RCMC Minutes

August 14, 2025

Ron East – Secretary

The Meeting began at 9:56 AM. Number of members/guests present - 55

Warren Gregg presiding

Warren announced commemorations and requested a moment of silence

Ken Marchant – Chair Activities Committee announced:

A day at the races – September 12th

A walk at the Arboretum – August 18th

Martin Alderwick – Chair Membership – membership stands at ?

Richard Rivkin introduced our Speaker: Robin Anderson

Topic: "Environmental Interaction: Everything Everywhere All At Once"

Presentation:

Environmental interactions are key to understanding humans' place in the environment and predicting and constraining the consequences of our actions on the ecosystems we exploit and manage. In this talk I will begin with an overview of my career as a research scientist with the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. In this role I was responsible for providing advice to aquatic habitat managers on the consequences of human activities including offshore oil development, mine tailings disposal, fish and shellfish aquaculture and hydro-electric development. My research programs aligned to inform this advice, focussed on better understanding the interactions between humans and the environment and their consequences for fish, fish habitat and the humans who used the environments and relied on the fish for subsistence or livelihood. In the second part of my talk I would like to share with you some of the very cool stories that we can tell from many years of studying mercury in fish in Newfoundland and Labrador that was a major part of my research program for thirty years.

Bio:

I have always been associated with aquatic environments. I started life on Toronto Island where we travelled by canoe as often as by bicycle. I spent an amazing six years there. Next in Quebec City, I and my siblings played water polo, swam competitively and one sister and I spent six years on the Canadian national synchronized swimming team as it was known then. I did my undergraduate degree at Laval University in biology and then an MSc in biology studying kelp ecology in the St. Lawrence estuary. From there I switched to freshwaters and completed a PhD at McGill University studying the ecology of aquatic plants in lakes of the Eastern Townships. After an assistant professorship at the Universite du Quebec a Montreal and a visiting professorship at the University of Maryland, my husband and I moved to Newfoundland where he was offered a position at Memorial University. I was offered a position at the Northwest

Atlantic Fisheries Centre in St. John's and then was given the opportunity to create the Marine Habitat Research Program for the Region of Newfoundland and Labrador. The research of this program was focussed on the effects of human activity on the marine environment. The other responsibility that I had as a federal government research scientist was to provide advice to fish habitat managers and the DFO Minter regarding the consequences of proposed development projects on fish and fish habitat. The first project I reviewed was the effects monitoring program for the Hibernia offshore development. Since then, I have led research programs and provided advice on other offshore development projects, on finfish and shellfish aquaculture projects, mining projects, hydro-electric developments, oil spill mitigation, seismic surveys, underwater cables and seaweed harvesting.

She told us a bit about her career at the Department of Oceans and Fisheries. She studied the effects of chemicals on the environment and its ecosystems, both ocean and fresh water systems. She studied the impact of the Hibernia Oil project on the aquatic environment off of Newfoundland and Labrador. They measured levels of Barium and Mercury and the effects found in the food chain. She also studied the effects of Fish Farming on the aquatic environment in Southern Newfoundland> She studied the effects of Shellfish Farming. She studied the effects of Nickel mining in Labrador. These studies were undertaken along side of the relevant industries as well as conducting independent studies. They studied the effects of mercury levels in fish on the local population, since fish were their principle source of protein. She was involved in mapping oil spills and long term effects on the environment. Metal mercury is a neurotoxin, and levels increase in larger fish. She studied the effects of acid rain on the freshwater environment, as well as the concentrations of toxins in reservoirs created by hydro projects, such as Churchill Falls. She mapped the effects of Mercury concentrations in fresh water and in the oceans and their effect on humans – both through fish meal fed to animals and directly on humans.- She gave an excellent talk and then took questions.

She was thanked by Warren Gregg

The meeting ended at 11:00 AM