



O'Hara 2000

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Preventing Bear Habituation Through Education

J. Klafki

With the continued support of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club and the Friends of Yoho Society, Parks Canada was able to hire Melissa Mauro as the Roving Bear Interpreter for a 14 week period in 1999. This marked the second summer of the Yoho Bear Habituation Education Project.

The project's goals are to educate park visitors about the causes and consequences of bear habituation with respect to roadside viewing and camping practices; to curtail the loss of "problem" bears from the local ecosystem due to habituation; and to enhance visitor safety.

This project is an important part of a much larger "Keep Bears Wild" campaign geared to preventing bear habituation in Yoho, Banff and Kootenay National Parks.

The habituation of bears to people is a threat to grizzly bear populations in the mountain national parks, as habituation usually results in the death of a bear, e.g. by road and rail strikes, or as 'management destructions' when the bear is considered too great a public safety risk. Preventing habituation is the most effective approach we can take.

The roving Yoho bear interpreter travels throughout the park with a roadshow trailer, setting up at high use viewpoints, parking lots and campgrounds. The trailer attracts visitors' attention and features interpretive displays, games and props about general bear biology, local and regional bear populations, and bear habituation.

By targeting these high use areas, many park visitors who would otherwise have limited contact with park staff are contacted, e.g., bus tour groups, visitors who don't speak English, and many day use



Melissa speaking with park visitors at the Natural Bridge in Yoho.

visitors. Key individuals such as tour bus drivers and guides are also important multipliers as they pass on information to their clients.

Personal contact with the bear interpreter is critical to the success of this program as it provides visitors with an interactive and memorable educational experience. In 1999, Melissa spoke directly with a minimum of 5,806 people and estimated that, indirectly, at least another 2,000 visitors received a message about bears and habituation by just viewing the trailer displays or "listening in".

This past summer, the trailer and bear interpreter were on the road four days a week for a minimum of four hours per day. At times, poor weather forced relocation to the Field or Lake Louise Visitor Centres. A

modified display was also set up at Le Relais three times over the summer. Here the focus was less on roadside and campground habituation as visitors favoured discussions around bear biology and ecology, in conjunction with bear management.

A young, habituated female grizzly bear from the Lake Louise area highlights the importance of this project and its connection to Lake O'Hara. In 1999, this bear travelled through the Lake O'Hara area three times: once over Abbot Pass, once into McArthur Pass and once around the Lakeshore trail. As a young female, the survival of this bear is important to the reproductive success of the local bear population. Educating park visitors about roadside habituation and how to prevent it will help increase this bear's chance of staying "out of trouble" and in the ecosystem, and also helps keep people safer. The financial contributions and support of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club for this important educational project is much appreciated. By helping "keep bears wild", your club is contributing to a healthier ecosystem and a richer landscape.

ANNUAL MEETING

The 2000 Annual Meeting of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club will be held at Le Relais at 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 3.

Lake O'Hara: Odaray-Highline Trail Update

J. Klafki

In 1999 a permit system was in place to limit use of the Odaray-Highline trail. While this system was effective for managing use, it complicated the visitor experience. This year, Parks Canada is piloting a voluntary use program with the objective of maintaining low use levels. The program will be monitored and evaluated using warden patrols, trail counters and trail cameras. Your understanding and support is vital to the success of this management approach.

Animals move through the landscape by following river valleys and crossing mountain passes; these areas form natural wildlife corridors. The McArthur Valley - Cataract Brook wildlife corridor is one such route passing through the Lake O'Hara area. This season, we are asking visitors to voluntarily change the way they visit and use the Odaray-Highline trail to help protect this important wildlife corridor.

This corridor is part of a regional network of corridors important to the health of local and regional wildlife populations. It allows wildlife movement from the western slope of the Rockies across to the eastern slope. Over time, wildlife movement, or gene flow, across the landscape maintains biological diversity. On a local and shorter time scale, this corridor allows individual animals and small populations to move between daily and seasonally important habitats.

Wider sections of the McArthur Valley - Cataract Brook corridor allow more "elbow room" for use by both people and wildlife, but narrow sections can bring people and wildlife into conflict. The McArthur Valley - Cataract Brook corridor squeezes through McArthur Pass. Here the

Odaray-Highline trail cuts across the corridor and human activity on the trail can create a barrier to wildlife.

Fortunately it's possible to "shrink" the disturbance zone or barrier of human activity at McArthur Pass to ensure a wide variety of species can continue to use the corridor effectively.

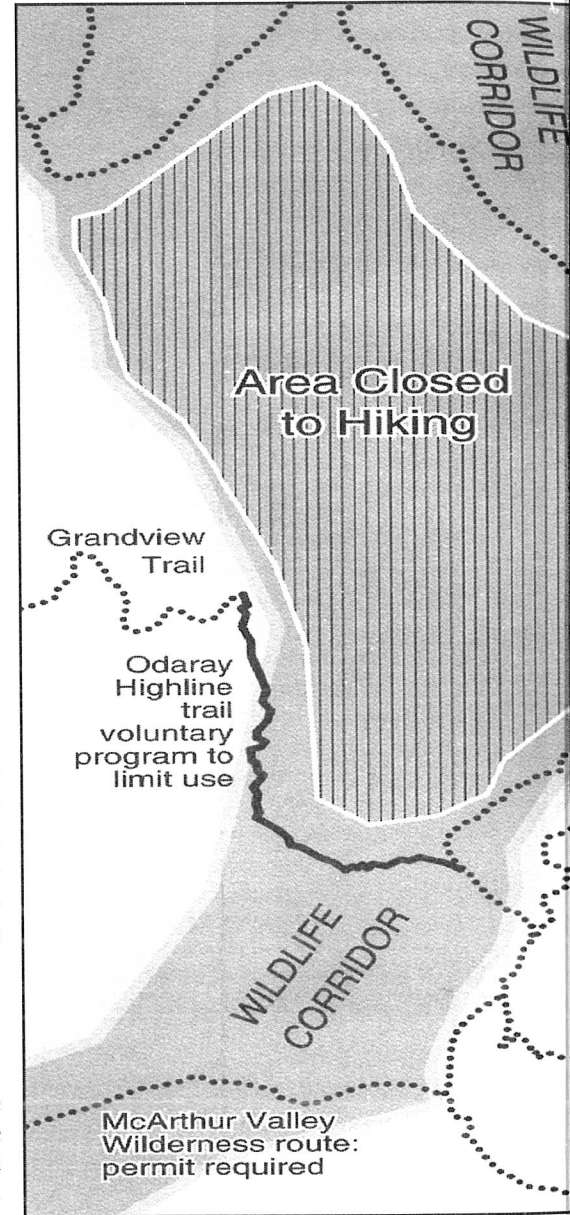
The McArthur Valley forms part of the wildlife corridor and also contains important grizzly bear habitat. Here, plant communities on avalanche paths provide important seasonal foods for grizzly bears, especially in spring and summer, e.g. cow parsnip. The McArthur Valley closure has been modified to allow limited human use after August 15th. A McArthur Valley hiking permit is required to hike this unmaintained wilderness route and can be obtained by phoning the Yoho visitor centre: 250-343-6783.

Adjacent to McArthur Valley and also contributing to the corridor is the Odaray Plateau. It contains habitat used seasonally by several species, including grizzly bears and mountain goats. The existing closure on the plateau will be maintained to protect habitat and to limit disturbance in the corridor. This summer, Parks Canada will also relocate the upper section of the Odaray-Highline trail up onto the bench above to further 'open' this narrow section of the corridor to wildlife.

Our Request to You

This season, we are asking visitors to Lake O'Hara to voluntarily limit their use of the Odaray-Highline trail throughout the season to help "shrink" disturbance in the corridor. Please consider hiking other trails first.

August 15 to September 15 is an especially sensitive period for wildlife movement. During this time, we are asking visitors to



Lake O'Hara: McArthur Pa

choose not to use the trail at all. Many species of wildlife use this corridor in all seasons; however, some species like grizzly bears, tend to increase their use of the corridor at this time of year. Further limiting disturbance in the corridor is critical for this wary species. For this period, we are asking visitors hiking to McArthur Lake to use the high level trail and not the lower McArthur Pass trail at the Schäffer Lake junction. Using the upper trail will help keep disturbance to the outside edge of this narrow section of the corridor.

Wildlife Corridors

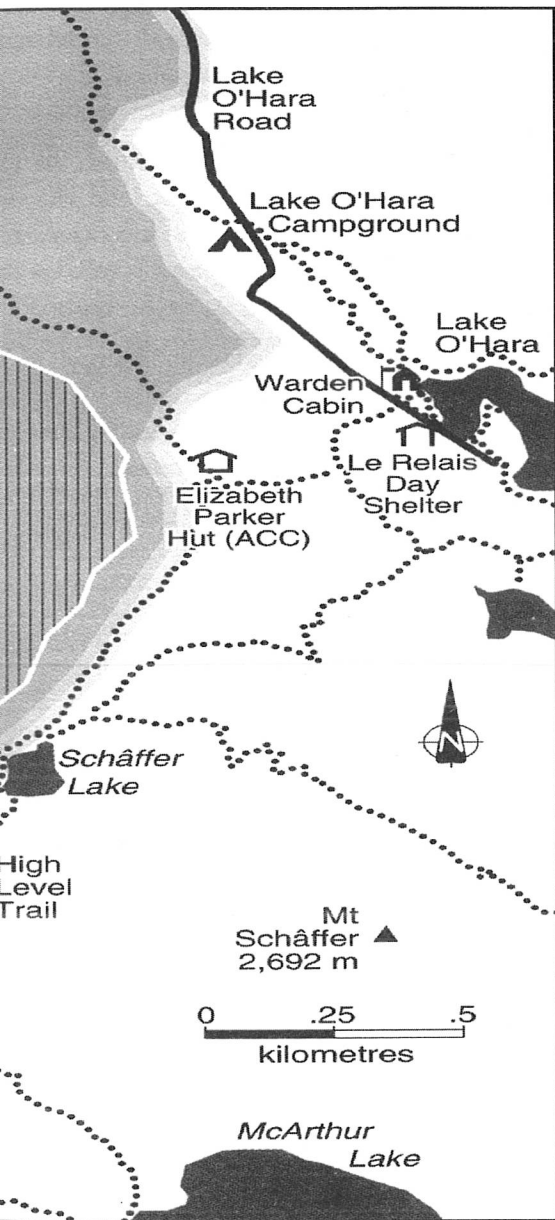
Concentrated points of human activity can influence the behaviour, survival and reproduction of individual animals. Wary species, like carnivores may avoid the area, or be forced to alter their movement to travel at night. This effect is magnified in a narrow wildlife corridor where, over time, it can influence the composition

and persistence of entire communities of wildlife.

If wildlife cannot move freely across the landscape, less habitat is available to them, and ultimately the patch of habitat they are in becomes isolated. This reduces the effectiveness of the corridor and its role in connecting healthy, viable wildlife populations and communities.

Trail Update

Our foremost request to visitors is to limit their use of the trail. If, after careful consideration, visitors choose to hike the trail, they can make one final assessment



ss and Odaray Plateau Area

at the trailhead. A small kiosk with a log-book for the Odaray-Highline trail will be located here. Its purpose is to help visitors assess how many groups are already using the trail that day and guide their final decision about hiking the trail.

This applies to the full season, including the more sensitive period. Please see Yoho's web site for full details on the volunteer program. A brochure on the program is also available upon request.

At the Trailhead:

1 Check the Odaray-Highline trail log-book.

It will show how many groups of people are currently using the trail. Four groups or less per day will help maintain a low level of disturbance. Your responsible decision may guide you to hike elsewhere that day.

2 Sign in your group so other hikers can assess if they should use the trail that day.

3 If possible join another group before entering the corridor.

Each group represents a disturbance in the corridor. By joining your group with another, two disturbances are reduced to one.

While in the Wildlife Corridor:

- Use the trail between 9:30 am and 4:30 pm.

This makes human use more predictable to wildlife and concentrates disturbance in a shorter daily period.

- **Stay together. Travel at the speed of the slowest group member.**

A tight group represents a pulse of disturbance; a group that spreads out creates a wall of disturbance.

- **Don't stop or eat below treeline**
- **Don't bring your pet.**

- **Stay with your group for your return through the corridor.**

From August 15th to September 15th

Please consider not using this trail at all. If you need to use the Odaray-Highline trail, check the trail logbook: two groups or less per day is our target. Please follow the trail use guidelines while in the corridor.

The Lake O'Hara Trails Club has consistently shown a high level of care and stewardship of the Lake O'Hara area. We ask for your continued support. Ongoing evaluation of our management actions and their consequences helps us to continually adapt our actions to ensure wildlife and habitat are protected while visitor opportunities are maintained across the greater landscape. Your comments are most welcome.

Yoho National Park

Box 99, Field BC V0A 1G0

Yoho_info@pch.gc.ca

www.parkscanada.pch.gc.ca/yoho



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Trails Club Work at O'Hara in 1999

This past year, the Trails Club funded educational programs as well as trail work in the area. Each summer a portion of every bus fare (paid by visitors to the campground, lodge, ACC Huts and day users) is donated to the Lake O'Hara Trails Club. In 1999 the total amount donated was \$7100.00. A good portion of that money (\$4100.00 in 1999) goes to sponsor the speaker series program. This program was initiated by Parks Canada, Lake O'Hara Lodge, The Alpine Club of Canada and the Lake O'Hara Trails Club over 4 years ago to fill an interpretive void in the area that had been created when ongoing budget cuts within Parks Canada had forced a cancellation of interpretive services to the Lake O'Hara area. Making use of the bus donations, a series of interpretive talks are given during the months of June, July and August, four nights a week. The topics which all relate to the O'Hara area, change yearly and can range from exploring the history of the Lake O'Hara area to mountaineering to learning about the flora and fauna in the area. The programs are held in the evening at Le Relais and have been very well received. We have received many requests to consider enclosing the porch at Le Relais to offer more space for these popular programs.

In 1999 we also continued our support of the Bear Habituation Project in Yoho National Park. Please refer to the article in this newsletter to give you some insight into this initiative in Yoho National Park. Melissa Mauro was the interpreter for this program last summer and did an excellent job of educating the public on bears and bear safety in the Park. The Trails Club donated \$3500.00 towards this program. We have committed the same amount for 2000.

1999 saw the completion of the project to replace all trail signs in the Lake O'Hara area. A total of \$9700.00 was spent in 1999 to pay for signs. This has been the culmination of several years work to see the project through. Many thanks to wardens Alan Knowles and Ed Robert for all their help.

1999 also saw trail repairs to the Cathedral Basin trail and repairs to a section of the trail leading out of the



Butterwort

campground towards Linda Lake. This work was contracted out to Gardner Associates Ltd. of Calgary who is very familiar with the Lake O'Hara area having done some excellent work on the trail system over the years. Work on the Cathedral Basin trail was done primarily on the top, steep section just prior to the trail flattening out before heading into the basin. Rock steps and drainage ditches have been put in place to make the trail less treacherous in rainy, wet weather and in early spring when the snowmelt creates a fair amount of slick mud.

Repair work was done on the trail heading out towards Linda Lake from the campground. There is a section of trail that had two long log timbers servicing as bridges across a wet area. One of the timbers had broken making one bridge very treacherous. This bridge was taken out and not replaced as it was felt it was not needed for the entire length. A 4 m two stringer bridge was required across the periodic creek and the remainder of this section of trail will be graveled in the

spring of 2000. In 2000, the intent is to replace the second bridge as it is felt it is only a matter of time before it breaks as well. The total amount spent on trail repair in 1999 was \$5088.28.

Your feedback is important to us. If you have any suggestions for trail work or ways to improve our club we would like to hear from you.

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

Produced by the
Lake O'Hara Trails Club.

Contributors:
Jenny Klafki,
Editor: Alison Millar



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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.

