



O'Hara '92

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Planning O'Hara's Future

The 1988 Yoho National Park Management Plan identified Lake O'Hara as one of the areas in the park requiring detailed study because of the intensive development and use it was subject to. Terms of reference were drawn up for a Lake O'Hara Area Plan that would guide the management of the area for the next 10-15 years.

A draft area plan circulated for comment in August 1991 addressed the following topics: protection of the area's natural and cultural resources; the role of the Lake O'Hara area in Yoho National Park and the four mountain park block; the visitor experience to be provided; quotas for overnight accommodation and day use in the area; the upgrading of existing infrastructures to comply with state-of-the-art environmental practices.

Several areas of the plan will be of particular interest to visitors familiar with Lake O'Hara:

▪ **Resource protection:** The area plan reconfirms the Management Plan's direction that resource protection will take precedence over visitor use should the two come into conflict, as it might, for example, as a result of grizzly bear activity in what is important bear habitat. This direction is in keeping with the Canadian Parks Service's legislated mandate which states that ecological integrity will be Parks' first priority.

▪ **Trail standards:** The plan will include trail maintenance and construction guidelines that will enhance visitor experiences as well as protect resources.

▪ **Visitor experience:** Numbers of people encountered on trails (derived from the 1989 visitor survey) are used

to define what constitutes "crowding" or "overcrowding" and the area is classified according to expected levels of use.

▪ **Facility development:** Overnight accommodation will not be expanded.

▪ **Public Transportation and Reservation System:** The existing public transportation system will be available to all user groups on an equitable basis. A quota allocation for the morning buses will be established in the final plan. Several options for day use and campground reservations are being considered.

▪ **Day use quota:** While changes to the quota were considered, the existing quota will be maintained.

The planning team received over 100 responses after the open houses held in Field and Lake Louise and from the 600 plan highlights sent out in August.

Marmots Play Where Eagles Soar



If you've ever felt summer at O'Hara is all too short, it's even more so for the hoary marmot!

Emerging from hibernation lean and hungry in May, these large, robust members of the squirrel family have

less than four months to mate, rear young, and eat enough food to survive the next eight months of hibernation.

Marmots reproduce soon after they emerge from hibernation. The colony usually includes several males, each with a harem. Each male mates with several females, ensuring that many offspring are added to the population each summer. One month later, females give birth to four or five pups each.

That leaves the rest of the summer for filling up on alpine flowers, grass-

es, roots and berries, and watching out for predators such as golden eagles and grizzly bears - and for play.

Marmots are sociable creatures. With young of the year close by, they spar and wrestle together with contestants rolling down a slope together, only to climb back up for a second round.

Then, perhaps even before the last colourful fall days at O'Hara are over, it's time to retire for the long winter sleep. Marmots are true hibernators.

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Superintendent's Message

Again, I have the pleasure of welcoming you to Lake O'Hara. Since writing this column last year, several significant developments have occurred, many of them initiatives that are a product of both societies' and governments' increased awareness of the importance of environment as being a major concern, not only in Canada, but globally. Increasingly, the Canadian Parks Service, as part of Environment Canada, is being required to assume a leadership role, not just for protecting the resources within the boundaries of National Parks, but to work with others to ensure the ecological integrity and ecosystems that the Parks are part of, are sustained. This is a daunting challenge for us all. It takes us beyond the role of stewards for our small pieces of the earth to assuming responsibility as environmental citizens for our regional, national and global environments.

Yoho is engaged in three unusual experiences. The first is that of the management of Lake O'Hara area by restricting levels of use through managing the quota. The Area Plan, which is soon to be released, will guide us in this specific approach in stewarding a small piece of the Park.

In the Yoho Valley, we are conducting a national experiment in the model known as "Limits of Acceptable Change". This model is unlike Lake O'Hara in that environmental and social stress indicators are identified up front. Management actions are activated when these indicators begin to suggest we are approaching critical levels of stress.

The final experiment is occurring in the Field townsite. Field is being recognized as a National Energy Demonstration Site as part of the Canada Green Plan. We will be looking at managing both the demand and supply side as well as instituting a "Limits to Growth" model. Coupled with the energy demonstration project we are pursuing a waste management/minimization demonstration project as well, which will go beyond waste management that has occurred in the past. We are now looking at integrated waste management minimization which will include piloting systems to both reduce internally, recycle, and in some cases, minimize waste generation at the front end. If we can do it in a Park with classic problems of wildlife/garbage conflicts and toxic and hazardous waste management, we should be able to apply the approach in other Park areas.

The Canada Green Plan recognizes that the National Parks provide unique opportunities to not only test such systems, but to also showcase them. If you are interested in participating in any of these exercises, I welcome you to discuss it further with Parks staff.

Have an enjoyable visit!

Ian Church, Superintendent
YOHO NATIONAL PARK

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Their metabolism slows to a near standstill, allowing them to survive solely on their accumulated fat, seldom waking up during the eight to nine month winter.

Hoary marmots can measure as much as a metre (3 feet) in length and weigh up to 9 kg (20 lb). The fur is silvery - "hoary" - at the chest and shoul-

Yoho's Grizzlies in Peril

In some respects a projected three-year study of grizzly bear habits and habitat in Yoho and Kootenay national parks was a fizzle. An unexpectedly high mortality rate - eight out of eleven collared bears dead or disappeared - meant a period of adjustment for researchers.

The remaining collared population may not have been truly representative. Almost all the bears studied were in the southern half of Yoho and the northern half of Kootenay. But by focusing on specific backcountry sites, and analyzing scat and available vegetation, biologists began to get a better idea of what bears were feeding on throughout the season and where they were finding it.

Definite patterns are emerging:

- The Helmet Falls basin and Goodsir basin appear to be key habitat areas.
- Territoriality may not be as important as once thought. There is substantial overlap of home ranges, and sharing is common where food sources are plentiful.
- Wolverine Pass may be a drain on the grizzly population, as bears cross onto provincial land where they can legally be hunted.

And one thing becomes clearer all the time. In order to sustain a viable

population, the Canadian Parks Service is going to have to work with the British Columbia government, which manages adjacent lands.

Since 1968, the B.C. government has banned both bear baiting and the killing of females accompanied by young. It has also closed the fall season.

But in the Kootenay region 411 permits were available for the 1991 limited entry spring hunt. Of these, 46 were for areas adjacent to Yoho and Kootenay park boundaries.

On average, 80 bears a year have been killed in the Kootenay region. Logging roads have made prime grizzly habitat close to the parks' boundaries more accessible. Many "park" bears have been tracked into these adjacent lands.

Biologists are now looking for assistance from forest companies, guides and outfitters, tourist operators and private donors to continue the study.

If the study is extended, next season will concentrate on trapping in the northern part of Yoho and the southern part of Kootenay in the hope of getting a more accurate representation of the grizzly population.

Life membership in the Lake O'Hara Trails Club is available at Le Relais for a mere \$25. For this you will receive this newsletter annually and help support club activities in the Lake O'Hara area.

We Need Your Help!

Your donation to the Lake O'Hara Trails Club will help further the preservation of Lake O'Hara and its trail system. The Trails Club is a registered non-profit organization and will issue a receipt for income tax purposes. You may donate directly to Le Relais, or mail your donation to:

The Lake O'Hara Trails Club
Box 1677, Banff, AB T0L 0C0

Thank You!

Would you like to join us?

O'Hara - Something for Everyone



"Things at O'Hara have changed and yet they remain the same. The mountains are the same and the type of people who come here."

- Muriel Aylard

The Alpine Club of Canada's 1925 camp was held in a clearing at the edge of Lake O'Hara near the Opabin outlet. As was the custom, participants had to go on a trial climb and prove themselves to the Climbing Committee before being selected to go with Swiss guides or volunteer guides on expeditions to higher peaks.

Among the first-time participants was young Muriel Aylard of Victoria. That year she went on expeditions to Wiwaxy Peak, Mt. Yukness and Mt. Lefroy. Since then she and her sister Aileen have made repeated visits to the area.

Mountains had always been a presence in the Aylard sisters' lives. The family had moved from the small mining town of New Denver on Slocan Lake to Victoria in 1911, but came back frequently to spend the summers in New Denver. So perhaps it was not surprising that, after high school, Muriel chose to study geology

at the University of British Columbia, later completing graduate study at McGill.

In the early years at O'Hara, Muriel recalls, people came primarily for climbing, hiking and fishing. Many of the people who came cared about the environment and the beauty of the place and returned year after year.

Nowadays at O'Hara Aileen and Muriel enjoy leisurely walks around the lake, stopping frequently to observe the alpine flowers along the way. Over the years they have garnered a rich source of information about the flowers, which they are always ready to share with other guests at Lake O'Hara Lodge.

"O'Hara has something for everyone," insists Muriel. "In all my years here I have never known anyone who did not feel that they had pleasure and peace of mind being at O'Hara - a renewal."

Walk Softly

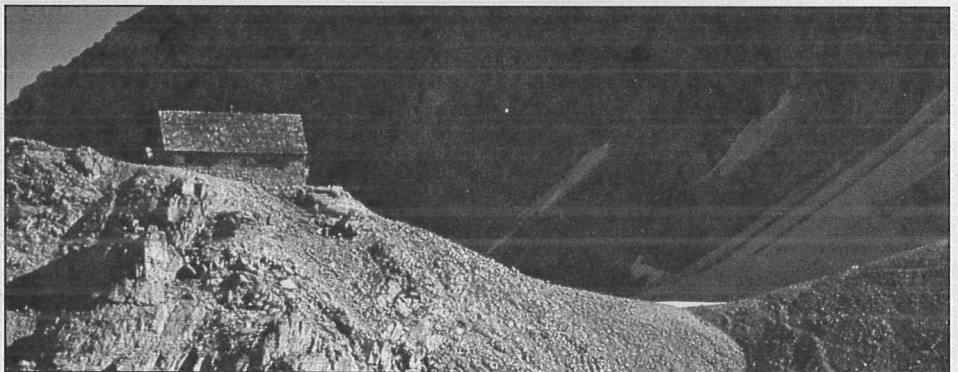
It's hard to imagine that one person hiking a trail could do much damage. But how about the 120 people a day over 100 days a year that visit O'Hara? The area's flower-strewn meadows and lake shores - its most loved and visited destinations - are the most vulnerable to damage, and 12,000 people add up to potential disaster. The way you hike makes an enormous difference.

▪ **Remain on the trail no matter what the conditions.** Microhabitat alongside the trail is fragile. Hikers who choose the upper edges of the trail to keep their feet dry create furrows where erosion can get a start. Soon a series of parallel rutted paths develop, encouraging hikers to walk abreast. Eventually, you get wide trampled paths. Short cutting on switchbacks also creates new paths for erosion.

▪ **Wear runners or lightweight water proofed hiking boots.** A heavy sole damages the soil base.

▪ **Pack out all garbage and leftover food, but leave all flowers and other natural objects behind for all to enjoy.**

▪ **Be considerate of the other hikers.** Noise pollution from groups larger than about six people, radios and tape recorders are intrusions that can ruin a wilderness experience.



Abbot Hut - Living the High Life

Flanked by Mount Victoria and Mount Lefroy, Abbot Pass ranks as one of the classic settings of Canadian mountaineering. A night at Abbot Hut (elevation 2927 m) is one of the classic experiences.

The hut was built in 1922 by Swiss guides from Lake Louise. Stone for its walls came from the surrounding slopes. Tools, lumber and windows were brought by horses to the Plain of Six Glaciers then slowly winched across the lower Victoria Glacier, beneath a notorious icefall, to the summit of the pass.

If you're a strong hiker you may want to include a trip to the Abbot Hut

as part of your visit to the Lake O'Hara area. Take the Lake Oesa trail. Just before the lake the alpine route to Abbot Pass branches off towards a long scree slope. Over the years hut custodians have carved a crude but helpful path up this scree gully. Allow 3-5 hours for the ascent.

Operated by the Alpine Club of Canada, the hut offers bunks, wood heat, eating utensils and gas cook stove and lanterns. Nightly rates are \$11 for members, \$16 for non-members. Reservations are required both here and for the Elizabeth Parker hut on the meadow near Lake O'Hara. For further information call (403)

Trails Club Members Provide Input to Planners

In May 1991 officers of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club were asked to articulate their vision of an "ideal experience in the Lake O'Hara area in 2005". The club was one of several stakeholder groups being asked by the Canadian Parks Service for input into developing an area plan that would guide future management and the nature of the visitor experience at Lake O'Hara.

The Trails Club decided to ask all members to share their vision. Drawing on the experience and academic backgrounds of members Peg Jones and Carly Thompson, a survey was prepared and mailed in less than two weeks to all 435 members throughout Canada, the United States, Japan, Australia and Europe.

Over 100 detailed responses were received, collated and summarized by late August. The Trails Club executive made presentations to Parks officials at

open houses in Lake Louise and Field, and in a formal written submission.

The message that came through loud and clear was that Trails Club members want to see every effort made to preserve the area in its present state. What the area offers - and what draws people to it - is its geographical and ecological uniqueness and its special beauty.

Members vision for the future includes:

- **Continue the existing quota:** Members feel that the overall ecological condition of the area has improved since the quota was established and that any increase would put pressure on sensitive areas again. It was also felt that increased contact on trails would cause people to leave the trails to achieve the desired wilderness experience.

- **Quota Administration:** Trails Club members are prepared to explore with

Parks ways in which they can assist in the fair and equitable administration and operation of the quota.

- **Trail construction and maintenance:** The Trails Club has been involved with Parks in trail work for many years with obvious benefits to both parties. Members want to continue to strive for trail design that is environmentally sound and as unobtrusive as possible. They are concerned that their contributions be used to enhance visitor experiences and keep visitors on the trails NOT simply to harden trails so that the quota can be increased.

- **No further development or expansion of facilities by any stakeholder.**

- **Continue to limit access:** Members oppose opening the fire road or any other parts of the area to private cars, tour buses, mountain bikes or other forms of transport.

The Trail Ended For Some . . .

JON WHYTE

Writer, historian and poet Jon Whyte, 50, died of cancer in Banff in January. With his death, the mountain community lost a valuable ally and a tremendous resource.

Born and raised in Banff, Jon devoted his life to writing about the history and natural heritage of the Canadian Rockies. He possessed a wealth of knowledge about O'Hara and the early years, and, in 1983, wrote Tommy and Lawrence, a romantic account of the work done at O'Hara by Dr. George K.K. Link and Lawrence Grassi.

A public memorial service was held at the Banff Centre January 14, honouring his accomplishments.

BOB HESS

Robert L. Hess, enthusiastic O'Hara hiker and fisherman, died on January 12, 1992 in New York city following a long illness. He was 59 years old. Bob, husband of Frannie Aaron (daughter of Maxine and Lester Aaron), first visited O'Hara in 1964 and returned many times. Bob and Frannie's four children - Laura, Carl, Jonathan and Roger - were introduced to O'Hara at an early age.

Bob, a specialist in African history and a leader in higher education in the USA, held a number of fellowships,

including a Fulbright and a Guggenheim. In 1979 he became president of Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, New York. The college thrived under his leadership. The Trails Club, Lake O'Hara, and guests will miss him.

FRED MAURICE

Longtime Lake O'Hara Trails Club supporter Fred Maurice died last September at his home in Victoria. A

retired director of Pemberton Holmes Ltd., he was a lifetime supporter of cricket in Canada and a Life Member of the Alpine Club. In the summer of 1990, to celebrate his 80th birthday, Fred hiked with his family to Lake McArthur during his annual visit to O'Hara.

As was the case in 1988, when his wife Edith died, in lieu of flowers, donations were sent to the Trails Club. In his memory, close to \$1500 was received and will be put towards trail work in the area.

Trails Bulletin

In the fall of 1991, the Trails Club contributed \$5000 in helicopter time and gravel for the upgrading at Schaffer Lake and McArthur Pass. The work was done in cooperation with Yoho Park backcountry maintenance coordinator Frank Doolaar and his trail crew. Clare Cullen, Kristi Walker and Melissa Mauro volunteered assistance.

Trail planner Don Gardner, who recently prepared the Lake O'Hara Trail Guideline for Yoho National Park, has been retained by the club to design and spec improvements to the McArthur Cutoff Trail and to come up with a solution to the extensive braiding and erosion problems in the meadows at Lake McArthur. These designs, once approved by the Parks Service will be implemented this summer and fall with Trails Club funding.

Annual Meeting

The 1992 Annual Meeting of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club will be held at Le Relais at 8:30 p.m. on Monday, August 17, 1992.

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

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