Tremolo

Tremolo... the laugh-like call of the Loon

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LOON HAUNT SEASON HIGHLIGHTS 2010

Spring arrived a little early in Red Lake so Bill launched the airplane from its winter storage spot for our first trips to Monroe and Unnamed in late April. Getting those outposts ready for Spring fishermen was routine and we were done in a couple of days. We then left to visit our son Scott and his family in the Boston area for a few days. We had visited our daughter Kari and our granddaughter earlier in the Spring. When we returned we were eager to get to Goose Lake and begin the process of opening the camp. We found the lake to be the lowest we have ever witnessed and "new" reefs, rocks and sandbars were everywhere, but especially in the upper river. The boat ramps were high and dry and Bill used his excavator to pull them twenty feet to the lake's edge. There was no bear or tree damage so that was a bonus. Bill put out the reef markers and found he had to put four sets of white markers in the upper river instead of the usual two so that fishermen could safely navigate on the way to Woman Falls. A few forest fires were burning but none threatened our outposts. Over the next couple of weeks we readied the rest of the outposts and the cabins at Goose Lake. We were not so lucky at Cherrington Lake however - a bear had seriously damaged two sides of the cabin and all the sides of the gas shed. Bill figured he had to try a different approach with this nuisance bear as replacing the cedar siding was futile. He made plans to install steel siding when he had the time and had room on the airplanes to bring in the siding. Some much needed rain finally fell on May 22nd and the forest fire threat was lessened. While getting the portage boats on Nechigona ready to go, we were delighted to see eight Tundra Swans in the lower river and a young bull moose, its antlers still in velvet. Loon Haunt and nature are one in the same and we never tire of it!

We were looking forward to welcoming returning guests and those guests that were joining us for the first time. Spring weather was very pleasant and bug free. Remembering the buggy summer of 2009, guests came armed with boxes of mosquito coils and were delighted to find they didn't need any. It wasn't until the month of July that we finally saw a few black flies. Fishing was superb with great numbers of walleyes caught at all locations. Guests gleefully commented on how fat and feisty the walleyes were and new fishing spots were found daily. We did notice however, that the northern fishing was not as rewarding as in other years.

My flower gardens were lovely and frost was not a concern at all. With the low lake levels we suspected that the wild rice crop would have a big growth advantage early in the season and that is exactly what transpired. The plants were easily three weeks ahead of schedule and, in anticipation, Bill serviced the picker long before it was needed. Nature controls the entire wild rice production from growth to harvest, just as in any farming, and we were hoping all the factors that make a bumper crop would come into play. The first day of harvesting was August 19th (a new early record for us). Mother Nature didn't assist us very much with the harvest this year however. The whole month of September was windy, cool and rainy – not ideal conditions for sure. Accuweather was invaluable for finding windows where we could pick, usually only two or three hours at a time. We did manage to pick over 9700 pounds of rice – not the 12,000 we were shooting for. We were disappointed that thousands of pounds of rice fell off due to the wind and rain but we remain optimistic for future years. This wild rice farming is in our blood!

This season we crossed off many items on our "to do list". Bill finally built the retaining wall at Goose Lake and reinforced the walkway to withstand the weight of the excavator. We stayed long after the last guests left for home so that we could finish projects. We did not have really cold fall weather and the water system didn't freeze once. We always say the romance of being in the bush vanishes when the water system freezes. October 3rd found us pleased with all our progress and on the way back to our home in Red Lake. ✣

2010 IMPROVEMENTS:

- New mattresses and a new refrigerator installed at Cherrington Lake.
- Steel siding replaced the bear damaged cedar siding at the Cherrington cabin and gas shed. There is now a deck and stairs added to the gas shed.
- The Cherrington cabin was raised and leveled.
- Handrail at the Poirier cabin.
- Record low lake levels enabled Bill to underpin the dock and repair the ramp at Monroe Lake.
- Rebuilt and reinforced the walkway to the dock to make it carry the weight of the excavator.
- Lake levels this fall were finally low enough to build a retaining wall along the shoreline in front of the service building. This wall will prevent further erosion of our beach. We also decked over the area between the service building and the retaining wall.
- The exterior of Cabin 3 was stripped bare and restained. All the cabins at Goose Lake were given a new coat of stain.

PLANNED FOR 2011:

- Handrails for some of the cabins for our aging guests.
- Many dead trees at Goose Lake will have to be cut down for firewood.
- Brush will be cut at the outposts