installed.
- The metal gate on the Diversion West Dike was removed (it was never closed anyway!) and reinstalled at the entrance to the cottage road, making the road past our new building the primary entrance to the station. The turn onto the main entrance, east

of the new building, was widened and an entrance sign was installed. The road was widened to the west of the new building.

- To help prevent future basement flooding in Mallard Lodge, a sand and gravel berm dam was built at the entrance to the basement by Danny Humiski.
- Rotting areas on the exterior siding and windows of Mallard Lodge were repaired, then the first floor was scraped, primed and painted. The interiors of Tyrrell, Wardle, Seton, and Criddle (room 4) were repainted. Broken window sills on Tyrrell, Agassiz and Criddle were replaced. Exhaust fans were installed in the two main bathrooms on the second floor of the lodge to help keep the humidity down.
- The water system was upgraded by installing a 90 gallon per hour water pump and two large air bladder tanks, supplied by water from the cistern in the basement of Mallard Lodge.

Equipment acquired

Over the past year, the Field Station acquired several pieces of domestic equipment. A 24-inch Vulcan griddle was purchased for the kitchen, replacing an old, barely functional one, along with a large electric soup kettle and a gravity-feed food slicer. On the scientific side, a 15-hp Yamaha outboard motor was purchased to replace one that was stolen while our boat was moored overnight on the west dike during the height of the flood. With support from the Science Endowment Fund, we purchased five Nikon dissecting microscopes and two Olympus compound microscopes for use in field courses. Now that the Field Station has regular Internet access via a Service Provider in Portage la Prairie, two computer modems were purchased, one for use in the office and one for the research computer lab.

Meteorological Station and Spring Flooding

Beginning in May, we initiated daily (08:00) measurements of the depth to the water table at a well just south of Mallard Lodge. A Li-Cor LI-1200 climate datalogger was obtained by Gordon Goldsborough on long-term loan from Manitoba Environment. It was installed at our main meteorological station for corroboration with our other LI-1200 at that site. Monthly water samples of Lake Manitoba were taken; however, analyses no longer include detection of agricultural pesticides in four seasonal water samples.

This year will be remembered for the many challenges the elements of weather presented. The west dike was cut by personnel from Manitoba Natural Resources on April 18th, causing water to spill into the West Unit of the marsh. Flooding was the most extensive since 1979. The station was basically closed to all but a few flood-fighters for 10 days until the waters had receded, and pumps and electrical equipment were restored to operation. On April 23rd, the ice dam at the Diversion mouth broke and flooding in the marsh ceased. The first group to use the station post-flood was the Spring Birding Workshop on May 10th. However, Diversion access to the east was, for the most part, impossible for almost a month. We estimated our losses, including flood-damaged equipment, buildings, and vehicles, and lost revenue during the flood, at over \$12,000. We will hopefully pursue a flood compensation claim with the provincial government.

Conferences, Workshops and Elderhostel

Two workshops were held during the winter: "Winter Survival/Arctic Lifestyles" and "Skin Preparation: Traditional Methods". Many thanks to both Rick Riewe and Jill Oakes for providing their inspiration and instruction. These workshops were rare opportunities for participants to access this information and both were very well attended and received. Because there was no Elderhostel in the spring this year, a Spring Bird Migration workshop, hosted by Bob Jones, was offered. A Fall Bird Migration Workshop, hosted by Jean Horton, was held in September. The third annual canoeing day in the marsh was held on August 10th after which supper was held; it continued to be very popular with the public. The Fall Elderhostel was held from September 1-7, at which 20 participants enjoyed the topics of Birding, the Agriculture Heritage of the Portage Area, and a visit to the Airport Hutterite Colony. I acknowledge the assistance and guidance of the Portage Elderhostel Committee for this event. An Agriculture Economics Conference, entitled "Getting the most from your manure resource: managing your on-farm waste system" was held in September. It was organized by Ann Nesbitt.

Summer Seminars

Seven seminars were presented throughout the summer, as follows:

- 19 June **Dr. Norm Kenkel**
Department of Botany, University of Manitoba
"Long term vegetation dynamics of plains rough fescue grasslands in Riding Mountain National Park"

- 26 June **Vaughan Greenslade**
Manitoba Department of Agriculture
"Grass and legume plants: their use and application"
- 3 July **Jason Greenall**
Manitoba Conservation Data Centre
"The function and purpose of Conservation Data Centres"
- 10 July **Christie Borkowsky**
Critical Wildlife Habitat Program
"Survey and inventory of the tall grass prairie at Tolstoi, Manitoba"
- 24 July **Hedy Kling**
Freshwater Institute, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada
"Centric diatoms in Canadian lakes and rivers"
- 21 August **Dr. Norm Halden**
Department of Geological Sciences, University of Manitoba
"Microbeam analysis of trace elements in otoliths: a guide to environment and fish behaviour"
- 28 August **Cathy Johnson**
Manitoba Department of Natural Resources
"Canadian biodiversity strategy"

Thanks to all the speakers, the summer seminars continued to be an important contribution to the learning environment for students enrolled in our summer courses and for resident researchers.

Publicity

An advertisement was again placed in the University phone book. A Internet home page was maintained for the station by Gordon Goldsborough. The course pamphlets and research pamphlets were printed and distributed far-and-wide. Numerous newspaper articles on the Delta Marsh Bird Observatory, the Bird Migration Workshop, Elderhostel, and the Winter Survival Workshop appeared in the *Portage Daily Graphic* and *Winnipeg Free Press*. Jill Oakes and Rick Riewe were guests on many radio and TV spots. Finally, we received North America-wide coverage of the humorous postponement of our Winter Survival Workshop because of bad weather!

Russ Mead