



O'Hara '87

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Superintendent's Message

Lake O'Hara is a "mecca" for the mountain hiker visiting the Canadian Rockies. Within its compact cirque and hanging valleys, some of the best known and traditionally used trails can be found. This evident popularity makes it a little uncomfortable for the park superintendent. Every action taken by Environment Canada-Parks to enhance the protection of the area and the enjoyment of the visitor is watched with critical eye. Last year we received both criticism and praise for the trail work proceeding at O'Hara. Your questions and doubts are not unique to O'Hara, but are shared by visitors in all wildland areas.

We will continue to work closely with the Lake O'Hara Trails Club to explore how we can best meet our objective of providing hiking opportunities while also protecting the resources and aesthetics of O'Hara. At O'Hara, the management practices in place reflect a thoughtful search for the most appropriate solution.

Admittedly, Parks does not have all the answers when it comes to building environmentally stable and aesthetically pleasing trails. Obviously the outcome of some of our decisions will be watched closely and I will again receive comment on your view whether we are meeting the mark or not. I appreciate the comments, but ask you to consider the alternatives when preparing them.

Keep asking questions and have a good hike!

Ian Church
Superintendent
Yoho National Park



Opabin Plateau with Cathedral Mountain.

O'Hara's Answer to Damaged Trails

Years of heavy use have severely damaged O'Hara's trails. Trails that once meandered delicately through a subalpine meadow now exist as deep, muddy furrows. A muddy trench makes for a most discouraging hike. Most hikers choose to walk on somewhat drier ground next to the trail. The result is a dramatic widening of the tread, or a tangled web of braided trails.

Several environmental impact studies came up with three options for the area:

1. Close trails and wait for the environment to recover. This could in some cases take decades.
2. Limit access to fewer people.

3. Fix the trails to withstand the volume of traffic.

Specialized trail construction was seen as the 'best' choice. Yoho National Park has experimented with various approaches to trail improvement.

Alternate Routes

- have been successful where drier or more durable terrain is available. Re-routes on similar terrain simply postpone the same problems.

Laying Rock Slabs

- has also been successful in some areas but rock supply is limited, transport is costly, and in some areas whole slabs disappear into the mud.

Loose Gravel Fill

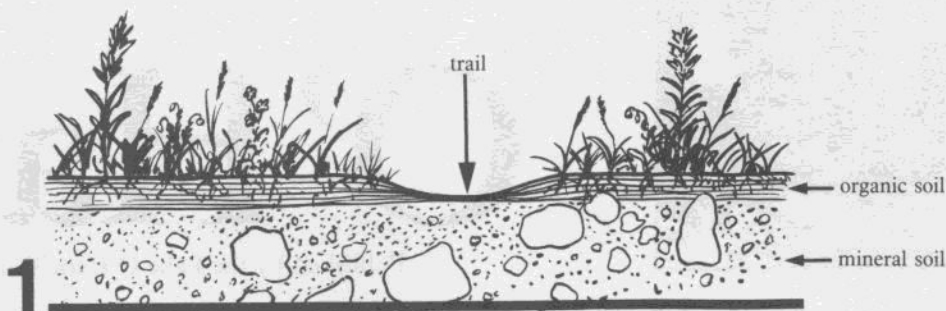
— a very temporary solution, as gravel either sinks into soft subsurface or gets spread out into surrounding vegetation.

In the most difficult problem areas, after much consideration, the best solution was judged to be a raised trail of compacted gravel, bounded on all sides by log retainers. These "turnpikes" are built in 4 m long sections with spaces between them to allow for drainage. With time, these turnpikes will blend very well into the surrounding landscape. As most of the trail work is still new in O'Hara, this is not yet obvious. The vegetation grows around the timbers and the earth tones of the tread match those of the surrounding terrain.

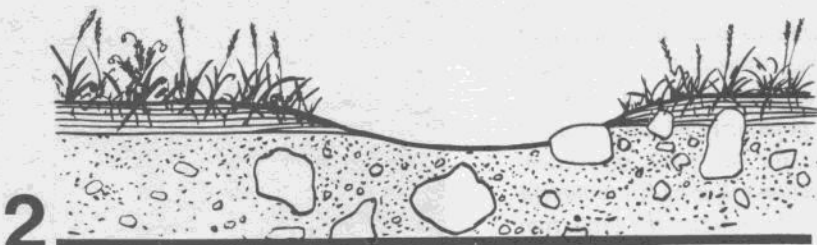
O'Hara trails do get heavy use, but this use seems to be well dispersed. Trails don't have to be as wide as in other high use areas such as Bow Summit and Sunshine Meadows (both in Banff) where wide trails are absolutely necessary to withstand the sheer volume of traffic.

At O'Hara, special effort is made to construct a durable and aesthetically pleasing trail system which is environmentally sound. Your suggestions and comments are welcomed.

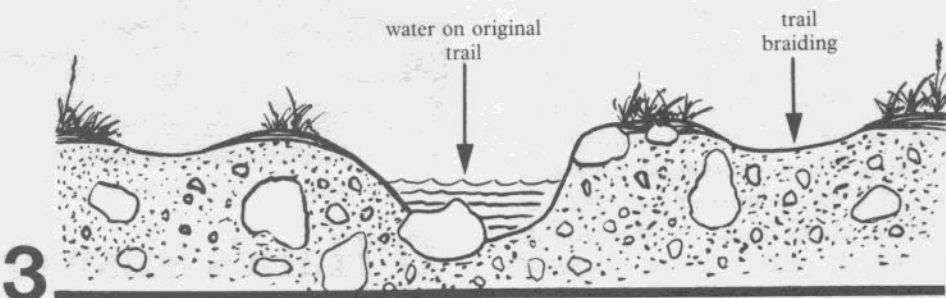
Cross-Section of an O'Hara Trail



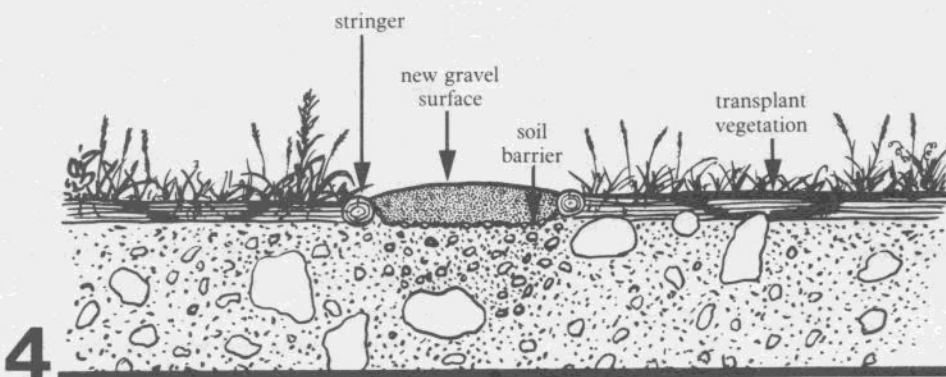
Cross-Section through a new trail



Continued use widens trail



New trails are formed



Trail after rehabilitation

Trails Bulletin

What trail work is happening at O'Hara this year?

Opabin-Prospect Trail Upgrading:

July 15th to October 1st

This project will involve upgrading of the entire trail. Helicopters will be used for about 2 days. It is recommended that visitors avoid using this trail in 1987.

Moor Lakes Trail Upgrading:

August 1st to September 15th

Work will be done to prevent further deterioration of the shoreline on Moor Lakes. Two small problem areas on East Opabin and one on West Opabin will be improved as well.

Routine maintenance and minor repairs on all trails will be undertaken by Yoho's trail crew throughout the summer. Work will include repairs to bridges, installation of water bars, rehabilitation and route marking along alpine trails.

Goodbye Allan . . . Hello Tom!

The rumors have been verified — Allan Knowles will not be returning to Lake O'Hara this summer! While Allan takes up new responsibilities in the frontcountry, as duty warden and working on impact assessment, this year's O'Hara visitors will be making the acquaintance of Tom Ross.

For the last ten years Allan has been a familiar sight on O'Hara's trails, striding along, pack on back, seven days a week all summer long. Trips out — to restock supplies, to do laundry, to get a haircut — were limited to a few hours every third week.

But is was back in 1956, towards the end of a summer spent working with the highway construction crew, that Allan first heard of Lake O'Hara from a park warden. "Incredible," is how Allan describes his first impression of the area. His first trip only took him part way to Lake Oesa but, like so many visitors, he was hooked and was to return again and again.

Over the following thirty years Allan saw the area undergo many changes — introduction of a bus service in 1959, road improvements, the end of horse use, removal of the campground from the meadow to its present location in 1974, new ownership of the lodge in 1975.

Allan joined the warden service in Banff in 1972 and spent the next two years as district warden in the Egypt Lake area. In 1975 he was transferred to Yoho and the following year was assigned to the Lake O'Hara district.

As the O'Hara warden, Allan has cared deeply about both the area and its visitors. He has long campaigned for providing continuity of service to visitors and has been a prime mover behind improving trails — both to keep visitors' feet dry and to minimize the impact on a beautiful yet vulnerable environment.

The requirement for the trail work going on today was recommended in an interim Trail Management Plan Allan drew up in 1980. This plan also set the stage for a trail transect program to monitor the effects of use and erosion on trails by measuring changes over a period of time.

Allan says he'll miss O'Hara and wishes Tom Ross good luck and a pleasant summer.



Allan Knowles — caring deeply about both the area and its visitors.

Help For Trails

This summer a \$1.00 surcharge has been added to each adult bus fare. The money raised through this surcharge will go directly to the Lake O'Hara Trails Club to be used for their continuing project of trail improvement. In this way, visitors will be contributing directly to projects that will preserve the experience that is O'Hara.

Yoho Invites the World!

Serengeti, Olympic, Everglades, Mount Everest, Galapagos, Great Barrier Reef . . . all are World Heritage Sites and national parks just like Yoho.

From August 18-24th, Yoho National Park will be at the centre of the world stage, hosting for the first time part of the 21st International Seminar on National Parks.

The Lake O'Hara area will get special scrutiny. Delegates will make a number of field trips into the area to look at trail restoration, and to participate in a planning exercise.

This prestigious seminar attracts experts on parks and reserves from around the world. This year, delegates from over thirty different countries will attend. After Yoho, the seminar participants move on to parks in the United States and Costa Rica.

Bears— What do those signs really mean?

Seeing a warning notice doesn't necessarily mean you'll meet a bear. Not seeing a notice doesn't mean that you won't see a bear either. The key thing to look for on any signs you see is whether they say 'Warning' or whether they say 'Closure'.

If a sign uses the word 'closed' or 'closure' it means just that. It has been put there because there is a threat to public safety — perhaps due to persistent sighting of a sow and cubs or because live traps or snares have been set. Park regulations prohibit entry into an area posted as closed.

You're much more likely to see a notice that says 'warning' and urges you to 'travel with caution'. This means that a bear has been sighted recently in the area, increasing chances of a possible encounter. To clarify the signs, wardens will also post **when** and more precisely **where**, as well as helpful details explaining the reason for the warning.

The warning sign does not mean that you **will** see a bear. Nor does it mean that you should stay out of that area, though if the thought of a possible encounter makes you nervous you may want to change your plans. A possible hazard exists and you should certainly remain alert but, ultimately, it's your choice.

Certainly the O'Hara area is no more popular with bears than similar areas in Banff, Jasper, Kootenay and Yoho National Parks. Since alpine and subalpine areas generally are important habitat for the park's grizzly bears, hiking in a group is recommended. If bears are seen in the O'Hara area, it is most frequently in McArthur Pass and over Odaray Plateau to the Cathedral and Duchesnay Basins area.

Watch for notices and stay off trails that are closed. Read 'You are in Bear Country' for further information on bears and safe hiking practices.

Please report any bear sightings to the park warden at Lake O'Hara or at any park Information Centre.



Peter and Catharine Whyte, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Adeline Link bailing a leaky rowboat, 1930. Photograph by George K.K. Link.

Adeline — A Trail in Her Memory

Few people know it as anything other than 'the trail around the lake.' Yet it is more than that. It is a legacy left by a few visionary trail builders, shared by modern day visitors to O'Hara.

George G. ("Tommy") Link and his wife Adeline spent fourteen summers creating their vision of Lake O'Hara. Lazy summer afternoons found them rowing the lake, exploring the shoreline and trying to find ways to build a trail along its shore.

It was August 1943 when Tommy and Adeline, Carson Simpson, and Walter Feuz with his son Ronnie began work on the shoreline trail. Adeline de-

dicated herself to fixing hearty meals for the men, checking their progress as supper time approached. By September the trail was complete and Adeline was the first to walk the new way.

Only two months later, Adeline died. Tommy was devastated. The little group of trail builders decided to dedicate the new trail to her memory. For the remainder of his life it was the memory of Adeline that would spur Tommy into finishing the vision they shared of a network of trails at O'Hara.

This summer, forty-four years later, the Lake O'Hara Trails Club will re-dedicate the Adeline Link Circuit with the installation of a small plaque.

Volunteer Trail Improvement Program

Since 1983 visitors have been helping with trail improvement on the Adeline Link Circuit. Volunteers pick up small canvas bags of gravel from the front porch of O'Hara Lodge, dump the gravel at designated drop sites along the trail and return the empty bags to the lodge. Once the pile at the drop site has accumulated, members of Yoho's trail crew spread the gravel on the trail.

The result over the years has been elevation of the trail tread in several areas prone to flooding during high water. This spring the program re-

ceived some natural assistance when an avalanche barreled down Opabin Creek, right through the trees to the lake. It deposited a large amount of gravel within forty metres of one of the drop sites! Evidence of the debris carried by the slide can still be seen from the Adeline Link Circuit near Opabin Creek.

Brian Hall, Backcountry Maintenance Coordinator for Yoho National Park, would like the volunteer work to continue. A sign near the front door of the lodge tells where to find the drop site. Would you like to help out?

Lichen Enchantment

Splashes of pale green and gray and ruddy orange colour the face of bare rock. Feathery fronds droop from branches and tiny ruffs of bright green catch your eye from the forest floor.

They're all lichens, the happy marriage between two distinct plant types — an alga and a fungus. Survival of the organism is a classic relationship based on giving and sharing. Sounds ideal doesn't it! The alga produces energy through photosynthesis, then transfers it to the fungus. The fungus provides the growing body of the lichen; a home and shelter from wind, sun and cold.

O'Hara hikers will see lichens everywhere. They serve as food for goats and smaller mammals, provide shelter for a multitude of insects and serve as nest-building material for birds.

Lichens are probably the most successful organisms to survive the severe alpine winters and brief but glorious summers — so successful that some have been known to thrive for up to 4,000 years.

Signs of the Times . . .

Parks' staff are putting the finishing touches on the design of new orientation signs proposed for Lake O'Hara.

Signs to be located at the gate are designed primarily for first time visitors and provide an introduction to this beautiful area. Visitors who learn too late that they need bus reservations will be directed to areas 10-40 minutes' drive away where they can enjoy experiences and habitats similar to O'Hara's.

Staging area signs will be placed near the warden cabin, close to the site of a planned day-shelter. Attractive low-profile panels will provide orientation to O'Hara's network of trails.

Produced by the Lake O'Hara Trails Club volunteers in cooperation with Yoho National Park.

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