

# **A Day Patrol to Dog Lake in Kootenay National Park**

**By former Park Warden David Reynolds**

In 1974 it was a hot and stormy summer in the Canadian Rocky Mountains of Kootenay National Park in British Columbia. I was a newly minted Park Warden stationed at Radium Hot Springs working along side senior Park Warden, Terry Gibbons. I had recently attended the Seasonal Park Warden Training School at the Palisades in Jasper National Park and was now educated about the role of a Park Warden. A Park Wardens' role is to enforce the National Parks Act, including enforcement of fishing regulations to ensure park visitors had the appropriate fishing licenses to angle in the water bodies in the national parks.

During my time as a Park Warden in Kootenay National Park, I spent many hours hiking the trails and driving the highway between Radium Hot Springs and the boundary of the park east of Marble Canyon. As part of my duties, I met with and greeted visitors at the many visitor attractions and campgrounds in the park. My view was that my role was more one of public relations and less of an enforcement one. I just wanted to make certain visitors were safe from the natural environment and the natural environment was safe from people. My travels had me meeting with visitors planning to camp or fish somewhere in the park. It was a great job! It was like working in "sleepy hollow"; it was so laid back sometimes. Most visitors were compliant with national park laws and regulations.

One of my frequent tasks was to check people angling in lakes and streams to ensure they held national park fishing licenses. If they didn't have one, it was my practice, and good public relations, to inform them of the law and simply sell them a license on the spot.

One sunny and hot Saturday afternoon in early August, I decided to patrol Dog Lake near McLeod Meadows Campground to check anglers for fishing licenses. I parked the Park Warden truck at the campground, crossed the Kootenay River and headed up the trail to the lake. When I arrived at Dog Lake, I noticed several anglers casting lines. I started my rounds checking who did and didn't have fishing licenses. A couple of the anglers I checked thought that all they needed to fish in the national park was a British Columbia Fishing License. I explained that the national parks have their own, separate licensing system from that of the Province. I offered these people a national park fishing license which they all promptly bought without any argument to spare themselves from being ticketed. I prefer that solution rather than charging them for a small infraction. Discretion is always the best part of a situation like this. I chuckled to myself that I was quickly increasing Parks Canada's revenue stream. I couldn't believe the number of people I encountered that day that didn't have a park fishing license. I guess they thought the risk was slight that they would be checked.

Near the far end of Dog Lake, I encountered a middle-aged man and woman with two lines in the lake. I said hello and introduced myself and identified myself as a Park Warden, even though my uniform was an obvious give away. I asked if they had a fishing license. The man said, "Yes I do" and promptly produced it from his wallet. It was a British Columbia fishing license. I applauded him for having a license but mentioned that his license was not valid in the national parks and I would be most willing to sell him the appropriate license. I turned to the woman with him and asked to see her license, knowing full well that if the man didn't have a license, neither would she. Her response was, and I remember it to this day, "I don't need a license." I was caught off guard by her response and ask her, "Why don't you need a license?" She said, "I am a beginner, so I don't need a license." I thought her response was so funny I couldn't help but laugh out loud. I apologized for laughing, but assured her she, even as a beginner, needed a license to fish in the park. She was not very impressed with me because first, she hadn't caught a fish and second, now she had to buy a license for something she didn't know how to do ... angle for fish. After some additional discussion and explanation, I sold them both a license and wished them a good day fishing. I chuckled to myself as I hiked back down the trail to the truck. Her innocent response had made my day!