Guide to magnifying tools ✺ **BUGS YOU CAN'T SEE** ✺ **TINY COTTAGE WITH A MASSIVE VIEW** ✺ How to plant a micro-forest ✺ **SMALL BITES FOR HAPPY HOUR** ✺ ***DRIP!* FIX THAT WEE LEAK BEFORE IT'S BIG TROUBLE**

Cottage Life

JUNE/JULY 2024

from trash to treasured

HOW ONE CLEVER COTTAGER UPCYCLED HIS WAY TO A PERFECT LITTLE ESCAPE

Aviva
Lifestyle
Insurance

From cottages to boats, we've been insuring fun for over 60 years.

Cottage and cabin coverage now available in Western Canada!
Visit aviva.ca or talk to your broker to learn more.

Cottages | Boats | Motorhomes | Recreational trailers | Collector cars | Motorcycles | ATV | Snowmobiles

AVIVA

Small is the new awesome

June/July 2024
VOLUME 37 NUMBER 3

This is the Tiny Issue, so we asked writers to tell us about the little joys of life at the lake (see p. 70). Then we weighed in too!

"Kayaking to the middle of the lake when it's quiet, and listening to the loons. So peaceful!"

—SARA ROMANO, EDITORIAL INTERN

"Drinking hot chocolate—with two marshmallows in it—when it's cold and rainy outside."

—JACKIE DAVIS, SENIOR EDITOR

"Waking up before everyone else and stealing a few tranquil moments alone before the rest of my friends and family get up."

—LEYLAND ROCHESTER, PUBLISHING COORDINATOR

"Bird watching while having a cup of coffee on the deck or the dock."

—KATHLEEN O'HARE, PRODUCTION ARTIST

"The feeling of the cold breeze on my face during that first boat ride."

—TAYLOR KRISTAN, ART DIRECTOR

"Nothing beats reading in the hammock!"

—NATALIE FRANKE, CONTRIBUTING DESIGNER

"Jumping into a cold lake on a hot day. There's no easing down the ladder for me."

—ALYSHA VANDERTOGT, SENIOR EDITOR

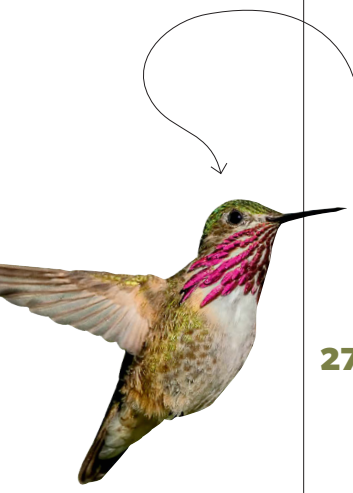
On the cover: **30** Magnifying tools **64** Bugs **45** Tiny cottage **39** Micro-forest **86** Small bites **80** Leaks **52** Trash to treasured

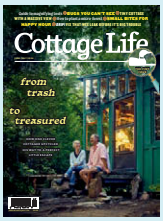
Contents

FEATURES

45

DEPARTMENTS





COVER PHOTO: DANIEL EHRENWORTH

It was no small feat choosing a photo for the cover of our Tiny Issue. We considered several options, including a beautiful shot of Ragged Lake cottager Paul Webster in his canoe (talk about a simple pleasure at the cottage). But we went with an image of Paul's compact cabin, a.k.a. the Crystal Palace. (See p. 52.) Because turns out, big stories come from small cottages.

PREVIOUS PAGE: LINDSAY GRAY. THIS PAGE: HUMMINGBIRD, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/RICHARDSEELEY; HOT TUB, CAROLINA ANDRADE


RAMBLER® FRENCH PRESS
YETI BUILT FOR THE WILD.

S'more stuff

How you can read, watch, stream, listen, and visit—Cottage Life is everywhere

WEBINAR ON CHANGES TO CAPITAL GAINS

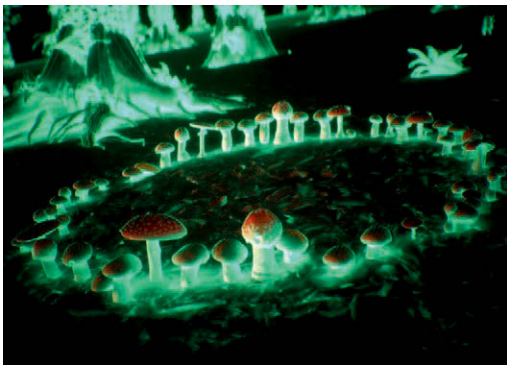
Have you been wondering how the recently announced capital gains tax inclusion rate increase may affect you? Well, if you are in the process of handing down your cottage (or you plan to), it likely will. Luckily, with the help of succession expert and estate planning lawyer Peter Lillico, we can help! We recently hosted a webinar where Peter explained how much tax you can expect to pay under the new proposed rate and strategies for saving money on capital gains. Gain access to the webinar by signing up for Family Matters, our free newsletter on all things cottage succession, at *cottagelife.com/newsletters*. And keep your eye on *cottagelife.com* as we continue to cover the rate increase.

The weekend starts in your inbox

We're adding a newsletter to the family! Introducing Weekender, by *Cottage Life* editor Michelle Kelly. Once a month, you'll receive Michelle's reflections on cottaging and exclusive access to some of our favourite stories from the archives, straight to your inbox. For more information, head to *cottagelife.com/weekender*.

Series premiere on *CL* television

It's time to dive into an unexplored part of the world. Catch *Secrets in the Jungle*, a new series coming to the Cottage Life channel Saturday, May 25th at 10 p.m. ET/PT. The show is a docuseries that explores jungles around the world to find things never before seen under their thick canopies. Find tune in details at *tv.cottagelife.com*.



ARE YOU READY TO ROCK?

Tall Pines Music & Arts Festival is back July 19–20 at Gull Lake Park in Gravenhurst, Ont. The all-Canadian lineup includes City and Colour, July Talk, and Dan Mangan. Don't have your tickets yet? Buy them at *tallpinesfestival.com* using code COTTAGELIFE20 for a discount!

Subscribe to our newsletters

It's the best way to stay in touch with us between issues—delivered straight to your inbox every week, for free. For more information and to sign up, visit *cottagelife.com/newsletters*.

FAMILY MATTERS
HOW TO SUCCEED AT COTTAGE SUCCESSION

THE KEY
BUY. SELL. RENT. DREAM.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS
GET INTO NATURE

DOCKSIDE DIY
BUILD IT. FIX IT. GET IT DONE.

DOCKSIDE
YOUR WEEKEND STARTS HERE

ILLUSTRATION, FREEPIK.COM


SUNSPACE
CREATE AN EXPERIENCE
Unlock the joy of cottage living effortlessly with Sunspace! Our customizable, maintenance-free products ensure a quick start to your cottage season. Enjoy your time and elevate your space with a stunning Sunspace Sunroom.
SUNSPACESUNROOMS.COM
BRING THE OUTSIDE IN

Contributors

Graham Roumieu

"I'm one of those classic stories of the kid who drew in class," says Toronto-based illustrator Graham Roumieu. "I started with drawing Transformers in grade school, mostly in the margins of my notebooks." And Graham hasn't stopped drawing since. (Though his repertoire has expanded beyond transformable robots.) Throughout Graham's 23-year career, he's contributed graphics to Disney, DreamWorks, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and many others. He's also created a trio of Bigfoot-themed books, and has illustrated every Cottage Glossary since its debut in our May '23 issue. "I always try to add a bit of a surprise factor," says Graham of his approach to the illustrations. For this issue's edition? "You know if that piece of toast goes in the water it's doomed." See the scene on p. 98.

Penny Caldwell

Many of you know Penny as the former editor of this magazine. And while she may have left seven years ago, she remains a dedicated Cottage Lifer: "I still feel a deep connection to *Cottage Life* and cottaging," says Penny. Lucky for us, she continues to write for us (and you!) from time to time. For this issue's story series, "In Praise of Small Pleasures" (p. 70), she penned a heartfelt essay celebrating perhaps one of the least-revered but most-used areas of the cottage: the back deck. "It's the workhorse of the cottage," she says. "I love sitting on a lounge chair back there and listening to the insects humming and the leaves fluttering." (Also, we're happy to report that retiring from working for *Cottage Life* full time has allowed Penny more flexibility to spend extra time at the cottage!)

Celebrity sighting at the Spring Cottage Life Show

Spoiler alert: we don't always get to meet the wonderful people we write about in person. So it was super special when Ben Phillips, his wife, Joan, and their daughter, Carly, stopped by our booth at the recent show. In case you missed it, Ben and Carly form two-sixths of the Baptiste Lake, Ont.-based band, Undefined Heroes, profiled in our recent feature "One Night Only" (May '24). Each summer, the band puts on a free show atop their boathouse, attracting cottagers from near and far. Thanks for visiting with us, gang! Rock on.

Cottage Life

Editor Michelle Kelly
Managing Editor Megan McPhaden
Senior Editors Jackie Davis, Alysha Vandertogt
Associate Editor Arisa Valyear
Contributing Editor Martin Zibauer
Editorial Intern Sara Romano

Art Director Taylor Kristan
Production Artist Kathleen O'Hare
Contributing Designer Natalie Franke

Senior Videographer/Editor
Adam Holman

CEO, Cottage Life Media Al Zikovitz

President, Canadian Media, Blue Ant Media Jamie Schouela
EVP, Media Solutions, Consumer Shows, and Publishing Mitch Dent
VP, Content, Cottage Life Michelle Kelly

Director, Lifestyle & Content Sales
Rosemary Munroe
Head of New Business Development, Cottage Life Mylène Tomkin
Western Sales Manager
Wendy-Ann Derbyshire

Director, Consumer Marketing
Travis Lunau
Publishing Coordinator Leyland Rochester
Consumer Marketing Consultant
Jennifer Williams
Retail Marketing Consultant
Craig Sweetman

VP, Marketing Aubray Boyd

VP, Programming Craig Junner
VP, Consumer Shows, Cottage and Home Greg McLeod

Cottage Life® is published by Cottage Life Media, a division of Blue Ant Media Inc.

blue ant media

cottagelife.com

Canada

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada.

Subscription rates:
Canada, $30.95 plus taxes for one year (6 issues), U.S., $45.00 for one year, and International, $75.00 for one year. Payable in Canadian dollars.

GST/HST Registration #819633876. Published May 9, 2024, for June/July 2024. ISSN 0838-2395.

Mail preference:
On occasion, we share our subscriber and client list with carefully screened organizations whose products or services we feel might interest you. See our privacy policy at *cottagelife.com/privacy-policy*. If you prefer that we do not share your name and address, please contact us via the subscription inquiry information.

CANADIAN POSTMASTER:
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to *Cottage Life*, 8799 Highway 89, Alliston, ON L9R 1V1. Canadian Publications Mail Sales Product Agreement number 40050643. *Cottage Life*, USPS 009-615, is published six times a year (Mar/Apr, May, June/July, Aug, Sept/Oct, Nov) by Cottage Life Media. Periodical postage rates paid at Lewiston, NY and additional offices. U.S. office of publication: 2152 Ridge Rd., Lewiston, NY 14092.

U.S. POSTMASTER:
Send address corrections to Cottage Life, Box 1068, Niagara Falls, NY 14304.

Cottage Life
99 Atlantic Ave, Suite 400, Toronto, ON M6K 3J8

Contact us
Advertising inquiries:
(416) 440-7062
adsales@cottagelife.com
Subscription or customer service inquiries: Canada & U.S.: (800) 267-0393
Toronto: (416) 864-3741
service@cottagelife.com
Website: *my.cottagelife.com*
Consumer show inquiries:
(416) 599-2000 ext. 6597
clshow@cottagelife.com
Editorial inquiries:
(416) 599-2000 ext. 277
edit@cottagelife.com

MIX Paper | Supporting responsible forestry FSC® C011825 www.fsc.org

Cottage Life is a member-supporter of:

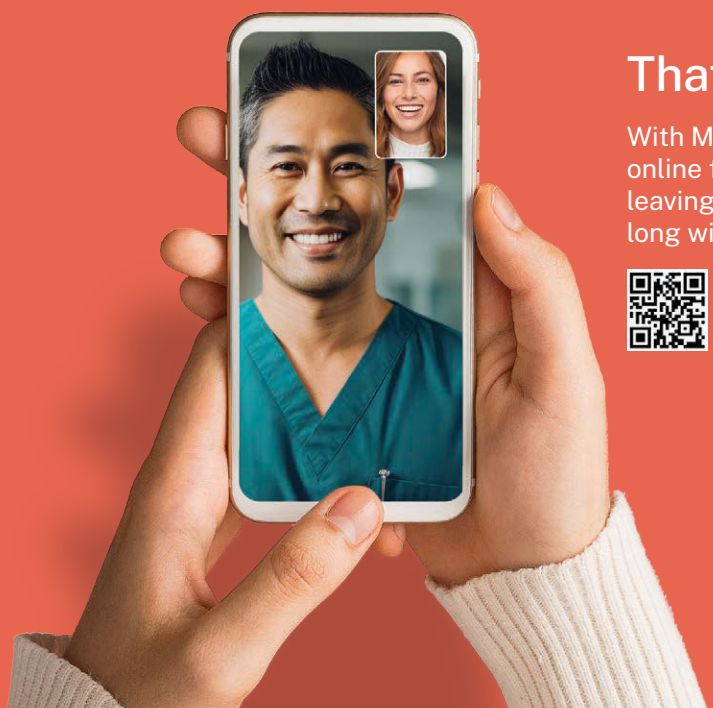
Magazines Canada IRMA

GRAHAM PORTRAIT, GREG BURI; PENNY PORTRAIT, EMMA HARRIS

maple

Sunburns, soothed.
Insect bites, treated.
Nausea, calmed.
Anxiety, eased.
Fever, managed.
Prescriptions, delivered.
24/7 care, provided.

Rest, assured.



That's why cottagers love Maple.

With Maple, you can connect to Canadian-licensed doctors online for 24/7 medical advice and prescriptions, without leaving your cozy cottage. Cottagers rest easy all summer long with Maple by their side, and now, so can you.

Download the Maple app now or visit GetMaple.ca

Get Maple. Get Care.

The little things that mean so much

ON SUMMER EVENINGS at the cottage, we eat dinner early. We wash and put away the dishes by 6:30 p.m., at the latest. This cuts into our cheese-eating and wine-sipping time at happy hour, but that's a small price to pay for what comes later.

Once the last crumbs are off the counter, we walk to the car with purpose, like the home team headed to bat. My husband drives, and the kids hop in the back while I play DJ from the passenger seat. I always choose a singalong tune—the Beatles, maybe, or Dua Lipa's latest—as we drive from our rental cottage to Kincardine, Ont., just a few kilometres up the shore. We put the windows down so the breeze off Lake Huron can get at our sun-kissed faces, our smiles as wide as the view of that great body of water. It's not the ocean, but it sure seems like it.

The road to town winds along the shore, the lake—almost iridescent at this time of day—to our left. Travelling this familiar route has its own rituals: we appreciate the painted cottage signposts; we check out the overflowing little lending library in one front yard; and we spot, through the trees, the remains of the boiler from the *Erie Belle*, a Great Lakes steamer that tragically exploded just offshore almost 150 years ago. But there's no stopping for books or pictures, despite the allure. The ice cream stand closes soon; we are on a mission.

The Ice Cream Shack is basic; a small beige hut at the end of the main drag with a few tables and benches next to it, just across and a little bit down from the pizza parlour. They serve Chapman's in these parts (it's made just up the road, in Markdale, Ont.). The Shack offers more flavours than most, and their single is really a double, if we're being honest about it, but of course no one ever is. There's almost always a line when we come. We wait our turn, and I silently wonder if there's a way to bottle the kind of patience my kids (heck, all of us) show in this moment. The patrons make jovial small talk with each other—everyone is in a good mood—while the kids consider their scoop selection with the same seriousness they show writing their Christmas lists. My son usually orders something with mint; my daughter likes "Treasure Chest," because it has "marshmallows and Moose Tracks stuff in it." My husband probably decided the moment that he woke up he would have something with toffee; I'm always drawn to salted caramel, but there are so many options! There are also no wrong choices. Because who is ever disappointed with an ice cream cone on a hot summer night?

We reach the front of the queue and get our treats before settling on the bench nearby. We sit and savour our reward in complete silence. It's been another wonderful day at the lake, our bodies happy from the sand and the surf and the laughing and the singing. In this moment, when we're sitting on a bench in Kincardine eating ice cream, it's hard to remember any of our problems, or that problems are a thing that exist at all. We're happy together, feeling healthy and lucky. So lucky.

These are the moments we wanted to recognize with "In Praise of Small Pleasures," starting on p. 70. We asked five *CL* writers about the little things they cherish most about cottaging. Remarkably, they all came up with totally different experiences, none of which were obvious to us when we brought them the assignment. And yet, I found each essay entirely relatable, the kinds of stories that, when I finished reading them, made me lean back in my chair and exclaim, "Yes, I know *exactly* what they mean." The small pleasures feature is just one part of this special themed edition of the magazine, which we've dubbed the Tiny Issue. Within these pages, you'll find lots of big details about all the little things that happen at the cottage, some you've noticed, some you may have missed. We're as excited to share it with you as we are about summer finally arriving—and that, dear readers, is no small thing.

ERIN LEYDON

BRING NEW LIFE
TO A GOOD FRIEND

5% REPOWER BONUS
ON SELECT MOTORS* FOR A LIMITED TIME

Keep things running smoothly with a Repower from an Authorized Suzuki Dealer.

SUZUKI.CA/REPOWER

SUZUKI

*Offer for a limited time. Subject to change without notice. Valid on models DF40 - DF350. See Dealer for details.

Cottage Life

WEEKENDER

VIEWS FROM THE DOCK OF OUR EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

WELCOME TO THE WEEKENDER— YOUR SIGNAL TO TAKE A BREATH AND RELAX.

Every month, our editor-in-chief, Michelle Kelly, will share her personal reflections, favourite CL articles, and insider tips about cottage living in one email newsletter, sent straight to your inbox and ready for you to enjoy when you get to the lake.

Subscribe now at **cottagelife.com/weekender**,
it's completely free to sign up now but won't be for long.

What's the story, morning glory?

The case for water witching

I'm responding to "The $12,000 Hole to Nowhere" (May '24), which seems to dismiss divining or witching as a means of locating a water well. My neighbour, an older man, insisted he knew how to find groundwater by divining. Using a forked stick, he pinpointed a spot on our property that he said would produce water. I drove a spike into the ground and called another water witcher.

Before he arrived, I removed the spike and put an innocuous pebble in its place. The second man went over the area from several angles and settled on the same spot as the first water witcher. Both men said a drill on that spot would intersect two seams of water.

Sure enough, as the drill bore down, it hit a seam around 36 metres, but it was weak. The second one at 46 metres was a bonanza. I tried using the first witcher's forked stick but got no response. He took my right hand with his left, and, holding the branches of the fork with our other two hands, we walked over the spot. The stick was irresistibly forced downward, pointing at the ground at that location. There is no way he was manipulating the fork or forcing it to move.—*Bob Ekholm, Thunder Bay, Ont.*

Great article on drilling and digging wells on cottage properties in the May '24 issue. You address virtually everything you need to know, including the caveats. My dad was a dowser, or, as he called it, a "witch weller." He was a straight shooter, so I don't believe it was an act. He helped many farmers and property owners find where to drill and could even tell the strength of the flow and the general direction if it was an underground stream. My parents bought a Christmas tree farm north of Stouffville, Ont., and one day, my dad took me outside and cut a "Y" of fresh branch. We each held one side of the branch, clasping our other hands together. As we walked down a slight hill, the branch turned toward a spot. All our strength couldn't get it facing forward. We walked further and there were faint tremors in the branch, but none like the first. Dad never charged a nickel for his help. His talent did not pass on to me, but I understand that one of my nephews has inherited the ability.—*Peter Helston, Loon and Turtle Lakes, Ont.*

Thanks for your letters, Bob and Peter. As one CL *editor says: "While scientists can't prove dowsing works, they can't disprove it either." The truth is out there somewhere! (Maybe?)*

All's well that ends well

I read "Cottage Q&A: Has the Well Flooded?" (*cottagelife.com*) in your Dockside DIY newsletter. I'm a professional hydrogeologist who has worked with wells for more than 35 years. Your advice is spot on, but I would have liked to see more information on shock chlorination. Too much chlorine can corrode metal—your well, pump, and other well components—and it's important to discharge the shocked water properly. If the homeowner flushes that water into their septic system, they could wipe out the biological part of the system. Septic systems have bacteria that help break down your waste, and if you shock it with too much chlorine, it'll destroy the bacteria and your system won't function properly.—*Don Ford, via email*

Tax form troubles

Thanks to *Cottage Life* and the journalist Emily Latimer, the many islanders who are required to file underused housing tax forms can now do so online ("CRA Fixes Issue with Underused Housing Tax Online Form that was Preventing Island Cottagers from Filing," *cottagelife.com*). We've owned our island on Rainy Lake since 1988, the same year *Cottage Life* began, and have greatly enjoyed both since.—*Craig Hunter, Rainy Lake, Ont.*

Window-washing wonders

I really enjoy the articles featuring different cottages, some of which are rustic and whimsical, others sleek and modern. The large windows in some of the new builds are striking! But the nagging question for me is: how the heck do they wash those windows? I read "A Super Structure" (Mar/Apr '24) and spent some time trying to work out the logistics of window-washing that sky-high retreat. Do they hire a window washer with rappelling skills? I would be very interested in an article about different kinds of windows at the cottage and how to wash them! —*Ruth Ferguson, Rideau Lakes, Ont.*

You know, this is a question we didn't think to ask, Ruth. But you might be on to something here. Any window-rich cottagers out there have a solution to this great-to-have problem? Email letters@cottagelife.com to share your best tips. ››

Your Letters

Celebrating the Canadian Canoe Museum

I enjoyed seeing the piece about the new home of the Canadian Canoe Museum in the May '24 issue ("A Boathouse Beyond Compare," Waterfront). I remember fondly my time at Camp Kandalore in the Algonquin Highlands, where the museum originated. The collection was started by Kirk Wipper, a professor at the University of Toronto, where he became known as a pioneer in the development of outdoor education in Canada. He owned the camp. I recall in the late 1960s, a timber-framing group arrived from B.C. and hand-squared and cut the logs that would be used to construct the building that housed the burgeoning collection. Periodically, Kirk would bring canoes out of the collection for the campers to paddle: birchbark boats, dugouts, etc. Kirk would tell campers how important these craft were to Indigenous Peoples in Canada and would explain Canada's canoe history. It's great to hear that this important collection of canoes, kayaks, and paddled watercraft is being well-maintained. I believe the building at Camp Kandalore is still called "the Museum."—*Graeme Smith, Buck Lake, Ont.*

Well warning

I read "Public Health Ontario Proposes Phasing Out Free Water Testing of Private Wells" (*cottagelife.com*) by Sara Romano in your Dockside newsletter. The article references the proposal to shutter six public health laboratory sites and to gradually discontinue private drinking water testing. As a retired public health inspector with more than 39 years of service, and a former manager of environmental health for Durham Region, I am extremely alarmed. Throughout my career, I provided well owners with advice on how to treat contamination. I am confident that the free testing contributed to their awareness of the potential for serious illness and, subsequently, their ability to take action to protect themselves and their families. Rather than encouraging people to safeguard their health, this move toward eliminating free testing will add another barrier to the process. I know from experience that it takes a lot of public health education to get people to even test their water for free, much less do it at a cost. I urge all Ontarians to contact their elected representatives and the Ontario Minister of Health to protest this ill-conceived idea.—*Alex Connor, via email*

Missing Zim Weighs In

Please bring Zim back. We love his stories and sense of humour and miss him terribly.—*Bruce Andrew, Lake Rosseau, Ont.*

Hi Bruce, we're happy to report that we still plan to have David Zimmer in the magazine. If you have a question for him, send it to edit@cottagelife.com!

We love to hear from you! Send us a note: letters@cottagelife.com. Published letters may be edited for clarity and length.

PORTRAIT, BRITTANY FARHAT; ILLUSTRATION, TAYLOR KRISTAN

Every year, Juno award-winning musician and unofficial Great Lakes aficionado, Donovan Woods, ranks the Great Lakes from best to worst. We interviewed Donovan about his 2024 ranking (*cottagelife.com*) and polled YOU to see how your list stacks up to his.

DONOVAN'S 2024 GREAT LAKES RANKING

1. LAKE HURON
2. LAKE SUPERIOR
3. LAKE MICHIGAN
4. LAKE ONTARIO
5. LAKE ERIE

YOUR 2024 GREAT LAKES RANKING

1. LAKE HURON
2. LAKE SUPERIOR
3. LAKE ONTARIO
4. LAKE MICHIGAN
5. LAKE ERIE

dorset cereals®

Take time for

Dorset Cereals at the cottage

dorsetcerealscanada.com

Still the Original

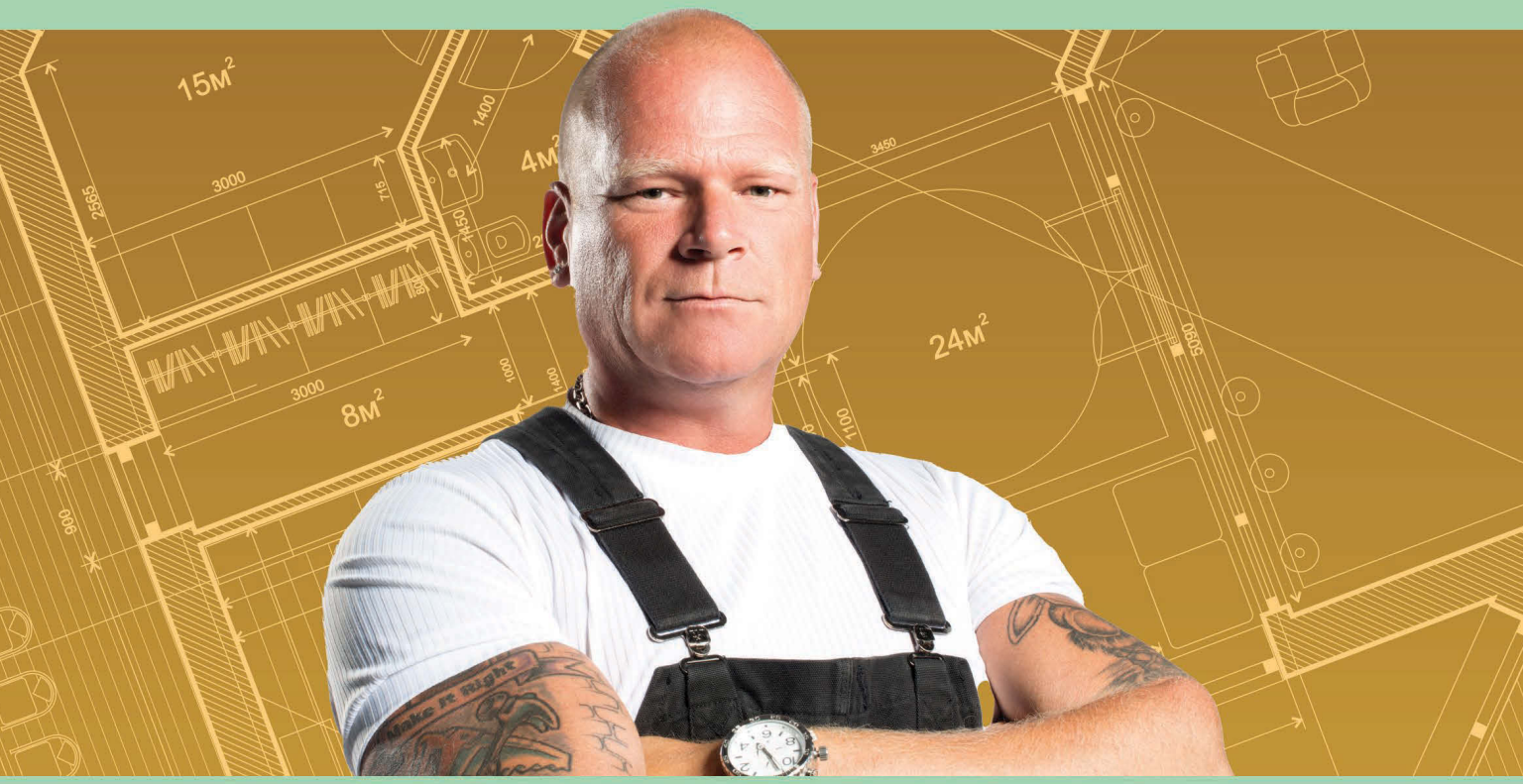
For 75 years, Pan-Abode homes and cabins have been crafted exclusively from Western Red Cedar with customizable kits that guarantee comfort, sustainability, and quality, generation after generation. **Your journey starts here**.

panabode.com | 1.800.665.0660

75 YEARS

pan-abode® THE ORIGINAL

HOLMES MADE IT RIGHT



Homeful MAKES IT FREE

All your favourite HOLMES series, all on one TV channel.

Visit homefultv.com for more info

STREAM FREE ON

pluto tv · LG Channels · The Roku Channel · tubi · Samsung TV Plus

Waterfront

Summer officially arrives in June! Get ready to celebrate the season (even the small joys of it) in a big way.

BY THE NUMBERS

Five fast facts about Canada's tiniest avian

Get to know Western Canada's wee calliope hummingbird, and then turn the page to meet four of its little (feathered) friends. ››

It's the world's smallest long-distance migrant: it flies about **8,050 km**

Males perform courtship flights to woo the ladies: they soar to more than **30 m**

It weighs about the same as a ping-pong ball: **3 g**

Its eggs are about as long as a staple: **1 cm**

It's shorter than the average crayon: **8 cm**

SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/RICHARDSEELEY

BY THE NUMBERS (*CONT'D*)

There are nearly 340 species of hummingbird in the world. Five call Canada home. Along with the calliope hummingbird, you can spot the:

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

Largely in the eastern provinces

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD

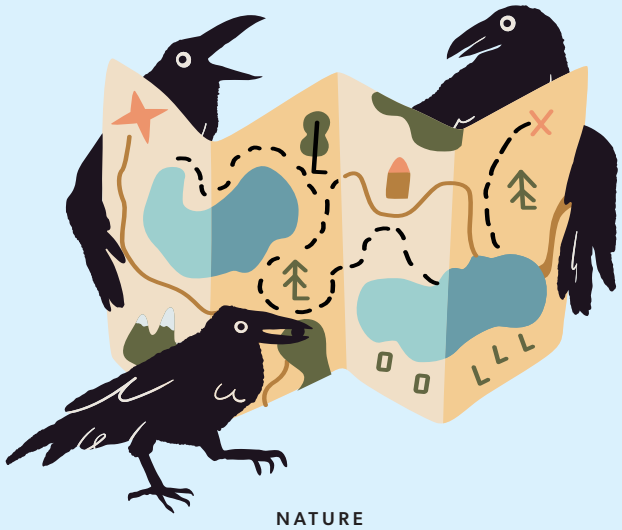
In the southern interior of B.C.

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD

In southern coastal B.C.

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD

In B.C. east to Saskatchewan; occasionally in the Yukon



NATURE

THIS ONE'S FOR THE BIRDS

COTTAGE COUNTRY FIGURES prominently in a push to wrap up the latest version of Ontario's Breeding Bird Atlas. With the five-year census entering its fourth spring, Mike Burrell, the project's coordinator with the Canadian Wildlife Service (one of five government and non-profit organizations partnering on the atlas) is looking to recruit citizen scientists to tally bird observations during the breeding season, from May 24 until late July. Volunteers are especially needed in central Ontario; that region has the most gaps in terms of data. "Cottagers are the best bet for getting coverage in places where we don't have a lot of permanent residents," says Burrell. "The biggest gaps are from North Bay to Parry Sound, Algonquin Provincial Park through the Ottawa Valley, and all the way to Sault Ste. Marie."

Currently in its third iteration, previous atlas efforts took place from 1981 to 1985 and 2001 to 2005. The atlas divides Ontario into 10-by-10-km squares and uses specific bird-surveying protocols to generate consistent data. The goal is to achieve 100 per cent coverage of squares south of Sault Ste. Marie and North Bay, and five per cent in remote northern regions because of challenging access and limited volunteers.

Such a data set allows researchers to track changes in bird species' distribution and abundance over time. For example, says Burrell, there's evidence that common ravens are expanding south from their former limit of central Ontario. At the same time, some red-bellied woodpeckers are now routinely breeding far to the north of their previous range. Population estimates also help to inform species-at-risk recovery plans, besides illuminating broader ecosystem trends. "Birds are great indicators," notes Burrell. "You find them in all habitats and they fulfill many ecological roles. They're also easy to survey."

That's where cottagers come in. Anyone can submit checklists of birds they identified during the breeding season to an online registry. More experienced birders can also perform "point counts," standardized observations in which species are identified by sight and sound from fixed locations during five-minute intervals. "Make a bird list every morning on your deck," suggests Burrell. "Repeated observations from the same location are the most valuable data that we can get."

—CONOR MIHELL

For more info and to submit observations, visit *birdsontario.org*.

THIS PAGE, PHOTOS (TOP TO BOTTOM): SHUTTERSTOCK.COM): FIONAM.DONNELLY, RCK953, KENEVAPHOTOGRAPHY, TOMREICHNER. ILLUSTRATION, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM, EDITED BY TAYLOR KRISTAN. OPPOSITE, PHOTO: COURTESY LET'S GO OUTDOORS

GROUP EFFORTS

A SHORE THING

AT WABAMUN LAKE, in central Alberta, the shoreline has been eroding for more than 60 years. This lake is naturally subject to water events, such as heavy wave action and ice quakes (expansion of ice onto the shore during high water). Then, there are the human contributions. "I think it was an unintended consequence, but people who were coming out to the lake wanted a clear view—they didn't want to have any vegetation between them and the water," says Stan Franklin, a former board member of the Wabamun Watershed Management Council (WWMC).

Historically, much of Wabamun Lake's shores were lined with reed beds, composed of bulrush plants. The bulrushes, which can withstand a lot of water turbulence, served as a natural water break for other plants, such as cattails, which can't tolerate as much water movement. With the loss of bulrush plants, the lake's shorelines were in trouble.

That's why, in 2022, the WWMC launched its Bulrush Restoration Project. "Shoreline naturalization, if done properly, creates habitat, filters runoff from the land, and absorbs nutrients that would otherwise end up in the lake," says Franklin.

Funded by a grant from the Land Stewardship Centre and the Alberta Conservation Association, the restoration project aims to replant existing but depleted reed beds, along with beds that historically existed but have been completely removed.

K & S Growers, a native and wetland plant nursery in Vulcan, Alta., provided the new replanting material—seedlings and locally cultured seed—for four restoration sites around the lake. "The rest of the plantings were from stock that was dug up from existing reed beds," says Franklin.

Wabamun Lake's shoreline restoration was a pilot project—how well the four bulrush sites fare over the course of the summer will help guide future projects.—ADELINE PANAMAROFF

REPORTER

BERRY COOL, STORM SIGHTING & GAME'S ON

BLUE'S CLUES

Shocking news: blueberries aren't actually blue. *Whaaa*? It's true, according to recent research published in the journal *Science Advances*. "Blueberries are observably blue; however, the pigments found in blueberries are not," explain the researchers. According to the study, it's "nanostructures" in the berry's waxy outer coating that scatter blue and UV light in a way that makes us perceive the fruit as blue. While scientists knew that the coating had functions—to repel water, for example—this research shows that it plays a role in the fruit's colouration too. These findings could have applications in bioengineering, say the researchers, including the development of edible blue paint. What a time to be alive.

THAT TRACKS

Ahead of Canadian thunderstorm season—it peaks in July, FYI—Environment and Climate Change Canada marked the completion of a multi-year project to install 33 new, updated weather trackers. The goal of the overhaul was to be able to better track and prepare for "increasingly severe weather as a result of climate change," says the ECCC. The government launched the project in 2016 (see "5 Things to Know About Our New Weather Radar," *cottagelife.com*). The new equipment is more robust. The radars send info-gathering "pulses" in two directions, not just one; they are better at distinguishing between different types of severe weather; and they give faster updates, spitting out new data every six minutes instead of only every 10 minutes. All these upgrades mean that meteorologists will be able to forecast severe weather events, such as tornadoes, sooner, and, therefore, issue earlier weather warnings. It won't help Dorothy and Toto, but it's good news for cottagers.

IT'S GAME TIME

Never send a man—or, more accurately, anyone—to do Margot Robbie's job. In early April, *Variety* announced that the *Barbie* star's production company, Lucky-Chap, would be bringing the cottage games cupboard classic, Monopoly, to life on screen. The project's been in the works for years (see "It's Movie Madness," Waterfront, Winter '16), but the film just didn't advance to Go. Until now, apparently. We have so many questions! What will be the plot of *Monopoly*? Will Ryan Gosling play the thimble, and Margot Robbie the iron? Which one of them will win second prize in a beauty contest and collect $10?

IN SHORT

The wedding crashers

OUR SON, KYLE, and our daughter-in-law, Sam, were married at beautiful St. Peter's Church on the Rock on Stony Lake, Ont., in July 2022. The church was enchanting, the cottage was beautiful, and the guests had a wonderful time. Because St. Peter's is on an island, there was a fair amount of planning needed to transport all the guests from the cottage to the church. Everything went off without a hitch. Well, that's not completely true.

Guests started arriving at our cottage at 2:00 p.m. We'd lined up pontoon boats to pick them up from our dock and boat them to the island where the historic church is located. At one point, with so many guests moving onto the floating dock preparing to board the boats, the dock, large, but not meant to hold that much weight, began to sink. When I realized what was happening, I knew that I needed to tell everyone to either get on board or move off the dock and wait for the next boat. Unfortunately, as I started to give this very important PSA, the dock sank just enough to startle every dock spider underneath. Hundreds of spiders—full-grown and babies—came up from between the boards. No one could hear my advice over the shouts of about 20 people too horrified or too surprised to do much but freeze. One of my sisters, with spiders crawling up her legs, rushed and dove into the boat, clipping her leg on the front pontoon. My twin nieces had high heels on—never a good idea at a cottage wedding—and unsteadily swatted at spiders climbing up their legs, squealing, and then booked it off the dock. All I could do was stand there and helplessly watch the chaos. Luckily, my wife, Janie, was taking care of other details and was not even aware this went on—she would have been mortified.

As the guests either got on the boat or came back to shore, the dock rose, and the spiders went back down where they belonged. Shortly after, as I was talking with my eldest sister, my brother-in-law alerted me to a spider on my jacket. I instinctively flicked it off—directly onto my sister! Needless to say, she wasn't impressed. I apologized, but was thinking, Sorry sis, but when it comes to dock spiders, it's every man for himself!—**BERN KELLY**

THIS PAGE: JESS HANNIGAN. OPPOSITE, BOOK COVERS: NATALIE FRANKE

HECK YES, CHEF!

ARE RECIPES BASED on board games the next big thing in cookbooks? Last year, Ulysses Press produced a book of recipes based on the best-selling Settlers of Catan. This spring, they released *Ticket to Ride: The Official Cookbook*, featuring dishes inspired by the popular train-travel adventure game. We're absolutely getting in on this before the trend explodes. (Don't steal our ideas, Ulysses Press.)*

EAT, DRINK, AND BE GREEDY

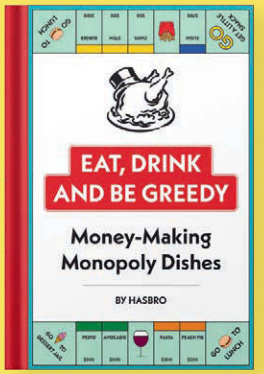
MONEY-MAKING MONOPOLY DISHES

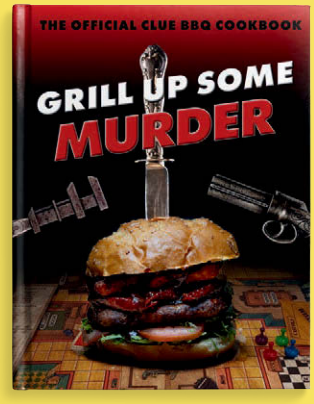
POSSIBLE RECIPES INCLUDE

Pacific Avenue Salmon

Marvin Garden Salad

Boardwalk Corn Dogs





GRILL UP SOME MURDER

THE OFFICIAL CLUE BBQ COOKBOOK

POSSIBLE RECIPES INCLUDE

Colonel Mustard-Glazed Ribs

Smoked Duck with Professor Plums

Mr. Green Chile Steak Rub

11 POINTS

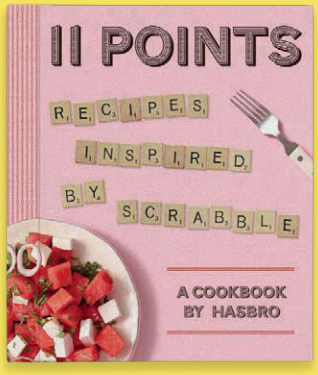
RECIPES INSPIRED BY SCRABBLE

POSSIBLE RECIPES INCLUDE

Winner, Winner Triple Word Score Chicken Dinner

How You Use That "J" Flapjacks

Zippy and Zesty Pizza



**Ticket to Ride: The Official Cookbook* ($40) is distributed by Simon & Schuster Canada (*simonandschuster.ca*).

BUYABLE

Croc jibbitz (little charms that attach to the ubiquitous sandals) are all the rage these days among the pre-teen set, and these ones are working flashlights.

Amazing! I bought them for my two kids and that move ended up being a gift to myself. Wearing Croc Lights leaves my kiddos no excuses for misplacing their flashlights (thereby giving me a reprieve from constantly searching for misplaced ones). The tiny torches shed a surprising amount of light, just enough to keep the wearer aware of the little roots and rocks along the paths at the cottage or at camp. Fashion and function for the win! ($20; *amazon.ca*)—**MICHELLE KELLY**

BUY THE WAY

Sibling revelry

IN THE MID-2000S, Ellie Thiessen's friends bought a cottage on Kushog Lake, Ont. As a regular visitor, Ellie, the general manager of a bookstore in Newmarket, Ont., quickly fell in love with cottage life. "The water was clean and great for swimming," says Ellie. "And it's a reasonable distance from the city." From 2017 to 2019, Ellie rented a cottage on the lake with her family, including her two sisters, Tena, the director of operations for a staffing company in Toronto, and Linda, a dog walker, also in Toronto.

By mid-2019, Ellie proposed to her sisters that the three of them go in on buying a cottage. "I thought she was nuts," says Linda. The trio of sisters already owned condos or homes and didn't think they could afford a vacation property. But the thought still appealed to them—they were all single, in their 50s, and liked the idea of a place where they could spend downtime together. So, Tena put a spreadsheet together, organizing their funds, and determining a budget. All totalled, they could afford to carry a mortgage on a cottage priced up to $700,000.

Aside from a location on Kushog Lake to be close to Ellie's friends, the Thiessens' only other requirement was that the property sit on fairly level ground, so that their elderly parents and Linda's senior dog, Scout, could easily navigate.

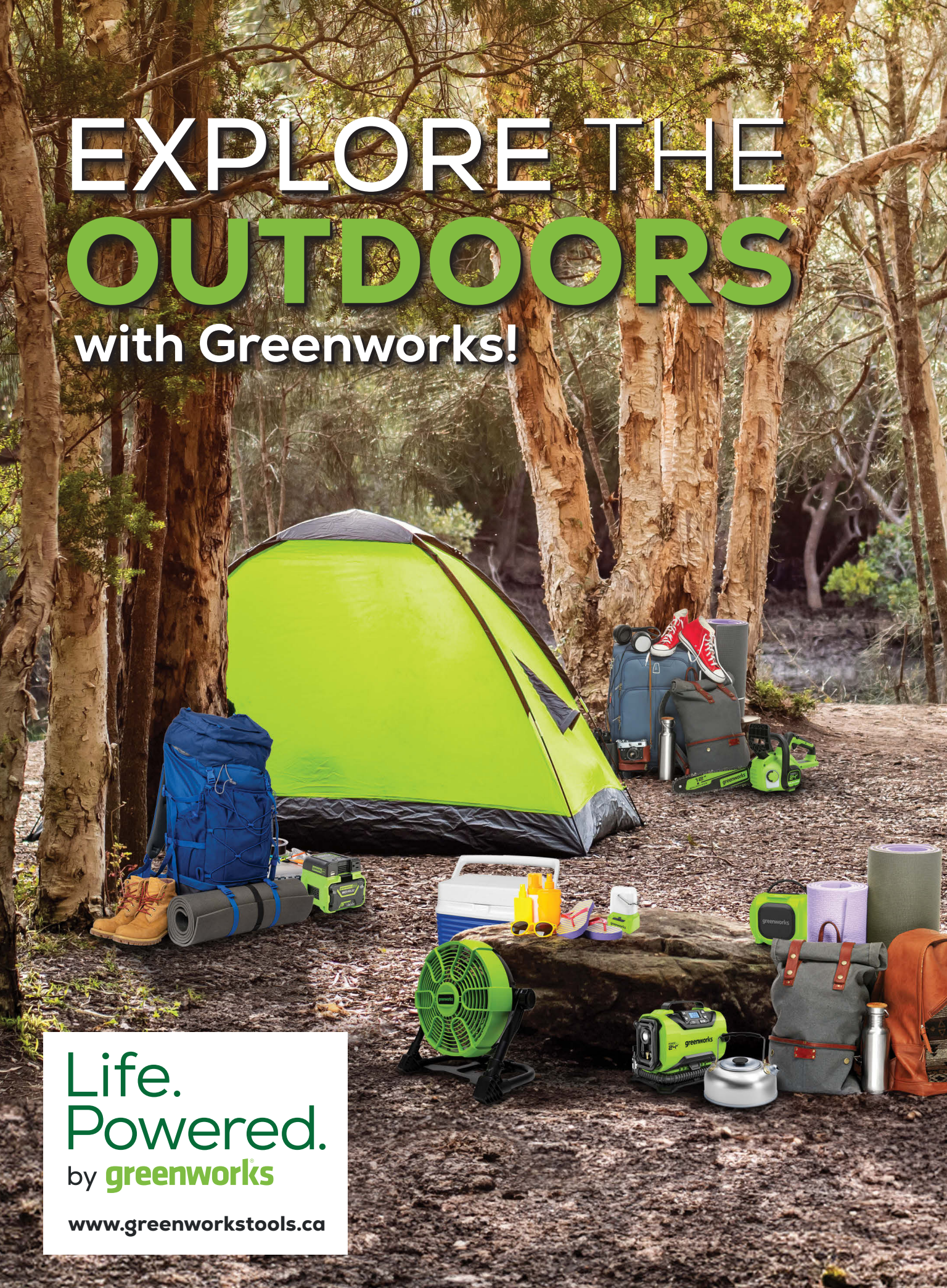
Over the next two years, the sisters put in eight unsuccessful bids. So, in June 2021, they decided to put their cottage search on hold. "We told our realtor, 'We're done,'" says Ellie. "Then she said: 'There's one more you have to see,'" It was a three-bedroom, one-bathroom cottage, plus a bunkie with twin bunk beds. Ellie was staying at her friends' cottage nearby when she saw the listing, so she jet-skiied over to see it. The bedrooms were all a good size, and there was a big deck with easy access to the water.

There were some drawbacks. The dock, while spacious, was wonky—it had a difference of three feet from the highest to the lowest point, which would require significant repairs. And the property was listed at $800,000, well above budget. But Ellie thought it was worth a try.

The sisters went in with a low-ball offer of $700,000. "We were the only offer," says Ellie. "We think the dock scared people away." The sellers came back with a counteroffer of $750,000, which was still higher than the sisters originally budgeted. But, by this point, two years into their search, Ellie had paid off the mortgage on her condo and relocated to Keswick, Ont., allowing her to contribute more to the down payment. So, the Thiessens accepted the counteroffer. They took possession at the end of July. "We were very excited," says Ellie. "We all booked the last week of August off together." The sisters head up whenever they can—sometimes all together and sometimes on their own or with guests. They'll also rent the cottage out to friends and family when not in use—about four or five weeks a year, which helps with repairs and maintenance.

In 2022, they winterized the cottage so that they could use it year-round, and they've now got a level floating dock. The Thiessens are now thinking about their retirement plans and are considering selling their properties in the future and living together in one place to consolidate their costs. Their Kushog Lake cottage is now in the running as a potential retirement spot for the sisters. "As we get older, we see how rare it is for family to also be friends," says Ellie. "We cherish the time we get to spend together at the cottage."—ANDREA YU

COURTESY ELLIE THIESSEN


EXPLORE THE
OUTDOORS
with Greenworks!
Life.
Powered.
by greenworks
www.greenworkstools.ca

Cottage Life Promotion

It's Better Outside with Ninja.

Cottage Coach APPROVED

Discover outdoor products designed to simplify weekends for the Cottage Coach.

Exclusively at Canadian Tire

Ninja FrostVault™

As the Cottage Coach, I'm always eager to solve a problem, but sometimes it's nice to have solutions handed to me. That's why I'm such a big fan of SharkNinja's line of outdoor products—especially Ninja's new FrostVault Cooler, which feels like it was custom-made for how I spend my days at the lake.

Any cooler I use had better be a workhorse, but rugged construction is just the beginning with the FrostVault, because it has a trick up its sleeve that I haven't seen in any other cooler I've tested. Not only does it retain ice for days and keep everything cold, but it has a separate drawer that keeps things dry as well! This is a game-changer for anyone who's ever had a soggy sandwich at the cottage.

Instead of a flimsy top basket that doesn't keep food dry and allows cross-contamination if you're keeping uncooked meat cool, the FrostVault has a completely separate drawer at the bottom. That means you don't have to open the ice-filled main compartment and dig through ice. Plus, you don't have to transfer food to waterproof containers before packing. That feature, combined with ergonomic handles and an integrated lock, makes this the ultimate Coach-approved cooler!

Ninja Woodfire Pro Connect™ XL Outdoor Grill & Smoker

I love challenging myself to make something new on the grill, but the Woodfire Pro almost makes it too easy. Not only is it simple to use, but it gives you authentic wood-fire flavour whether you're grilling, baking, roasting, smoking, or using the air fryer. And it's fully connected, so I can monitor and control the heat from my phone.

Ninja Woodfire™ 8-in-1 Outdoor Oven

I'm not a picky eater, but I'm particular about how I cook. And while it's fun to cook pizza and chicken wings over a campfire (yes, I've done it!), Ninja's Woodfire 8-in-1 Outdoor Oven makes it so much easier to cook almost everything, from no-turn New York or thin-crust pizzas in just three minutes to an entire rib-eye roast or turkey.

Shark FlexBreeze™ Fan with InstaCool Mist Attachment

A single mosquito might have the power to keep us up at night, but even a gentle breeze can keep them at bay. So if I'm not in the wind, I like to have a fan handy. Shark's powerful, portable FlexBreeze fan is the perfect way to create a breeze up to 21 metres away, and its InstaCool Mist attachment makes it easily the coolest fan I've used.

Discover SharkNinja's full line of outdoor products at sharkninja.com

SharkNINJA

Workshop

Because sometimes you should sweat the small stuff.

Big little jobs

Fix a switch instead of buying a new tool, pull bearings to extend motor life, or work with wee screws. Small tasks? Huge value. ››

SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/EZUMEIMAGES

SOLUTIONS

Distance learning

FOR WEEKEND WARRIORS who have painted, tiled, or hammered themselves into corners, it's smart to call for advice so you can work safely and more efficiently. Online DIY coaching—a virtual service that allows you to speak directly to an experienced contractor or fellow DIYer—can be more valuable than scrolling through random YouTube videos or seeking guidance from teenage clerks at the hardware store, says John Sanders, who launched Reno DIY (*renodiy.ca*) in March.

"I'll give the client the advice they need to take on their project as if I'm right beside them, except they do the work. Plus, I'll provide a little cheerleading to keep spirits high," says Sanders, a general contractor near Orillia, Ont., with 40 years of experience.

After fielding hundreds of DIY questions from his customers, including ones about common cottage roadblocks such as installing kitchen cabinets on uneven floors and walls, Sanders launched his troubleshooting service. "Few renovations fall together perfectly. When DIYers don't know what to do next, the job either gets put aside or looks horrible when it's finished," he says.

Sanders offers a free video call to assess the project, the owner's skill level, their access to tools, and their timeline. After that, coaching packages start at $350 for John's input over three days.

Calgary-based DIYer Ghislaine Boucher renovated six homes before launching DIY Reno Coach (*diyrenocoach.ca*) in February. "People need someone guiding them through the process, because you can waste time and money doing things the wrong way," says Boucher, who assists with design plans, budgeting, scheduling, and shopping for materials. Her fees typically range from $100 to $395. Coaches can also advise on hiring a contractor, if needed.

To get the most out of the experience, both coaches suggest cottagers send videos, photos, measurements, and sketches. Boucher also sends clients a questionnaire evaluating how much work they want to take on. For projects involving plumbing, electrical, HVAC, or anything structural, both insist owners obtain a permit and, in most cases, hire out the work to a professional.

"Renovating can be such an emotional process, and people just get stuck," says Boucher. "Having somebody to help you get over that hump gets you going again."—WENDY HELFENBAUM

KNOW-HOW

TINY SCREWS LOOSE

ONCE YOU START repairing tools, appliances, and—if you're adventurous—laptops and such, you'll come across some very small screws. Some of these fasteners are only a few millimetres long, and working with them is threaded with tiny challenges.

You don't have tiny screwdrivers?

A butter knife probably won't work this time. Pick up a precision screwdriver set at the hardware store or online. The sets come with multiple heads to match those wee screws holding your laptop and small appliances together. You'll need star-shaped Torx and pentalobe drivers for many electronic devices; slot and Phillips drivers for eyeglasses and battery covers. Sometimes, you can jam a tiny slot screwdriver in to turn Phillips and Torx screws, but that risks stripping the head.

You stripped the head and the screw's stuck?

Try sheathing your tiny screwdriver with the thumb of a thin disposable latex glove or even a balloon. The rubber layer gives your driver head better grip on the screw. In a pinch, squeeze a drop of superglue on the screwdriver, and hold it in place in the screw. When the glue cures in a minute or two, remove the screw (and then clean the glue off the screwdriver).

And now you've dropped the screw?

In the carpet? Grab the largest magnet you can find and comb it over the fibres. If this happens often, consider getting a screw starter (left). This device grips the screw by the slots while you thread it into its home.—MARTIN ZIBAUER

THIS PAGE, ILLUSTRATION: FREEPIK.COM. OPPOSITE PAGE, SAWDUST: SHUTTERSTOCK/TANYA GRACHEVA, COLLAGE: NATALIE FRANKE

MATERIALS

A small irritant:

tips for sawdust control

1 THE OUTDOORS IS THE BEST SAWDUST COLLECTOR
If you only work with wood now and then, choose a nice day—then sand, saw, and rout outside. A folding work station offers a great outdoor bench, with no need to sweep up when you're done.

2 YOUR HEALTH NEEDS PROTECTION
Unless you've got an effective dust collector protecting your lungs, wear a dust mask, especially when sanding. This applies even if you're working outside, and is especially important if you're sanding cedar or pressure-treated lumber: repeated exposure to some wood dust can trigger permanent allergic sensitivities.

3 A SHOP VACUUM NEEDS TO BE BIG
When you're using a table saw or chop saw in your workspace, you'll get decent dust collection with a wet/dry vacuum connected to the dust port, but I find the vac needs to draw at least 12 amps of current to work well. Moving lots of air is key to effective dust collection. Small vacuums don't cut it.

4 DUST COLLECTORS ARE AMAZING
For about $500 (same as a big shop vacuum), you can get a 1 or 1½ HP woodworking dust collector that'll gobble up sawdust and shavings from a table saw, jointer, or planer. These units move many times more air than even the largest wet/dry vacuum and work surprisingly well.

5 SAWDUST AND SHAVINGS ARE USEFUL
Got an outhouse? Throw a handful of fresh, dry shavings down the hole after each use to help balance the carbon/nitrogen ratio and reduce odours. Sawdust and shavings work well as garden mulch too. Even cedar is good for this, but black walnut and pressure-treated sawdusts aren't. Bag them up and trash them, since both contain compounds that inhibit plant growth.—STEVE MAXWELL

JOB JAR

ON AGAIN, OFF AGAIN

WHEN MY SHOP VACUUM wouldn't turn on, I started by investigating the switch. On many portable tools and small appliances, mechanical on-off switches—the ones with a satisfying click—can wear out, and they're usually easy to replace.

Before sleuthing, unplug the tool so it isn't energized. Next, you'll need to access the switch. Owners' manuals with exploded views can assist with disassembly; otherwise, start with the fasteners that appear to hold the chassis together. Work carefully, check for hidden screws under labels, and record your steps with your smartphone camera (for reference when you're putting it together again).

Look for melted or darkened insulation, oxidation, or corrosion on and around the terminals. Sometimes, cleaning the switch terminals with a brass brush and replacing the wire clips can get you back in the game. If the switch appears normal, remove it to test it using an electrical multimeter. With the black probe in the "com" port, the red probe in the Ω port, and the meter set to the lowest ohm (resistance) rating, check what the display reads when the probes aren't touching anything (usually it's 1, flashing zeroes, or OL). If the display remains the same when the switch is off and you place one probe on each of the two connections, but it gives a different reading when the switch is on, the switch is good.

If a simple on-off switch fails the multimeter test, it needs replacing. With the part number from the owners' manual, you may be able to order a new switch from the manufacturer. Otherwise, search online—you'll need to match the switch size and type, as well as the amperage rating. Any tiny numbers on the switch can help you narrow the search quickly. To install a switch, just reverse what you did to remove it.—SEAN LEDOUX

STUFF WE LIKE

Visual aids

It's hard to fix what you can't see. Five tools to help you magnify small details, explore hidden spaces, and scan behind walls

1 **Apexel 200X Phone Microscope** clips over your smartphone camera, and the lens magnifies the view for close-up inspection. $55, *apexellens.com* 2 **Klein ET20 WiFi Borescope** lets you feed the LED-lit camera on a bendable cable into inaccessible spots, then view the images on your smartphone. $140, *amazon.ca* 3 **Walabot DIY 2** scans through drywall for pipes, wires, studs, and even live rodents. $238, *walabot.com* 4 **Sunjoyco headband magnifier** includes five interchangeable, stackable lenses and LED lights in a comfortable, hands-free headband magnifier. $49, *amazon.ca* 5 **Carson Tri-View Folding Loupe** has three 5x lenses—combine two lenses for 10x magnification or three for 15x. $14, *walmart.ca*

KNOW-HOW

Just getting our bearings

NEW SQUEAKING OR grinding sounds from an electric motor often indicate that a bearing needs to be replaced. Bearings are mechanical devices that reduce friction to help keep motor shafts spinning smoothly. With the power off, rotate the motor shaft by hand while listening for sounds from inside the housing where the bearings live. The movement should feel and sound smooth, not gritty. To get to the bearings, you may first have to remove a pulley or a gear from the shaft, which may be secured with set screws. Loosen the screws, and give the part a tug. If it doesn't move easily, reach for a gear puller (see left).

Holding the greased tip of the forcing screw in the dimple on the motor shaft end, place the jaws on the backside of the piece you want to remove. With bearings, set the jaw ends on the inner ring to avoid tearing off the outer one. Tighten the forcing screw until it's finger-tight, then switch to a wrench—the jaws will slowly pull the piece forward. Tapping the piece lightly with a mallet can help release its grip.

Bearings come in an array of types, but the ones in your workshop motors probably have balls inside (so they're aptly named "ball bearings"), arranged within a ring. You may see ones with cylindrical spindles too. The side of the bearing should have a universal part number, which you can use to source new ones from an industrial supplier. Carefully slide the new bearing onto the clean motor shaft. If it's at all reluctant, you can use a plastic or metal pipe that's just large enough to slip over the shaft, and gently tap it against the bearing face to seat it in place.—S.L.

REAL TOOL

GEAR PULLER

IF YOU NEED to remove a bearing (or a gear or pulley) from a shaft, a gear puller can grab it and pull, while keeping it aligned with the shaft so nothing jams or bends. These tools have a yoke with two or three jaws—I prefer three for even pull on all sides—and a central forcing screw. The jaws can also be flipped to reach inside a ring-shaped piece. Gear pullers come in a range of sizes: measure the distance from the shaft end to the opposite face of the bearing to determine which one you need.—S.L.

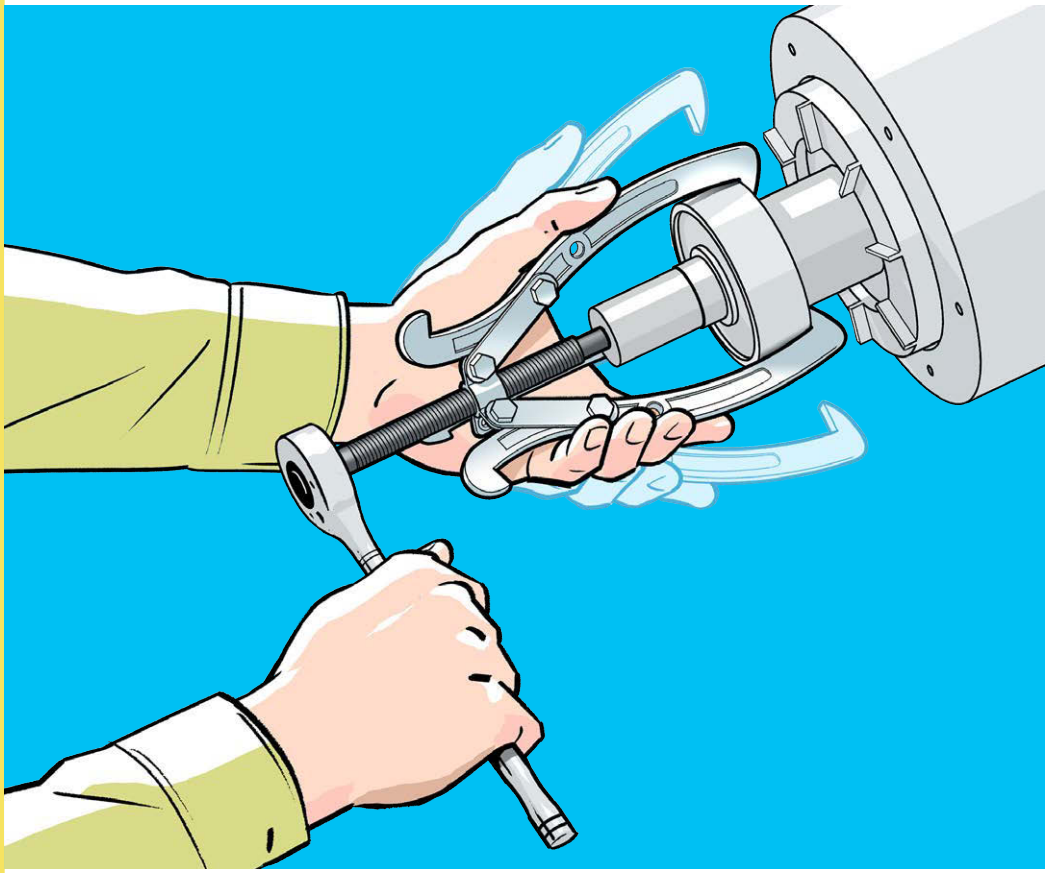
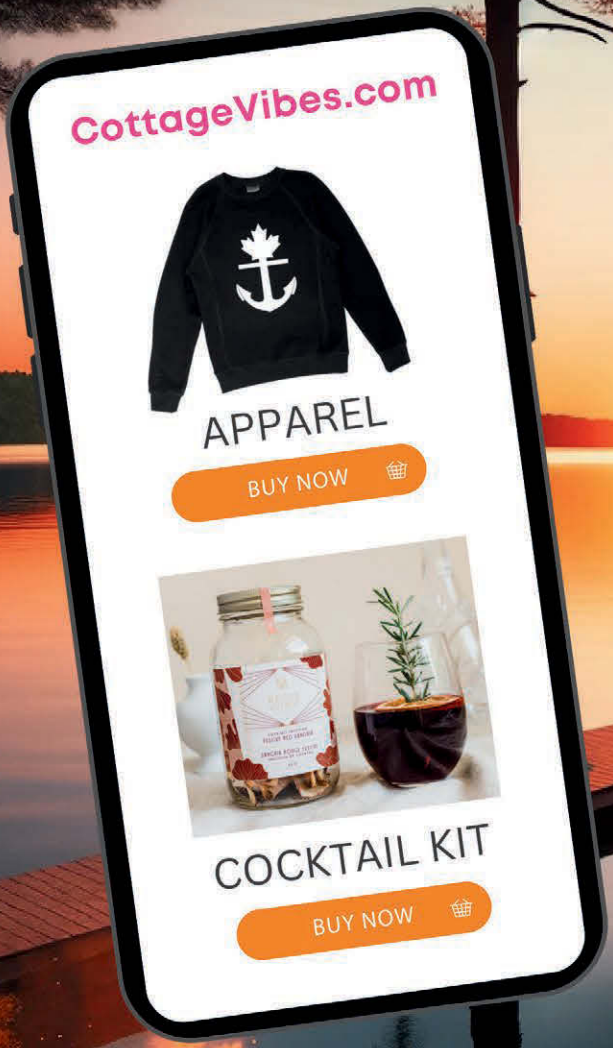


ILLUSTRATION: JORI BOLTON

All you need for the cottage in one place, online.



COTTAGE VIBES

SHOP NOW

JESS HANNIGAN

Minds in the gutter

BY JACKIE DAVIS

Q: I have a cabin with a flat roof. We don't have gutters because the snow and ice would rip them off. But not having gutters to divert the water is damaging the exterior of the building. What are my alternatives? *—Matthew Schwab, via email*

A: First of all, your roof probably isn't entirely flat. "In the roofing world, we recognize a flat roof to mean that there's still at least a two per cent slope," says Russell Richman, a professor at Toronto Metropolitan University and a building science consultant. And you *can* use gutters (a.k.a. eavestroughs) with such a roof. People do. Plus, the kind of eavestrough busting damage that you're concerned about could happen even if the roof wasn't flat. In fact, "a sloped roof could be more problematic depending on the specific context," says Richman.

But back to your question. You have several alternatives to eavestroughs, but Richman would suggest drip edges: metal, L-shaped brackets that stick out further than the edge of the roof. "They might be an inch or two off the fascia," he explains. This means that water isn't trickling down the side of the wood cabin. Instead, you're forcing it to fall away from the wall. "It might, at times, look like a really slow waterfall—or during a storm, a really fast waterfall," says Richman.

Since you're not complaining of water getting inside the cabin, we assume that isn't happening. But if, for example, water begins collecting around the foundation, you could regrade around the perimeter of the cabin so that the ground slopes away from it instead of towards it.

As always, it's tricky to give a perfect solution without seeing the cabin in question. If in doubt, call in an expert. Ultimately, "you just need to be getting the water off the building and away from the building," says Richman. "That's the name of the game."

Burying: the truth

Q: My dad wants to be buried at our family cottage. Is that possible?*—Alfie Maurice, Kawartha Lakes, Ont.*

A: Yes. But if the family wants to follow the law (and you do, right?), you'll need to apply to the Bereavement Authority of Ontario and have the property, or part of it, designated as an official cemetery. "An Ontario land surveyor has to come in and define the location of the cemetery, even if it's just 15-by-15 feet," says Michael D'Mello, the deputy registrar with the BAO. "We need to know exactly where that person is going to be buried." (This applies to a cottage in Ontario. If your cottage was in a different province, the regulations would be different.)

Okay. Seems straightforward. Except, if you turn your cottage property into a cemetery, "you become a cemetery operator," says D'Mello. That'll involve some regular paperwork; you'll have to file an annual report with the BAO. "Basically, you need to tell us how many burials have happened over the year and that your contact information is still correct," he says. Again, seems straightforward enough. But even though it's a minor hassle, "a lot of people don't want to do it," says D'Mello.

The real problem comes down the road. What if you want to sell the cottage? Because once the ownership is transferred, the new owners become cemetery operators too. That could be a major con for some buyers. A solution would be to split the property into two lots, with the cemetery separate from the rest of the land. You'd remain the cemetery operator, and therefore, be on the hook to maintain it. Any monuments should remain "secure and stable," says D'Mello, and you'd need to take care of the lot. All cemeteries are meant to be places of respect. As such, "the level of maintenance must meet the standards of respect that the community would expect." If you don't maintain the cemetery, you could face a fine of up to $50,000 from the Ontario Court of Justice (or imprisonment for up to two years less a day).

The BAO doesn't actively discourage people from turning their property into a cemetery, says D'Mello. "But we don't really encourage it either." Scattering ashes is a much less complicated way to lay someone to rest at the cottage. To scatter ashes on private property, you need the landowner's permission; since it's your family property, you'd obviously already have that.

Before you make any decisions, contact the BAO (*thebao.ca*) and ask to speak to a licensing agent. *Cont'd on p. 35*

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

Whether you call it a cottage, cabin, or camp—you'll get the best advice and inspiration from *Cottage Life*

Order online at cottagelife.com/save

Lead or no lead?

Q: How do I identify lead fishing bait? I want to weed through our tackle boxes and get rid of it.—*Bea Jones, via email*

A: Good call. According to Birds Canada, using lead-free bait is one of the top ways you can help loons. They ingest it accidentally and that almost always results in death.

Unfortunately, it's not easy to ID lead bait by looking at it. But there are a few quick tests. Can you mark up a piece of paper with it or dent it with a pair of pliers? Then it probably contains lead.

You can also buy lead test kits, either online or in most hardware stores, says Margie Manthey, a longtime angler who launched Wolfe Lake's Lead Fishing Tackle Buy Back Program ("They're Tackling It As a Team," Waterfront, Sept/Oct '22). She's a fan of the AAwipes Lead Test Swab Kits. "You get results in 30 seconds. I've used it to test a few questionable baits."

Keep in mind that painted lead bait, or lead bait encased in some kind of rubber coating, is still lead. "Many anglers incorrectly assume that these types of baits are safe, but they're just as deadly," says Manthey. The coating breaks down in the digestive systems of loons and other aquatic birds.

If you're planning to refill your tackle box, don't make the further mistake of thinking that new bait is lead free. Most sold today contains it, says Manthey. "And a lot of packaging doesn't alert the consumer." So ask for lead-free bait when you shop. There are lots of options, including tungsten, steel, tin, and metal composites. But they usually cost more than lead—up to 10 times more in the case of tungsten. (Lead is cheap and easy to manipulate; other materials, not so much.) Still, "Replacing your lead one-ounce-and-under sinkers, weights, and jigs or jig-heads is a great place for anglers to start," says Manthey.

That move might not be kind to your wallet. But it will be kind to wildlife.

Along came this spider

Q: I was letting the dog out late one evening and saw a shadow on the outside corner of our front door. I took a closer look and realized that it was a large spider. I decided to quickly bring the dog in and call it a night. We are no strangers to dock spiders, but this one appeared quite different. What kind of spider is it? —*Charles Boult, Bennett Lake, Ont.*

A: Definitely not a dock spider, says Robb Bennett, a spider biologist with the Royal BC Museum in Victoria. (Your spideriffic lake was named after him. Oh, fine. It wasn't.) That's an orb-weaver, a.k.a. a garden spider, in the genus *Araneus*.

"They build the symmetrical orb-webs that are so attractive on dewy mornings," he says. To him, your specimen looks like a female.

Araneus spiders are common across Canada and the northern U.S. And (who knew?) one is famous, says Bennett. Charlotte—from *Charlotte's Web*—is a barn spider: *Araneus cavaticus*. That's why her full name is Charlotte A. Cavatica.

There was no reason to get spooked by your cottage visitor. Orb weavers are harmless, and they're usually smaller than dock spiders. But they can appear larger. They have bulky bodies and proportionally shorter legs, says Bennett. Dock spiders are also much more nimble—they hunt, and only use webs for guarding their eggs and "rearing the kids." Orb weavers and their relatives, on the other hand, sit and wait in their webs for prey to come to them. "They're awkward and clumsy," says Bennett.

Of course, some of them can spell. According to E.B. White, at least.

Mouse poison vs. owls

Q: How common is secondary poisoning in owls that eat poisoned mice and rats? —*Aaminah Townsend, via email*

A: That's tough to determine. "Usually, the only way to know for sure is post-mortem," says Rob Hope, the director of

the Orphaned Wildlife Rehabilitation Society in Delta, B.C., which specializes in helping raptors. But it's common enough in B.C. that the government permanently banned second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) for general use in 2022. First, some background: all anticoagulant rodent poison works by disrupting the animal's normal blood clotting process so they bleed uncontrollably. The poisons are classified as either first-generation (the rodent must eat several helpings before the effects are lethal) or second-generation (these are stronger and kill the rodent after one feeding). There are also non-anticoagulant poisons that work in various ways—as a neurotoxin that destroys a mouse's nervous system, for example. The risk of secondary poisoning from first-generation rodenticides—the one most familiar to cottagers is probably warfarin—or the non-anticoagulant varieties is lower for birds and mammals compared to the risk from SGARs. And obviously, eating only one poisoned mouse, compared to, say, five of them in quick succession, wouldn't have as severe an effect on a predator. But the impact of anticoagulants is cumulative. Compounds from the poison build up in the liver and can last for months, so repeated exposures can eventually result in the animal hemorrhaging to death.

Because fast-acting SGARs are the poisons that are used the most frequently, the ban did help. "The suspected cases of secondary poisoning have dropped," says Hope. But it's still happening. For one thing, commercial pest control companies can use it, at least in certain areas—restaurants and hospitals, for example. (And unfortunately, people still seem to be able to get it and use it illegally, he says.)

There's mounting evidence that secondary poisoning is a real problem in birds of prey all over the world. Their diet is heavily rodent-based, after all. One 2022 study that looked at secondary poisoning in southern Ontario raptors found rodenticide in 62 per cent of the dead birds tested (through liver samples). The researchers concluded that exposure to these poisons is common in birds in that area. In Canada, there are some country-wide restrictions—they were introduced by Health Canada in 2013—on the use

of poison. For example, some products are prohibited from use in certain outdoor areas. But the goal of those restrictions was to protect children, pets, and non-target wildlife from directly consuming the poison. The results of the 2022 study indicate "that legislative changes in Canada may not be protecting non-target wildlife as intended," according to the researchers.

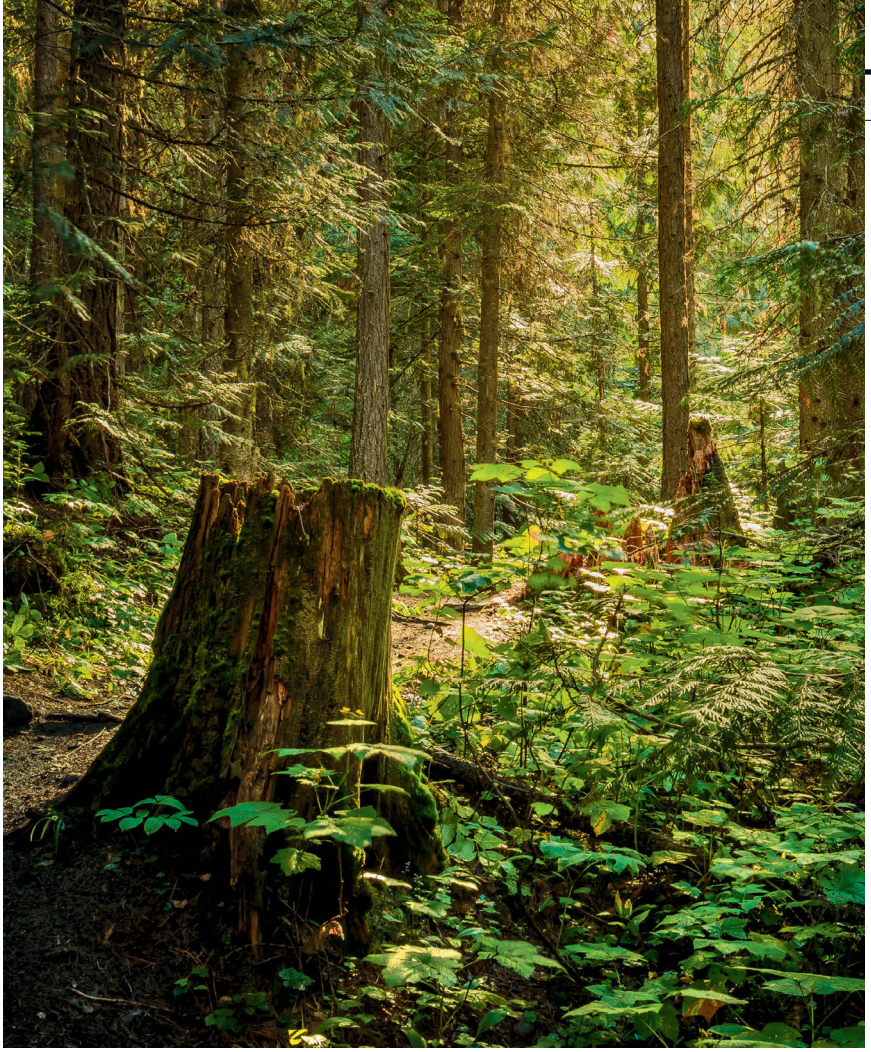
It's especially hard to know how many owls (and other birds) become sick or die from secondary poisoning in cottage country or rural areas, says Brian Salt, the founder of Salthaven Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Centre in Strathroy, Ont. "They fly away and hide," he says. "If it's on someone's 100-acre property…nobody ever finds them."

Salthaven sees about a dozen cases of secondary poisoning, on average, in a year. Most of the cases are birds of prey. But that in no way reflects actual numbers, of course; Salthaven is only brought birds that are still alive. Staff give the birds Vitamin K to counteract the effects of the poison. Sometimes it works. Mostly it's too late. And the irony? "We're poisoning the allies we have in keeping the rodent population under control," says Salt.

If there's growing evidence showing how bad rodent poison—any rodent poison—is for owls and other raptors, there's an equal amount of evidence showing how *good* these birds are for rodent control. There are studies (mostly in the U.S.) that have demonstrated how making habitat raptor-friendly (by installing nesting sites, for example) is more effective and cheaper as a form of rodent control. Even some pest control companies encourage this.

So, if you want to help the owls and decrease the mice population at your cottage, consider installing an owl nesting box. You can buy one, or build one yourself. (Visit *cottagelife.com/project/owl-house* for plans.) Then let nature do nature: the predator population goes up, the prey population goes down.

STILL LOOKING FOR ANSWERS?
Good, because we love to research stuff! Email answers@cottagelife.com.



JOHN PELECHOSKY

Seeing the forest for the trees

A healthy woodlot—no matter the size—can fight climate change and might even help your bank account **BY LIANN BOBECHKO**

ONE YEAR, WITH the kind of gusto for tidying up that's endemic across cottage country in early July, my husband, Steve, and I set out to clean up an abandoned woodpile. It had been festering in an overgrown tangle of trees by the shore. I lifted up one of the rotting logs and jumped—there, looking at me, sat an equally startled Eastern red-backed salamander. The small, dark, rust-coloured creature darted away. Steve and I looked at each other, and shifted more pieces of wood, catching glimpses of another, and another. We could hardly believe that inside this eyesore, just steps from the cottage, there was a secret world under our rotting logs. So we left it and its neighbouring firepit to fall apart in peace.

In life, it's a natural desire to tidy up. It's how we take care of a place. Opening up at the cottage means cleaning up mouse droppings and wiping winter grime off deck furniture. That desire to bring order to our surroundings extends to the forest; we see a tree that fell over the winter and want to chop it up, we see fallen leaves and want to rake them. That would make sense if the forest around your cottage was a movie set, placed just so for maximum aesthetic impact. But long before you got there, the forest was home to plants, animals, and living processes—and guess what? It still is.

Forests bring a bevy of benefits: they reduce the effects of flooding and drought, they supply shade, they capture toxins and excessive nutrients, and they provide habitat for wildlife. All of which make them a key part of the fight against climate change.

It may feel like our tiny part of the forest is inconsequential in the whole of Canada. What difference does it make what you do on your small lot? In fact, even the tiniest waterfront properties support a whole lot of life—70 per cent of land-based wildlife and 90 per cent of aquatic life will depend on vegetated shorelines at some point in their lives.

Beyond these reasons, many cottagers take on forest revitalization with succession planning in mind, wanting to promote a healthy forest for when they hand down their property, or because they're losing land to erosion.

Only about 12 per cent of land in Canada is protected, as of 2022. "The whole world is in a biodiversity crisis," says ecologist Cara Steele, who is the program coordinator at Abbey Gardens, a learning and community hub in Haliburton, Ont., that promotes sustainable living. Helping people appreciate the benefits of a healthy forest is one of the things that happens at their rehabilitated quarry site, which is home to demonstration gardens that feature cottage-country landscapes and low-impact native gardens.

That kind of diversity comes with complexity. That can mean patches of lowlands where trees grow happily with wet feet, alongside dry upland forests. You might have an area where a big old tree died, and the plants that had been patiently growing in its shade now make a break for the light, each sapling vying to be the tallest, shading out the others. The roots of blown-down trees sit sideways in the air and spill over with ferns that take root in the newly exposed soil. The constant change brings vibrancy.

A healthy forest also has structure: layers of foliage, starting with the canopy—which provides a sort of protective cap on the forest—the sub-canopy, the shrub layer, and down to the ground covers. A fully layered forest will have birds and mammals nesting throughout—in treetops, cavities, and on the ground—depending on their needs. In our fight against a warming climate, all this structural diversity gives more shade, more microhabitats, more species, and more species interactions. Plus, it slows rainfall as the water filters through the many layers of leaves and needles, which go on to enrich the soil when they fall. Not to

mention, trees have the superpower to pull carbon out of the atmosphere. They turn it into leaves, wood, and roots through photosynthesis, which releases oxygen.

First ask yourself: do I need to do anything at all?

Preserving forest—especially at the shoreline—is a priority for Chris Earley, who is an interpretive biologist at the University of Guelph's Arboretum. "At our cottage, there's a slope to the shoreline where we can see the lake through a canopy of hemlocks, but it's not an open view." Instead of clearing a vantage from the cottage, which they call The Tree House, they embraced what's there. "We're trying to keep it as natural as possible."

For some property owners, the benefits move beyond the land to their bank accounts; there are tax advantages to maintaining your forest more actively. The Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program in Ontario is a provincial program that encourages owners of 9.88 acres or more, minus any buildings on the lot, to steward the land by developing a forest management plan. Doing so involves hiring a managed forest plan approver to map the different forest types on your property and identify different activities you can do to maximize forest health over a 10-year period. Participants can then pay reduced property taxes on forested portions of the lot. Other provinces, such as B.C., New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador, also offer reduced tax rates for properties with managed forests. P.E.I. will lend owners money for forest management work, and Quebec offers tax deductions and subsidies. (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta do not currently have programs in place.)

If your property is less than 10 acres, consider a micro-forest or a site assessment

If you don't have a large lot, there are benefits to actively cultivating a small forest too, as demonstrated by the burgeoning movement of micro-forests. Also called mini-forests, Miyawaki forests, pocket forests, or tiny forests, these small, densely packed, multi-aged stands of trees mature in a few decades rather than a century, take more carbon from the air than a similarly sized area just covered in grass, and provide a rich mix of composition and biodiversity. Plus, with fully developed layers and a robust root system, the trees are more able to weather the extreme flooding and storms that climate change brings.

> Forests bring a whole bevy of benefits, all of which make them a key part of the fight against climate change

Largely used to restore habitat on urban and suburban sites, micro-forests—which can feature 20 to 40 local native species and yet be as small as 16 square metres—are now being used all over the world to recreate natural forests using intense soil preparation and about three plants per square metre. As Steele explains, Abbey Gardens' two, 100-square-metre plots were densely over-planted to induce a high level of competition between the trees, forcing faster growth upwards instead of outwards. It would be impractical—largely because of costs—to use this intense technique over a large area, she says, and it also requires a fair bit of maintenance for the first few years until it is established, such as routine watering and pulling out any weeds that shade out the new plants. But if you want to reestablish a small portion of a degraded site (say, after construction), this might be an option to consider.

Many cottagers know that promoting forests is something they want but they need help figuring out what they can do and how to start, says Steele. She is also the owner of Meadowsweet Naturescapes, a service that specializes in installing ecological gardens and shoreline naturalization. According to her, ideally cottagers would have at least three quarters of their property at the shoreline vegetated—whether with forest or with shrubs and wildflowers—with no more than one quarter dedicated to patios, gazebos, docks, or grassy areas.

Through a service Steele offers at Abbey Gardens, land owners can hire her to do a site assessment with the goal of revitalizing upland areas and shorelines; she will even set up a micro-forest. She creates a plan based on their budget, and then plants native species on-site. She follows up with a summary report and maintenance advice. All in, costs for customers in the area typically start at $800, which includes the base cost of $495, plus mileage, extra planting labour, and materials. Steele notes that she welcomes cottagers who are willing to work alongside her, which can help offset labour costs. For those who are more DIY-inclined, she also sells plant kits for $200 tailored to pollinator gardens, open shorelines, and forests. "I work with cottagers so that they can still have their sitelines, their paths, their lawn, but let's add some plants around it," says Steele.

And finally, take the time to really see your forest

Look at the habitat features around you. Start to learn your plants, your birds, your insects, your mammals. Look at field guides, and use apps such as iNaturalist and Merlin, which can help you identify the species around you. Take a guided walk or a hike through a nearby provincial park, which is likely a similar environment to your cottage landscape. You'll see what the forest on your property wants to be. *Cont'd on p. 43*

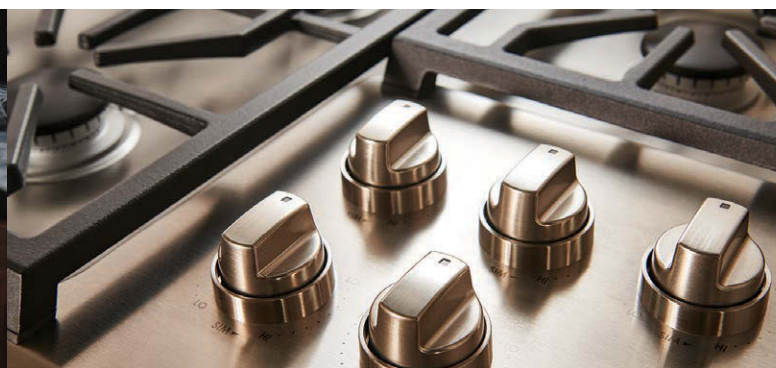
We can't please everyone. Unless they step through our doors.

At Tasco, nothing motivates us more than "hard-to-please." So go ahead, sweat the small stuff. Nit-pick every product. Drill us on the details. It's what our showrooms are made for. We ask the right questions to get to know our customers like the back of our hand – whether it's your hosting preferences, cooking routines, or how many creams you take in your coffee. So come to Tasco to get the high-end treatment you deserve.

Learn more at www.tascoappliance.ca

tasco
appliances

WHERE PICKY
SHOPPERS SHOP



Cottage Life

Digital Edition

Inspiring articles and stunning photographs right at your fingertips — anytime, anywhere!

INCLUDED WITH YOUR PRINT SUBSCRIPTION

HOW TO:

1. Tap on Account
2. Tap on Sign In
3. Tap on Print + Digital Subscriber
4. Enter your email address, tap Continue
5. Create a password
6. Tap on the Library tab to access your issues

DOWNLOAD THE COTTAGE LIFE MAGAZINE APP THROUGH THE APP STORE OR ON GOOGLE PLAY!

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

To purchase, or for more information on how to activate your digital edition, visit cottagelife.com/digital

Augment, rather than destroy, the natural habitat. Sometimes, at cottages, we don't need to plant forests, we just need to leave the one that already exists alone. Stake off a bit of lawn near the woods, for instance, and stop mowing it, then watch what plants grow back and which birds move in. Watch as your shoreline gradually converts from a Canada goose pooping area into a vibrant forest zone, filled with pollinator plants that give cover to mammals darting to the lake.

When you want a clearer view to the lake, can you prune a window through branches of the tree that are in your way rather than cutting it down? When Steele advises cottagers, she asks, "Where do they like to sit? What do they look out at? If sitelines have to be vegetated, we consider wildflowers and shorter species." Or as Chris Earley asks, "Can you change your practice about where you're going to sit at sunset, and instead work with your land and your environment?" At Earley's cottage, if they want a clear view, they take a stroll down to the dock. But, he notes, "The photos we take through the canopy at sunset are stunning too."

"If you're taking down a tree for a non-disease reason, can it just lie there?" he asks. "If it's in the way, can you incorporate it into the landscape by creating a sitting area, or something else creative?"

Sometimes, the forest provides its own solutions to other problems. At Earley's cottage, there were native tree seedlings growing on the septic bed, which would eventually cause damage if left. He didn't relish taking them out; however, there was also a slope that was in danger of eroding. So they transplanted some mountain ash, white birches, and raspberries from the septic area to help stabilize the hillside.

Learn to love the forest. "Visit your forest in different seasons," says Earley. While you may not have a cultivated garden bed of daylilies or impatiens that will bloom all summer, "what you have instead are trilliums that are here for just a week-and-a-half," says Earley. "But that's what makes them special." Whatever native plant grows in your forest is successful there because it's perfectly adapted for that spot.

Caring for your forest is about more than the trees, and it's certainly about more than a tax incentive. Our family has been formally managing a nearby woodlot for years. Having a healthy forest is something we notice when we walk through. We see it in the wildflowers on the ground, the flycatchers nipping in and out of the hemlocks above, and the towering beech trees with claw slashes showing where bears have climbed up into the branches in search of nuts.

For the plants, the birds, the salamanders, and the bears alike, that piece of forest by the lake is where they find everything they need, just when they need it. It's home. And when we can learn to see it that way, we understand more deeply how to take care of it.

Liann Bobechko is the former deputy editor of Cottage Life. *She is the co-editor of Bluedot Living Toronto, a newsletter that shares sustainable climate ideas.*

Unlock dark riddles, lost treasures, and other mysteries frozen in time.

NEW EPISODES
Saturdays, 10pm ET/PT

Cottage Life

ROGERS	BELL SATELLITE	BELL FIBE	SASKTEL	COGECO	EASTLINK
277 SD | 548 HD	641 SD | 1730 HD	641 SD | 1641 HD	65 SD	166 SD | 759 HD	643 HD

COTTAGELIFE.COM

Views from the top

When prime waterfront property wasn't an option, this clever couple built up so they could look out

BY BETH HITCHCOCK | PHOTOGRAPHY CAROLINA ANDRADE

MIRROR IMAGE MEDIA

The electrical, plumbing, and internet are housed in a small building on the ground. A central chimney system disguises any wires or hardware running up to the Tower.

CALL IT A real estate light bulb moment. When Peter Mogl-Maclean and Paula Washington began looking for land on which to build a cottage in Nova Scotia in 2020, Peter realized many otherwise prime coastline views were blocked by hills or trees. "I said to Paula, 'There's a lot of undervalued real estate if we recognize that our first floor should be 30 feet in the air,'" he says, with a laugh.

The joke soon evolved into an exploration of, "What if?" After a year-long search, the couple found a narrow, 15-acre property that fit their budget near Broad Cove, a small community about 45 minutes south of Lunenburg. The land was littered with blown-down trees, but Peter and Paula could see the property's potential. To know for sure, they hired a boom truck to hoist them up in the basket for a bird's eye view. Peter's hunch was right: 30 feet up in the air, there were panoramic ocean views to the east and rolling hills to the south. For Peter, who'd always loved the imposing nature of towers—"Being up high somehow makes me feel safer"—it was a dream opportunity. "He'd been talking about building a tower for about 10 years," says Paula. "Here was his chance."

There was, however, one glaring obstacle. Peter and Paula knew how to build a small cabin on the ground; they'd already completed two previous builds for their rental business, Shackup Cabins. But a cabin in the sky? That was a new challenge. They started researching fire watchtowers with wraparound decks, a model that made sense in terms of size and utility. Eventually, because they didn't have expertise working with steel (especially for a project of this size), they enlisted a Halifax-based engineer, who had experience fabricating modules for offshore oil and gas rigs, to build the base and stairs.

The couple could have opted for skinnier legs, which would have been enough to stabilize the Tower, but they decided to go with larger support legs so that it would look extra-sturdy and renters would feel secure. After that, the couple had another crucial decision to make: the colour. The steel structure had to be sprayed in the shop ahead of the build, and Peter and Paula wouldn't be able to see the colour until it arrived. "It was the most stressful decision we've made in our three projects," says Peter. "We were mindful that the Tower should look warm and unpretentious, and at home in the surroundings."

The couple spent almost nine days rolling out multiple coats of paint samples on plywood sheets, then inspecting them in both rain and sun to see how the colour responded. Finally, inspired by San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, they selected a nostalgic brick red that Paula deemed, "Very Parks Canada." ››

Nostalgia reigns supreme at the Tower, where there's a mix of cassettes that range from Aretha Franklin to The Village People. "A friend of ours is a committed audiophile," says Peter. "He regularly checks in to curate the collection."

▲ The V-groove wall colour is Wild Sage from Allbäck—a soothing green shade to match the treetops outside.

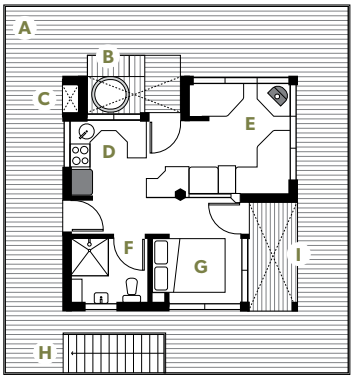
▶ Peter and Paula opted not to install upper cabinets, which would block the view. Instead, the lower niches, cupboards, and shelves provide enough storage for cooking and dining necessities.

> “There’s a lot of undervalued real estate if we could have our first floor 30 feet in the air”

Peter and Paula didn’t waste an inch—clever, built-in storage is a standout of the Tower’s design. Above the bed (opposite), the couple added a deep nook, which acts as the bedside table without taking up more floor space. Shelves on top of the bed and underneath (see above) offer more places to put things in lieu of a closet or a dresser.

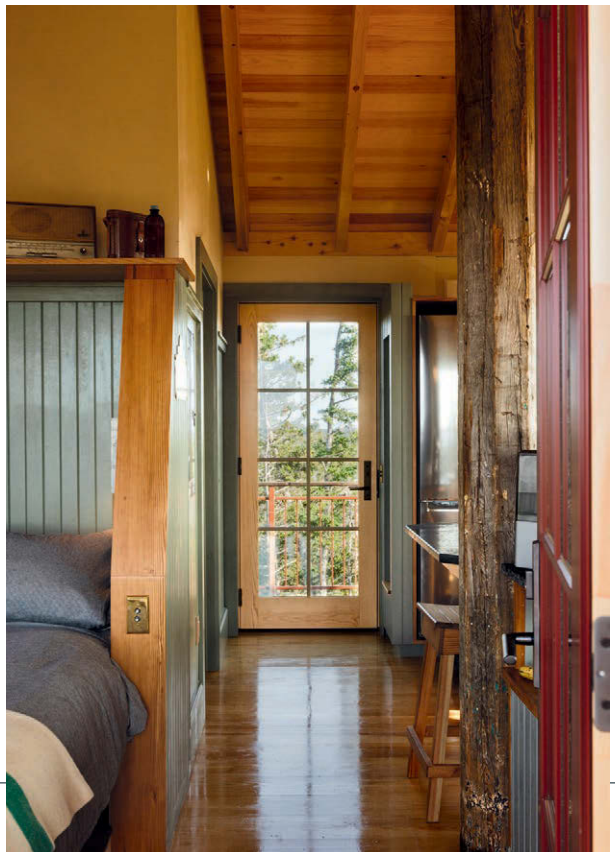
When it came to building the cabin itself, the couple—who have no formal design training—harkened back to their previous cabin builds and their shared experience working on boats. This time, they would affix a deck to the steel frame so they could build the cabin on top of it. “It was like building on a stage with railings all around,” says Peter.

They selected pine beadboard for the ceiling and reclaimed yellow pine bleacher boards for the floor. All the furniture and cabinetry are made from long-leaf yellow pine that was purchased from a cotton mill in Yarmouth, N.S., that was about to be torn down. ››

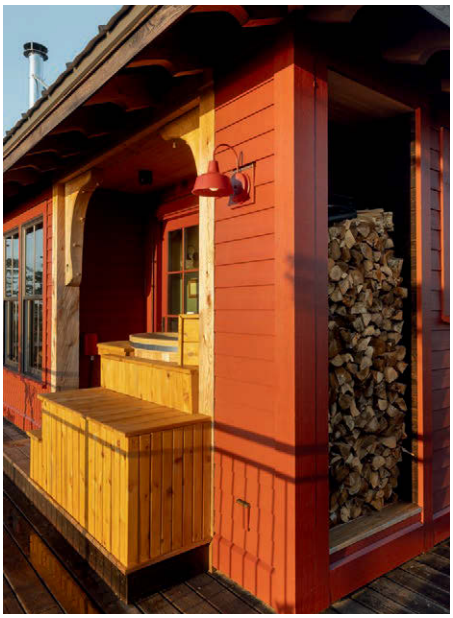


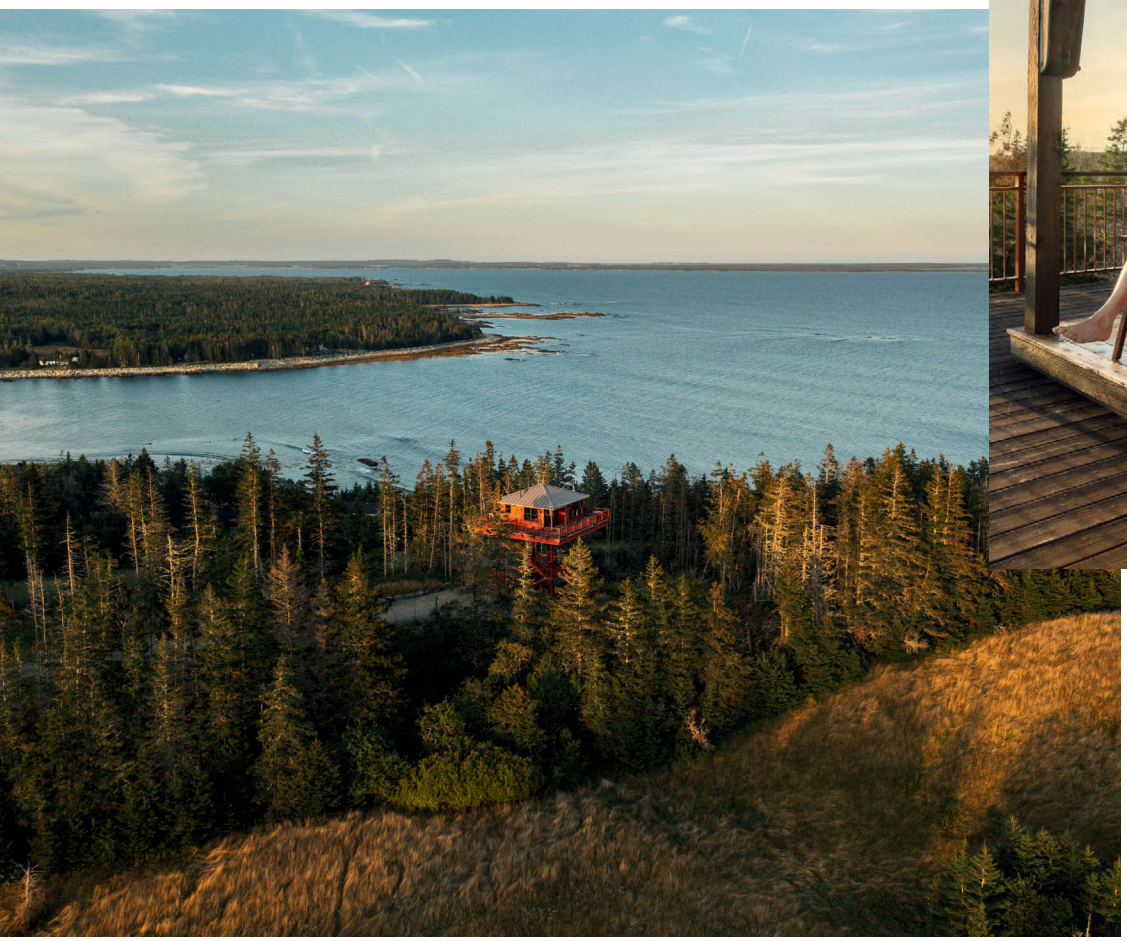
N ↖ COAST ↑

A wraparound deck
B hot tub
C wood storage
D kitchen
E living space
F bathroom
G bedroom
H staircase
I covered deck



There's a small alcove on the east-facing deck where the couple nestled a hot tub. The spot offers ocean views, but it's also protected from the northeast wind.





▲ Unlike most cottages that only face one direction, the cabin is surrounded by a six-foot-wide deck on all sides.

◀ Above one of the living room couches is a framed vintage map of the LaHave Islands, some of which are visible from the Tower.

"We didn't have six inches to spare. It was so relentless that if you moved one thing, everything else shifted"

In keeping with the boat-hull vibe, all the furniture is built-in and built-up on platforms fixed to the floor, which conceal storage. "Space was so limited that standard furniture would have made it feel like a cramped bachelor apartment," explains Peter. "Fixing the furniture and creating cubbies and nooks seemed more intentional." The V-groove walls and window trim are coated in sage green linseed oil paint from Sweden, chosen for both its rich colour and chemical-free ingredients.

Settling on a layout for the 484-sq.-ft. cabin proved tough, especially when it came to the kitchen. The couple used wood offcuts to create mock-ups once the frame was built to test not only how the space felt, but how it worked. "We didn't have six inches to spare," says Peter. "It was so relentless that if you moved one thing, everything else shifted."

In terms of the accessories and the finishes, "turn-of-the-century" was the look they hoped to achieve, thus the solid brass faucets and switch plate covers throughout—many of which were sourced at a ship recycling facility. Fun vintage touches, such as a "Please Help Smokey Prevent Forest Fires" sign and a functional cassette player, add personality to the small but airy space.

Peter and Paula love to spend a spontaneous night up in the treetops when the forecast calls for storms. "The Tower in the sunshine is amazing. But on a rainy, blustery day, it's spectacular," says Peter. "It feels really special to watch the weather come in."

Writer and editor Beth Hitchcock lives in Nova Scotia. She also wrote "Some Colour from Down Under" in our August '23 issue.

DRONE PHOTO, MIRROR IMAGE MEDIA

Gull Lake Park, Muskoka

TALL PINES

MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL

FRI, JULY 19

JULY TALK

Dan Mangan Texas King JIN the Band
The Vaniers Chloë Doucet

SAT, JULY 20

CITY AND COLOUR (SOLO)

JJ Wilde Spencer Burton Boston Levi
Deanna Petcoff The Sarandons
Ila Barker Tiny Horse

LIVE BANDS LIVE PAINTING FOOD TRUCKS VENDOR VILLAGE
BEACH SWIMMING CANOEING KIDS PLAY ZONE 12 & UNDER FREE!

1-Day & 2-Day Passes Available
www.TallPinesFestival.com

GET 20% OFF PASSES!

USE PROMO CODE: COTTAGELIFE20

Mr. Webster's Wonder Emporium

It's ramshackle, upcycled, and made of barely anything new, but there's nothing accidental about this cottager's cabin

BY JIM MOODIE

PHOTOGRAPHY DANIEL EHRENWORTH

Just off the kitchen is an exterior dishwashing station (above). Paul found the coach house lamps in a Toronto dumpster; they're powered by a solar panel on the roof.

A VISIT TO Crystal Palace begins with a paddle. Or, as the case may be, a brush with shoreline authorities. "Area patrolled by Black Lab Security Co.," warns the sign affixed to a red pine at the boat launch. I'm admiring this bright metal placard, complete with a canine silhouette, when I realize my own stocky shadow has snuck off. Great. We haven't yet slid our canoe into Ragged Lake, a secret-feeling spot in the Shield country south of Bancroft, Ont., and already we are making waves.

I find the trespasser on the deck of a nearby cottage, pestering the owner. "Not a problem," he insists. My dog proceeds to sniff around the base of his barbecue, licking a few planks. Peering at us through a screen door, meanwhile, is the very beast we are supposed to fear—for her surveillance skills, perhaps even her shakedown abilities—although, of course, she's not too fierce. We get off with more of a lick on the palm than a slap on the wrist and resume our short portage to the dock.

The lake, as seen on a map, is itself shaped like a dog, possibly a cougar. Let's call it a wolf—a wolf running full-tilt, downhill, mouth ajar. We are launching from a hackle on its neck. Crystal Palace, as neighbours have playfully dubbed our destination, would be at the tip of a forepaw—on a small bay that tapers like an arrowhead. Owner Paul Webster has sent me a map with arrows drawn on by hand, along with helpful reference points, such as "big island" and "big house." His own place is described thus: "two docks, cottage not visible from lake."

Paul is relaxing in a weather-beaten wooden chair on one of those docks—neither of them big—as I approach. He's a well-travelled journalist in his late 50s, with a kid in university, but he still has a boyish energy of his own. He is clad in baggy swim trunks, the kind of striped dress shirt favoured by Guided by Voices frontman Bob Pollard (another ageless wonder), and a corduroy ball cap with a smiley face on it. "Dollarama find," he says, proudly. Tethered to the second dock is a beat-up Grumman canoe, the one Paul paddled in here a few days earlier, now loaded with some stuff to paddle out. I can't help but notice there's a smiley face on that, too, applied by hand.

The canoe-cottager is also a painter, and he sees a connection between his brush and paddle strokes. "I'm not a commercial artist, more of a Sunday hobbyist, but it's a really nice way to appreciate things—to really slow it all down and just stare at it," he says. "And, of course, canoeing in really slows it down too, because if you drive in, the landscape just flashes by. But with painting, and canoeing, there's a pretty big Zen factor."

Paul was living downtown Toronto some two dozen years ago when he got the itch to acquire a piece of wilderness. He started looking in the Bancroft area on the recommendation of a friend. "I went to a real estate agent in Coe Hill and asked, 'What have you got under $15,000?'" he recalls. Soon enough, he discovered 20 boat-access acres on Ragged Lake that were available for $12,000. He and his girlfriend of the time, who became his wife, checked out the property and promptly jumped on it, wild as it was. "There was nothing here—just forest," he says. "The first night, we put up a tent, lit a fire, had dinner, drank a bottle of wine. Then we couldn't find the bloody tent, because the bush was so thick, and we'd forgotten to bring flashlights."

The property remains densely treed. A "turbo-charged beaver," as Paul describes the animal, has taken out a few cedars in recent years, but there's still plenty of greenery to hide what's now the main cottage building and especially its predecessor, which was finished in 1999. Paul leads me along a narrow path, up a hill. "For whatever reason, I decided to build it way back here," he says. "I was told you have to build a hundred feet back from the lake, but I didn't really understand the land all that well and chose this place kind of randomly." It's certainly a secluded spot, about twice as far inland as required by law; you'd more readily expect to find a poaching blind or a moonshining still at the end of the trail. But that just adds to the fairy tale quality of the tiny abode (fashioned long before the term "tiny abode" became a hashtag) that awaits you.

Not much bigger than your typical garden shed, but tall enough to accommodate a small loft, Paul's first cabin is almost entirely composed of antique windows, along with a few doors, one of which is lain sideways as a wall panel. The exterior is painted a mellow yellow, and the overall feel is of a place to incubate plants or turn pots. "Freak show hippy cabin," would be Paul's description, although that doesn't really capture the craftsmanship and charm of the dwelling, in which found materials are repurposed into something truly unique. "It was an experiment, made with love," he says. ››

"When you're a long way from anywhere, it's good to have an enormous, very eclectic spice cabinet," says Paul, of the kitchen. He and his daughter, Rosa, love to cook: "We have cook-offs; things can get pretty intense." They store ingredients in jars they've collected from all over the world, including from Russia, China, Latin America, Africa, and Europe.


EATONS
GROCERY BOX

Paul lived in Russia for about five years, hence the collection of Russian memorabilia throughout the cottage, including this Soviet-style orchestra concert poster (far right). The wall is constructed from a large double door that was once a sliding partition in an old Annex mansion. The ceiling is made from pine boards from the mill in nearby Bancroft, Ont.

For Paul, the DIY instinct goes deep. As a 12-year-old, growing up in Toronto and in Victoria, B.C., he built his own boat—not a model, one he could actually row on the water. He also appreciates quality architecture and feels compelled to salvage any stuff that would otherwise go to waste. "I'm constantly turning over in my mind, How could I refashion this or reuse that?" he says. "I found that quirky piece of wood—what am I going to do with it?" When it came to creating the first cabin at Ragged Lake, he had already amassed a pile of potential components in the backyard of his Hogtown home. "I was living in the Annex, and there had been all these houses getting torn down and modernized, ripped apart," he says. "I always thought it was sad to see all these old windows, hardwood staircases, all this beautiful panelling and detailing, getting gutted, so I started to collect it, beginning in 1992, from demolition sites."

Bringing the material to the property took some effort and ingenuity, given there was only a self-propelled craft for transport. "I've never had a power boat here," Paul says. "But you can get a lot in a Grumman. You can get a door in there. Or sometimes we would borrow one of the aluminum fishing boats at the landing and tow it behind the canoe. It takes a while to come in with a loaded scow behind you, but it's no big deal. Just don't do it into the wind." Paul did all the work with hand tools, as the property had no power, and still doesn't, although he gradually introduced solar panels, and a couple of years ago, he finally got a generator. He doesn't use it much, but admits "it's awfully nice to have a radial arm saw" for ongoing projects. "I'm a lot older than I was."

Paul's daughter, Rosa, was born in 2001, which got him thinking about more space to accommodate family and friends. Rather than expand the existing cabin, he opted to build a duplicate closer to the lake, yet still at a remove that would meet code requirements. Structurally and aesthetically, it was much like the first: barely 100 sq. ft., cobbled together from curbside and dumpster finds, and mostly walled with antique glass. Hence the Crystal Palace tag, and the occasional friendly tease. "We get comments like, 'Wow, you must go through a lot of Windex,'" says Paul. ››

A third cabin, adjacent to number two, followed in 2007. This one was equally compact but more conventional, in that its windows were fewer and newer, even double-paned to retain heat. "I kind of moved away from the quirkier stuff once we had a kid," he says. "And I ended up getting divorced, so the cottage played an important role in my staying present in her life. Her mom got the house in Toronto, so I was like, 'This is the house that you and I share.' I built this cabin around the idea that, 'This place is yours.'"

About twenty years ago, during a period spent in Europe, Paul had an epiphany about his next architectural move. "I got the idea from Salvador Dali's house in Spain," he says. "He had all these fishermen's huts that he connected together into a spacious house." The first Ragged Lake cabin, being so far inland, would have to remain as a standalone structure, for use as a bunkie or storage, but the other two, set about five metres apart, could be readily joined. Well, it did take some work, but friends pitched in. Pines were cut on the property, their bark peeled in spring, for use as beams. Roughsawn lumber was paddled and towed over. Within a year, the two tiny abodes had been bridged into a single bigger one, and the whole exterior was painted in forest green, to blend with the surroundings. "It's the other end of the spectrum from the multi-million-dollar Muskoka showplace, but it's one of the best things I've ever done in my life," says Paul. "It's kind of a dream, right?"

The expanded cottage is still smaller than most, and lacks most mod-cons, including plumbing. It's got a kitchen for cooking but all the washing-up happens outside, with lake water heated on a propane burner and dishes scrubbed in an outdoor sink. There's a fire pit that serves as another culinary/hospitality area, ringed with counters topped in marble and granite, all castoffs from urban home renos. The bathroom is an outhouse, but far nicer than your average kybo, featuring stained glass and other decorative touches, including antique lanterns. Paul says this helped his daughter and her friends get over the ick factor when they were younger.

Rosa, now 22, has become more involved in the Ragged Lake experiment over the past decade, contributing paintings of her own to the cottage walls, alongside her dad's and other works of art and decor that they both agree on. "This summer, she came up with her boyfriend, and that's the first time she ever came up without me," says Paul. "So there's a nice transition happening where she's taking ownership of it, and she seems to love the place."

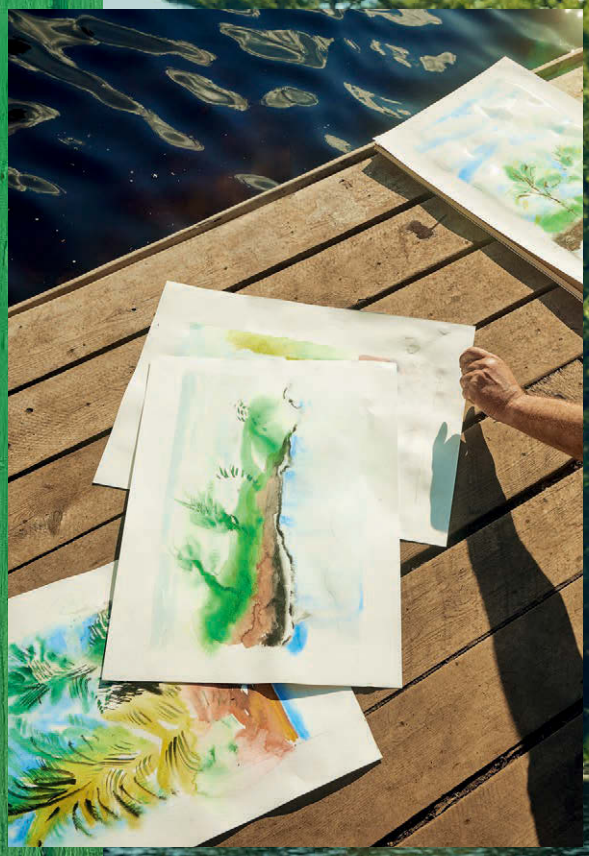
Others do too. You can see why. For all its ramshackle, recycled elements, Crystal Palace is an art piece in itself. Even the unused porch pillars and newel posts that lean against the cottage feel artfully placed. Door knockers shaped like lions' heads are attached to a wall, while an oval plate from an American Beauty woodstove is screwed to a door. Duck decoys occupy a shelf, with a carved turtle between them. The rafters are jammed with wooden skis and hockey sticks, along with countless other retro treasures found at yard sales or fished from garbage bins. Flagstones from the old Windsor Arms Hotel in Yorkville form an outdoor staircase and bricks brought over by canoe are now sunken in the earth, making for medieval-feeling footpaths.

Paul is a master at giving things a second life—he built this bench out of discarded floorboards—but he's good at hanging on to things too: his father gifted this plaid jacket to his grandfather, who eventually gave it to Paul.

In *The Glass Castle*, memoirist Jeanette Walls describes a rootless and chaotic upbringing, with the title referring to a solar-powered dream home that her quixotic (and probably bipolar) dad talks about building but never does. Paul's parents, both university profs, provided a more stable existence, but they were also idealistic, in their way, and thrifty. "My parents were garbage-pickers," says Paul. "I hardly grew up in poverty—we were middle-class people—but their parents lived through the Depression, particularly on my mother's side, so they had that ethos of waste not, want not, and don't buy it if you can get it from the garbage." ››


MERMAID CAFE
6250 Km


LABYRINTHS
JORGE LUIS BORGES
NDP1066
FITZGERALD
THE GREAT GATSBY
Richard Brautigan
TOLSTOY: CHILDHOOD, BOYHOOD, YOUTH
THE WEST
ISLAND HOUSE BOOKS
DICTIONARY
OXFORD



Sometimes, when he's working with watercolours, Paul will dunk his whole paper into the lake and then paint on the wet sheet, for effect. Watercolours are one of his preferred materials because "they're super portable," he says. Painting is an activity he and his daughter, Rosa, often do together. "This place has been an art lab for her since she was a kid," says Paul.

The family was not flush (or inclined) enough to send their kids to private camps, but Paul did attend a "1970s nature camp" in the Haliburton area and later worked as a tree-planter. In each case, he slept in a tent, and got used to the idea of rudimentary living amid nature. "I would go to other people's cottages, with expensive boats and posh houses, where you can't get any sand in the boathouse even," he says. "I've always veered toward the rustic side. And I do kind of get off on being a little exposed to the elements. There's a certain bracing quality of, like, I'm going to have to canoe out of here and there's a gale coming in—am I going to get out? Probably, but it can be touch and go."

A couple of years ago, Paul decided to list his place on Hipcamp, a kind of Airbnb for folks who don't mind roughing it a bit, as a way to help pay his daughter's tuition. The uptake has been considerable, the reviews flattering. One guest described his setup as "eclectic." All of this came as a bit of a surprise to the dumpster-diving cottager, but also as an affirmation.

"I assumed people wouldn't be interested," he says. "But it turned out to be validation, to some degree, of the artsy, expressive part of this place. People are saying, 'I love what you did,' and that has a special feel, because it's not a place that I just bought. I built it mostly by hand; it's tied into my identity. When people say they like it, it's like, Hey, they like my art." He pauses for a moment, then adds: "It's a small kind of pleasure that it gives other people pleasure too."

There might be another project at Ragged Lake before Paul hangs up his hammer or retires his radial arm. It may not be strictly necessary, but being the dreamer he is, he can't help but consider one more way to expand Crystal Palace, while also involving his daughter and further proving—unlike the dad in *The Glass Castle*—that some wild schemes can come true.

"The work is mostly done, but I might build a little bunkie along the shore somewhere," he muses. "Rosa thinks it would be a good idea, and I might do it with her." Should the two roll up their sleeves together, "I have lots of pillars and old antique doors and stuff stashed under the cabin."

Jim Moodie winters in Sudbury, Ont., and summers on Panache Lake. He wrote about his favourite paddle on p. 76.

Bugs

You

can't

see

Insects and other tiny creatures play a huge role in the cottage-country ecosystem.

It's high time that we notice their work

BY JACKIE DAVIS

ILLUSTRATION VICTOR WONG

SPENDING TIME AT the cottage involves spending time with creepy-crawlies, whether you love them or you hate them. Dock spiders and mosquitoes and water striders and bees…it's a never-ending list. And those are only the ones that you actually see on a regular basis. Insects alone make up about 80 per cent of the world's species, and they all play a huge role in the ecosystem. "Ants are often underappreciated for all that they do," says Bob Anderson, an entomologist at the Canadian Museum of Nature and a longtime *CL* source for all things buggy. "Tiny parasitoid wasps that people will never notice keep insect populations in check. Fly maggots, meanwhile, aid in decomposition of animal and plant material." And some of the most miniscule of our cottage-country beasts—including minute spiders and almost-invisible zooplankton—are the most crucial. It was a big job, but we managed to whittle the list down to seven small VICs (Very Important Creatures) that we wanted to highlight. Sorry, maggots. You didn't make the cut. ››

MIDGES

What *are* midges? The better question might actually be, "What *aren't* midges?" Because, turns out, midges are lots of flying bugs. "The term 'midge' can refer to blackflies, sand flies, and numerous other small flies," says Antonia Guidotti, a collection technician in the Department of Natural History at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. "Common names are not always helpful." Midges in the family *Chironomidae* are the ones that emerge in large numbers in the spring. They're vital to a lake's ecosystem (see "The Lake Food Chain," p. 68). Their offspring, larvae tinier than a grain of rice, live at the bottom of deep lakes where they're food for fish or other invertebrates.

NOW YOU SEE ME You'll notice midges when they swarm in a cloud—the swarms can grow to up to 50 million bugs—either at the surface of a lake or in "mating swarms." These mating swarms can appear throughout the summer, depending on the species. Sometimes they form around people, using humans "as a marker or a reference point," says Guidotti. They're made up of males hoping to attract the ladies by (apparently) using you as a wingman. It's unnerving, but they have no interest in your flesh. (The biting midges, those "no-see-ums" that can fly through screened windows and doors, belong to a different family of midges.) Many species of common, non-biting midges don't eat anything at all as adults. Their larvae are the piggy ones, scarfing down algae, decaying organic matter, and, in some cases, larvae of other bugs. Rude! Other species of midges are pollinators in the adult phase—it only lasts for a few days—and they eat flower nectar.

NOW YOU DON'T
Adults and larvae can be as small as 1 mm.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY COOL
A midge can flap its wings at a speed of up to 63,000 beats per minute.

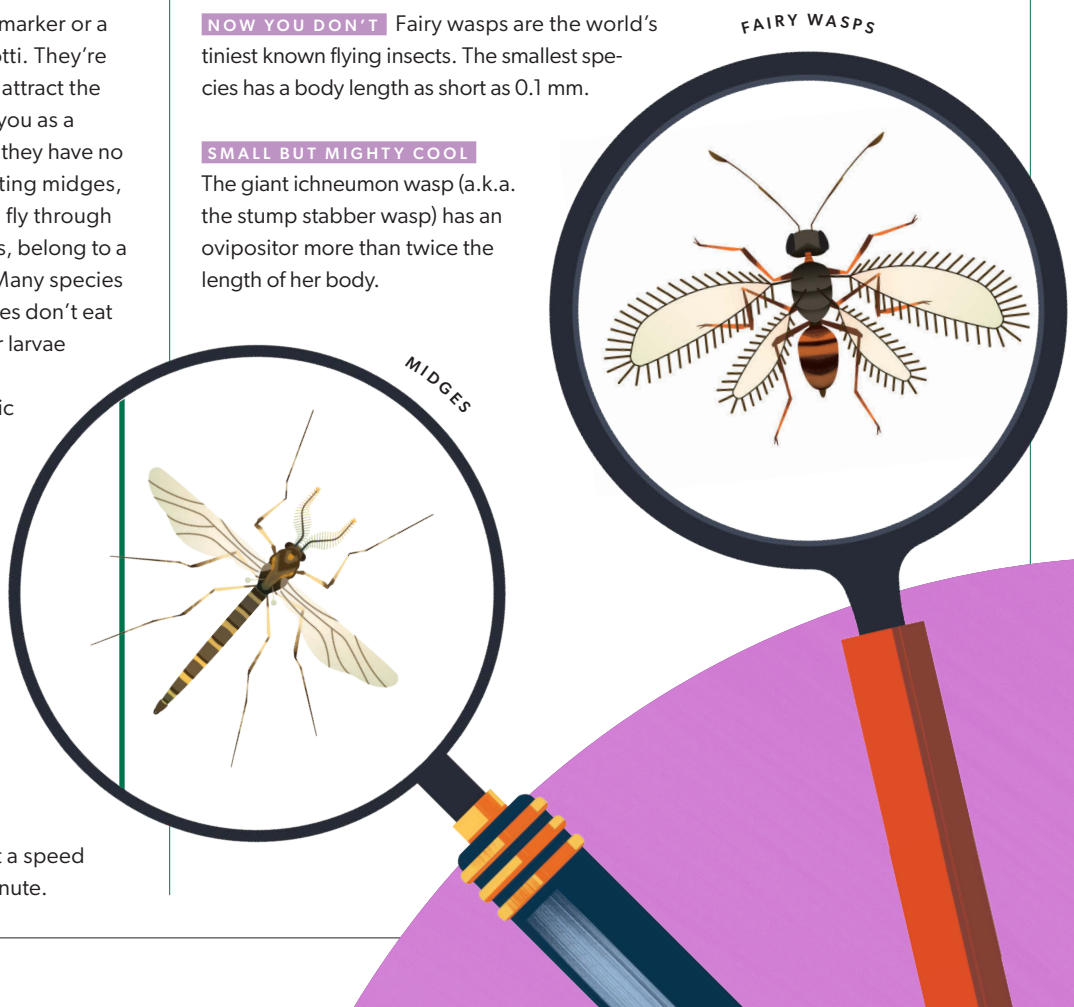
FAIRY WASPS

For a creature with such an adorable name, these parasitoid wasps are terrifying. Fairy wasps and their kin have offspring that develop on or inside a host insect, feeding on its innards until they're mature and ready to get on with their lives. They're like the chest-busting creatures in *Alien*. Except very tiny, and with wings. When they're not giving you nightmares, parasitoid wasps are doing good work: "They're very important in the biocontrol of some plant pests," says Guidotti. Different wasps use different hosts at various life stages. But it's always the females doing the nasty deed with their long, egg-laying ovipositors, using them like a needle delivering an injection. "Fairy wasps will lay their eggs in the eggs of other insects; other parasitoid wasps use larvae or caterpillars, pupae, or adults as hosts," says Guidotti. One species lays its eggs on spiders. "The spider's *alive* while it's being eaten." Keep in mind that parasitoid doesn't mean the same as parasite. "A parasitoid feeds on another organism and eventually kills it. "Humans are targeted by parasites, but not by any parasitoids, says Guidotti. "As far as I know." (Wait. You mean…you don't know for sure?)

NOW YOU SEE ME You probably won't. "Picture the period at the end of a sentence," says Guidotti. Other parasitoid wasps are much larger, as big as a AAA battery. You likely have seen them, because they're so numerous. But you might not recognize them as wasps—they come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. "Parasitoid wasps might be one of the most diverse insect groups on the planet," says Guidotti. "They're right up there with beetles." (Beetles make up at least a third of earth's insects.)

NOW YOU DON'T Fairy wasps are the world's tiniest known flying insects. The smallest species has a body length as short as 0.1 mm.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY COOL
The giant ichneumon wasp (a.k.a. the stump stabber wasp) has an ovipositor more than twice the length of her body.



WATER FLEAS

"People can live on a lake for decades and never understand that there's a whole secret world down there under the water, with all these stories and subplots," says Paul Frost, a biology professor at Trent University in Peterborough, Ont., who studies freshwater ecology. And water fleas, a.k.a. *Daphnia*, are major characters in that ever-changing environment. Because they eat algae and excrete nutrients—nitrogen and phosphorus—the "clearwater phase" of a lake (when a lake is at its clearest, usually around the first of July) often corresponds to a peak in *Daphnia* numbers. *Daphnia* and other zooplankton can increase rapidly, and then crash rapidly, within the span of a few weeks or even days, in response to changes in the ecosystem and the food web.

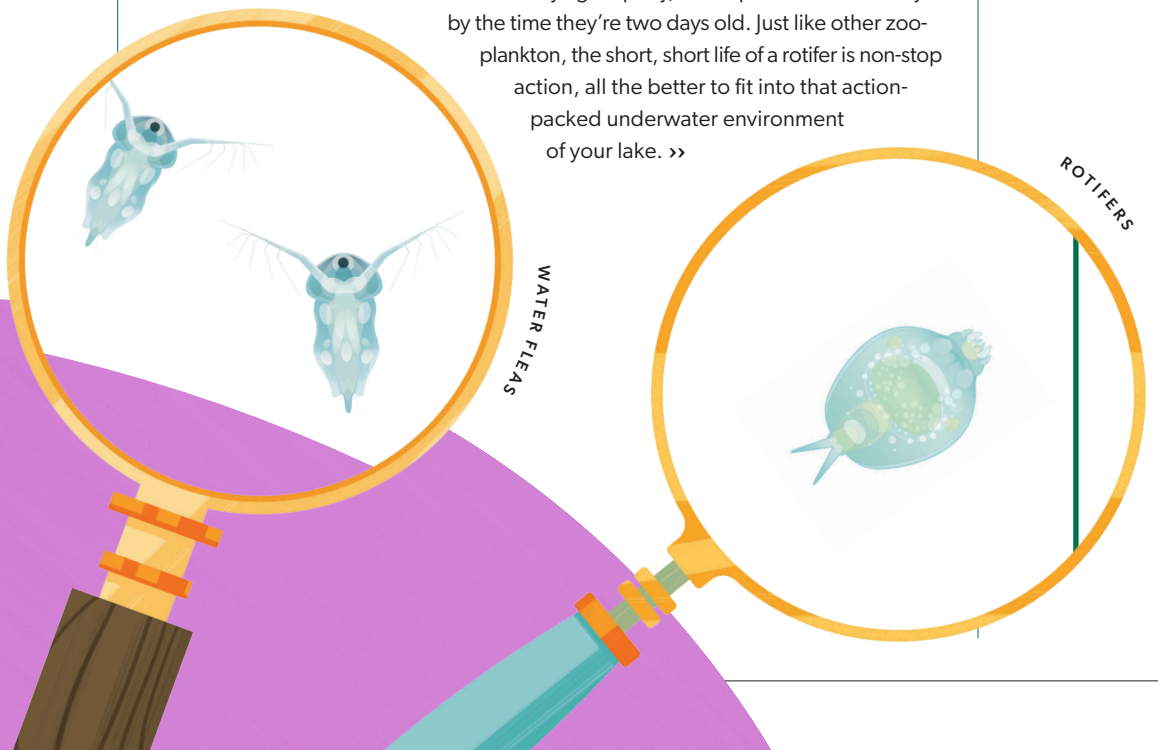
NOW YOU SEE ME Water fleas are, well, the size of a flea (they also move like fleas, in a jumpy, jerky motion). They're definitely visible to the naked eye, but you wouldn't normally see them because they spend daytime at the bottom of the lake, hiding from predators—fly larvae and minnows—and stuffing their faces. "They're prolific grazers," says Frost. Some predatory species also eat other zooplankton, such as rotifers (below).

NOW YOU DON'T They range from 0.2 mm to 5 mm.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY COOL Because *Daphnia* are transparent, experts can study their insides through a microscope. Scientists can tell, for example, if a female has a clutch of eggs inside her. Amazing. But kind of creepy.

ROTIFERS

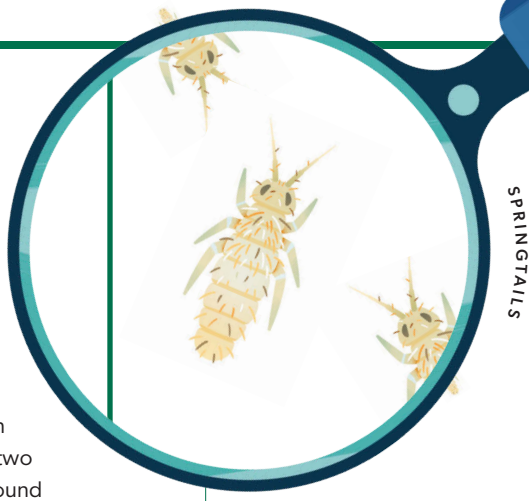
Roti-what? These wee, multicellular creatures are among the smallest animals in the world—and to think that you only just now learned that they exist! But in every litre of lake water, there are probably hundreds to several thousand of them, says Frost. "So if you're drinking the unfiltered water, you're probably drinking some of them." They age rapidly, and reproduce—asexually—by the time they're two days old. Just like other zooplankton, the short, short life of a rotifer is non-stop action, all the better to fit into that action-packed underwater environment of your lake. ››



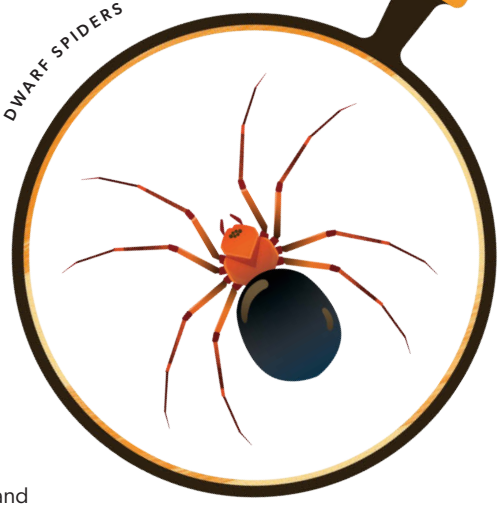
itty-bitty-o'-meter

*

GRAB YOUR READERS, THESE DOTS ARE TO SCALE!



SPRINGTAILS



DWARF SPIDERS

NOW YOU SEE ME Maybe. "They look like dots in the water," says Frost. As with water fleas, they're transparent. Rotifers are prey for almost anything else that's alive in the lake. They move slowly through the water. As they swim, two rotating rings of fibres around their open mouths pull water through their bodies. This allows the "wheel animals" to feed, by filtering out and ingesting delicious protozoa and other food sources.

NOW YOU DON'T Rotifers can be as small as 1/10 of a mm long.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY COOL A rotifer can filter 1,000 times its own volume of water per hour.

SPRINGTAILS

Like other tiny creatures, springtails are everywhere, but you'll rarely notice them. They have six legs, and they look a little like very small ants, but they're actually insect cousins. "They're part of a subphylum called Hexapoda," says Guidotti. "So they're on a branch *related* to insects." Springtails eat a wide variety of food, depending on the species and the soil where they live, but some are detrivores—they consume decaying organic matter and help break it down.

NOW YOU SEE ME On mild winter days, you might notice certain species of springtails, called snow fleas. They like to breed in shallow pools of meltwater, and their speck-like dark bodies stand out against a snowy background. But springtails don't need a mild day to be happy. They can take the cold. Their bodies produce a natural antifreeze that allows them to survive Antarctic-level temperatures. As winter turns to spring—and the ground gets too wet—springtails are on the move, travelling, sometimes in a large group, to drier leaf litter. They can walk, sure, but they can also propel themselves, thanks to a neat trick: they have a forked tail that they can tuck under their bodies to launch themselves forward. (Spring. Tail.)

NOW YOU DON'T They can range from 0.25 mm to 6 mm.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY COOL A springtail can jump up to 10 cm; if one were the size of a human, it could probably leap tall buildings in a single bound. It couldn't, however, fly. No wings. Or cape.

DWARF SPIDERS (AND THEIR TINY RELATIVES)

"There are close to 1,700 known spider species in Canada and, of these, only a small proportion are usually noticed by folks," says Robb Bennett, a spider biologist with the Royal BC Museum in Victoria. One of the teeny-tiniest among all

THE LAKE FOOD CHAIN

FISH-EATING BIRD

BIG FISH

those arachnids, dwarf spiders (also called money spiders), "occur in untold millions down in the litter and roots over a few hectares of forest." But you'll rarely encounter one. "They're cryptic." Another related group of micro-spiders are those in the sheetweb family, says Bennett. They're slightly larger; a couple of well-known species are the filmy dome spider and the bowl-and-doily spider. (Who names these things?) Most of the spiders you pay attention to—at least, at the cottage—are the "in-your-face varieties," says Bennett. He means you, dock spider.

NOW YOU SEE ME Well, you can certainly see the *evidence* of tiny spiders. Sheetweb spiders often build their webs—they're usually either flat and sheet-like, or dome-shaped—in visible locations; for example, among shrubbery. And, 20 years ago, "a famous dwarf spider event" occurred near McBride, B.C., says Bennett. "A zillion or two of them decided to vacate a farmer's hay field over the space of a few fall days, leaving the field and surrounding fencing festooned with sheets of silk. It was quite the sight." And now that farmer has arachnophobia.

NOW YOU DON'T Dwarf spiders are about 2 mm long; the smallest species of sheetweb spiders measure less than 1 cm.

SMALL BUT MIGHTY COOL Thousands of new species of spiders are discovered every year. And now you have arachnophobia.

FIREFLIES

You're familiar with fireflies. Because every cottager loves those guys! But you may not be aware that they're a) beetles and b) hardcore carnivores at birth. Firefly larvae inject poison into their prey: snails, worms, slugs, or other larvae. This turns the victim's innards into mush, which the larvae (a.k.a. glowworms) slurp out. Like a lot of adult insects, many firefly species don't eat in that life stage. But some—the females, at least—lure, then eat other fireflies, while others feed on pollen and nectar, acting as pollinators. Unlike bees and butterflies, they do this important work during the night shift. Fireflies are nocturnal.

NOW YOU SEE ME Fireflies spend most of their days in leaf litter, moist soil, or hanging out on low vegetation, says Bob Anderson. When darkness falls, they take to the skies, flashing their lights—the colour and flash pattern varies by species—to attract or respond to mates. There's also evidence that fireflies glow to deter predators. Seems counterintuitive (if you want to hide in the dark, don't turn on a flashlight), but research suggests that, as with brightly coloured butterflies, the attention-grabbing looks keep predators at bay. And even if they do get caught, fireflies taste nasty. A bird that eats one will probably avoid it in the future. Scientists may understand the why of a firefly's glow, but the how still isn't entirely understood. What they do know? The bioluminescent energy that the beetles generate comes from a reaction within the light-producing organs in their lower abdomens, involving oxygen, a chemical called luciferin, and an enzyme called luciferase.

NOW YOU DON'T Adults, on average, are 0.5 to 2 cm. Which, in the tiny bug microverse, is actually ginormous. (See "Itty-Bitty-O'-Meter," p. 67.)

SMALL BUT MIGHTY COOL Firefly larvae already glow from within their eggs.

Jackie Davis is a senior editor at Cottage Life. *She writes the magazine's regular Cottage Q&A column. In this issue, that column also features her favourite spider expert, Robb Bennett.* *See p. 33.*

In praise of small pleasures

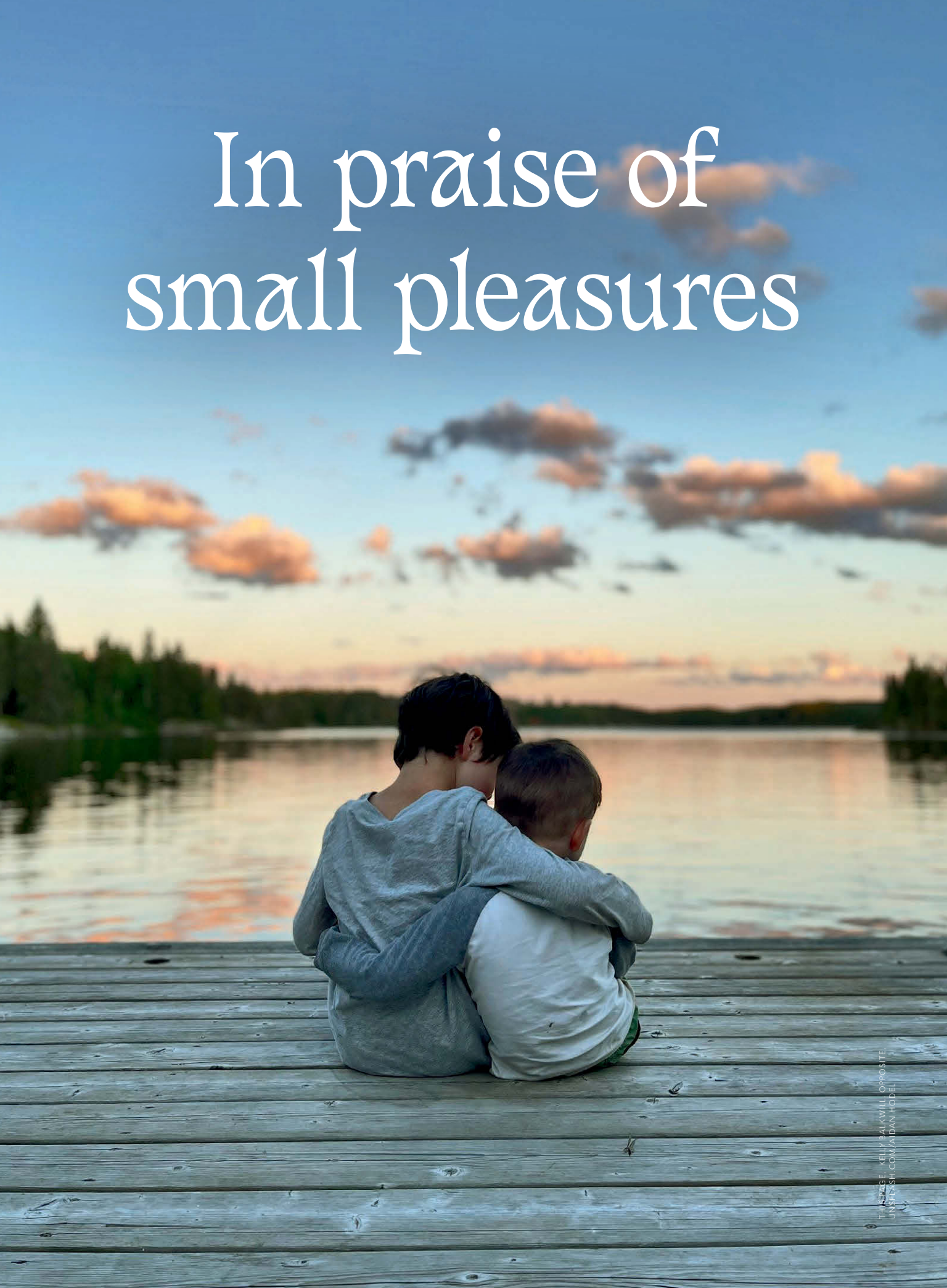
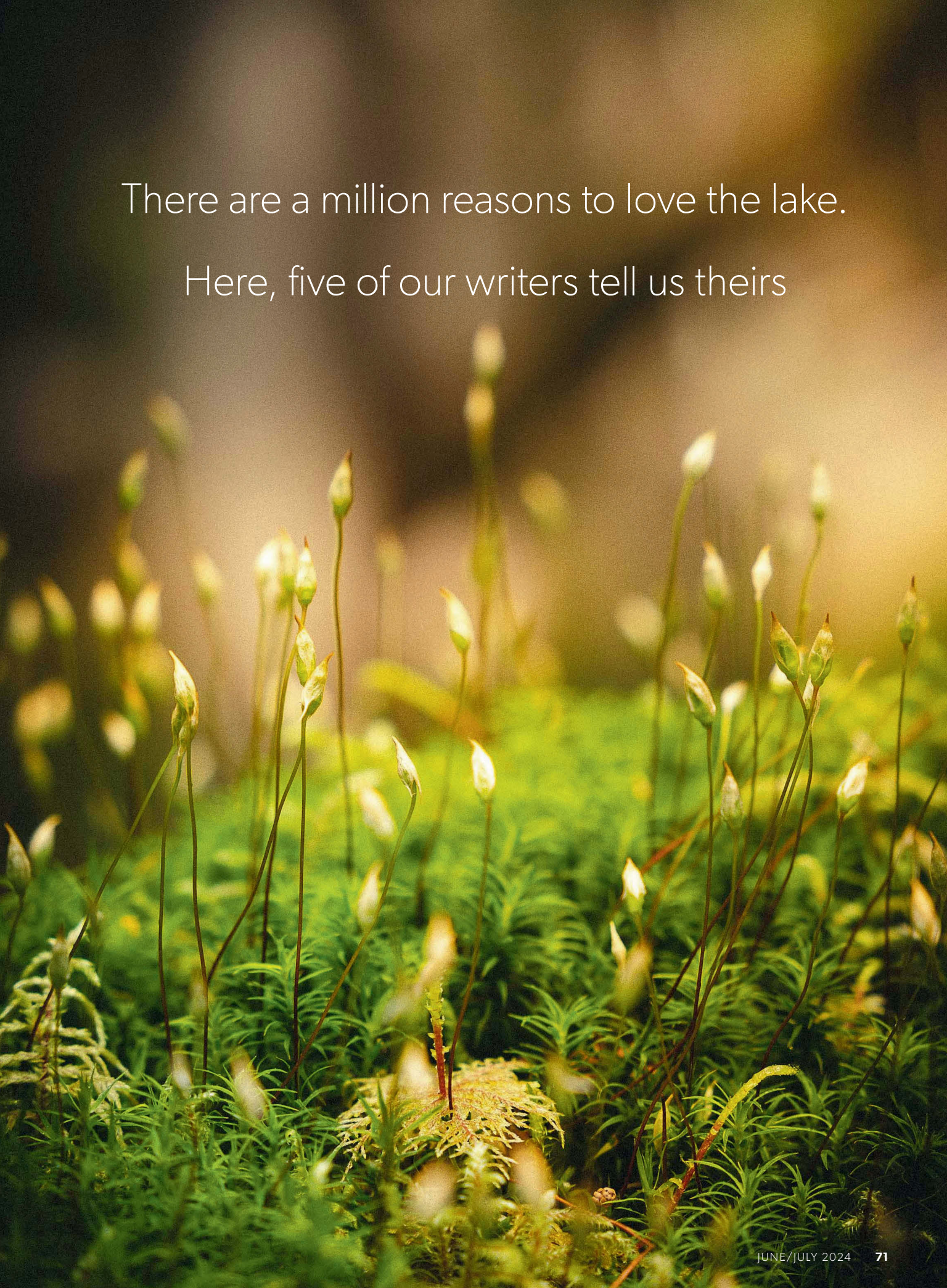


IMAGE: KELLY BALKWILL OPPOSITE, UNSPLASH.COM/AIDAN HODEL



There are a million reasons to love the lake.

Here, five of our writers tell us theirs

reflecting on the back deck—and the quiet whisper of memories

BY PENNY CALDWELL

FORTY-TWO YEARS ago, I landed on the island as a visitor and passed the pre-spousal cottage test. That meant simply to survive a weekend off-grid and show boundless enthusiasm.

Mary and Jack, matriarch and patriarch, did their own thing. And, over the years, they showed me how to do the cottage thing, especially Mary, who was the beating heart of the cottage. When they weren't down on the dock, my in-laws preferred the back deck. They got up early and drank coffee from bone China cups (after the war, Jack refused to drink from a mug). They folded their lean bodies into creaky metal chairs that faced toward the forest. They watched the morning sun start its grand arc toward the cottage's favoured front, where it arrived in time for tea (for them) and cocktails (for us and our friends).

The back deck is not the most desired spot at the cottage. For one thing, it faces east, away from the water into woods that brim and buzz with mosquitoes (but also iridescent dragonflies and sweet wild blueberries). A wood-frame wall as thin as a cereal box separates the deck from the bathroom whose window looks onto the coffee-drinkers. Discretion goes out the window when occupants slam the ancient wood sash closed in an attempt at privacy.

Most visitors prefer the cottage's west, or lake side. A generous screened porch settled high above the water takes in the drama of the Bay. Loons wail, powerboats rumble up the channel, and raging sunsets blaze like dragon's breath across the sky.

On the back deck, Jack liked to supervise while Mary worked away with a paintbrush or served him tuna and chopped-pickle sandwiches for lunch. Next to the porch is an old shed, open on two sides, where we store brooms, rakes, garbage bins, and firewood. Mary would sweep the steps and feed peanuts to a chipmunk as brave as Heracles when he killed the snakes. She wrote "Chippie" on the lid of a large, green tin and kept the nuts in the pantry, a tall cupboard with shelves and a single light bulb with a chain you pull to turn on. We once turned on the light to discover a very real, very large, non-mythical fox-snake on the floor, but then decided he was after mice, not nuts, and so we let him stay.

Mary and Jack worried about the snakes, particularly massasauga rattlers, which we saw sometimes. On the back deck, we saw other creatures too, like the brown-and-grey grouse hen who hustled her babies to safety through the underbrush. Once, our buddy Jim went into the dark shed to get logs for the woodstove. My husband heard him yell and rushed after him, only to collide with Jim as he scrambled back out. The bear he had encountered face-to-face took off through the shed's open back and lumbered off into the woods. Mary faithfully recorded these escapades in the guest book, a cottage log that tracked us through the years and kept our stories honest.

When we got a dog, the back deck was where we bathed our reluctant puppy. Sometimes, he slipped out of our soapy grip to roll happily in the dirt. The first time, Mary and Jack had a good laugh, until the dog heaved himself up, gave a mighty shake, and showered mud, moss, and pine needles upon all within range.

Eventually, the back deck became a staging area for the activities of our human babies. We bathed the toddlers in a tin wash tub, and Mary was lifeguard by their wading pool until they were old enough to graduate to the deep, cold water at the front of the cottage.

Grown-up now, our girls keep their own busy offspring corralled in the front screened porch, embraced by the warm sun and the view. But I still like to sit out back, where the trees, a few decades taller, throw a cool, dappled shadow. It's peaceful, but it's not entirely quiet. There is a whisper when the west wind blows over the roof and hits the highest branches. The leaves flip and flutter, and I hear their soft chatter in a way that seems near impossible at home under the thrum of cars and shriek of sirens that define life in the city.

That leafy serenade is magic, like toys that come alive after the store closes. It conjures the voices of the people we miss. We said goodbye to Jack in 1997, and Mary is nearly 102. She can't come to the island anymore, but though she's blind, she seems to see things we cannot. When I am alone on the porch, I wonder if she's there with me, if that is Mary's soft voice, a song on the wind.

Penny Caldwell is the former editor of Cottage Life. *The back deck is at the Georgian Bay cottage she still visits after 42 years.*

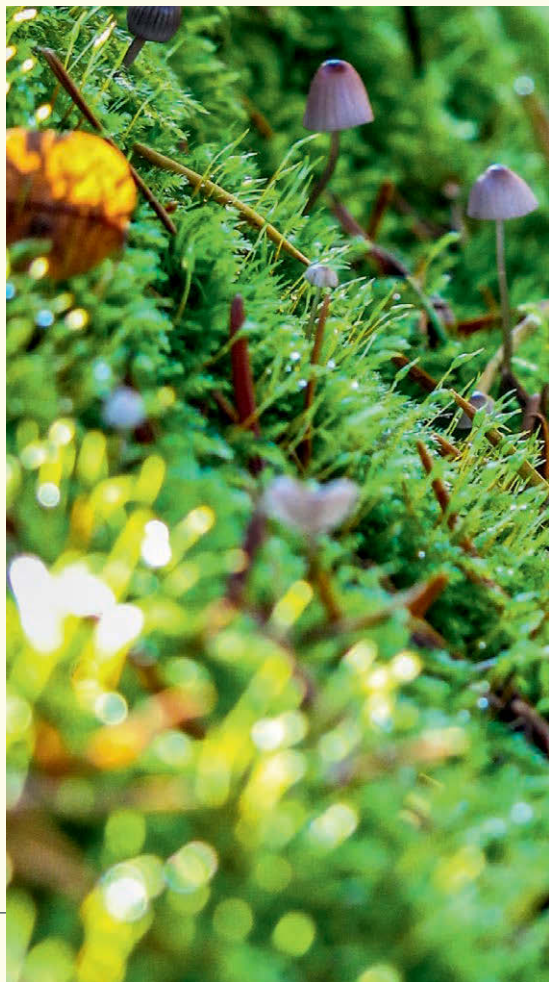
LEFT, RAINA+WILSON. RIGHT, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/SANDIWALMSLEY

inspecting a patch of moss—a gateway to another world

BY ANNIE STOLTIE

WILLOW HUNG AROUND for two months. I would have walked past her, oblivious, but back then my daughter was waist-high, her eyes the same level as the rock wall in front of our farmhouse. My daughter was—and still is—a rescuer of worms and woolly bears, an appreciator of all things slithery and beady-eyed, which is why she was so taken by the spider in a crack in the wall. She named her, and during our daily walks we'd stop and watch Willow hunt in the mouth of a funnel-shaped web, its center a dark hole that led to another world.

I loved being with my kids at that dreamy stage, their feet practically floating above the ground as they were wowed by milkweed tufts, cicada shells, a feather. Every excursion meant bringing home treasure to put in mugs and cereal bowls that lined our windowsills. ››



I still like to sit out on the back deck, where the trees throw a cool, dappled shadow. It's peaceful, but it's not entirely quiet

We live by a river, against a wall of mountain whose ridgeline fills the sky with the kind of vista you see on postcards. Here, the natural world shows itself everywhere. It's a special place to raise a family, but also a pain when it comes to groceries, doctors, and, when the wind blows, electricity. Through the shuffle, years raced past; my son grew taller than me and my daughter preferred time alone in her room to catching crayfish and rambling through the woods. Life got noisier, the kids talked us into cell phones, and we stopped paying attention to neighbours like Willow.

And then, last fall, I spent a month in Florida, where my dad was recovering from emergency surgery. There, my days took on a predictability so unlike my life at home. I rose early, drove my mom to the hospital and back, ate a meal, returned to the hospital, and at dusk walked circles around my parents' apartment complex, a ring of identical buildings surrounded by a moat of sidewalks and parking spaces. The sameness of the scenery did little to distract me from my worry about my father, and those I loved back home, so I'd focus on the geckos, pinkie-sized lizards that launched themselves across the pavement into strips of manicured grass. These daredevils gave me a laugh and brought the weight of my emotions down to size.

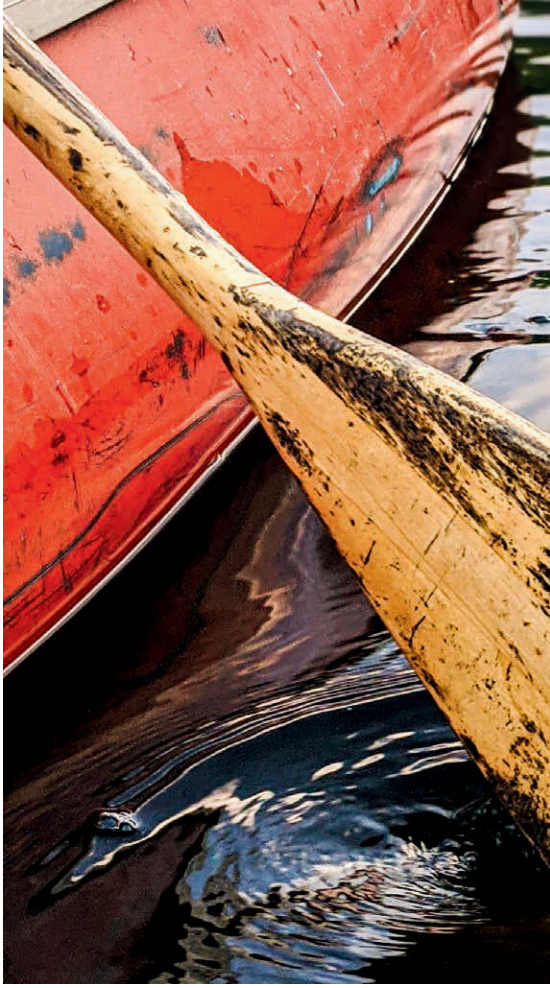
After I returned home, I wandered through a tunnel of trees, leaves crunching beneath my feet. I ventured on and on until a shock of green stopped me. It was a patch of moss clinging to a rotting tree trunk. I patted its surface—soft and spongy, like a swatch of shag carpet. I leaned in for a closer look.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, a botanist, and a professor, says that even a handful of moss "is inhabited by hundreds of tiny animals…herds of grazing mites as bright as parrots, and translucent ivory water bears" that "lumber through the branches. Springtails bounce along like tiny kangaroos." Moss is a diverse landscape, nothing like the uniform blanket it appears to be. Look carefully and you'll see "the frizzled dark tufts of *Dicranum fulvum*" and "satiny sheets of *Plagiothecium*. Haircap moss stands like miniature white pines on the rock tops, and deep carpets of luminous *Hypnum* mimic a bed of delicate ferns." Kimmerer wrote the book on paying attention.

In *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*, she says that looking closely "alone can rival the most powerful magnifying lens." You get lost in another world, abandon your chattering orbit, appreciate interconnected ecosystems, and find beauty and peace.

Willow the spider, sprinting geckos, a patch of moss in the forest—these marvels are everywhere, their dramas perpetually unfolding. Their magic, if you look hard, maybe even get down on your knees, is to shrink the bigness of our spinning world down to size.

Annie Stoltie is the editor-in-chief of Adirondack Life *magazine.*



paddling with a storied blade

—born of a special place

BY JIM MOODIE

I'M NOT A fisherman, but I have netted some dryland doozies in my time as a cottager. One of my favourites is a wooden elephant that would not only fit in the palm of your hand but the paw of your cat. That little sculpture came with my place when I bought it, as did a number of other artifacts. Some of my treasures have been bequeathed by family or bestowed as gifts; others I've found in the forest or thrift stores. My Wolf Lake paddle, which I may prize over anything else, is the only thing I have ever won.

Wolf Lake is not the lake I cottage on. Nobody cottages on Wolf Lake, although you can find the remains of a ranger's

LEFT, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/SANDIWALMSLEY. TOP, MARGARET FLEMING

cabin at one of its campsites. It's a Killarney-esque gem in a canoe-tripping area northeast of Sudbury, Ont., that I started visiting long before I found a cabin to call my own. Just two kilometres long and squeezed by steep quartzite hills, it has a kind of stark, compressed grandeur. It also happens to boast the largest stand of old-growth red pines in the world.

On a hazy day in 2018, my girlfriend, Alyssa, and I hiked up through some of those ancient conifers to a ridge. I'd like to say a wolf materialized from the primeval woods to join us, but the photographic record will show the canine in our company was more of a motley descendant. Mostly Lab, some husky, goes by the name of Joe. As Alyssa and my mutt shared a moment on an outcrop overlooking the lake, I snapped a picture. Two years later, I submitted it to a contest held by groups striving to protect the lake from mining development, and it took top place in the People in Nature category.

The real pinch-me moment came when I learned what I'd collect as a prize. Whereas the other two winners were up for a book and a hoodie, I was to receive a custom-made paddle, crafted by Franco Mariotti, a former Science North biologist and a long-time *CL* source who has been championing park status for Wolf Lake since the 1980s. Yes, I felt blessed. And a bit guilty, since I already have a trove of paddles, two of which were made by my own father. But at the same time—a paddle made by someone else I admire, connecting to a place I cherish? I put my good fortune down to payback for a lifetime of disappointments, particularly around the Toronto Maple Leafs, and said: bring it on.

Functional artwork has always spoken to me, whether it's the bowl my uncle turned from a burl, a guitar I admire more than strum, or a quilt my mother laboured over for hours, piecing scraps into a colourful whole. Franco's paddle fits that category. Meticulously constructed from laminated strips of maple and mahogany (repurposed from a bed frame and bookshelf, respectively), it has a quality that is at once eye-catching and entirely practical. I can hang it in my cottage, amid feathers, bones, and stained glass, but I can also snatch it from the wall and use it to propel myself across the water.

Not long after I got this beauty, Alyssa, Joe, and I headed back to Wolf Lake to christen it. On our second day on the lake, Franco arrived to join us. I knew him a bit already, having consulted him for stories on everything from forest caterpillars to white raccoons; in this case, he was coming to speak on behalf of the Save Wolf Lake coalition, although, for each of us, it was also an excuse to immerse ourselves—and the paddle, of course—in an area we both love. There's no cell service up there, but we had a meet-up plan, a time and a place.

I learned a lot more about Wolf Lake that day, as Franco took us on a tour of the pines, pointing out fire scars on the trunks and spelling out their value, in terms both ecological and archival. "These trees are nature's history books; you just have to learn how to read them," he told us, adding: "Some of these trees would have been here when woodland caribou, eastern elk, and cougars were in this area—animals we would never consider being part of this ecosystem, but they were."

Whether I'm using the paddle or simply gazing at it, this finely wrought object seems to hold something of Wolf Lake in it—its stripes evoking the pollen streaks on rock, or the shafts of light you see shooting through the canopy—as well as the passion of its builder. And I'm reminded of the moment we found Franco at Wolf Lake, rounding a point in our canoe to spot him on shore, atop a boulder. I lift the glossy blade from the water and wave it over my head. A hello, and a salute.

Jim Moodie is a frequent Cottage Life *contributor. He cottages on Panache Lake, Ont., and he also wrote "Mr. Webster's Wonder Emporium" on p. 52 of this issue.*

reveling in unexpected nourishment—

thanks to the trust of a stranger

BY STACEY MAY FOWLES

LESS THAN TWO kilometres from our Prince Edward County, Ont., cottage is an honour system farm stand. Painted a pale blue grey and set about five feet from the quiet, winding county road, the stand isn't particularly fancy, but definitely a near-mythical thing in my mind, wheeled out from time to time from June to October. Seeing its shelves fully stocked is a genuine reason to celebrate, and for me to frantically yell to pull the car over for an unplanned, unwieldy armful of produce.

There's a red metal lock box secured to one of the stand's four posts, ready for the coins and bills I've scrounged up from the car's console. (If I don't have cash on hand, they happily accept e-transfers.) Hand-scrawled signs offer brief descriptions of the day's selection, along with a plea to please return the provided containers. There's no one around to overlook the transaction, save for the occasional cow or goat nearby.

In the years since my family discovered the farm stand, it's become an integral part of our cottage experience, guiding our meals during the bountiful summer and fall months. Though I've never met the person who stocks it with ripe produce, the trust they grant me offers a community connection I know is special.

At the stand, I've lingered over an eggplant, considering pairing it with bread crumbs and grated Parmesan. I've carefully picked out a supply of red, green, and purple peppers, while jalapeños available by the quart have inspired me to embark on lofty (and not altogether successful) plans to create jellies, relishes, or sauces. I've filled a tote bag with as many delicata squash as I can carry, bringing the extras back to the city to share with friends.

One particularly eventful day, I pulled into the farm stand to find a bounty of shishito peppers, peeking out at me from reused boxes in vibrant shades of green, orange, and red. I deposited my dollars and rushed my rare find home to fry them until they were delightfully brown and blistered. I cooked up more than 30 peppers that day, spritzed with lemon and sprinkled with coarse salt. When the lone spicy one ended up on my plate, it felt like an omen of good luck.

My favourite farm stand moment is when I arrive to an abundance of ripe county tomatoes. Warmed by the sun, ready to burst, they are a gift and a gentle warning—best enjoy the summer now, because the end is on its way. The firmer of these tri-coloured beauties go in dog day salads with a bright dressing made from local mustard, while the more bruised and wrinkled I've boiled down into a pasta sauce,

THIS PAGE, LIAM MOGAN. OPPOSITE, MARIS LUBBOCK

decorated with garden-grown basil. Each bite is a connection to the farmer down the road and a reminder of the exchange that prompted the meal.

When the air starts to cool and we are starting, begrudgingly, to give in to the end of summer, the farm stand offers me solace. Blue banana, butternut, and acorn squash are the stars of the harvest, which I'll roast until sticky sweet and drizzle with local maple syrup. My daughter will thoughtfully pick out her Halloween pumpkin from the stand, and I'll dutifully deposit another few dollars into the box. Soon after that, the bay will start to freeze over and the stand will be wheeled away one last time.

Warmed by the sun and ready to burst, the appearance of tomatoes is both a gift and a gentle warning

The convenience and sustenance this local food source provides is obvious, but I've come to see the stand's real benefit in the simplicity it offers. Our cottage days exist apart from the decisions we have to make every day, and, in that spirit, the farmer makes the decisions for me, offering me the relief of cooking based on what's ready to be eaten. The time I spend in the cottage kitchen, with the restraints of dictated ingredients, becomes oddly liberating, with a spontaneity that counteracts the over-planning, over-scheduling, and over-thinking of my "real life" day-to-day.

I'm sure one weekend I'll pull up to our farm stand and finally spot the person as they put out a pile of zucchinis or a half-dozen boxes of beans. But, for now, I'll relish the mystery each time I faithfully put my loonies and toonies in the red metal lock box.

Stacey May Fowles is a journalist and the author of five books. Her children's book, The Invitation*, was released in 2023.*

chasing sun-warmed rocks—in search of a perfect swim

BY CHRIS NUTTALL-SMITH

MY WIFE, CAROL, is a master of the infuriatingly thoughtful gift. For a birthday of mine a few years back, she got my friends to record an album's worth of tribute songs and roasts and had them pressed into a one-off vinyl record. When I entered a bird-fancying stage, she had a taxidermied drake wood duck (it had died a natural death, on a farm, she was promised) shipped all the way from France. ››

But her *coup de grâce*, to this day, is the needlepoint she commissioned for an anniversary of ours. "You never regret swimming," it announced, in its pointillist stitching. We'd been saying those words, mostly as a dare, pretty much ever since we met. That square of needlepoint has become our de-facto family crest. I think I got her flowers that year.

We swim a lot, Carol, me, and Cormac, our teen. And when we aren't swimming, we're often obsessing over our favourite swimming rocks. There's the one on B.C.'s far west coast where a cold mountain river coalesces into deep, clear, pebble-bottomed pools, hyphenated by mini waterfalls. We've swum from that rock in sun and cold and near-blinding rain, through chattering teeth and pie-eating smiles. And nope, regret has never once entered our minds.

And there's the paddle-in cove, just south of Parry Sound, Ont., where a weather-smoothed whalesback of sun-kissed gneiss gives way to a pocket of lake water with the texture of slept-in silk. We've found outstanding swimming rocks in Asia and in England ("wild swimming," as it's often called there, is a national obsession), in Alberta alpine meadows, and on cottage lakes in Haliburton, Ont. One of our all-time favourites as of now is among an archipelago of tiny, kayak-access islands near a friend-of-a-friend's cottage on Georgian Bay. There's a broad tongue of ancient rock there that rolls off fast into bottle-blue water. When the bay is even the slightest bit heaving, the waves roll hungrily over your feet.

The last time we went, we were with some friends. It was late afternoon in hot, high summer. We'd brought a little cooler

MARIS LUBBOCK

with drinks and snacks. We'd swim a bit, then snack a bit, sprawling out with dripping limbs onto the warmth of the rock. It felt like there was nobody else for miles. We'd earned it too, boating there just after lunchtime. That's a thing about swimming rocks: getting to the best of them usually takes a bit of effort. And unlike a dock (love them, but dock swimming is dock swimming, more-or-less generic), or yet another sand-strewn beach, this little spot was one-of-a-kind. The action of the waves had formed a sort of subsurface lounger. You could sit there for hours. You could probably read a book while doing it too. And like most of the greatest swimming rocks I've found, this one was very much on public land. It was there for the taking (for a time) for free.

As the sun dipped lower, we timed our dives so we'd slice through the swells. We let the lift from the waves push us back up onto the rock. "That's the best swim I've ever had," one of my friends said.

The very best swimming rocks share a few key attributes. The feeling of remoteness is important. Which is not to say that a great swimming rock has to actually be far away; it can even be tucked just off the road. An associated feature: the best of the best almost always feel like a secret. Or as Carol and I have taken to putting it, a truly great swimming rock will always pass the naked test. (Another time-tested motto the two of us share: "Bathing suits are a sign you've given up.")

Exposure is important—with west being best, for late-afternoon sun. And so is texture: of the rock and of the water around it. And great swimming rocks are just plain beautiful. They're the sort of spots that burn into your brain, that you replay through winter to get through the cold, that you pine for the entire spring.

After a lifetime of camping, we bought a property last year. It's far enough north that the locals don't call them "cottages," but "camps." It's a good-sized lot, with shoreline on two different lakes. One of the last things we did before finalizing the deal was paddle as much of those lakes as we could. We found swimming rocks everywhere: deep-water jumping rocks, clear, secluded, rock-ringed coves, and cocktail hour-worthy island shores. They felt remote and reasonably private (no bathing suits were dampened in the touring of those rocks) and undeniably gorgeous—each one, in a way, its own kind of gift. Pleasures don't get much simpler than that.

Chris Nuttall-Smith writes about food, restaurants, and travel. He's the author of Cook It Wild: Sensational Prep-Ahead Meals for Camping, Cabins, and the Great Outdoors.

IT'S 8 P.M. ON A FRIDAY NIGHT. *drip* YOU'VE CONQUERED THE TRAFFIC AND FINALLY *drip* ARRIVED AT THE COTTAGE. *drip* YOU'RE JUST ABOUT TO POUR YOURSELF A *drip* DRINK WHEN—WAIT A SECOND. IS SOMETHING LEAKING?

Don't panic! Here's how to fix three commonly found tiny leaks before they become big, big trouble

BY RAY FORD

THE PROBLEM WITH cottage country? Too many drips. "Despite our best engineering, leaks still happen," says Sean Peterson, a professor of mechanical and mechatronics engineering at the University of Waterloo. "Any sort of system or device we have, no matter what it is, eventually corrodes, wears down, or fails."

Don't take it personally, it's just physics. Peterson explains that high-pressure substances will always escape to low-pressure areas if they can. "Any pathway that emerges in the membrane separating the two provides a release," Peterson says. Take a blow-up mattress, for example. When your cat—inevitably—claws a hole in it, the barrier containing the high-pressure air becomes compromised and the air just takes the path of least resistance out. Same goes for water escaping a pipe through a pinhole or blown connection. And those leaks plaguing your roof, kayaks, or canoes? You can fault physics for that too. Sunlight, rain and snow, cold and heat, and the forces of water and wind all conspire to erode and weaken the trusty membranes that keep the bad stuff (in this case, water) out.

If this sounds dire, the good news is there's always duct tape. Joking! (But not really). Whether by tape, tarp, or otherwise, these emergency tricks will help you stop pesky drips in a jiff until you or a professional can fix the leak for the long haul. (Don't worry, we'll tell you how to do that too). ››

OPPOSITE, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/NARUEDOMYA EMPONGSA

THE LEAKY CULPRIT Your copper pipe, which has burst or developed pinholes.

FINDING THE LEAK Drips often show up a floor beneath their source, typically on the ceiling, says Jeremy Begin, the owner of Bracebridge, Ont.-based Cottage Country Plumbing. If you suspect a leak on your main floor, start searching your basement or crawlspace with a flashlight to find glistening wet spots or water stains. Listen for drips or flows too. On the high-tech side, an infrared thermal imaging camera shows surface temperatures and can outline leaks hidden within walls, ceilings, or floors. A remote inspection camera, with real-video imaging via its pen-like camera wand, can help identify leaks behind walls as well. (Depending on where the leak is, you can deploy the camera by removing the wall's baseboard.) Slow-dripping leaks are harder to find and may only reveal themselves when a sink or tub is in use. Begin says toilet leaks, typically from a poor seal, are the most stealthy. To detect devious leaks like these, Celeste Carnevale, the owner of 2 Bro's Plumbing in Whitby, Ont., suggests running your shower or faucet for a few minutes (or flushing your toilet a couple of times), waiting five to seven minutes, doing a leak check, and then repeating anywhere from three to five times. Test each fixture separately; one at a time.

SharkBite Max Brass Push Coupling

the BUSTED pipe

STOPPING THE LEAK Properly installed push-to-connect fittings—SharkBite is a popular manufacturer—provide fast and easy (and temporary) pipe-leak relief. But before you do anything, turn off your water, drain any existing water in your pipes, and place a bucket under the leaky pipe for emergency drip-catching. If you're dealing with a burst pipe, Begin recommends using two fittings and a piece of cross-linked polyethylene (PEX) pipe in between. Cleanly cut the burst pipe on either side and attach one fitting on each open end, connecting them via the PEX pipe. The process is less complex for a pinhole leak. "If it's midnight, and I just want to get your water back on, I would cut directly on the pinhole and apply one SharkBite fitting," says Begin. Remember to use a deburring tool and sandpaper to smooth out your cuts. This will ensure proper fitting.

FIXING THE LEAK For a burst pipe, remove the push-to-connect fittings and solder sweat adapters (permanent pipe connectors) onto the remaining copper ends, crimping a new piece of PEX in between. If you're not handy with a torch, or don't have one, call a plumber. For a pinhole, replace the push-to-connect fitting with a copper union fitting. Soldering is required here too, so again, call a plumber if you're not experienced with this type of repair. "If your copper pipes are getting one pinhole after the other, I would switch to PEX at that point," says Begin. "It's about half the cost of copper, and takes about a third of the time to install."

the SOPPING wet roof

THE LEAKY CULPRIT Your roof, which is now leaking water into your cottage.

FINDING THE LEAK Roof leaks are vexing. Most hide during fine weather, only springing to life during bouts of precipitation, and, because of this, they can sometimes take weeks to discover. Montreal-based roofing consultant Paul Grizenko recommends looking for wet or stained drywall, bubbling paint, pools on floors, wet insulation, and mould. From there, use a flashlight and a thermal imaging camera to trace your leak to the source. It's often in the attic, says Grizenko. Usual suspects include bad seals or failing caulking on roof penetrations—think vents, plumbing stacks, and chimneys—and cracked or missing shingles atop compromised underlayment. Also common are ice dams (often around roof eaves and valleys), where winter ice buildup causes snowmelt to back up and seep beneath shingles and underlayment.

STOPPING THE LEAK Grizenko recommends roofing cement for small jobs, such as repairing a cracked asphalt shingle. "It's not pretty, but it works as a temporary patch." If you're heading to the roof immediately, Grizenko suggests driving a screw from the attic through the roof deck at the leak area so it's easier to locate from above. Once on the roof, mark the area and remove the screw.

Next, sweep or brush loose asphalt, dust, and debris from the repair zone. Use a putty knife or a trowel to work layers of the sticky cement into the crack, filling it completely while maintaining a fairly thin cover of roofing cement on top. Trowel the outer edges of the patch flush with the surface. For best results, read directions carefully (cements differ per manufacturer) and choose a mild, dry day. Grizenko says roofing cement is too viscous in the cold and too runny on hot days.

Leaks from faulty seals around flashing (the thin metal sheets on roof seams that direct water away) and roof penetrations will likely require new caulking. "Between ultraviolet exposure and thermal expansion, caulking becomes brittle and pulls away from whatever it's protecting over time," says Grizenko. Use a utility knife to cut away the old caulking and clean off the old residue with acetone. When the surface is dry, apply new, high-quality roof caulking, such as Through the Roof! sealant. If the leak stops, you may have solved the problem, but only for the life of the caulking.

If you can't get to the roof right away—say it's raining or you're preparing to leave—tarping can serve as a short-term stopgap and is best left to professional contractors. "It takes experience to know how to secure a tarp that won't blow off or rip," says Grizenko.

FIXING THE LEAK To properly fix a leak stemming from a broken asphalt shingle on an otherwise-healthy roof, use a flat pry bar to *gently* bend up the shingle(s) covering the one you're replacing. Next, use the pry bar to remove the nails securing the faulty shingle: again, *gently*. Pull out the broken shingle and slide the replacement beneath the upper course, nailing it down using the same nail pattern as the rest of the roof. Apply roofing cement beneath the tabs and on the nail heads of the new shingle, then press the shingles into place. Book the job for a mild day, when asphalt is less likely to crack.

If you notice many lifting, missing, or broken shingles, plan a new roof—and consider everything from the sheathing to the water barrier. Also, don't cheap out: "If the person who is charging more can explain why, and give clear indications of the extra steps they're taking, they may be the cheapest person to hire in the long run." ››

THE LEAKY CULPRIT Your canoe or kayak, which now has water inside *and* out.

FINDING THE LEAK Sometimes your kayak or canoe tumbles off the car and cracks. And sometimes, when you're paddling, you hit stuff. (Who put that dock there?). To detect leaks in canoes, "Put water into the canoe and see where it comes out, or put the canoe in water and see where it comes in," says Beth Peterson, the owner of Ottawa Valley Canoe and Kayak. If you also suspect (or hear) water sloshing around in the craft's sealed bow and stern flotation tanks, Bob Hellman of Hellman Canoes & Kayaks in Nelson, B.C., recommends taking your craft to a professional who can access the sealed (typically with fibreglass) compartments and assess your tanks for leaks.

For enclosed kayaks, "Take the kayak to the beach and get it in the water," says Jillian Conrad, the production manager of Swift Canoe and Kayak in South River, Ont. "One person holds the kayak while another person looks inside with a flashlight and watches for water coming in." Most leaks occur at the glued seam where the deck meets the hull.

STOPPING THE LEAK "Clear Gorilla Tape is your go-to," Conrad says. When the craft is clean, warm, and dry, tape both sides of the leaking area (inside and outside the craft, for example), using multiple layers if necessary. A solid tape job could last months and works on wood, composite, and aluminum surfaces. For leaking flotation tanks, Hellman says a repair shop can replace them, or, you can have the tanks swapped out for float bags.

The best thing about Gorilla Tape? "It leaves less residue behind when it's removed, and it sticks on a cold, wet surface in a pinch," says Conrad. (Peterson, also a fan of Gorilla Tape, once saw a leak successfully plugged with cow manure.) Clingier stopgaps, including silicone sealant, glue, nail polish, and epoxy, are the bane of repair shops. "Even if you can clean all the silicone off, getting something to stick afterwards isn't easy," says Conrad.

the DROWNING *watercraft*

FIXING THE LEAK For permanent fixes on coin-sized holes or cracks a few inches long, materials and DIY kits are available from suppliers such as the Oshawa, Ont.-based Rayplex. The key is matching the craft's original chemistry or construction. Kevlar or fibreglass won't play nice with plastics such as Royalex. But you *can* use a fibreglass patch on a Kevlar canoe. (Kevlar is nearly impossible to cut without proper shears, but determined DIYers can buy pre-cut patches or get one custom cut.)

If possible, talk to a professional before you do something. Having your craft's make, model, and 12-digit Hull Identification Number (HIN) handy while asking about repairs over the phone, or ordering parts, is helpful. You can find it on the starboard side of the stern. Otherwise, you might end up Frankensteining your craft with materials that just won't jibe.

Repairs require a clean, dry, warm, and well-ventilated workspace, a passing knowledge of chemistry (including resins and hard-eners), and patience. Steps include removing loose and damaged material, sanding and cleaning the repair area, and applying patches made of the right substance. "The patch should always extend two to three inches larger than the area you're repairing, and you need a strong bond around the area where the canoe or kayak has been weakened," says Conrad.

Fixing larger cracks and completing specialized jobs, such as repairing cedarstrip or wood-canvas canoes, as well as welding aluminum ones, should probably be left to the pros. Finding and gluing a leaking seam sounds easy, but it can also be an exercise in frustration for amateurs, warns Conrad. "I've had people try to fix the leaks themselves, and, you know, you're on the phone with them every day."

THIS PAGE: CANOE, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/MAREKULIASZ. OPPOSITE: GARDEN HOSE, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/HURSTPHOTO; FLOATIE, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/OLDMANGEORGE; WATERING CAN AND PLASTIC PITCHER, CLEANPNG; BLOW-UP MATTRESS, CANADIANTIRE.CA

PATCH IT OR PITCH IT

Silly question: what cottage putterer worth their duct tape isn't going to at least consider patching something before pitching it? But is it a good idea? It depends…

Patch it!

Easy fix

FLOATIE

If it's a blown seam, or it's leaking from the valve, pitch it. For small holes or tears elsewhere, patch it. (Most floaties come with patches. If not, try a Type B Tear-Aid kit.)

BLOW-UP MATTRESS

Similar to floaties, if the tear is on the seam or valve, pitch it. To repair other holes, use a Tear-Aid patching kit. (Type A this time.)

PLASTIC PITCHER

If it's Tupperware, check the warranty. The damage might be covered. If not, don't pitch: give Grandma's pitcher new life as a coin bank or storage container. If the crack is miniscule, use it as a boat bailer.

WATERING CAN

Pitch it and buy a more robust one made of metal or a sturdier plastic. Hardcore DIYers *could* try using a two-part epoxy (part resin, part hardener), such as J-B Weld.

Trickier Fix

GARDEN HOSE

If the hose is cracking and brittle, pitch it. For a quality hose, David Kovacs of Vanden Bussche Irrigation says cut the bad section and "patch" with a coupling and two clamps.

Just pitch it

F PHYSICS STACKS the deck to favour leaks, how you play those cards still matters. The tendency to rush fixes and cut corners almost guarantees future problems. "It's the 'my brother can do it' factor," says Begin. "If a pipe's not installed correctly or you have a badly soldered joint, it will hold long enough that it feels okay, and then it will let go."

And while SharkBites, roofing cement, and Gorilla Tape all have a place, engineering professor Sean Peterson says the most powerful leak-stopper is likely also the most overlooked: the cottage checklist. "Many industries, including aviation, have checklists because they force people to think about preventative maintenance, which helps avoid catastrophic failures."

So if you're looking to avoid the dreaded cottage drip once and for all, it's time to revise those opening and closing checklists to include scouting for water stains behind walls and in your attic, storing canoes and kayaks safely, and maybe even stocking some just-in-case plumbing supplies. And Gorilla Tape. There are already enough drips around the lake. Why invite more?

Crystal Clear Gorilla Tape

Ray Ford is an award-winning writer and a regular contributor to Cottage Life. *He's also a handyman, DIYer, farmer, and fire chief. He wrote "Cold Comfort" in our Winter '22 issue.*


Dukkah
Za'atar

FOOD AND PROP STYLING, ANDREW BULLIS

just a little somethin' somethin'

It doesn't take much to wow the crowd at happy hour. These 5 recipes make versatile, delicious, and quick bites for the beach, dock, or deck

BY MARTIN ZIBAUER
PHOTOGRAPHY LIAM MOGAN

SPICY IDEAS

Put out small bowls of za'atar, dukkah, and olive oil, and dip hunks of crusty bread, raw vegetables, and baked pita chips into each.

Mix za'atar into plain yogurt or sour cream for a chip dip.

Spear feta cubes on toothpicks and dredge with dukkah, or dredge mini bocconcini with za'atar.

Top hummus, poached eggs, or grilled chicken or fish with za'atar or dukkah.

Sprinkle za'atar generously over stretched pizza dough; drizzle with olive oil and bake.

ONE THING I learned as I got older and less cynical: summer is not actually endless. It's always over far too soon, so when you can spend time on the dock with your friends, having a few snacks and drinks, that's exactly where you must be. And these dishes—fresh, quick, and each with a little wow factor—are what you must be eating. I hope that you'll treat these recipes as a vague set of loose recommendations: swap in the ingredients you have in the cupboard and don't fuss if something is missing. Because if you're in the kitchen worrying about following a recipe to the letter, you're not down on the dock having fun and enjoying the non-eternal sunshine. LET'S GET CREATIVE.

Two Middle Eastern mixes

Falling somewhere between spice mixes and condiments, both dukkah and za'atar are adaptable, flavour-packed starting points for all sorts of snack ideas. Dukkah is an Egyptian mix of chopped, toasted nuts and spices. Za'atar combines an aromatic herb—usually thyme and its kin—with the tart zing of sumac and nutty sesame seeds.

Dukkah

Egyptians vary the mix of nuts in dukkah, depending on what's on hand. Many versions feature hazelnuts, but if you don't have pine nuts or almonds, try pistachios, peanuts, or cashews instead. Don't overprocess—the nuts should have a coarse, crunchy texture. MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

1 tbsp	**each coriander seeds, fennel seeds, and sesame seeds**
1 tsp	**cumin seeds**
½ cup	**unsalted hazelnuts**
½ cup	**pine nuts or blanched almonds**
1 tsp	**paprika**
½ tsp	**salt**

1 In a dry, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat, stir together coriander, fennel, sesame, and cumin seeds until spices are fragrant and lightly toasted, about 2 minutes. Immediately transfer toasted spices to a bowl and let cool.

2 Using a spice grinder or mortar and pestle, grind toasted spices to a coarse powder. ››

3 In the same saucepan and working in batches, toast hazelnuts and then pine nuts or almonds. (For even browning, toast each type separately.) Once browned, immediately transfer to a bowl and let cool. Pulse nuts briefly in a food processor or chop with a knife until coarsely chopped.

4 In a bowl, combine nuts, spices, paprika, and salt. Adjust seasoning to taste.

Za'atar

Jars of dried za'atar from Middle Eastern grocers are convenient, but the freshly made mix is much, much better. The heat from the toasted sesame seeds brings out the flavour of the thyme and sumac. **MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP**

¼ cup	fresh thyme leaves
1½ tbsp	ground sumac
¼ cup	sesame seeds
1 tsp	salt

1 In a small bowl, mix thyme and sumac.

2 In a dry, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat, stir sesame seeds until fragrant and lightly toasted, about 2 minutes. Transfer immediately to bowl with thyme and sumac mix and stir together. Stir in salt. Adjust seasoning to taste.

Tip Spices go from toasted to burnt in seconds; once they're ready, transfer them out of the hot pan right away.

Grilled Peel-and-Eat Shrimp with Green Goddess Dip

A plate of grilled shrimp with a herb-flecked, California-style dip is guaranteed to disappear quickly; maybe you should double the recipe. **SERVES 4**

450 g	21 to 24 count, shell-on shrimp, deveined
⅓ cup	Italian-style salad dressing (not low fat)
½ cup	parsley, chopped
1 tbsp	lemon juice
1	green onion, roughly chopped
1 clove	garlic, roughly chopped
½ tsp	dried tarragon
¼ tsp	salt
½ cup	14% sour cream or 3% plain yogurt (or a mix of both)

1 In a non-reactive bowl, stir together shrimp and salad dressing and let marinate for 30 minutes.

2 In a food processor, purée parsley, lemon juice, green onion, garlic, tarragon, and salt. Add sour cream or yogurt and pulse to combine. Adjust seasoning to taste.

3 Remove shrimp from dressing and pat dry with paper towels. Place in grill basket on barbecue over medium-high heat; close lid and cook, turning once, until opaque and lightly charred, 4 to 5 minutes. Serve with green goddess dip.

Tip Shrimp is usually sold deveined, but check that the dark vein along the shrimp's back has been removed completely. If you think peeling shrimp as you eat them is a bit of a faff, just eat the shells and tails—they're tasty too.

Grilled Ginger-Garlic Edamame

As a snack, grilled edamame is as simple as it gets—just cook shell-on soybean pods on the barbecue until they blister and char a little, then toss them in a flavourful sauce. You can follow this recipe for a sweet-and-sour garlicky sauce, or use it as a jumping-off point. Some tasty add-ons: red pepper flakes, black pepper, chili powder, or chopped peanuts; Lao Gan Ma (chili crisp); crushed seaweed; sesame oil, and soy sauce—or forget the sauce entirely and just sprinkle with some coarse salt. **SERVES 4–8**

2 tbsp	lemon juice
1 tbsp	honey
2 cloves	garlic, grated
2 tsp	fresh ginger, grated
¼ tsp	salt
1 bag	(450 g) frozen edamame in the shell

1 In a large bowl, stir together lemon juice, honey, garlic, ginger, and salt.

2 Place edamame in a grill basket on barbecue over medium-high heat. Close lid and cook, stirring occasionally, until shells are slightly blistered and charred.

3 Add grilled edamame to ginger-garlic sauce and toss. Serve warm or at room temperature. ››

Green Goddess Dip

Grilled Ginger- Garlic Edamame

Grilled Peel-and-Eat Shrimp

Pizza Frittata Nibbles

Eggs make this bite fairly substantial, but I bet you'll still scarf down several on the dock. As with any frittata, you can vary the chunky bits: roasted peppers, chopped spinach or arugula, ham, more cheese or less—almost any cooked food works. It's a great way to use bits from the fridge before you have to haul them home come Sunday.

MAKES 12 MUFFIN-SIZED FRITTATAS

¼ cup	**pepperoni, diced**
¼ cup	**sundried tomatoes, diced**
4	**green onions, thinly sliced**
8	**eggs**
½ cup	**milk**
½ tsp	**dried oregano**
½ tsp	**dried basil**
¼ tsp	**salt**
⅓ cup	**panko**
⅓ cup	**grated parmesan**

1 Grease a 12-cup muffin tin. Divide pepperoni, tomatoes, and green onions among prepared cups.

2 In a bowl, beat eggs, milk, oregano, basil, and salt. Divide mixture evenly among cups.

3 Bake in 375°F oven until top is lightly set, 13–15 minutes. Sprinkle panko and cheese overtop frittatas. Place under broiler until lightly golden, 4–6 minutes more. Serve warm or at room temperature.

SWITCH IT UP Make mini-frittatas in a 24-cup mini-muffin tin. Reduce initial baking time to 8–10 minutes.

Toronto-based writer and recipe developer Martin Zibauer is Cottage Life*'s contributing editor. His favourite small snack is fruit, preferably eaten on the beach.*

WEAKEST LINK

WITH HOST
ROMESH RANGANATHAN

NEW EPISODES
FRIDAYS, 10PM ET/PT

ONLY ON

BBC FIRST

TV CHANNEL

ROGERS	ROGERS IGNITE	BELL FIBE	BELL SAT	COGECO	EASTLINK	TELUS
538	362	1660	1623	777	884	375

www.bbcfirst.ca
@BBCFirstCanada

PHOTO, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/GLASSANDNATURE. ILLUSTRATION, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/THEFISHERMAN

Fathers know best

In early summer, it's a male pumpkinseed sunfish's time to shine, when he takes on nest-building and baby-tending duties **BY TIM TINER**

The brightly hued, easy-to-catch pumpkinseed sunfish is commonly the most abundant set of fins in warm, weedy shallows from New Brunswick to Manitoba. There are also introduced populations in B.C.; they arrived from the U.S. via the Columbia River system.

With powerful jaws and molar-like teeth, the squat, flat fish crush snail shells, mussels, and aquatic insect larvae after sucking them up from submerged plant beds and muddy water bottoms. Some lakes have subpopulations of more streamlined pumpkinseeds. They have smaller jaws and longer, denser gill rakers (internal spiny rows at the base of the gills) to better strain plankton above rocky offshore shoals.

Between late May and mid-July, male sunfish use their tail fins to sweep out circular nests in water that's as shallow as 15 cm. The nests are as wide as serving platters, formed in gravel or sand. The fervently defended saucers, spaced a metre or more apart, may be in colonies of up to 15.

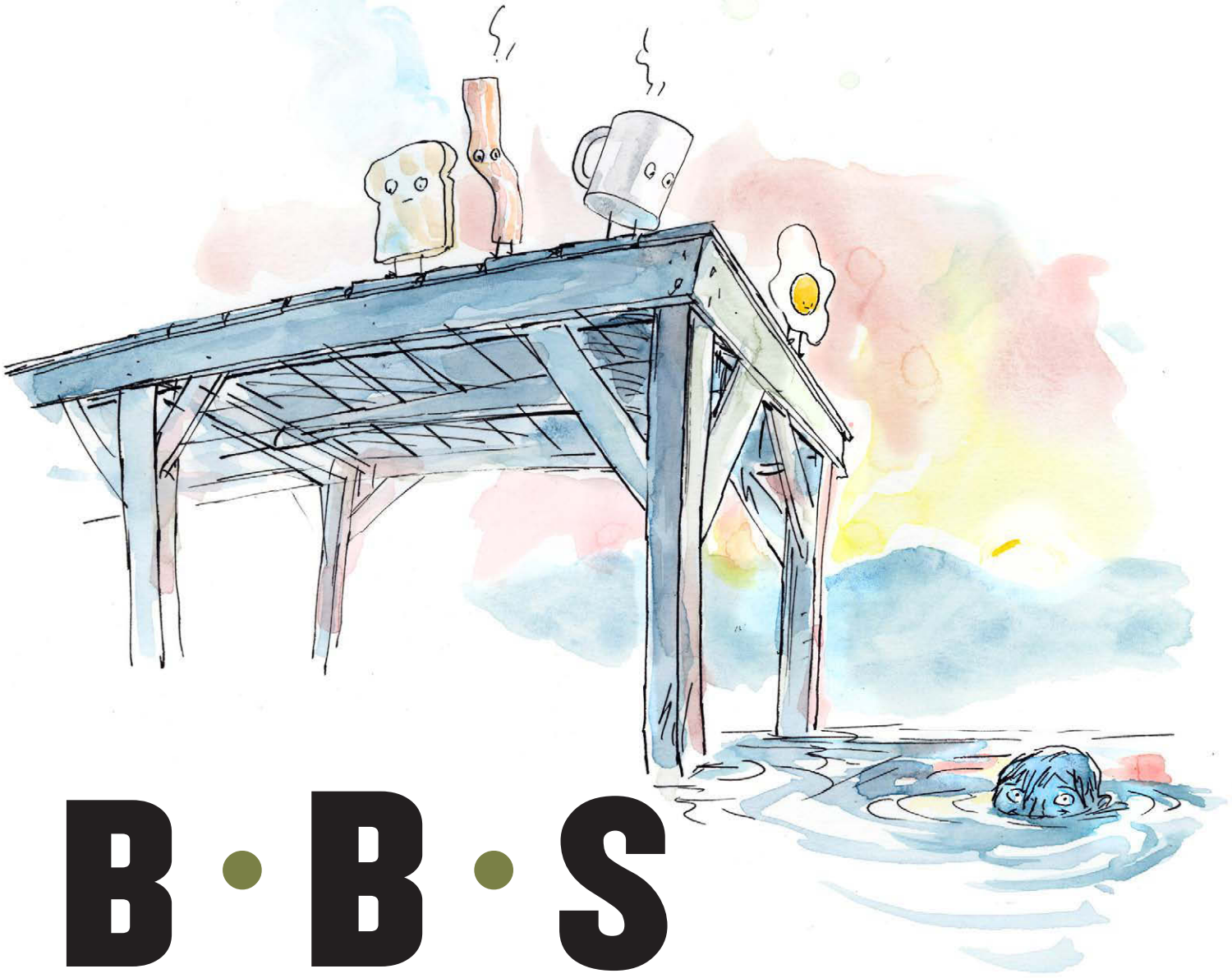
A female's sidebars darken as she approaches a colony, cueing males themselves to glimmer and wheel lustily around the rim of their nests. Wooers spread their distinctive black-and-scarlet gill flaps, which are significantly larger on males. She chooses the suitor with the most symmetric pair of flaps and the most weed-free nest space, bestowing him with 600 to 7,000 amber eggs.

First-time nest holders may be five to seven years old. Some smaller males never nest, but will still spawn—when as young as two—by darting from plant cover to add their own milt while another pair mates. Most offspring of these "sneakers" inherit their fathers' stealthy mode of breeding.

Sometimes spawning with several love'em-and-leave'em females, a nester fiercely guards up to 15,000 eggs from predators and will even inflict a painful bite on encroaching human fingers or toes. Transparent fry hatch in three to 10 days. A father keeps watch for another week or so, until the young swim from the nest.

Spot the difference

In many lakes, pumpkinseed sunfish share the water with the closely related bluegill sunfish. The easiest way to distinguish between the two? Pumpkinseeds have a red spot on their gill flaps. Bluegills don't.



B·B·S

/ bee · bee · es / noun

1.1 A beloved cottage tradition: the "before breakfast swim"

1.2 The only a.m. activity allowed to take place before breakfast and coffee

Use it in a sentence

The lake is so calm this morning. I hope I can sneak in a BBS before the kids wake up.

We want to know: what words do you use at the cottage but nowhere else? Email us at edit@cottagelife.com.

GRAHAM ROUMIEU

DiscoveryDreamHomes.com

Central/East	West Coast	North/East USA	Georgian Triangle & Southern Ontario
1.866.395.5647	1.877.823.5639	1.866.390.5647	1.866.506.6626

Proud to be a strategic partner in THE Dream Home Group™