

Lake St. Peter Stories

Tale of the Drunken Loon

The call of the loon is familiar sound in cottage country, but it can be a real surprise to city folk who have never heard it before.

In the mid-1950s, my father and two of his workmates bought adjoining lots in a newly opened section of Lake St. Peter. As soon as the weather allowed, “the boys” headed north each Friday evening, with the goal of pushing construction far enough along so that the moms and kids could enjoy a bit of summer in a first communal cottage.

The boys made their base at Silver Birches Trailer Park, in one of the park’s small rental cottages. One spring night, after hard day of brush clearing, they had just drifted off to sleep when they were jarred awake by an outburst of maniacal laughter. They grit their teeth in sleepless anger as the noise rolled across the lake and echoed off the hills.

The next morning, they complained to the park owner about the racket.

“Oh, that’s just a loon,” he told them.

“Well, if this loon has a name, I’d like a word with him,” said one of the boys. “Drunken idiot kept us up half the night.”

With a laugh, the park owner informed them that the drunken idiot was actually a bird, whose presence was treasured by both locals and cottagers. Eventually, he said, they’d grow to love the loon’s haunting call as the symbol of our own little piece of wilderness heaven.

For years to come, the three families often gathered around a common campfire to enjoy the the stars, the singing and the smell of toasting marshmallows. Occasionally, we’d be lucky enough to hear the eerie wail of a loon, accompanied – always – by an ever-more embellished retelling of the tale of the drunken idiot that startled our dads on that dark spring night.