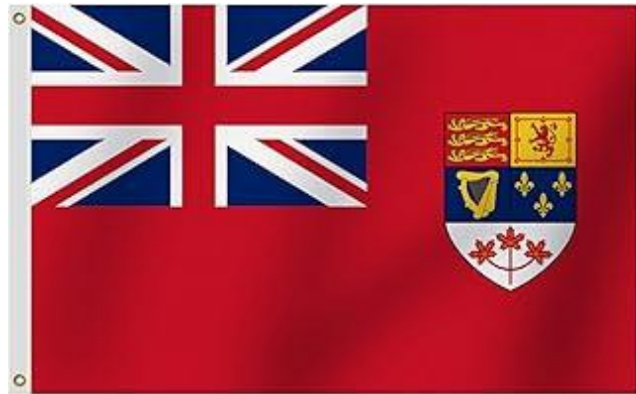


## Unusual Duties of a District Warden

I have written before about district wardens and their more well-known responsibilities like fighting forest fires, chasing poachers and predator control, but there were more unusual duties.

### Flying the Flag:

After World War Two and before Canada adopted the Red Maple Leaf as our National Flag, Canada used the Canadian Red Ensign as its flag. The Red Ensign was a British Commonwealth flag with the British Union Jack in the top left corner and a Canadian crest in the bottom right. As



an outpost of the Canadian Dominion, Warden's District Cabins were obliged to fly the Red Ensign. Protocol for the Ensign was that it could only be flown from sunrise till sunset, which meant it had to be raised every morning and lowered every evening. Although it was the district wardens' responsibility it was often delegated to one of the warden's family members.

The flagpole was typically a nice straight pine pole cut somewhere in the district, peeled, dried and painted white. It was supported between two sturdy posts of similar origin and preparation. The posts were sunk deep in the ground spaced just so the flagpole could fit between them. The flagpole was secured between the two posts with two metal rods that passed through both posts and the flagpole. One rod near the base of the posts and the other near the top. Removal of the bottom rod would allow the pole to be tilted over for maintenance. Some clever individuals at the park had invented a wooden skid that would slide into the box of a warden's truck. The skid had a large wooden roller that protruded over and above the tailgate of the truck. Every summer the flagpole would be lowered by backing a truck with the skid up to the flagpole with the roller just touching the flagpole, then removing the bottom rod and gently driving the truck ahead lowering the flagpole to horizontal so it could be given a fresh coat of white paint, a new pulley and rope as well as a fresh clean flag. The truck would then be reversed and the flagpole rolled back up to its vertical position. Wardens would usually partner for this job and the flagpole was all set for another year.

## Reading the Weather:

From the 1930s through to the 1960s weather data was collected manually. Many district warden's cabins were equipped with weather stations. The weather station consisted of a tall pole with an anemometer to read wind speed, a rain gauge and a louvered cabinet with other instruments. The data collected was current wind speed, precipitation, high and low temperature for the past 24 hours and relative humidity. The information was entered on a paper spreadsheet. The results were telephoned to Waskesiu head office and then relayed to the Metrological office at the Prince Albert airport where it was amalgamated into the National Weather Forecast. Since the readings were to be taken at 12:00 noon each day, when the warden was often away on patrol, reading the weather and communicating the result to Waskesiu often became a task carried out by the warden's wife. The weather station was subject to the same annual maintenance as the flagpole.

## RCAF Ground Observer Corps.

In the period immediately after World War Two there was considerable concern with the rising cold war and fear of air attacks from Russia. Radar air defence systems, like the DEW and Mid Canada lines were being built but not fully ready for service. The RCAF Ground Observer Corps was created as a stop gap measure to get eyes on the sky to watch for potential bomber attacks. District wardens became part of the Ground Observer Corps. Members received training on aircraft recognition and issued with the "Aircraft Recognition for the ground observer" manual. The manual included data on just about every aircraft of the day. It included photographs, silhouette drawings, military markings and other data like size, service ceiling, load capacity and flight range. There was also a smaller more portable manual that was more specific to military aircraft. To my knowledge no enemy aircraft were ever spotted.

