

The Day the Ice Melted

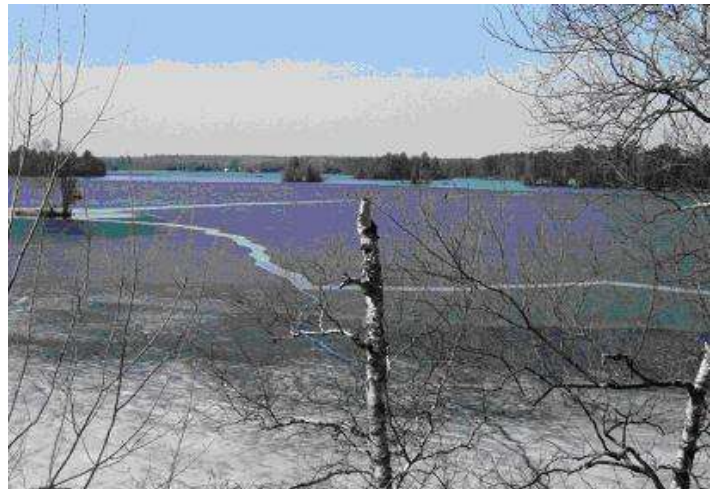
BY IRENE HORNE, April 4, 2010

We couldn't decide which activity had given us the most pleasure. Watching sap boil or watching ice melt. For two old retired folk it was a toss-up.

Being retired gives you the freedom to go where you want when you want. We decided on Wednesday, as it was the last day of March, and that means the end of Maple syrup time. The cottage being north east of us means it stays colder longer than in the greenbelt of Ontario where we live. The snow had disappeared and the trees were starting to bud, so we knew we had to get up and do the last boil.

There was hardly any sign of snow on our trip up but when we turned into our lake road there was still snow in the bush and the ice was still in the lake. No sign of buds on the trees. The boiling takes place on the outside fire pit. The boiling pots are yard sale finds. The day was unbelievably warm. Usually we are all bundled up and tramping through snow to get to the trees with the sap pails. Not this time!

I went about what I normally do and that is taking pictures: Keeping a visual record of our days here on earth. When I went down to the dock, I could see on the opposite side of the lake what looked like open water along the shore. The rest was solid ice, although there were no fishing huts to be seen. I snapped away, enjoying the digital camera with its freedom to take many more pictures than you ever need to take, just in case..... I captured my husband sitting in shirtsleeves, the pots on the fire with the steam rising, the big long crack that had appeared in the ice, from the corner of our dock, that continued over to the tiny island just out from our cove. Later that evening, I captured a pretty sunset and noticed more cracks showing up in the ice.



Thursday, April first and it was no joke! The day continued with the same wonderful sunshine and even more warmth. The boil continued and my picture taking became an obsession. There was now open water visible around the shores of all the islands within sight. The crack was getting wider and others showing up. I was documenting morning, midday and evening.

Throughout the following days we just couldn't believe our luck. In the 39 years we had owned our cottage never had we experienced such weather on an Easter weekend. It was early in April for Easter, too. Never before had we been here to watch the ice go out.

Good Friday brought many more cottagers to the lake. Who would want to miss being here with this record breaking temperature. No bugs. That was the other delight. I could rake to my heart's content and not stir up any blackflies. Neighbours dropped by to check out our new garage. We paused and checked out the progress of the crack from our deck, a view from up high, then went to tour the guys' new pride and joy. By the time we returned to the deck the crack was now a river. A boat could be seen on the opposite side of the lake where the water was now completely ice free. That was about a 20 minute time frame.

My friend who lives across the lake year round keeps track of this yearly phenomenon, and the phone calls had begun among the Lake Association for the official announcement. She informed them that there was still ice on the East shore and was waiting for me to let her know. A very weird, loud wind started up on Sunday evening that did the trick. We awoke on Monday morning and no trace of ice could be seen. We could now hook up the water.

I have been whale watching in both the Atlantic and the Pacific. I have seen manatees in Florida. I have travelled extensively and toured castles and deserts, but I can honestly say these past few days, watching sap boil and ice melt ranks very high on our more pleasurable moments.

Only in Canada, eh?