

## In Memory of Phyllis Ford

The Lake O'Hara Trails Club pays loving tribute to the memory of Phyllis Ford, who died on August 1, 2006 at the age of 96. During the twenty-two summers (1954-1975) that her husband, Austin, owned and operated Lake O'Hara Lodge Phyllis was his indispensable partner. Having fallen in love with O'Hara during their first brief encounter the summer of 1939, they were absolutely thrilled when Austin and Claude Brewster had the opportunity to buy Lake O'Hara Lodge from the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1953.

Once Austin became sole owner of the lodge in the fall of 1956, he consulted Phyllis on all matters. In fact, from 1966 on, they no longer hired a manager to run the lodge. Austin asked Phyllis to take on that enormous responsibility herself and she did it with greatest aplomb and with infinite attention to detail. All that she did was done with utmost care and sensitivity, whether it was deciding where to seat guests at meals, what fabric to choose for curtains or bedding, or planning the first wedding at O'Hara. She was always a warm, welcoming

presence and made returning guests feel they were coming home.

Phyllis' infectious enthusiasm for life and O'Hara was positively contagious. Busy as she was, she still managed to enjoy the trails with longtime guests. She instilled her great love of O'Hara in every lodge staff member and took as her highest priority, the hiring of staff to make certain she had the range of talent needed to run Lake O'Hara Lodge as smoothly as possible and to entertain us each Saturday night.

During the Ford years Lake O'Hara Lodge was transformed from a simple backwoods lodge to a superb place with many creature comforts. Many of the traditions that were established still endure today. For a fascinating account of the Ford era, read Phyllis' book published in 1998, *O'Hara: The Ford Years 1954-1975*.

The Trails Club sends its deepest sympathy to Phyllis' children and grandchildren. Her legacy endures and her remarkable contribution to Lake O'Hara Lodge has a permanent place in its history.

*Fran Hess, LOTC*

## LOTC Art Raffle

In 2006, the last of four limited-edition lithographs by Quebec artist Horace Champagne was raffled off. Our lucky winner was Maureen Mitchell of Canmore, Alberta.

Mr. Champagne's generous donation has enabled us to raise \$5,400 which have gone directly to support trail work at O'Hara. Our sincerest thanks go to Horace for his donation and for his participation as a board member of the Trails Club. If you were not one of our four lucky winners and would like to see more of Mr. Champagne's work, you can visit his web site at [www.horacechampagne.com](http://www.horacechampagne.com).

## 2007 Art Raffle

This year well-known and respected B.C. artist Robert Genn has donated an original painting. This framed 11" x 14" painting, titled *Grey Day on O'Hara*, is work derived from Mr. Genn's first visit to O'Hara in 2002. At press time details of this year's raffle were not available. Check at Le Relais and/or Lake O'Hara Lodge for details this summer.



## Order by Mail

### Membership

You can make a difference. Be a part of O'Hara by becoming a member and/or making a donation.

Membership is \$25 and entitles you to receive the annual newsletter in your mailbox each year. Each new member will receive an LOTC logo reflective sticker.

### Donations

Every dollar you donate to LOTC is directed towards our mission to inspire and facilitate the stewardship of the trail system and the appreciation of the cultural and natural history of Lake O'Hara. This year we will do this by funding a Parks trail crew and an evening speaker series. It costs \$375 for one trail worker to be at O'Hara for a ten-hour day. This year your donation will fund trail work on Grandview, East and West Opabin and Opabin Meadows. One evening presentation costs \$125 and we will fund 30 presentations this season. Every donation, regardless of size, helps us make a difference.

You will receive a tax receipt for the full value of your membership fee and/or donation.

Forward your full name, address and phone number with all memberships and/or donations to:

Lake O'Hara Trails Club  
Box 98, Lake Louise, AB  
T0L 1E0



*Preservation through  
Appreciation*

The 2007 LOTC  
**ANNUAL GENERAL  
MEETING**

Le Relais at 8:30 p.m.  
Thursday, July 26, 2007

*All Members Welcome!*



# O'Hara 2007

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## The Fine Art of Finding the Spot

On a particularly windy day on the west coast of Vancouver Island, I persuaded a Cessna pilot to take me up Clayoquot Sound to Flores Island and the isolated village of Ahousat. It was a bumpy ride but we eventually got to Ahousat's public float. I climbed up above the village and using a photocopy of an Emily Carr painting and by lining up distant mountains I was able to locate the spot where she had produced one of her paintings. For a while a young native boy stood quietly beside me and watched my painting develop. Eventually, in my concentration, the boy disappeared. Then I happened to notice he was down below on the float talking to the pilot who was now holding onto his plane's wing so it wouldn't swing about in the wind. Later, the boy reappeared at my side. "You see that pilot down there holding his plane?" he asked after a long while, "He says you're crazy."

Crazy or not, this avocation of finding the painting spots of painters I admire has been an exciting challenge and a valuable subplot to my regular painting activities.

Once, on Lake of the Woods in Ontario, I spent two days scrambling on and off not a few of the fourteen thousand islands in that lake. I was looking for the view of a particular and distinctive islet that Walter J. Phillips had painted in 1926. Carrying dog-eared photos of both the watercolour and the subsequent print "Sunset, Lake of the Woods," I only knew of the direction I might be facing. On a careful pass through promising islets, I finally saw the view and ran the boat ashore at the spot from which Phillips must have done the painting.

Whenever I'm out looking for material, I

always think of J.E.H. MacDonald's admonition: "The first thing a painter has to do is find a good place to sit." Phillips too was a sitter, and it didn't take long to find the only logical place that he would have chosen to sit and paint that islet. There was even a place between the rocks to hold the paint-box, and a nice crevice below to anchor the water jar. Needless to say, eighty years later, it felt good to use the Phillips spot.



it. The snow lies in the same places in the springs and reduces to similar patterns by mid-summers.

A couple of years ago I set myself up to repaint the Seven Sisters from Lake O'Hara where John Singer Sargent had painted the 36" x 40" oil that now resides in the Fogg Museum in Boston. While the volume of water over the falls and the colour of the lake vary from season to season and from painting to painting, the angle of light on the formations of Oesa above does not. It's this sort of continuity that turns my crank.

This coming summer, with the aid of Lisa Christensen's latest "The Lake O'Hara Art of J.E.H. MacDonald and Hiker's Guide," as well as helpful friends, my daughter Sara and I are going to have another go at MacDonald's Yoho. I'm told that there are new-found discoveries to be had. And even though trees have grown up in MacDonald's open burns, there will still be a distinctive peak showing above. I'll also be looking for old drops of paint that may have been mistaken for lichen. Up on the Opabin it's known that MacDonald stashed small bottles of turps and linseed oil beneath rocks for use when he returned on the following days or years. I'll certainly look for them, and if I happen to find a painterly artifact from the twenties you can definitely count me as one who is on his way to the crazy house. I just hope the crazy-place has a spot for a painter to sit.

*Robert Genn.*

*The fruits of Mr. Genn's June visit to O'Hara will be on display at Canada House in Banff on October 20, 2007; the artist will be in attendance. More information about the artist and his work is available on his web site at [www.robertgenn.com](http://www.robertgenn.com).*





## Trail Report

In 2006, LOTC provided a contribution to Parks Canada to fund a trail crew at Lake O'Hara. The able crew of John Morrisson and Matt Cadden returned to O'Hara for their second season spending 61 man-days in the area from early June until September. The O'Hara crew worked on:

- Removal and replacement of the outlet bridge. Additional Parks Canada staff assisted the crew in the design, removal and replacement of the outlet bridge. The old bridge was first sectioned and moved aside to allow uninterrupted use of the Adeline Link Circuit. Once the new bridge was in place, the old bridge remains were removed by helicopter. Helicopter time was co-ordinated with ACC helicopter-supported maintenance to minimise both costs and disturbance. In addition to the work on the bridge, upgrades were made to the bridge approach.

- Clearing winter rock falls on Odayay & Yukness Ledges.

- Removing obstacles on Wiwaxy, Huber, Oesa and All Souls trails. This included removal of some very large boulders.

- Tree cutting on Linda Lake and Morning Glory Lake trails. Wood from this work was given to LOTC for use as firewood at Le Relais.

- Brush and rock removal in Cathedral Basin.

- Minor trail repairs on Opabin Plateau and East & West Opabin, Big Larches and McArthur Lake trails.

Once again we see the attention to detail and care that this Parks Canada crew has established as their trademark.

### What's on for 2007?

In 2007, LOTC funding will bring a two-man Parks crew back to O'Hara to work on Grandview, Opabin Plateau box repairs and East and West Opabin short cutting remediation. This will be the third year of the four year Memorandum of Understanding between LOTC and Parks Canada, which provides funding for a dedicated trail crew at O'Hara. This agreement is funded through user donations and raffle proceeds.

*Kim Baines, Parks Canada  
Patty Cucman, LOTC*

## Fish Sampling in the Lake O'Hara Area



Westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*) were one of the first salmonids to re-colonize western Canada in the wake of retreating glaciers. They are adapted to cold-water, low productivity ecosystems. Historic distribution of westslope cutthroat trout (WCT) straddles the continental divide of southern British Columbia (Upper Kootenay and Upper Columbia drainages) and Alberta (South Saskatchewan drainage).

Throughout its range, the number and distribution of populations have steadily declined and fragmented in response to the cumulative effects of habitat loss and degradation, overfishing, and detrimental interactions with introduced species. The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) has now completed its

evaluation of the status of this fish and will recommend to the Minister of the Environment that the BC populations of this fish be listed as 'Special Concern'.

Active stocking of cutthroat and closely related rainbow trout happened throughout the streams and lakes of the Lake O'Hara area between 1924 and 1969, and small fish still persist today in many of the lakes and Cataract Brook. The genetic origin of the cutthroat stocks and the degree of potential hybridization with rainbow trout is not known.

In the fall of 2006 non-lethal DNA samples were taken from fish in five lakes, including Lake O'Hara. Samples have been sent to the University of British Columbia and results are expected in May 2007. It will be very interesting to match the DNA results with our field observations. Some experts feel it is easy to visually identify hybrids between rainbow trout and cutthroat trout. The 30 fish that were sampled from Lake O'Hara on September 27, 2006 had orange throat slashes and black spotting patterns consistent with cutthroat trout, however the stocking records indicate that the lake was mostly stocked with rainbow trout except for 1948, 1956, and 1957. Results from the DNA work will help us understand the genetic value of the remaining cutthroat trout in the Lake O'Hara area and help guide management decisions that will need to be made in the future.

*Shelley Humphries M.Sc., Parks Canada Aquatics Specialist*

## Switchbacks are for the Benefit of the Trail – not the Hiker

*The following article is an excerpt from the Delaware Valley Chapter Newsletter, FOOTNOTES, 1975. This document is credited to Ken Graham and was found in the George Link archives in the Whyte Museum. It is reprinted here in its original form - spelling, punctuation and grammar intact. Enjoy and heed.*

When laying out and building hiking trail good practice indicates the incorporation of switchbacks on steep slopes. Switchbacks are to prevent erosion of the trail. They are NOT primarily to make it easier for the hiker to climb up and down the mountain. HIKERS SHOULD NOT CUT ACROSS SWITCHBACKS. They should follow the trail to the end of the turn before turning.

We are all familiar with the force expended by rapidly propelled water

as in the ability of a fire hose to knock a man from his feet. We have all seen evidence of the terrific (sic) force of fast flowing water in mountain streams where tremendous boulders have been rolled far down the mountain side. The steeper the slope and the longer the straight path of the water the faster it flows. Rain water flowing down a mountainside can quickly erode a trail into a deep ditch full of rocks, roots and mud. No fun to hike thru.

The steeper the grade of the trail the more swiftly the rain water runs down it. The faster the water flows the larger the particles it is able to move. On a very gentle grade vegetation and tree roots tend to hold the soil in place and it is not moved by the slowly flowing run off. On a steep grade the soil is soon washed away, then small stones, then

*cont. pg3*

## Hidden Pathways of Water in the Lake O'Hara Basin

Lately we hear a lot about climate warming and how it is causing glaciers around the world, including those in the Rockies, to shrink. Some people even say that we will have little water left in mountain streams when glaciers disappear. This is a great concern for city dwellers and farmers in western Canada, many of whom rely on rivers from the Rockies for their water supply. However, recent scientific studies suggest that glaciers cover only a few percent of the Rockies and that the majority of water in mountain streams is sourced by snowmelt and summer rain. The major concern related to climate warming, according to many hydrologists around the world, is the amount of snow accumulation and the timing of snowmelt. Warmer climate generally results in more rain and less snow, and also later freeze-up and earlier melt. How will these changes affect lakes and streams in the Rockies? This is the question that a team of researchers and students from the University of Calgary is trying to answer.

During summer months, you will see us measuring stream flow and collecting samples from streams and lakes, checking weather stations, and carrying heavy packs of equipment for geophysical surveys of rock and ice. If you visit Lake O'Hara in late April, you will see a number of us on snowshoes measuring snow depth and density on the Opabin Plateau. All these activities are part of our study aimed at understanding the sources and pathways of water in the Lake O'Hara Basin. When you see us on the trails, please feel free to talk to us. We are always happy to share our findings with people like you, who love the mountains and, hopefully, water too. In last year's newsletter, Joanne Williams from Parks Canada introduced the objectives of our study. This year, I would like to report some of our findings so far.

Let's look at Lake O'Hara first. There are four creeks (Mary, West and East Opabin, and Oesa) flowing into Lake O'Hara, and one stream (Cataract Brook) flowing out. Therefore, during summer months, it is evident that the lake receives water (inputs) from the four creeks and rain, and loses water (outputs) to Cataract Brook and evaporation. Since the lake level stays more or less constant, total inputs must equal total outputs. Jaime Hood, a graduate student, discovered from careful measurements throughout the summers of 2004 and 2005 that the lake had much higher outputs than inputs. What does this mean? The difference must come from a hidden source. She concluded that Lake O'Hara receives at least

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larger rocks until finally there only remains a deep trench of boulders, roots and mud. Switchbacks keep the grade gentle and the runoff rate of rain water is slow? hence no erosion. Furthermore at each turn the water continues flowing in its original straight course off the trail into the woods and does not pick up the ever increasing speed and momentum that it does on a straight trail. On a properly graded and switchbacked trail erosion can be completely prevented.

BUT: There are hikers who regard (sic) switchbacks as a challenge to his virility. Who says, "Must I plod endlessly back and forth at such a ridiculously slow rate of ascent?" So he cuts the corners and goes up fast. His footsteps are followed by others. Soon there are two trails. Soon water begins flowing down the new steep trail each time it rains. Soon the gently graded smooth trail becomes a muddy, rooty, boulder trench. It is possible for one to tell when he is approaching a road or other marks of civilization by the ever-increasing number of switchback shortcuts in the trail. The veteran hiker who hikes long distances observes trail ethics and does not shortcut.



Checking weather stations

30-70 %, depending on the time of year, of its inputs from groundwater. This finding may change the way hydrologists look at water cycles in alpine systems. Groundwater was commonly ignored in alpine regions because water does not easily flow through bedrock and the soils are so thin. Now we know that groundwater can play a rather important role.

Inspired by this work, we started looking for evidence of groundwater and found it in many places. Jim Roy, a post-doctoral research fellow, found that the main source of Opabin Creek is a series of springs located west of Hungabee Lake, where groundwater comes out, likely all year round. Interestingly, the chemical composition of groundwater varies widely among the springs even though they are all located within 30 m or so. Jim thinks that the variation is caused by the mixing of two types of groundwater, with one much more enriched in sulphur minerals. Groundwater dissolves minerals as it flows through rocks for a long time. Therefore, the enriched groundwater may indicate that it spent a larger amount of time underground or that it passed through different types of rocks before re-surfacing.

So, what do all these findings mean? We are still analyzing the results and trying to synthesize them into a conceptual framework, but one thing is clear. Groundwater is an important part of the water cycle in the Lake O'Hara Basin, and probably in other similar basins in the Rockies. Our field data suggest that melt water from glaciers and snow, as well as summer rain, is temporarily stored as groundwater before it is released to streams and lakes. This storage occurs in underground 'reservoirs' with large storage capacities, which likely include rocky debris features, such as glacial moraines and talus slopes. It is possible that the groundwater storage may provide a buffering mechanism to alleviate the effects of climate warming on water resources. In order to understand the water cycle and predict what the impacts of climate warming may be, we need to understand the hidden pathways of groundwater in the mountains. We hope that the Lake O'Hara Basin will serve as a natural laboratory for observing the water cycle and testing our ideas. We would like to thank Parks Canada and Lake O'Hara Lodge for supporting us in many ways.

*Dr. Masaki Hayashi, Associate Professor, Dept. of Geology and Geophysics, University of Calgary.*