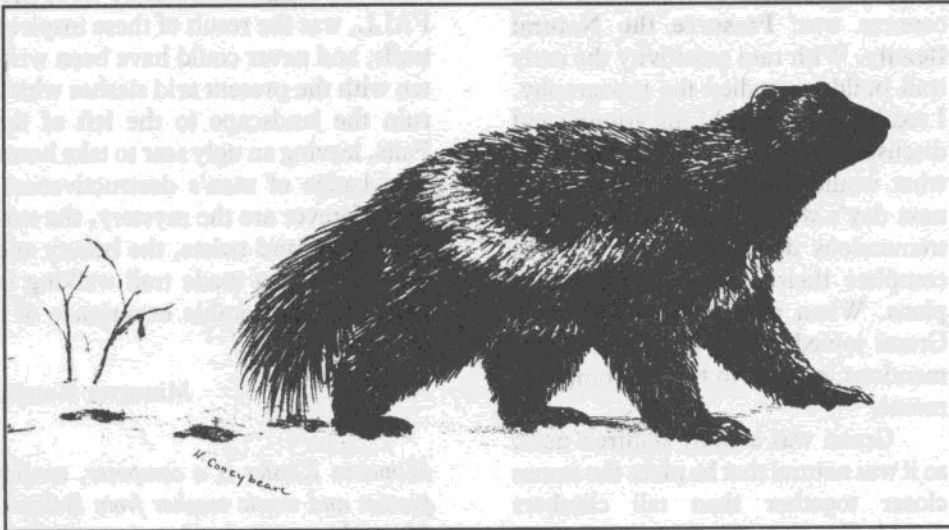




O'Hara '89

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Sketch by Howard Coneybear

The Wolverine – One of Lake O'Hara's Most Remarkable Denizens

Seldom seen, despite roaming up to 20 miles in a single night, the wolverine is one of Lake O'Hara's most remarkable denizens.

Living mostly on scavenged meat, roots, and berries; the wolverine will also lie in wait, hoping to pick off a dozing marmot or ground squirrel. Sometimes it can take game as large as elk or moose with its powerful, wolf-like jaws. However, the wolverine prefers scavenged meat, cleaning up the kills of others or chancing upon the carcass of an unlucky mountain goat who lost his footing.

Wolverines have a ferocious reputation, even known to scrap with bears when confronted at a food source or near their dens. Like other members of the weasel family, they have foul-smelling musk glands to deter their enemies.

The wolverine is at his best in winter. His heavily-furred, wide feet

are a real advantage in deep snow, which slows down large cloven-hooved animals. However, the reverse is true in summer, and the wolverine resorts to vegetable matter, or digging for marmots and squirrels. He can move a surprising amount of rock when chasing a marmot; but, usually the marmot's defences prevail.

Trappers frequently blame raids on their traps on the crafty wolverine, that will eat both the captured animal and the bait. Consequently, wolverines have been poisoned or hunted out of most of their natural range. Of course, this isn't a problem in Yoho where all wildlife is protected, but wolverines do wander beyond the park boundary.

While you might not see a wolverine, they can't help but leave distinctive four-inch tracks with five toes, which are often seen leading over a distant mountain pass, relentlessly searching for the next meal.

Warm Welcome Awaits You at Trails Club Day Use Shelter

At last – a place to get out of the rain, sip a hot chocolate, exchange words of advice and make last minute adjustments to plans.

This is the fruit of over a year's worth of planning, financing and construction by the Lake O'Hara Trails Club. A welcome addition for the more than 3,000 day visitors who enjoy Lake O'Hara's magic annually, the shelter is maintained and operated summer and winter by the Trails Club.

The bus loads and unloads at the shelter, part of which is enclosed, the rest a large covered porch with spectacular views. During the summer months the shelter is staffed and stocked with a variety of Trails Club items; collectables such as pins and crests, trail maps, books and a menu of light snacks and beverages. Among the usual tea, coffee, soft drinks, juice and chocolate bars are such delights as soup, buns, muffins, cookies, squares and fresh fruit. During the winter, the shelter is not staffed but we encourage visitors to use it responsibly.

Please feel free to give us your comments on the shelter's operation. Trails Club members are wholly committed to initiatives like this one to further enhance your experience at O'Hara.

Superintendent's Message

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

A lot has happened since the previous newsletter. The exhibit panels that were slated to go in last summer finally appeared last fall. You will also notice that the day use shelter, being constructed by the Trails Club, is well on its way to being completed. This should solve long-standing beefs about the lack of shelter for people just up for the day. We have also entered the twentieth century by introducing a computerized reservation system that speeds up our ability to process the large number of requests we receive. And those of you who find yourself walking around the lodge this year may notice a very welcome change – a modern sewage treatment plant!

Last year many of you asked about the quota. This summer we plan to assess how the system affects the quality of visitors' experiences. We may then make some changes but these will not increase the capacity at the Lodge, the Alpine Club Hut or the campground. In the future we may apply a similar system to other back-country areas.

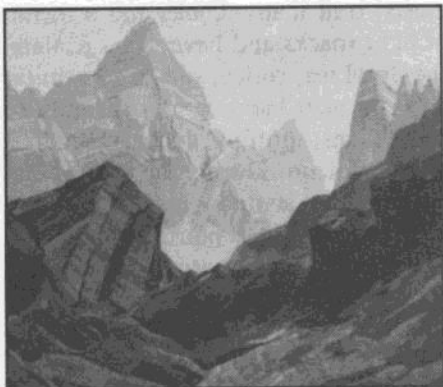
The questionnaire you may be asked to fill out is your chance to tell us what you feel about your O'Hara experience. Please respond as honestly as possible. What we learn from this survey may have an impact on how we manage other areas in the future.

Have a good hike!



Ian Church
Superintendent

Yoho National Park



Mt. Hungabee by Peter Whyte; courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies

Letter from Minuetta Kessler

The lead article in the Lake O'Hara Trails Club Publication of Summer 1988 is entitled: 'Day Visitor Complaints . . . We are Listening' – My article is entitled: 'Old Timer's Complaints . . . Are You Listening?'

Only God could have created the unique paradise that is O'Hara. So impressed were the early trail blazers with this uniqueness, that they were inspired to fashion the trails as only an artist could conceive them. Their chief concern was: **Preserve the Natural Beauty.** With rare sensitivity the early trail builders studied the topography. I recall Simpson and Link arguing and discussing, endlessly, in the evenings, what would be their strategy for the next day's work. They laboured with tremendous dedication, each day, to complete their carefully thought out plans. When park warden Lawrence Grassi joined them, there was a tremendous impetus to their accomplishments.

Grassi was a short statured man, so it was natural that he place the stones closer together than tall climbers would. For this, we shorties are eternally grateful . . . He also possessed

the talent of giving variety to his trails and satisfaction in traversing them. He seemed to walk each step as a pianist would walk, with his or her fingers, savouring the feel in his body as well as the image in his eyes – and even the sounds entering his ears! To bring the trail close to the Seven Veils Falls, as it was called in those days, meant basking in the spray as well as in the music of the waterfall – a rare, wondrous delight. My song, THE OESA WATERFALL, was the result of these inspired trails, and never could have been written with the present arid slashes which ruin the landscape to the left of the Falls, leaving an ugly scar to take home as a badge of man's destructiveness. Gone forever are the mystery, the surprise turns and twists, the beauty and excitement that made trail walking in O'Hara a memorable experience of a lifetime.

Minuetta Kessler

Minuetta Kessler is a composer, concert pianist and music teacher from Belmont Massachusetts and a longtime visitor to O'Hara.

Artists at O'Hara Reveal Startling Landscape Anew

When Walter J. Phillips, Canada's finest watercolourist first visited Lake O'Hara in the mid-1920s, he took himself to Sargent's Point, the place on the lakeshore near where the Warden Cabin now stands, where John Singer Sargent sketched in watercolour the notes for his majestic painting of the lake in the collection of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard, Cambridge, Mass. Mr. Phillips, who gently observed the world of artists as intensely as his eye sought out new compositions, noticed the palette scrapings festooning the branches of the trees about him there, and said many painters in oils must have tried to compete with their American impressionist predecessor. Mr. Phillips, journalist-reporter on the visual arts for a Winnipeg newspaper, noted that Carl Rungius' fine 1924 Carnegie-award winning painting of Lake McArthur had its subject mat-

ter in the O'Hara region, and also that in September a year before his own visit a cougar quietly and curiously followed the eastern Canadian painter J.E.H. MacDonald (oldest member of the Group of Seven) as he had descended on the rocks from Lake Oesa to Lake O'Hara in that wild area of Yoho National Park.

Mr. MacDonald was never known to be as intrepid as his fellows in the Group of Seven. The manager of the lodge at O'Hara, Sylvia "Sid" Brewster, contacted a friend, Peter Whyte, a twenty-year old art student from Banff in 1925, and asked him if he'd like to come up to the area and accompany the older painter.

Peter's wife Catharine – they met at art school in Boston in 1925 and were wed in 1930 – came a little later. In a nutshell that's the history of art at

Continued on next page

Artists at O'Hara

(continued)

Lake O'Hara. Sargent's fine large oil; Carl Rungius' five or six good large landscapes of the region (one of them of Lake O'Hara itself a gift of the artist to the National Gallery of Canada, almost never exhibited); Walter Phillips' exquisite watercolours of the lake and region, and a beautiful woodblock print of the waterfall below Oesa; and dozens of brilliant oil sketches by J.E.H. MacDonald and the Whytes. Over six or eight visits to the gallery of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff, art lovers will see much of what the museum has collected of O'Hara art. But, as at most museums, not all the collection is on the walls at once. Beyond the Banff Museum you will find works in Boston, Hamilton, Edmonton, Kleinburg, and Toronto, but you will have to work hard, since most gallery and museum employees will look at you blankly if you ask to see works from the O'Hara region.

With the exception of John Singer Sargent and his compatriot Aldro T. Hibbard, the O'Hara region, like most landscapes, has been rendered best by those who have known and loved it best. As the harsh light of July and early August gives way to the dramatic light of late August and September, the lakes, the mountain faces and slopes, and the weather of the Great Divide country become more intense.

The days grow sharper yet. Up on the Opabin moors a figure shrouded in warm clothing sets up his easel and his sketchbox. The region shall never be painted finally. The palette scrapings are still there to be found.

A Development Plan for Lake O'Hara

The wheels are in motion for the development of an overall plan for the Lake O'Hara area.

The plan will govern how present concerns and future development are managed. This summer the Canadian Parks Service will be gathering background information to help with planning. First, a visitor survey will give an idea of what is acceptable in terms of crowding and visitor management techniques. Second, a trails study by a private consultant will recommend guidelines for future trail redevelopment so that it is more sensitive to both the physical and aesthetic environment.

Trailbuilders



Lawrence Grassi and George Link

One was a distinguished botany professor from Chicago, the other an Italian coal miner. Both loved the mountain solitude of Lake O'Hara; both chose to share this love with visitors. O'Hara's trails are the fruit of the labours of these two men who developed a mutual respect for each other but never actually worked together.

Lawrence Grassi was 65 when he came to O'Hara in 1956 as the park warden. By then George 'Tommy' Link, along with Carson Simpson, had already built an intricate network of trails. In some respects Grassi and Link shared similar ideas on the aesthetics of trailbuilding, but in others their trails reflect two distinct approaches.

Tommy Link liked to saunter, to

explore his way, to muse along the curious niches of nature. The trails he built, as they wander to their destination, reflect a childlike appreciation for the vagaries of nature. He insisted they be called ways.

The first trail Tommy and his wife Adeline worked on was the shortcut through larch trees to Odaray, where they had a favourite resting spot. The summer before Adeline died, they completed the trail around Lake O'Hara, known today as the Adeline Link Memorial Circuit. Tommy continued their work. In 1949 he and Carson Simpson founded the Lake O'Hara Trails Club whose members today volunteer their labour to maintain O'Hara's trails.

Grassi, a gentle, quiet mountaineer, found intellectual challenge in the labours of trailbuilding. He engineered his trails up rock walls in pursuit of the most direct approach to their destination. He saw trailbuilding as an art in itself.

Grassi began his trail construction around Canmore but is probably best remembered for his mastery of the art at Lake O'Hara. The stone staircases to Lake Oesa and the high trail to Lake McArthur are his legacy.

Grassi and Link had different ideas of what a trail should offer, but trailbuilders and trailwalkers alike can draw inspiration from these two men. They shared a preference for using natural materials and a visionary desire to share the beauty and splendour of their special places with others.

O'Hara's Wardens – A Special Legacy

O'Hara has always had a special relationship with its resident wardens. Of the 33 years since the first of them

took up residence in the cabin by the lake, 29 years are accounted for by just three men, each of whom has made his own unique and valuable contribution.

Lawrence Grassi took on the job at an age when most people today are retiring. He has left us an unparalleled legacy with his extensive trail work – something that is not among the regular duties of today's wardens but was just part of the job back then. Among his accomplishments is the trail to Lake Oesa and its famed "Grassi Steps". Grassi also took good care of O'Hara's visitors. It wasn't uncommon to be invited for tea or to get back to Abbot Hut after a long climb to find a roaring fire fueled by firewood he'd hauled up the pass on an afternoon off.

Tim Auger arrived on the scene fresh out of university. His background

Continued on next page

You can get involved! It is important that the Parks Service know what you, as an O'Hara visitor, want to see here in the future. If you wish to be kept informed or comment on proposals please write or call:

Lisa Casselman
Public Consultation Co-ordinator
Canadian Parks Service –
Western Region
520 220 4th Avenue S.E.
Calgary, Alberta T2P 3H8

A mailing list will be established for all who are interested. Plan proposals will be developed and mailed in the fall for your comment. Make sure your voice is heard!

In Memory of Edith Maurice

When Mrs. Edith Maurice of Victoria died in October of last year, her husband Fred, a longtime O'Hara visitor and Trails Club supporter, asked for donations to the club in lieu of flowers. In her memory, more than \$700 has been received, for which the Trails Club is most appreciative.

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?

West Opabin Trail Upgrading

(from the junction with the Opabin Prospect trail south to the junction with the East Opabin trail)

Mid-July to end of August

This project will involve defining and crowning the trail and the use of rock waterbars, and rock slab inlay. All rock will be flown from adjacent talus slopes.

A 75 metre reroute to connect the West Opabin Trail with Moor Lakes Trail is being considered for this summer if funds are available. Rock steps and waterbars with some switchbacks are tentatively planned.

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.

Coordinators: Cathie Findlay-Brook & Tim Wake

Editor: Maggie Stronge

Designer: Howard Concybeare

Contributors: Michael Morris, Jon Whyte, Ian Church, Cathie Findlay-Brook, Sue Kryss, Bill Coote, Paul Chamberland, Rob Scoble & Cécile Lafleur

Bears?

"Where are all the bears? When we were here before we saw them every night!" The bears are still out there, they just aren't patrolling the campgrounds anymore because we have learned to clean up our act.

"Improved garbage handling has done a lot to reduce the problem of garbage bears in campgrounds," says Kevin McLaughlin, Yoho's warden in charge of bear management. "Now as long as campers keep their campsites clean and their food securely stored there is less incentive for a bear to come into a campground."

The next step is to learn how to keep people and bears out of each other's way in the backcountry. This is year two of a three-year study which will tell us more about the numbers, food habits and seasonal movement patterns of the grizzlies in Yoho and Kootenay national parks. "The more we know about the bears and their habits the better we will be able to reduce conflict," says McLaughlin. "This information can be valuable in locating and designing backcountry trails and campsites as well as assisting us in deciding when to post a bear warning or close an area."

New signs have been adopted for bear warnings and area closures in Yoho to conform to sign used in national parks throughout the region. The new signs are colour-coded to help distinguish between the two. "When we close a trail," says McLaughlin, "it's generally because of persistent sightings of a sow with cubs, or because traps or snares have been set. No matter what the signs look like the important thing is when people see an "Area Closed" or "Danger Area Closed" sign, they must keep out: a "warning" or "Caution" sign is an indication that extra care should be taken when traveling in an area."



A Sacred Place

by Carol Ann Sokoloff
from the forthcoming book

Eternal Lake O'Hara

Tread softly,
you walk
in the garden
of the gods;

their mythical presence
is hidden hard in crevices,
suspected in glens,

most sensed
in the highest places,
where humans
seldom visit.

Tread softly
and be
a welcome worshipper
in Nature's temple;

Tread softly,
you walk
in the garden
of the gods.

Carol Ann Sokoloff is a writer and a frequent visitor to O'Hara. She lives in Victoria.

O'Hara's Wardens

(continued)

in geology and love for climbing made O'Hara an ideal stomping ground. To Auger's credit are the high exposed alpine routes at O'Hara, among them Yukness Ledge, Grandview, Wiwaxy and All Soul's routes. And climbers still consult his photographic record as a guide to O'Hara's climbing routes.

After Tim departed in 1975, a perfect replacement was found to carry on the O'Hara tradition. Allan Knowles' behind-the-scenes work in environmental impact studies, planning and trail work has kept the area much as he found it. He continues today to be a custodian in the true sense, working for the pleasure and reward of seeing 'his' district protected and enjoyed safely by all.