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# The Cottage Environment

by Joann McCann

We are inaugurating a new feature in *ShoreLines* to offer some tips on how we can all be more friendly to our environment and also to provide you with some interesting reading and resources. Besides the fact that we in the OFWCA have always shown an interest in our environment, it is appropriate to note that in the past year, two new environmental organizations have been formed to protect the Ottawa River.

**Environmental Ideas:** The *Regina Leader-Post Carrier* Foundation has published a best-seller of recycling and energy-saving ideas and environmentally friendly alternatives for home and garden, entitled, "Environmental and Energy Money and Time-Saving Household Hints." Since recycling is a popular topic at our annual meetings, I thought that these recycling hints might be useful. Many of them have been around for a long time. You will probably recall your grandmother following some of these practises:

Dryer lint is for the birds—literally. Stash your dryer lint and, come spring, leave it outside so that birds can use it to help line and build their nests.

Use Styrofoam meat and vegetable trays as packing to protect items sent in the mail. Or cut them up and use them as protective packing for china.

Buy a reusable coffee filter instead of using disposable paper ones.

To unwrinkle and recycle ribbon, run it through a warm curling iron.

Save the inner linings of cereal boxes and use in place of waxed paper. (In most places, these liners are not recyclable.)

Finally, compost, compost, and compost! In the next issue, we will give you some tips to turn kitchen wastes into "gardeners' gold."

Also in the spring issue, we will provide some hints for the garden and the cottage!

**The Ottawa River Institute:** Based in Pembroke, this is a non-profit corporation whose mission "is to foster sustainable communities and ecological integrity in the Ottawa River Watershed." Check out their website at «[www.ottawariverinstitute.ca](http://www.ottawariverinstitute.ca)» and their



**Idyllic Cottage Scene, from Gwen Marchant**

column in the *Pembroke Observer*. It's written by one of their directors, Ole Hendrickson, an environmental scientist. You can become a member of this organization by registering online or by calling Lynn Jones at 735-4876.

The article below, reprinted with permission, is from the website and it was originally published in the *Pembroke Observer* and the *Renfrew Mercury*.

## Why Was the River So High?

By Ole Hendrickson

Why was the river so high this spring?

This spring was unusual. Not only was it cool, but water levels in local rivers stayed high much longer. In past springs, water levels dropped more quickly. After the snow melted, the flooding subsided. But not this year. Cool temperatures meant that trees leafed out slowly this year. Did that have anything to do with water levels?

As I drifted down the Indian River in my canoe on a cool and cloudy morning, I thought about all the water that trees pump out of the ground.

Trees use tremendous amounts of solar energy to move water from the soil, up their trunks, and out into the air through tiny pores in their leaves. Forests are giant humidifiers.

Broadleaved trees—the maples, aspens, birches, oaks, and such—cannot start pumping until their leaves are out. The conifers start as soon as the ground is unfrozen, but they make new leaves later in spring and become more active.

Water seeps through soil into streams and rivers, adding to their flow. Hydrologists call this shallow groundwater

recharge. The saturated area, or recharge zone, is largest in spring. It shrinks in the summer as green plants pull water through their leaves and dry out the soil.

This spring has been great for canoeists. Lots of water means a longer season for running small rivers that become too rocky in mid-summer. But I've talked to several canoeists, and none of them knew how trees were connected to this.

Most of the sun's energy is used in moving water around the world. Hydrologists have shown that the Amazon forest makes its own rain. They debate whether deforestation in Central America is creating deserts there.

China cuts down its forests and Yangtze River floods kills millions of people. Giant dust storms from China spread microbial particles and even diseases around the world. As John Muir once said, when you look you find that everything is hitched to everything else.

It's hard to think globally and act locally, but one of the best ways is to think about water. Water molecules just keep moving. In the ground, in the trees, in the air, in your lungs, around and around they go.

Nobody can really own water. It's something we all share.

**Ottawa Riverkeeper:** The other stewardship group dedicated to our river is the Ottawa Riverkeeper, whose mission is to "facilitate maintenance and enhancement of the river's ecological integrity through monitoring, original research, public and agency communications, and enforcement. Ottawa Riverkeeper works independently as well as co-operatively with individuals, businesses, community groups, and all levels of government on both sides of the river." This organization is based in Ottawa but our area is represented by John Almstedt of Pembroke.

The Riverkeeper has an excellent website with information on the geography and history of the river, legislation (federal and provincial) concerning the river, and other issues pertaining to our waterway. The Keeper concept started in 1966 on the Hudson River by a group of fishermen. A book, *The Riverkeepers*, written by John Cronin and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., chronicled the success of the Hudson River fishermen who reclaimed their river from its polluters. There are over 40 keeper programs across the U.S. and Canada. You can become a member by signing up online at «[www.ottawariverkeeper.ca/membership.html](http://www.ottawariverkeeper.ca/membership.html)».

**Sources:** The Ottawa River and its watershed are part of the larger St. Lawrence watershed. A watershed is also called a drainage basin. If you want to understand the basics of watershed ecology, look up this Canadian book: *Watersheds: A Practical Handbook for*

*Healthy Water*, by Clive Dobson and Gregor Gilpin Beck (Willowdale, Ont., Firefly Books Ltd., 1999). It provides a fascinating overview of the fundamentals of ecology while providing *How can I help?* sections throughout the book that include helping at the cottage. This book explains the principles of ecology but has many illustrations, making it accessible to a young student interested in the watershed cycle.

**A displaced Maritimer in the Ottawa Valley!** Last September, in the bird column of the *Ottawa Citizen*, it was reported that someone living along the Ottawa River near Dunrobin spotted an Atlantic puffin. Their appearance is quite distinct, having the large colourful orange bill, a white face, and black collar. This bird was far from home as its habitat is the eastern part of the St. Lawrence and the coastal islands of the Maritimes.

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