



# O'Hara '88

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## Day Visitor Complaints . . . We Are Listening



*Staging area for new interpretation and orientation panels.*

Two long-standing beefs at Lake O'Hara are going to be addressed this year - the lack of information and proper facilities for day visitors, and the whys and wherefores of the quota system.

There are plans to construct a day visitor shelter near the warden cabin. Information displays are being installed at the gate, the campground and the warden cabin. A study of the quota system has been initiated. While these new initiatives will benefit everyone at Lake O'Hara, the needs of the day visitors, our most numerous user group, will receive the most attention.

Yoho Park management and the folks at Lake O'Hara Lodge have been aware of the inadequate facilities for day visitors for some time. Indeed this is the most popular subject in letters of complaint to the superintendent. The solution to the problem, however, is expensive, and requires careful planning. The lodge itself was only designed to handle its overnight guests, and soon becomes crowded and un-

pleasant on a rainy afternoon. The best solution would probably be a separate building to provide warm shelter, a hot drink and a snack, and some information on the area. The logical site for such a building would be in the "staging area" near the warden cabin. This area has already been designated for new information panels, outlining the various sub-areas within O'Hara and containing some vignettes on the natural and human history. A bus stop at this location and the addition of some public toilets would complete the picture.

But where will the money come from? A proposal from the Lake O'Hara Trails Club, to construct and operate such a facility on a non-profit basis is being reviewed by the Park. Under the proposed arrangement, the club would contribute any operating surplus to trailwork in the area. It is hoped that a solution will be in place by the 1989 summer season.

The quota system at O'Hara has also been the subject of many visitor

comments over the years. First instituted in 1976, the system was designed to limit access in the fairest way possible in order to preserve the fragile natural environment, and maintain the backcountry hiking experience in the area. The numbers chosen were somewhat arbitrary, based largely on a common sense approach. The concept was a new one to park visitors and resulted in some very disappointed people being turned away at the Lake O'Hara Gate. In time however, most visitors realized that a trip to O'Hara meant planning ahead and phoning to reserve space. This applied to overnight visitors as well, as limits were set for Lake O'Hara Lodge, the campground and the Elizabeth Parker Hut. Confusion still exists though, over unfilled seats on the bus. The daily quota for day visitors is set at 36. Once this quota has been filled, no more day visitors will be allowed in, even though there may still be empty seats on the bus.

This year's study will attempt to determine not only how successful the quota has been in terms of preventing damage, but also how it affects the hiker's experience by keeping use within what is known as a "social or psychological carrying capacity" for the area. This is the first time the Canadian National Parks service has studied an example of this principle, and there may be applications to other areas in Canada.

As is often the case, these changes and studies have come about largely in response to comments from visitors. More comments are welcome and should be addressed to: The Superintendent, Yoho National Park, Field, B.C. V0A 1G0.

## Superintendent's Message

Welcome again to Yoho National Park and specifically the Lake O'Hara area.

Depending on when you arrive this year, the most visible change will be the new interpretation and orientation panels at the parking lot and at the staging area at the lake. I hope that everyone will enjoy them and that first-time visitors in particular will find them useful.

The panels at the gate are intended primarily for people who have heard of O'Hara, but arrive at the access road unaware of the need for reservations. To help alleviate these visitors' disappointment - and in the hope of redistributing use to other parts of the mountain parks - we have suggested some alternatives. The destinations we recommend are all within reasonable driving distance, and offer experiences similar or, in some cases, superior to those at O'Hara. One option in the Little Yoho Valley area is the brand new Iceline trail. If you are looking for a change, and a spectacular hike, I can fully recommend it. Last fall, shortly after the Iceline opened, my wife Nancy and my four and five-year-old children spent a day on it. In the eyes of my son, Craig, it was the best trail he had ever walked on.

Back to O'Hara. You may have noticed that we have a new reservation telephone line this year - 604-343-6433. This number bypasses our switchboard, resolving a problem you may have encountered in the past, when the lines from the switchboard to the reservation desk were busy and you found your long distance call picked up by someone who could not help you! We are also working on a computerized reservation system which should speed things up even further.

As I said last year, we don't have all the answers, but the decisions we make are made with the best intentions. If you feel we are missing the mark, let us know. We appreciate your comments, but ask that you consider the alternatives when preparing them.



Ian Church  
Superintendent  
Yoho National Park

## Adeline Link . . . Trail Designation

The past was re-bounded to the present and the future on September 21, 1987, when a small group of Lake O'Hara Trails Club members re-dedicated the Adeline Link Circuit.

The trail was first dedicated to the memory of the departed member of its crew in September, 1945, in a ceremony presided over by Carson Simpson, including Dr. George K.K. Link, and Walter and Ronnie Feuz of Golden. Mrs. Link, first person to walk the circuit about the lake in 1944, died shortly after work on it was complete. Walter Feuz, watchman of the lodge during the Second World War, had been joined by his son Ronnie for company. To work on the trail the Links and Mr. Simpson had permission to stay in the otherwise closed lodge.

That small party intended to make a plaque to commemorate the contributions of Adeline, their chief cook, but the planning and building the O'Hara trails diverted their attention.

Forty-two years later the sole survivor of the original party joined in the small ceremony. He hadn't been to Lake O'Hara for forty years, and noted the trees had grown a bit. He also posed a mystery for questers and historians. When they had completed the trail, Ronnie Feuz said, his father had cut a blaze on a spruce, notching a channel above it to divert the sap, and had entered on it the names of all the crew. He thought it might be near the Warden Cabin, but a brief search did not locate it.

The plaque, erected near Sargent's Point, recognizes the trail's first name and asserts its builders' names. The ways of Lake O'Hara did not just not happen, and it pleases the Trails Club to place a small monument from time to time to honour its predecessors. A substantial history of O'Hara's footpaths appears in Tommy and Lawrence, the Ways and the Trails of O'Hara, published by the Trails Club and available at the Lodge.

## Help For Trails

In the summer of 1987 a one-dollar surcharge on each adult bus fare was introduced to generate funds for the Lake O'Hara Trails Club. This revenue was immediately put to use to construct a new trail across the south end of the Opabin Moor Lakes. The new route provides both access and protection to a sensitive, marshy area, and connects East Opabin to the Highline Scenic route just north of Hungabee Lake. The work was performed by contractor Alex Brook and his trail crew at a cost of \$8838. The surcharge will remain in effect so that future trail work will continue to be funded in part by those who benefit most from trail improvements.

## Bears

Last year was a quiet one for bear encounters at O'Hara. "In fact," said warden Kevin McLaughlin, "we had very few encounters in Yoho generally, even though we recorded more sightings. Perhaps it's because both park staff and visitors are getting better at keeping camps clean and garbage disposed of in appropriate areas. People are becoming more bear-wise when they travel in the park."

Wardens this year will continue to post signs on the trails when there is a threat to public safety. "When we close a trail," said McLaughlin, "it's generally because of persistent sightings of a sow with cubs, or because traps or snares have been set. The important thing is when people see an "Area Closed" sign, they must keep out. A "Warning" sign is simply an indication that care should be taken in travelling in an area."

Visitors are asked to continue to be on the alert. Subalpine and alpine areas throughout British Columbia and Alberta are important grizzly habitat. At O'Hara, this may include Odaray Plateau, the Cathedral and Duchesnay basin areas, and McArthur Pass.

Advice from the wardens is that you read your copy of "You Are In Bear Country" before travelling in back-country areas, and that you watch for warning or closure notices and report any sightings to the O'Hara warden or park information centres.



## The Cabin in the Meadows



1909 Alpine Club Camp

The Alpine Club of Canada seems to belong in the O'Hara Meadows! In 1909 the club selected the meadows as the site of their annual camp. It proved an ideal location and the camp was one of the most memorable in the club's history, seeing "190 under canvas."

A highlight of this camp was a two-day outing to Paradise Valley over Abbot Pass, the Victoria and Lefroy glaciers and Mitre Pass, returning by way of Wastach, Wenkchemna and Opabin Passes and glaciers. This was a trip of which it was said that "no other of such little difficulty gives so fine an insight into the secrets of the mountains."

The hike became an often-repeated event and Lake O'Hara a favorite location, playing host over the years to thirteen ACC camps. Not all were held in the meadows however. Also used was a two-acre site next to Opabin Creek on the shore of Lake O'Hara. In 1914 the club was granted a lease on this lakeshore property. The clubhouse originally planned for this site was never constructed but the lakeshore lease did play a role in the club getting its present accommodation in O'Hara.

During the early 1920s the Canadian Pacific Railway ran a tourist camp in the meadows. With the completion of a new lodge in 1926, the tourist camp operation was moved to the shores of Lake O'Hara, leaving behind one chalet and the small adjacent hut — Wiwaxy Lodge, the oldest building at Lake O'Hara. The ACC surrendered their lakeshore lease and gained title to these buildings, which they have operated since 1931. The larger building was named for Elizabeth Parker, one of the club's founding members.

For information on accommodation in the Elizabeth Parker Hut contact the Alpine Club of Canada, (403) 762-4481.

## No Room At The Inn

There seems to be some confusion over the issue of when and under what circumstances day visitors and campers are welcome at Lake O'Hara Lodge. We consulted Michael and Marsha Laub, who operate the lodge, to clarify the matter.

Non-registered guests are welcome at the lodge daily from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. "We'd just ask that people remove their boots, confine their visit to the main floor - and don't eat their bag lunches in the building" says Michael Laub. At 3 p.m. the lodge is closed except to those who wish to have Afternoon Tea (\$5.00 per person for tea and pastries). At 4 p.m., departure time for the bus, the lodge is closed to all non-registered guests. Meals at the lodge are served by reservation only. Lunch reservations should be made with your bus reservation. For overnight visitors reservations for breakfast or dinner can be made at the front desk.

On occasion there is evening entertainment at the lodge which campers and hut users may attend. Space is limited and, correspondingly, so is the number of people who may attend. Information on these events may be obtained at the lodge.

## Artists

Have you ever wondered who does the art work for the interpretive signs found throughout Canada's western national parks? The panels are usually designed by Canadian Parks Service Calgary-based design team then illustration and production art is contracted out to artists in the private sector.

Illustrations on the new panels at O'Hara are by Dave Whamond - perhaps better known, at least to visitors from the Calgary-Banff area, for his editorial cartoons in the Calgary Herald. The style of the bird's-eye-view map of O'Hara may also seem familiar. It is by Murray Hay whose work has helped keep skiers on track on many of the ski hills of western Canada.



From political cartoons to observations of nature. Illustrator Dave Whamond at work on illustrations for orientation panels at Lake O'Hara.

## For Experienced Hikers Only



Rocks painted with these symbols mark the way on alpine routes. These routes are exposed and steep and should be used only by experienced hikers.

## List Of Publications Available At Lake O'Hara Lodge

**Tommy and Lawrence — \$6.00**

The Ways and Trails of Lake O'Hara  
by Jon Whyte

**History of Lake O'Hara — \$5.00**

by Lillian Gest

**The Magic of Lake O'Hara - \$7.50**

a trail guide by Don Beers

**The Lake O'Hara Trail Map — \$2.50**

by Dr. George K.K. Link

**Trail Guide to Lake O'Hara — \$1.50**

a trail map

### Trails Bulletin

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

**East Opabin Trail upgrading:**  
Mid-July

The project will involve water diversion, tread levelling, revegetation of braided areas, rock steps and rock slab inlay.

Routine maintenance and minor repairs to all trails will be undertaken by Yoho National Park's trail crew throughout the summer.

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

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## Techniques For Trail Improvement . . . A Constant Evolution



*Diny Harrison fitting large slabs to provide a solid, stable walking surface.*

Most of the past two seasons' trail improvements at O'Hara have focused on the Opabin Plateau - a favorite destination area that has long been plagued with muddy trails and early season closures.

To find a good long-term solution to Opabin's trail problems, Brian Hall, Yoho's backcountry maintenance coordinator, did some research into how other parks had tackled similar problems. Based on his findings, and his own experience, he recommended the use of "turnpiking". This technique uses log retainers to contain a raised trail of compacted gravel. The result is a slightly elevated and well defined trail "turnpike".

During the summer of 1986 trail crews started using this technique at Opabin. The result was a durable new trail that remained solid in wet weather, was comfortable to walk on, and protected the surrounding environment. There was only one problem. Many hikers felt the new trail was an eyesore - that the stairs and turnpikes were so visually imposing that they violated the very essence of the O'Hara 'backcountry' feeling.

In 1987, because of comments received from visitors in 1986, plans for improvements to the Opabin Prospect Loop were modified to reduce the amount of turnpiking. In some sections a gravel infill technique was used instead of turnpiking. In this approach, a uniform trench was excavated, lined

with a soil separation blanket, and filled with gravel. Careful attention was paid to the depth of trenching, drainage and proper compaction of the gravel. The result - a trail with a lower profile using the natural terrain to retain the gravel; far less obtrusive and yet still very functional in terms of drainage and durability. Where turnpiking was absolutely necessary, smaller diameter retainers were used and sections were made shorter to ensure better cross drainage.

On the Moor Lakes project, another alternative to turnpiking was pioneered. In an area continually subject to marshy conditions, a 50 cm deep trench was excavated, lined with plastic snow fencing, then filled with rock, covered with a soil separation fabric and topped with scree from a nearby slope. Large rock slabs were laid on to this foundation to provide a solid, stable walking surface. As a finishing touch the original sod was replaced around the slabs, creating an unimposing, natural look.

The Moor Lakes approach is expensive but, according to Vic Bennett, Yoho's trail contracts supervisor, it may provide the solution to the perennial problem of building a durable trail through soggy terrain without creating an unacceptable visual impact.

The process continues. Brian Hall and his trail committee will review the success of this year's work and make new recommendations for next year.