



O'Hara '94

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The Challenges of the Preservation/Recreation Balance

The increasing awareness of the need to make changes in order to protect and preserve our wildlife, and the events of the past few years have led to some new directions in the management of the Lake O'Hara area. For visitors, these changes mean more restrictions on their use and enjoyment of the area. For Park managers and staff, it means more time and energy spent determining what is a reasonable balance between human use and preservation and then establishing, supervising, and explaining closures, restrictions and/or trail relocations. The result is a little hardship all around in order to maintain a better balance in the future and to preserve natural spaces, habitat and wildlife in perpetuity.

At Lake O'Hara the most dramatic conflict is between grizzly bear activity and human access. Since 1975 there have been four documented bear encounters at O'Hara, all on the Odaray Plateau, with two involving serious injury. An investigation during the summer of 1993 by Wayne McCrory and Erica Mallam concluded that the Odaray Plateau and especially the Odaray Prospect area present a greater hazard to hikers than other parts of the O'Hara area.

Their report points out the excellent goat habitat which coincides with what appears to be a regular travel corridor for grizzlies, and suggests that the

In view of this study and observations made over the years by O'Hara warden Allan Knowles, the Yoho Park administration decided to indefinitely close the Odaray Prospect area to hikers. The closure came into effect August 9, 1993. It is important to recognize that the closure does not define a boundary between a 'safe' and an 'unsafe' area, it merely identifies an area where the risk of an injury encounter is greater.

The research into this issue continues. Wayne

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*Helicopter transported gravel is used to resurface the Lake McArthur Trail
Photo courtesy of Don Gardner*

bears may actually be hunting goats in the vicinity of the Prospect. If this is the case, the chances of an encounter between an unsuspecting hiker and a predaceous bear are increased.

The McArthur Trail Project

The upgrading of the trail between Schaffer Lake and Lake McArthur (see map page 5) which began in 1991 was completed in the fall of 1993. The major improvements are in the trail definition, tread surface and drainage, and are the result of a combined effort by the Lake O'Hara Trails Club and Parks Canada. The design work was done by

Don Gardner on contract to the Trails Club. The first phase of the work (from Schaffer Lake to the junction of the trail coming in from McArthur Pass) was

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The McArthur Trail Project

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completed over three seasons by Parks Canada trail crews with some materials, helicopter time and volunteer help provided by the Trails Club. The second phase, up to Lake McArthur, was contracted by the Club to Judd Meagher and his crew from Skyline Trails in August and September of 1993.

This project is an excellent example of the importance of cooperation between Parks and non-profit organizations such as the Trails Club, and the value of raising funds to assist Parks in providing the improvements necessary to protect and preserve a unique area such as Lake O'Hara for future generations.

The breakdown of the Trails Club's expenditures on the Lake McArthur Trail Project is shown below:

1991 Helicopter Time	\$ 4,322.
Gravel	623.
Gardner Associates	1,745.
1992 Gravel	1,129.
To Parks for Trail Crew Work	6,692.
Gardner Associates	1,341.
1993 Helicopter Time	14,516.
Gravel	1,753.
Skyline Trails	12,478.
Gardner Associates	6,752.
Total	\$ 51,351.

When the lower McArthur Trail was closed in September due to the close proximity of bear beds, the upgrading of that section of trail was abandoned. As the crew, materials and resources were already in place, Allan Knowles suggested some resurfacing on the Opabin Plateau in selected areas that were still posing problems for hikers. The figures shown above include this Opabin work.

We owe our gratitude to all those involved in the Lake McArthur trail improvements from the trail crews to the 'idea' people like Don Gardner, Allan Knowles and Rob Hemming. Thanks for a great effort and a great job! We look forward to more of these cooperative ventures in the future as we continue to preserve and protect the Lake O'Hara area by raising funds to maintain its unique trail system.

You can help us by supporting the Lake O'Hara Trails Club and by being careful to stay on the defined trails so as not to damage or erode any of this beautiful yet fragile landscape. A braided trail or an eroded area adjacent to a trail is caused by simple carelessness of individual hikers, please don't be one of them! We

always welcome your comments and suggestions on trail work (or anything else!) at Lake O'Hara. Comment forms are available at Le Relais.

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 at 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?

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.

An Invitation to Participate

Parks Canada is conducting a formal review of the plans that guide the management of the Four Mountain Parks: Yoho, Banff, Jasper, and Kootenay Park. We hope that you will choose to take part in the plan review process. For more information, pick up a newsletter at the Field or Lake Louise Information Centres or contact:

Public Consultation Coordinator
Box 2989, Station "M"
Calgary, Ab. T2P 3H9
Phone/Fax: 1-800-651-7951

M.L. Aaron

October 8, 1900 - April 2, 1993

Lester Aaron first saw Lake O'Hara in 1916 while he was on a horse trip from Lake Louise. Thrilled by the area's sheer pristine beauty, he vowed to return, which he and Maxine did for many years. It was well-known that his face radiated pure joy the moment he started up the fire road. Princeton and Harvard Law School prepared him well for the rigors of heading the family business; O'Hara

regularly restored him spiritually and physically to continue being a truly humane leader in Western Pennsylvania. Most important of all, his beloved family, including the spouses and children of his three daughters and son, shared his love of hiking and relished following him to favorite lunch and napping sites! He lived to a rich full life; he left in peace and now we say a fond farewell.

Preservation/ Recreation Balance

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McCrory was also contracted by Parks Canada to study the McArthur Valley (south of McArthur Pass) to assess grizzly activity, quality of bear habitat, and hazard to hikers. The McArthur Valley trail, as it leaves the Lake O'Hara area heading down towards the Ottetail Valley, was also closed in the summer of 1993 as a result of a non-injurious encounter. The results of this study have led to revised closures shown on the map on page 5.

In June of 1993, with the support of a Parks Canada research permit, Lake O'Hara Lodge and the Lake O'Hara Trails Club contracted wildlife biologists Paul Paquet and Cam McTavish, to investigate the possibility of using remote photography to monitor bear activity in established grizzly travel

corridors such as Odaray Plateau and McArthur Pass. Cam spent about 45 days working with cameras and gathering data on recent and past bear activity. His findings led Parks to close a section of the lower Lake McArthur trail to hikers in September, 1993, as it ran very close to a series of well used bear beds. This lower trail had been slated for upgrading as part of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club's Lake McArthur Trail Project, but as the closure of this section will likely be permanent, the trail upgrade was only completed on the upper trail to Lake McArthur and along the lake front.

With two closures in effect at O'Hara (Odaray Prospect area and the Lake McArthur lower trail) and another closure in an adjacent area (the McArthur Valley south of McArthur Pass) the hiking

opportunities in the area have been reduced somewhat. If this reduction in use will reduce the chances of an encounter between hikers and grizzlies then it is indeed a small sacrifice to make. If it does in fact provide the increased buffer we need between an important hiking area and valuable bear habitat (such as McArthur Valley), then we have increased the chances of sustaining a viable grizzly population in the Mountain Parks. Balancing the need for preservation with a level of human activity to sustain the appreciation and interest required in the long run to maintain the political support for that preservation, is our challenge. O'Hara is one small area in the Parks system, but the lessons we learn here will serve as examples in other areas as bear/human conflicts increase.

Samual Allen Featured In New Book About O'Hara

This summer marks the 100th anniversary of the naming and mapping of the Lake O'Hara region by the young American climber Samuel Evans Stokes (S.E.S.) Allen. Allen is a fascinating character who intrigues followers of Rocky Mountain history, because little is known of his life. In the early eighteen-nineties he spent summers in the Selkirks and Rockies, exploring the Great Divide watersheds and Assiniboine regions and accomplishing first ascents of prominent peaks including Mt. Temple with Walter Wilcox.

Allen and Wilcox were the most experienced members of Yale's - Lake Louise Club of 1894, which set as a goal the exploration and mapping of the Lake Louise watershed areas of the Great Divide. Allen himself was personally fascinated with the unnamed and unmapped ranges to the south, a region he had

heard the Irish prospector Col. Robert O'Hara speak of in glowing tones. In their discovery of the Paradise Valley, the Lake Louise Club, five young men from Yale with little experience in mountain travel, reached as far as Wenkchemna Pass and Walter Wilcox himself ventured over that pass as far as the rocky valley (Prospector's) below. Only S.E.S. Allen was interested in any further exploration beyond that valley and over the next pass.

Samuel Allen set off alone from his camp in the Paradise Valley, early one August morning in 1894, in what the late Jon Whyte wrote of as "the greatest day" of Rocky Mountain exploration. He crossed the Wastach and Wenkchemna Passes descending to the Prospectors Valley (which he at the time named Opabin) where he noted the landmark now called Eagle's Eyrie as a guide for his return journey. He then ascended the next pass, which he

also called Opabin, an Indian name for rocky, and found himself at the high end of the plateau we now know as Opabin. As he was not equipped for any kind of extended journey, Allen had little time for detailed exploration that afternoon, needing to return via the same three passes before nightfall. Nevertheless he spent a little time estimating heights and naming Mounts Ringrose and Huber and Biddle after well-known Alpinists (having already named Hungabee, or chieftain, from the other side of the Valley) and Mt. Schaffer after botanist Dr. Schaffer, a close friend. Allen was hoping to find a pass to the Bow River, which Colonel O'Hara had also been searching for in his visits in the region. No such pass was evident that afternoon, and Allen resolved to attempt a further exploration via the Cataract Creek. That is the route

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Grizzly Bear Study at Lake O'Hara - 1993

From July to September, 1993, Cam McTavish, a biologist with John/Paul Associates of Canmore, was contracted by the Lake O'Hara Lodge and the Lake O'Hara Trails Club, with the support of a Parks Canada research permit, to ascertain if a system of remote photography used successfully on wolves by Dr. Paul Paquet, would provide the means to monitor the movements of grizzly bears. Knowing where the grizzlies enter and exit the area, and the timing of their use of the area, would provide better information for making decisions on visitor trail use. Knowing which game or hiking trails are most often used by bears and when they are used, might allow both the visitor and the bears a greater degree of safety. Adding to the knowledge base of the activity of these grizzlies and thus decreasing human encounters, inevitably protects these threatened animals. This project was designed to function in conjunction with research that is in progress on separate studies of the grizzlies of the Central Rockies Ecosystem.

The basic method used was to set up ordinary 35mm cameras that would automatically fire when a large mammal moved past. The devices used to trigger the cameras were of two types: a unit that detected the presence of infra-red light (body heat), and a unit that detected motion. This second sensor is very similar to the intrusion sensors on burglar alarms. Daily monitoring would reveal how many shots had been taken in the previous 24 hours.

An additional system used was a video camera that was connected to an intervalometer. It was programmed to record one second for every minute. In this way eight time-lapse movies of McArthur Pass were made.

The principle seemed simple enough. Place enough cameras in

the forest at the right locations, and you can determine the movements of bears by studying the time and date stamped photographs. Science and technology prevails. The catch of course is that "Nature" is certainly anything but simple.

Cam soon found that the biggest obstacle he would face was a group of animals that were ingenious, tenacious, and sly. You guessed it.....rodents. Each time a camera system was erected, the clever little devils would quickly find it, and either chew the electrical cables to bits resulting in dead batteries and reams of exposed film of nothing in particular, or they would simply knock everything over during the parties they must have been having on top of the equipment during the night.

While working the bugs (or rodents) out of the system, the cameras ran for 47 days and resulted in photographs of: 41 hikers, 4 porcupines, 4 pine martens and 1 mountain goat. One hundred and eight shots were destroyed as a result of the rodent problem. Although no grizzly bears were photographed, the technique was obviously successful.

In addition to the photography work, Cam tried to gather as much data as possible on past movements of the bears. This involved interviews with many of the long term staff and managers of the Lodge, and with the very knowledgeable warden Allan Knowles, who has patrolled the area for years.

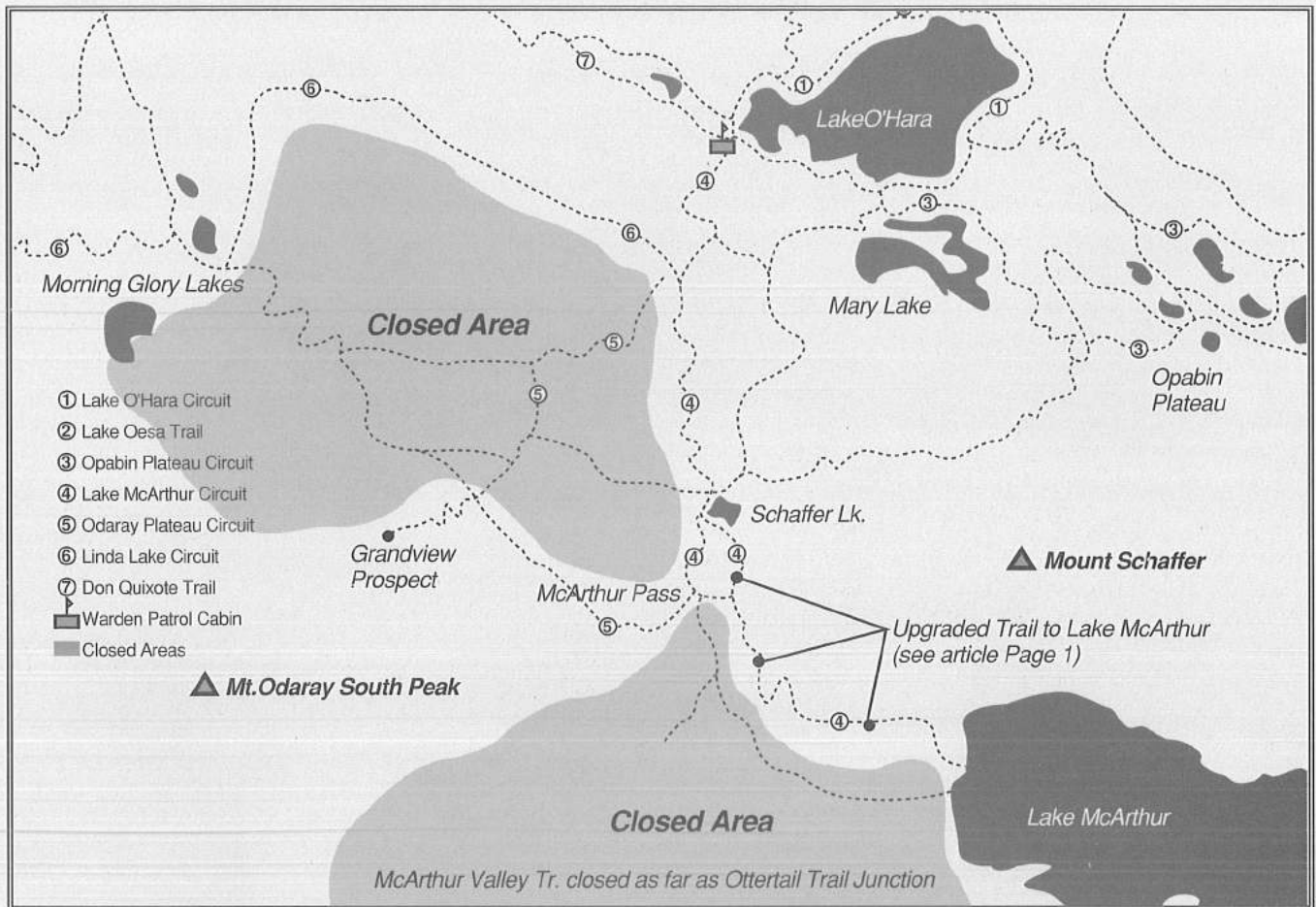
Past movement of the grizzlies was also determined by noting the location of holes in the ground left by the bears digging for small mammals, roots and bulbs. Cam documented 557 holes, which may sound like a lot, but in fact may not be. The study was very intensely concentrated in the relatively small area of O'Hara.

Should the same effort be applied in a region that is 'prime' grizzly habitat, it is likely the number of digs per unit area could be much greater. Signs of their well-used day beds and remnants of several mountain goats that they fed on, were found on McArthur Plateau and in Duchesnay basin. These goats were either killed by the bears, or died of other causes and were scavenged. Two of the beds were located very close to the lower trail to McArthur Lake. Parks Canada wisely decided to temporarily close this section of the trail and continue to monitor these beds.

Bears love to rub themselves on special trees and when they do, their hair is left behind stuck in the bark or the sap of the tree. Only one such tree was found in the vicinity of Lake O'Hara (over two kilometers from the Lodge). That only one tree was found, may reflect the small amount of time that the bears spend in the immediate area. On the McArthur Valley hiking trail that leads into the Ottetail, just south of McArthur Pass where the bears spend a great deal of time, a grizzly rubbing tree may be found almost every few hundred meters. In this same area, which is excellent bear habitat, Warden Knowles counted 57 grizzly scat (droppings) on a ten kilometre stretch of the trail. Again, with the much more thorough search that Cam conducted, one would expect to find many more scats than this around the immediate O'Hara area if the bears were spending considerable amounts of time there (especially considering how often a grizzly may defecate - over five times a day!). Only 24 scat from this year were found.

A simple study to determine the rate of breakdown of the different scats collected during the summer was also initiated. It

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Partial Map of Lake O'Hara Showing Closed Areas

This map shows the revised closure areas designed to reduce bear/human encounters and to protect bears. Detailed background information on these closures is available at Le Relais, the Lake O'Hara Campground, the Elizabeth Parker Hut, Lake O'Hara Lodge and at the Field Information Centre .

Grizzly Bear Study

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can be important to accurately age the deposition of scat found in the field as other events may be associated with that scat.

Tracks of the big bears and several sightings were also noted this season. A great deal of effort was spent to determine which routes are used by the bears when they do pass through. These routes were mapped and will be the focal points of next season's photography.

In addition to the camera work and the data gathering that dealt specifically with grizzlies, Cam began a rough habitat assessment to determine how common the important bear foods are at Lake O'Hara. The timing of the

maturation of these foods was compared to other areas.

In the documented bear encounters at Lake O'Hara, there is evidence that bears feeding on mountain goats may have been an important factor. Indeed, in National Parks' contracted research (by McCrory et al.), the hazard of bears feeding on goats was considered to be so significant, that the Odaray Prospect was closed for an undetermined period of time. For this reason, Cam attempted to monitor goat movements on Odaray Plateau and around McArthur Lake. Several significant goat trails and storm-related patterns of movement

were discovered.

Although the results of season one of this seven to ten year study are hardly enough to base any firm conclusions, Cam and Paul believe that grizzlies found in the area are likely "passing through" and are using the Southwest Lake O'Hara region mostly as a movement corridor between areas of much better habitat to the South and to the North. But caution is advised in believing that if the bears were only found in one area in the past, that they will again be found in that area, and only in that area, in the future. Bears appear to be anything, except predictable!!

Samuel Allen Featured

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O'Hara had taken, using horses, but had been unable to penetrate the glaciers of the Great Divide, with the animals.

Later in the month, Allen began a solo trek from the Hector train stop at the foot of Wapta Lake, but found the going tough and turned back, determined to prepare for an extended journey in the region. His Yale Colleagues again appear to have been uninterested in this adventure, and it was with Yule Carryer, a native Indian who had studied at the University of Toronto and was working for the railway at Field, that Allen eventually succeeded in the exploration in September of 1894. The first night the two camped on the slopes of the mountain Allen named Wiwaxy (an Indian word for windy). Rounding that mountain the next morning Allen and Carryer first glimpsed what Allen wrote of as "as beautiful a lake as I have ever seen". This lake he named Lake O'Hara, for he believed Col. O'Hara to have been one of the first Europeans to have seen it, and it was from O'Hara that he had heard of its existence. Continuing along the slopes of Wiwaxy and Huber, Allen ascended the cliffs behind Lake O'Hara and spent a very cold night on the shore of Lake Oesa, which he named for floating blocks of ice which spilled from the glacier behind it, dotting the sapphire surface with white.

Still looking for a possible pass to the Bow River, Allen decided next to attempt a climb up a gorge of broken rock, rising from the far end of the Oesa. It turned out that Carryer was the first to reach the

top of what they discovered was a pass between Mt. Victoria (which Allen knew as Mt. Green) and Mt. Lefroy. Looking down the other valley, Allen realized he was at the top of what he had called the Death Trap Col, the previous summer when he and Wilcox had attempted the summit of Mt. Victoria from Lake Louise. Allen called this pass the Death Trap Pass, but after the 1896 death of Philip Abbot in an attempt from there upon Mt. Lefroy, Allen wished it to be known as Abbot Pass. It is noted that Yule Carryer built the first cairn on the pass.

The climbers returned to their camp by four o'clock and spent the next night at the shore of the little lake at the foot of the wedge-shaped mountain, S.E.S. Allen named Yukness, an Indian word for wedge. Allen had studied Sanskrit and Philology at Yale. During his explorations he spent his time learning Indian languages from his Stoney packers and used these words to name mountains, passes and lakes in the Rockies.

The following morning the two adventurers were the first to ascend to the now popular hiking spot, Wiwaxy Gap. S.E.S. Allen thought the view, "the most consummate...from an artistic standpoint that I have seen in the Rockies." Further exploration of the Lake O'Hara region was cut short by the onset of snow.

S.E.S. Allen's naming of Lake O'Hara in 1894 took place when he was a mere twenty years old. By 1896 he had produced the first map of the Lake Louise/Lake O'Hara region. His wealthy

family, however, refused to have it printed (in order to discourage their son's apparent mania for mountains) and very soon S.E.S. Allen was institutionalized for schizophrenia, released only by death in 1945. Allen's Yale colleague, Walter Wilcox became a hugely popular bestselling author with his accounts of early explorations in the Canadian Rockies from which he entirely omitted the contribution of Samuel Allen. Only recently has the life and work of S.E.S. Allen begun to be adequately recognized. His story and writings are dealt with in detail in the recently published book *Eternal Lake O'Hara* by Carol Ann Sokoloff.

Events Planned

Yoho National Park has organized a commemorative hike to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the naming and mapping of Lake O'Hara by S.E.S. Allen. The hike will begin at the Lake O'Hara Gate at 10 A.M. on Saturday, July 30 and proceed up the trunk trail to Lake O'Hara. Carol Ann Sokoloff will be along on the hike and will also perform readings from *Eternal Lake O'Hara* at Lake O'Hara Lodge on the evening of July 28th, and at the Lake O'Hara Campground on July 30th. There will also be a book launch for *Eternal Lake O'Hara* at the Information Centre in Field from 11 A.M. - 3 P.M. on Friday, July 29th.

1994 ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club will be held at Le Relais at 8:30 p.m. on Monday, August 15, 1994.



Preservation
through
Appreciation

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

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