



O'Hara '99

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O'Hara Ice

By Joe Shea

Contrary to the many concerns expressed by area visitors during the hot summer of 1998, not all the snow and ice will melt away under the summer sun at Lake O'Hara. High up in the mountains on the Continental Divide, and deep in the shadows of other peaks in the area, there will remain glaciers – large masses of compressed snow that refuse to disappear, clues left behind by one of nature's most powerful agents.

Glaciers covered much of the Rockies 10,000 years ago, during the last great ice age. At that time, the earth's climate was in a cooling period; the summers became cool and the winters even colder. Snow remained on the ground year round, and as this snow accumulated year after year, it would slowly compress under the weight of the overlying snow. It would compress and freeze over and over, resulting in layers of ice that would continually build up underneath. Eventually these glaciers would begin to slide down the mountains, with the help of gravity and the water that was squeezed out of the ice due to the pressure. Slowly they would grind down the mountain sides and push down the valleys, gouging the landscape with ice and rocks. However, the climate began warming up again, and the ice began to melt. It would melt from the valley bottom up, receding into the higher altitudes and shadows where we can see it today.

Glaciers can still be seen today on Odayay Mountain, where the different layers of ice are clearly visible from Grandview Prospect. A trip up to Lake McArthur will reveal Biddle Glacier, sitting at the bottom of Biddle Mountain, which is a perfect example of a cirque, a term which describes a bowl that has been hollowed out by a glacier. Other glaciers can be seen on the backside of Mount Huber, and almost all the way along the divide – Glacier Peak, Hungabee Mountain, and Mounts Lefroy and Victoria.

Opabin Glacier is perhaps the most accessible in the area, resting at the foot of Opabin pass.

The scars left behind from past Ice Ages are also still visible in the area. Striations are the little scratches left by the passing ice, and are used to determine the direction the glacier traveled. These can be found in abundance on the country rocks of Opabin Plateau. While you are up there, take a visit up to Opabin Lake, which is bounded on its southern end by a terminal moraine, a long chain of loose rocks which shows the furthest extent of the last glacier. The rocks actually come from the higher slopes of Mt. Hungabee, Biddle Mountain and Schaffer ridge. These would have fallen or have been scratched off and traveled to the front of the glacier. Yet once the glacier began to melt, they were left behind. Older moraines are also found in Duchesnay Basin, and are experienced as the rolling terrain that is hiked along the Linda Lake and Morning Glory Lake trails.

The beauty of the Lake O'Hara area can be attributed to the glaciers that have come and gone over millions of years. Etching and carving the landscape like a sculptor's hammer and chisel, glaciers have left us with an incredible landscape. All we have to do is put on our boots and explore it.

When he isn't answering visitor questions at Le Relais or out exploring the wonder of O'Hara, Joe Shea can be found in the study halls at the University of Calgary reading up on rocks.

ANNUAL MEETING

The 1999 Annual Meeting of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club will be held at Le Relais at 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 29.

Lake O'Hara Revisited

By Andy Link

In September 1998, after 10 years of planning, my wife, Donna, and I journeyed to Lake O'Hara. My first and only other visit to the lake had been 48 years before when Dad and I went to see the sights and visit Dad's oldest brother.

In 1950, Dad let me choose between hiking in or riding a horse from Wapta Lake. I was 12, and the horse was an easy choice. When I arrived at the lodge, Dad was there to greet me, along with Uncle Kuni. George Konrad Karl Link was Kuni, because when one of his younger siblings tried to say Konrad, it came out Kuni, which stuck. Little did I know that Kuni, Tommy to many, was well known at Lake O'Hara.

Dad and I shared room #5 in the lodge, next door to Uncle Kuni in #4. We slept with the window open, and on clear mornings saw Cathedral Mountain bathed in the orange glow of the rising sun.

Enhancing our stay was Esther, Kuni's favorite waitress, a lovely, low key lady. For me, it was Celine, one of the lodge staff, a captivating older woman of 18 or so. When I checked the lodge photo gallery in '98, the 1950 staff photo included both women.

Each day, Kuni, Dad and I would head out on a hike. I recall lots of uphill walking, and I invariably brought up the rear. 1998 confirmed the uphill walking, but it seemed more palatable, now. Sometimes, we would carry tools to work on the trails. That is when I learned that Uncle Kuni had blazed many of the trails around Lake O'Hara. Another time we saw some trout in a lake that seemed to be no less than 20 inches long. The trout have probably grown with time. I had a fly rod and managed to put a variety of flies right in front of the trout, but all were ignored. Trout aren't hungry at 10 AM!

Kuni, a kindly curmudgeon, told me of the time he was sunbathing in the nude after lunch when a marmot stole his undershirt. I

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On these pages you will learn of the most recent developments regarding trail closures at Lake O'Hara. You will also have an opportunity to hear different perspectives regarding these closures.

Odaray Plateau and McArthur Valley: wildlife and recreation

by Jenny Klafki, Parks Canada

In 1993, following a history of five serious bear-human conflicts and an independent bear hazard assessment, indeterminate closures of McArthur Valley and the Odaray Plateau were put in place. Working with the World Wildlife Fund, Lake O'Hara Lodge and the Lake O'Hara Trails Club, and with the assistance of a research steering committee, Parks Canada undertook a five year socio-ecological research project. The research concluded that McArthur Valley and Odaray Plateau contained important habitat and also contributed to an important regional multi-species wildlife corridor, i.e., one used by mountain goats, grizzly and black bears, cougars, wolverines, elk, moose, wolves, lynx and marten.

Access to key habitats and a continued flow of animals is vital to the long-term survival of a species, especially those requiring large home ranges, such as carnivores.

Parks Canada is progressing beyond single species management (e.g. grizzly bears) and moving towards an ecosystem based approach, which considers ecological processes and relationships between species, as well as social and economic factors. Thus, human use decisions in Lake O'Hara and McArthur Valleys are justified for their ecological gains and not solely for any perceived or targeted bear population or bear activity density. Key ecological goals of protecting habitat and movement corridors in a regional and long-term context have been supported by research.

In addition to helping us understand how animals are using the O'Hara area, the research addressed the social issues around human use as well. This helps us to understand the interactions of people and wildlife and where and how we can manage for a high quality visitor experience while minimizing wildlife displacement. This information also shows how we can lessen the chance of human-wildlife conflicts, especially with

grizzly bears.

Parks Canada is putting in place the following human use management actions to maintain effective wildlife corridors and to ensure a high quality visitor experience in the Lake O'Hara area:

Obtaining Odaray Highline Trail Permits

There are two options for accessing the Odaray Highline trail:

Each day, one Odaray Highline trail permit is issued from Le Relais Day Shelter for a 9:30 a.m. hike. There is no charge, but registration is required in person at Le Relais for this group hike. Fifteen spaces are available with personal groups no larger than four. Ten hikers may sign up for the hike at Le Relais the night before between 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Five spaces are reserved for day users arriving the day of the hike on the 8:30 a.m. bus.

In addition, 20 Odaray Highline trail permits are also available monthly to accommodate climbers and others that require a more flexible schedule. Seven of these are available through Parks Canada at no cost; the Alpine Club of Canada and Lake O'Hara Lodge also have permits available for the convenience of members and guests.

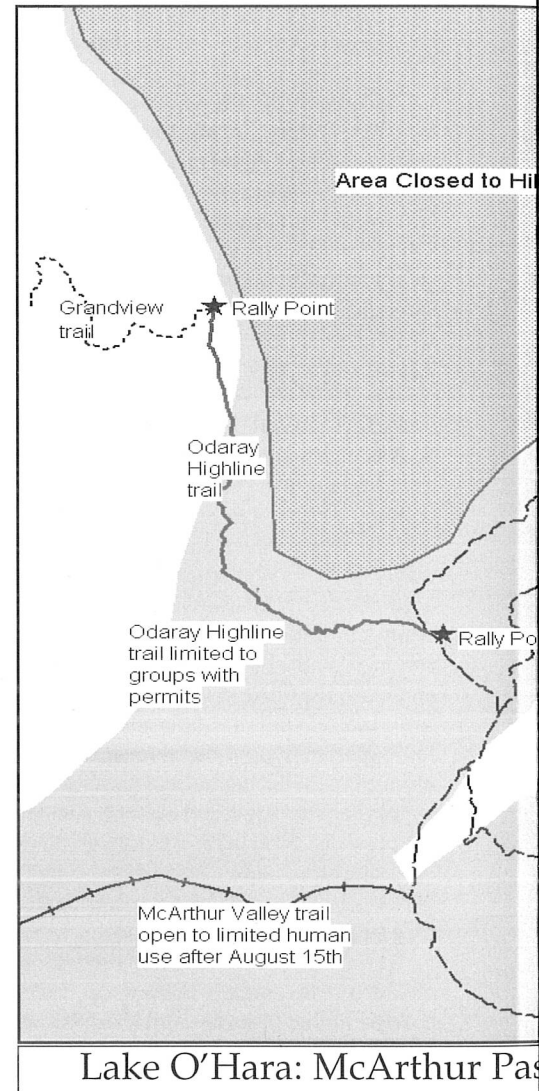
To reserve an Odaray Highline trail permit from Parks Canada, please call the

Lake O'Hara reservation line: 250-343-6433. 30% of the permits are available three months in advance by phone or in person at the Field Visitor Centre; the remainder are available on an in-person 24 hour first-come : first-served basis. Maximum group size permitted is fifteen. A minimum group size of six is recommended to reduce the potential for bear-human encounters.

McArthur Valley hiking permits

After August 15th, two hiking parties per week may travel through the McArthur Valley. A permit may be obtained free of charge from Parks Canada.

Half of the McArthur Valley weekly hiking permits are available three months in advance of the departure date; the remainder are available on a 24 hour in advance first-come : first-served basis in person. A maximum group size of ten is permitted. A minimum group size of six is recommended to reduce the potential for bear-human encounters. Please call the Field Visitor Centre for more information: 250-343-6783.



Lake O'Hara: McArthur Pass

- Trail density will be reduced in the McArthur Pass area by closing and rerouting a section of the Low Level McArthur Lake and McArthur Pass trails. This will reduce disturbance to wildlife in the McArthur Pass area, while allowing hikers access to Lake McArthur via a loop trail with a view down McArthur valley.

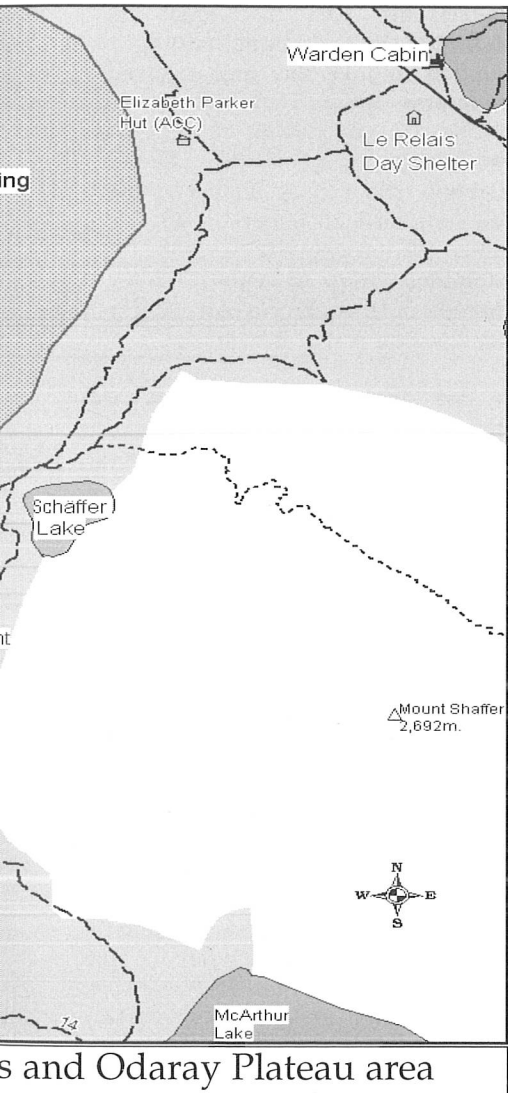
- The existing closures within the

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Odaray Plateau Trail Closures and Permit Restrictions

by Don Gaynor, Treasurer of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club

After reviewing the results of the bear studies conducted in the Lake O'Hara region and attending two meetings concerning the trail closures on Odaray Plateau and restricted access to Grandview, it is my opinion that the continued trail closures and new permit restrictions are not justified.



Map of the Odaray Plateau area

I attended a meeting with Parks Canada in Lake Louise on February 11, 1999, where Parks plan to allow access to Odaray Grandview on a permit basis only this summer, was presented. The number of hikers allowed per day is in the range of 15 to 20 of the 250 people in the area (campers, ACC hut users, Lodge guests and staff, and day guests). On any given day you might have an 8% chance of hiking to Odaray Grandview or climbing Mt. Odaray. Since the start of the bear studies and trail closures, we

have had unrestricted access to this trail without encountering any problems. Those of us that regularly hike in the O'Hara region consider Odaray Prospect and Grandview to be two of the most spectacular viewpoints in the Rockies.

Parks Canada will require hikers going to Odaray Grandview to travel in groups and meet at "rally points" near McArthur Pass for the trip in, and below Grandview for the return. This will result in serious damage to the local environment at these sites. Research has shown that hiking in groups of 6 or more may prevent a bear attack but it is very unlikely that a group of hikers will remain close together at all times.

I am concerned that Parks Canada may go beyond the new permit requirements for hiking to Odaray Grandview and require the use of professional guides. This would mean we will have to make reservations months in advance and pay for a hike that many of us have done on an unrestricted basis for decades.

Odaray Plateau was closed on August 9, 1993 and the reasons given were because of high grizzly bear activity, and to reduce human/bear conflicts. Historically, between August 10, 1984 and September 2, 1993, there were four encounters with a grizzly on Odaray Plateau. Two of these events resulted in serious injuries to three hikers. Keep in mind that there were only two injurious events in more than 60 years of hiking in the area.

Shortly after the trail closures, studies commenced to determine the extent of bear activity in the O'Hara area. These were partially funded by the Lake O'Hara Trails Club. I am very impressed with the detailed data collection done by Cam McTavish, whom I had the pleasure of meeting on several occasions.

In this article I have included quotations from two of the bear study reports, these are enclosed with brackets {}.

{In summary, we conclude that in 4 years of research, the core region of the study was utilized by at least 4 grizzlies - the sow, her 2 cubs, and a medium to large adult.} FPR 1997 page 42.

{We suggest that a very rough estimate of the amount of time that grizzlies spend in the core area would be approximately 10 bear days per

season.} FPR 1997 page 43.

{When we examine the total amount of sign located, we have no reason to believe that bear use/year has significantly changed over the 4 years of study. It is doubtful that use has increased as a result of the implementation of area closures.} FPR 1997 page 43.

{To this point however, we accumulated no concrete data that indicated that the bears that appeared on the Plateau, were there to hunt goats.} FPR 1997 page 47. The possibility that grizzlies were hunting goats on Odaray Plateau was the initial justification that Parks Canada used for the trail closures.

{In 4 seasons of research, we are aware of less than 9 occasions where grizzlies have traversed the Odaray Plateau (approximately 2 passes/season or 1 per 60 days during annual research sessions. The evidence suggests that it is a rare event when a grizzly moves through that region.} FPR 1997 page 63.

{Another serious consideration when interpreting these data is that they easily could lead one to conclude that the area had a tremendous amount of bear activity and thus may have had a greater than expected frequency of occurrence of bears. It must be recognized that the relatively small size of the study area allowed for a very intense and thorough investigation not replicated in most other bear research.} RMGB 1993 page 25. I believe that there are many other areas in the four Mountain Parks visited by hikers that if studied as intensely as O'Hara, would show similar or greater grizzly bear use.

An important concern with restricting access or closing trails is that many people assume the open trails must therefore be completely safe. This is a serious error because a bear could be encountered on any trail. {Grizzly bears and/or their sign were observed in every basin of the Lake O'Hara region during the four years of this study.} FPR 1997 page 37.

The four years of research also recorded the activities of one wolf and one cougar. These animals are mainly active at night and would not be affected by hikers. The mountain goats are accustomed to people and have even been seen in the facility yard of the Lodge.

Anyone that reviews the bear studies will quickly realize that the McArthur Creek and Otertail areas are heavily used by grizzlies. It is

Lake O'Hara Revisited

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was to return the shirt if I ever caught the marmot.

When it came time to leave, Dave Cook, who was in charge of the horses, fixed me up with a fine mount for the return to Wapta Lake. The horse knew exactly where the Wapta barn was and, at the end, covered the last half mile at breakneck speed, in spite of my efforts to slow him down.

Dave, one of those cool, interesting outdoorsmen that every boy should have an opportunity to know, did neat things, like taking care of horses and whittling stuff out of wood. A month or so after leaving, I received pair of boots, about 2 inches high, in the mail, whittled and signed by Dave. I still have those boots.

In 1950, the glaciers in the area were larger than now. As a geologist, I know the loss of ice relates to global warming during the last 20,000 years. With four cycles of global cooling and warming in the last 1.6 million years independent of man's activities, glaciers wax and wane.

In 1998, I saw the lake through trained eyes. Geological features are everywhere. Cyclopean steps on the Opabin Plateau are easily seen from Yukness Ledges. Their gentle southeastern slopes and near vertical northwestern faces resemble 30 m high steps of solid rock cut by glaciers within the last 20,000 years. A piece of sandstone along a trail had raindrop impressions, recording a storm 500 million years ago. Sandstone, outcropping on the north side of Lake O'Hara next to Aunt Adeline's trail, was deposited by braided rivers a half billion years ago. Lakes McArthur and Oesa are tarns left by alpine glaciers. There is much to see here beyond the scenic wonders.

I now have a new picture of Lake O'Hara, but I need more slides for the geology classes I teach. Donna and I will go back to Lake O'Hara to get them.

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 98, Lake Louise, AB T0L 1E0

Odaray Plateau Trail Closures

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puzzling that Parks Canada is going to reopen access to this area where there is a lot of grizzly activity, while restricting access to Odaray Plateau which has minimal bear activity.

I fully support temporary trail closures wherever an animal carcass exists, a bear encounter has recently happened, or a grizzly is in the area. I do not believe that permanent closures are needed. Due to increased awareness by hikers (thanks to the educational efforts of Parks Canada and Cam McTavish) and preventative measures like pepper spray, the risks posed to hikers by bears at Lake O'Hara are minimal, infinitely less than those we take when traveling to Yoho Park by vehicle.

The chance of meeting a grizzly on a trail in the Lake O'Hara area is the same as it has always been during our many years of hiking there. The risk has not changed, but our knowledge of the bear activity has significantly increased due to the excellent work of Cam McTavish.

I urge everyone to question Parks Canada about their reasons for the continuing trail closures and additional permit restrictions. If you agree with me that these closures and restrictions are not justified, please inform Parks Canada. If they do not hear from us, we can anticipate more restrictions to our recreational activity. I also recommend writing to Parks Canada if you support their restrictions, they need as much input as possible to determine the acceptance of their decisions. You can write Parks Canada, Box 99, Field, BC V0A 1G0 or fill out a response form at Le Relais.

References: RMGB 1993 - Remote Monitoring of Grizzly Bears in the Lake O'Hara Area Season 1, 1993; FPR 1997 - Field Progress Report for 1997 Draft Copy.

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.

Odaray Plateau and McArthur Valley:

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Odaray Plateau area will be maintained. Many species use this area as an important travel corridor.

- The McArthur Valley closure will now be in effect from May 1 - August 15th annually to protect important grizzly bear habitat. After August 15th, the valley will be open to limited human use when bear plant food sources are past their peak. A McArthur Valley hiking permit is required to hike this unmaintained wilderness route.

- Human use on the Odaray Highline trail will be limited as the trail runs through important wildlife habitat and fragments the corridor extending from McArthur Valley through Cataract Brook. An Odaray Highline trail permit is required.

We ask for your cooperation and continued stewardship at Lake O'Hara to implement these human use management actions. The management decisions and operational systems put in place this year will be evaluated at the end of the season to ensure both ecological and visitor experience objectives are being met.

Life has ebbed and flowed across this landscape for thousands of years under continually changing conditions. The plant and animal life we see today in O'Hara is a result of this movement. Change, not always tangible to humans, is the constant. Parks Canada is committed to ensuring that natural processes continue unimpeded into the future. Our responsibility lies in proceeding cautiously and continually monitoring, evaluating and refining the effects of our actions within the framework of ongoing scientific research.

Produced by the
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*Preservation through
Appreciation*

