



O'Hara 2019

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Tim Wake: Forty Years of Stewardship

When you ask Tim Wake about his proudest accomplishment in his four decades as a member of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club board of directors, his answer may surprise you – “that nothing has changed.”

“What I am most proud of,” Tim clarifies, “is that when you look at the landscape surrounding Lake O'Hara, it is the same as it was when I first visited.”

Tim adds just one caveat to that statement. “Of course, the trails are in much better shape today than they were then.”

Tim first came to O'Hara in 1969 to take a summer job as a dishwasher at Lake O'Hara Lodge. “I remember my university roommate warned me not to accept the position. He said dishwashing was awful. But that job changed the course of my life.”

“I came in as part of the lodge's opening crew,” Tim

remembers. “We climbed Yukness that first day, and I was hooked. One of the cooks presented me with an aluminum foil crown and pronounced me King of the Kitchen.”



Tim Wake on the summit of Mt. Odaray in his 'King of the Kitchen' days. Tim served on the LOTC board from 1977 until 2018.

After working four summers at O'Hara, Tim completed his engineering degree in 1973 and set off on a round-the-world trip. While he was in New Zealand, he received a letter saying the lodge was about to be sold, and decided he had to return to work “one last summer.” That summer turned into decades.

“Michael Laub, one the new co-owners, told me the plan was to operate the lodge summer and winter, and he hired me to winterize the operation and

help run it year-round. It was a dream come true,” Tim explains. “I told myself I would work for a few years, and then pursue engineering. But the longer I stayed, the more I loved the area.”

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2018 Trail Report: Leading the Way

2018 was the first year of a new Five-Year Trail Plan (2018 – 2022). The plan, approved by Parks Canada in early 2018, was developed by the Lake O'Hara Trails Club with input from trail designer Don Gardner, the O'Hara trail crew and other Parks Canada staff.

The new plan does not call for any major new trail projects. Instead, trail work in the next five years will concentrate on addressing longstanding trail maintenance and environmental concerns. The Lake O'Hara area is in a unique position to be a model for best practices in trail construction and

maintenance within the mountain parks, and the trail plan reinforces this leadership role. Retaining the unique character of O'Hara's trails and trail experience is another important goal, as is continuing to offer opportunities for visitors to contribute to, and engage directly in, stewardship of the area.

Trail deficiencies to be addressed over the next few years can be grouped into five key areas:

- Trail widening;
- Trail proliferation;
- Erosion;

- Unstable rock work; and
- Structural failures

Trail issues have been mapped and prioritized, and specific actions for addressing them have been outlined. However, the new plan leaves room for creativity on the part of the trail crew to adapt the best solutions to specific situations. Once again, the Lake O'Hara Trails Club will contribute \$20,000 a year to support trail work in the area (up from \$15,000 in previous years), as well as contributing to some material costs such as gravel purchase.

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Tim Wake: Forty Years of Stewardship (continued)

Reviving LOTC

In 1977, Tim was given both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity was to invest a portion of his savings and his lodge wages into becoming a part owner. He has been a shareholder ever since. The challenge was to revive the Lake O'Hara Trails Club.

LOTC was founded in 1949 by George K. K. (Tommy) Link. In the early decades, the club focused on building trails. Link, along with master trail builder Lawrence Grassi, established many of trails visitors still enjoy today. But by the '70s, the club was less active. At the same time, increasing numbers of visitors meant O'Hara's trails were being loved to death.

"There was a great trail system," says Tim. "But as users increased, those trails took a beating."

Under Tim's leadership, LOTC became a registered not-for-profit in 1978, board members were recruited, a LOTC logo (still in use today) was created, and an annual newsletter was published.

"It took some years for us to build trust with Parks Canada," says Tim. "By the '70s, Parks no longer allowed volunteers to build or maintain trails in any formal way, but they did become open to LOTC identifying projects and supporting the hiring of experienced trails crews."

Building trails that last

Tim points out the importance of hiring trail workers with mountain experience. "One summer, before LOTC became active again, a summer trail crew erected a wooden beam bridge across the avalanche gully on the Wiwaxy trail. That winter, an avalanche swept the bridge out onto the frozen lake and when the ice melted, the bridge floated all the way over to the boat dock at the lodge."

"I was standing there one morning looking at the remains, when a member of the trail crew walked by and asked what I was doing with their bridge. He thought we'd carried it off!



Since LOTC was revived, trail maintenance has improved. This stone culvert, installed last year near Lake McArthur, enhances trail drainage. Photo: Sue Webb

We had a good laugh, once I explained what had happened, but it's an illustration of why you need experienced crews. The rock wall that Lawrence Grassi built in the same gully back in the '50's is still there."

Tim was part of the lodge management team from 1975 to 1994, and served on the LOTC board from 1977 until 2018, making him LOTC's longest serving board member. "Right from the beginning in 1977, our vision was that LOTC would support trail work, and promote conservation, education and awareness of the Lake O'Hara area," Tim points out. "I think it's fair to say that LOTC has accomplished – and continues to accomplish – all those objectives."

Asked to peer into the future, Tim says he has two hopes. "One is that we find a fair and equitable way of dealing with the increasing visitor numbers, and the second is that fifty years from now Lake O'Hara looks the same as it does today – and the same as it did that first day I climbed Yukness fifty years ago."

Debra Hornsby

In Memoriam: Tim Auger

Lake O'Hara lost a dear friend with the passing of Tim Auger in August 2018. Tim's lifelong career in the Parks Service began in 1967 when he joined the Yoho trail crew. From 1969 to 1975, he was the seasonal Park Warden at Lake O'Hara, before moving to Banff to join Park's newly established mountain rescue team. A talented climber, Tim was instrumental in refining mountain safety and rescue

techniques, eventually becoming one of the foremost mountain rescue specialists in North America.

From 2011 to 2016, Tim served on the LOTC board. Here's how he described his connection to Lake O'Hara in the 2010 newsletter: "I met my wife, Sherry, in front of the Warden's cabin at O'Hara in 1972.... Over the years we have returned to Lake O'Hara to climb or hike and always to soak up

the special beauty of this remarkable place.... I am not alone. Lake O'Hara is considered a magical place for so many. The magnificent concentration of the Rocky Mountains' finest scenery inspires such passion in people that they want to be considered friends of this particular place on the planet."

We thank Tim for his many contributions to the legacy of Lake O'Hara.

Trail Report 2018 (continued)



Don Gardner and Steve Bertollo discuss best trail maintenance practices in June 2018. Photo: Sue Webb

Trail work completed

General trail maintenance included snow-downed tree removal, trail defining in the snow (June), rock clearing off the alpine routes, re-installing trail signs at Oesa/Abbot Pass and Oesa/Yukness junctions, avalanche debris removal, re-painting faded alpine route markers, repairing damaged trail tread, and repairing/replacing stone steps.

Notable accomplishments included new stone steps around the final switchback to the Seven Veils Falls viewpoint, new stone steps on a steep corner on West Opabin trail, the installation of a stone culvert to solve a drainage problem on the McArthur Lake trail, and stone edging installed at key locations along the lakeshore trail. Two new trail sign locations were identified between west and east Opabin near Hungabee Lake,

and informal trails on Opabin Plateau were reviewed.

“Best practices” workshop

Board members Klaus Exner and Dan Verrall accompanied trail expert Don Gardner to Lake O’Hara in late June, to meet with the trail crew and discuss maintenance techniques. One of the key themes was root removal, how to judge when it is necessary and how to accomplish it without sacrificing trail stability. All parties felt the day was productive and valuable.

Of clay and gravel

Good quality trail mix (not the kind with raisins and nuts!) — with appropriate proportions of gravel and clay — is essential for creating a durable trail surface. Gravel previously used on the lakeshore trail did not include clay, and thus has migrated to the sides of the trail. In 2018, LOTC spearheaded the process of procuring a supply of good quality gravel/clay trail mix, and plans to have it in place for the 2019 season. With the help of volunteer hikers carrying bags of trail mix and dumping them in locations marked by trail crew, the lakeshore trail surface will be much improved.

Thanks owed

LOTC appreciates the consistency in trail crew staffing, with Steve Bertollo

officially in the seasonal foreman position. Tanya Marcotte was on maternity leave for the 2018 summer (congratulations Tanya!); Shannon Elliott filled her position.

As always, the contributions of LOTC donors and members have made (and will continue to make!) all the difference in maintaining a high quality trail experience at Lake O’Hara. If you have any thoughts on O’Hara’s trails, please send us a message via our Facebook page. See you on the trails!



Newly installed signage to discourage use of informal trails near Opabin Lake. Photo Sue Webb.

Sue Webb

Yoho National Park Plan Review

The Yoho National Park Management Plan provides strategic direction for the delivery of Parks Canada’s mandate for protection, visitor experience and education. It sets out a vision for the park and includes key management strategies, as well as area concepts which provide more detailed direction for specific areas such as Lake O’Hara.

The management plan is reviewed every ten years – the review includes a public participation process which provides stakeholders, members of the public, Aboriginal Peoples, park

residents and visitors an opportunity to provide input.

The first phase of public consultation on management plans for Banff, Jasper, Yoho, Kootenay, Glacier, and Mount Revelstoke national parks took place between February and April 2019. Parks Canada encourages interested individuals to check www.letstalkmountainparks.ca or email llyk.comments@pc.gc.ca to share their perspectives. A second stage of consultation will offer additional opportunities for input once the

management plan is drafted and before it is approved. Check the LOTC website (lotc.ca) and/or Facebook pages for updates on how to comment during the second phase.

The Lake O’Hara Trails Club is an active participant in the review of the Yoho National Park Management Plan, and we invite you to also share your comments and perspectives with the club, so that we can better represent the interests of our members. Email us at info@lotc.ca.

Canada Jays: fine feathered thieves

For a bird that weighs just 70 grams, the Canada Jay carries a lot of names: Grey Jay, Whiskey Jack, Camp Robber, Lumberjack, Wiskatjon. But regardless of what you call it, the Canada Jay is a bird most Lake O'Hara visitors will recognize – and possibly scold, as it flies off with the last of their lunch.

Roughly the size of robins, Canada Jays (*Perisoreus canadensis*) have grey backs and wings, white underparts, long white-tipped tails, and small bills. They are unafraid of humans, perching nearby as soon as a sandwich is unwrapped and swooping in to snatch anything left unattended. In addition to hikers' and skiers' lunches, these gregarious birds will eat almost anything: seeds, insects, eggs, nestlings, carrion, and the occasional unwary rodent.

Canada Jays are members of the corvid family. Like their magpie and raven cousins, they are highly intelligent.

They store food, using saliva to paste seeds to conifer branches, or stashing them in abandoned woodpecker nests. Researchers have estimated that an individual jay will cache between 22,000 to 30,000 conifer seeds in late summer and fall, using an average of over 1,000 cache sites, which each bird must then find by memory over the cold winter months.



Canada Jays are a favourite bird for many O'Hara visitors. Despite their love of human food, they should never be fed. Photo: Amar Anthal

Pairs mate for life, breeding in the late winter and building a nest of twigs lined with grass and feathers for insulation. Young birds travel with their parents in loose family groups during their first year.

While many birders know these birds as Grey Jays, in 2018 the American Ornithological Society (the scientific body responsible for the classification and naming of birds in North America) officially changed their name to Canada Jay, reflecting the original name given to the species by John J. Audubon.

At Lake O'Hara, Canada Jays can be found throughout forested areas, but their favourite haunts seem to be where we humans gather – outside Le Relais and Elizabeth Parker Hut, or at favourite picnic spots near Mary and Schaffer Lakes.

Debra Hornsby

Leave your legacy at Lake O'Hara

You love Lake O'Hara. You want it to stay beautiful, always. With a little planning now, you can help ensure the future of this special place.

Consider a planned gift to Lake O'Hara Trails Club. Through a bequest in your will, you can support the Club's projects, helping to guarantee the future of

beautiful, well-maintained trails, public education programs for visitors and a protected landscape.

For details on how to leave a legacy to Lake O'Hara, check out our website www.lotc.ca or contact us at info@lotc.ca. We'll send you an information sheet on how to write a Lake O'Hara bequest.

Support the trails you love. Become a LOTC member.

Be part of O'Hara by becoming a member of the Lake O'Hara Trails Club (\$25 for a lifetime membership) and/or making a donation (fully tax-deductible). Your support will help us to preserve and enhance the Lake

O'Hara area through trail maintenance and public education.

For more information on how to join or donate, go to www.lotc.ca. You can also forward your name, address,

phone number, and membership fee and/or donation to

Lake O'Hara Trails Club

Box 98, Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada,
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Preservation Through Appreciation

2019 Annual General Meeting

Monday, September 9, 2019, 5:00 p.m.

Bill Warren Training Centre, Canmore, Alberta

All Members Welcome!