

a great conservationist



was extremely well received. The magazine's editor asked for more.

At around this time, Belaney became interested in beavers, which were becoming a threatened species. He and his new Indian wife, Anahareo, had found two beaver kittens whose mother had been killed in a trap, and they decided to found a beaver colony. Eventually, the two kittens – named McGinnis and McGinty – left them, but Belaney soon found replacements, one of whom – Jelly Roll – became a celebrity through Grey Owl's books and films.

Grey Owl took Jelly Roll with him to Métis-sur-Mer where he lectured to rich Canadian and American holiday-makers on Indian life and the animals of the woods and forests. The venture proved profitable, and the following winter he retired to Elephant Mountain Lake to complete his first book.

Grey Owl comes to Prince Albert National Park

In 1931, the Ministry of the Interior offered him a position as a naturalist at Riding Mountain National Park in Manitoba with a brief to start a new beaver colony. Riding Mountain, however, proved unsuitable for this purpose, but Grey Owl found the ideal site on Lake Ajawaan at Prince Albert National Park in neighbouring Saskatchewan.

He named his new home Beaver Lodge, and he spent much of his time there writing. His books became popular, he found himself in great demand as a lecturer, and for once in his life he tasted wealth and success. But this experience was shortlived. Grey Owl died in April, 1938, aged 49.

Beaver Lodge still stands on the shore of Lake Ajawaan – 'far enough away to gain seclusion, yet within reach of those whose genuine interest prompts them to make a trip' (to quote Grey Owl). The one-room log cabin looks much the same as it

did when the naturalist lived there, having been restored in the 1970s. The upper cabin built for Anahareo also survives intact, and the site attracts canoeists and hikers who can stay overnight in one of the campgrounds in the area.

Wilderness left largely untouched

This area of Prince Albert National Park is well maintained and easily accessible to visitors, but most of the huge park has been deliberately left untouched as a natural wilderness. One excellent way to appreciate it is to follow the Grey Owl Wilderness Canoe Route mapped out by the park authorities – a week-long trip through some of the smaller lakes and waterways of the region.

Among the wildlife visitors are likely to see are moose, white-tailed deer, black bear, elk and red fox. On the lakes and rivers you can find beaver, otter, ducks and pelicans from the protected pelican colony on Lavallee Lake. If you are lucky, you may even see coyotes, wolverine, wolves and badgers – but such sightings are rare.

This summer, the Park is likely to attract a record number of visitors, particularly during the Heritage Week (August 8–14). At Waskesiu Town, there will be theatrical events, talks, exhibitions, tours, a banquet and other events which trace the development of the Park and celebrate the life of its most famous inhabitant.

Today, there is a strong conservationist lobby in Canada, with the result that species – such as the beaver – which were once heading for extinction are now increasing in numbers. Archibald Stansfield Belaney, trapper turned conservationist, would doubtless rejoice that his conservationist message has taken firm root.

'We need an enrichment other than material prosperity,' he used to say, 'and to gain it we have only to look around. Remember, you belong to nature, not it to you'.

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