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ASSOCIATION

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VOYAGEUR TRAIL NEWS

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VTA's 30th ANNIVERSARY *by Gayle Phillips*

Think about it for a minute. Do you remember what was going on in your life 30 years ago? It's relatively easy for me—I was expecting my first daughter! I suppose that means I can be forgiven for not remembering the birth of the Voyageur Trail Association!

Here it is, thirty years later and the idea of building and maintaining a pedestrian hiking trail across Northern Ontario is still as popular an idea as it was 30 years ago! That's pretty unusual in an age where ideas are so fleeting that they change almost the next moment!

I am appealing to members and landowners to share their stories over the years on the Voyageur Trail. They should be recorded for posterity this year in our newsletters so we never lose touch of our humble beginnings.

Some day, someone will write an article for our 60th Anniversary newsletter and will want to re-print these stories of conquest of the last of the great wilderness in Northern Ontario!

For me, I will never be able to re-pay the Voyageur Trail for all it has given me—breathtaking views, moments of wonder and solitude, lots of fun times, and life-long friends. So forgive me if I can't remember what was written about in the local newspaper 30 years ago, but I promise to pay attention from now on!

NEWS FROM THE WEB

The Voyageur Trail Association web site now sports a link to a photo gallery! Some terrific photos have been submitted of various sections of the Voyageur Trail and now, with the addition of another free web site spot, we can showcase them!

Thanks to David, Pat and Kas Stone for the most recent additions. If you have any photos that you think should be showcased on our site, please contact me at: voyageur.trail@sympatico.ca (no large file attachments or video please!)



SOMETIMES EVEN BUTTERFLIES FEEL



THE NEED TO CONSULT A VOYAGEUR TRAIL GUIDEBOOK!

VTA member Doris Welz stops to consult her VTA Guidebook when this little butterfly decided to do the same.



VTA GETS A GRANT *by Mike Landmark*

The Voyageur Trail Association was the proud recipient of a generous grant of \$15,600.00 from the Regional Services Branch of the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation this past summer. This funding was intended to produce an educational video and training modules for the VTA.

To date, the VTA has completed phase one of the video, which should be available shortly to all local clubs. The second component of the grant involves developing training modules, such as hike leadership, CPR and First Aid, utilizing the Hike Ontario Leadership Program. Even if you are a competent hike leader already, you can always enhance your skill and knowledge level by taking the hike leadership course. It doesn't hurt to learn from someone else's point of view or gain additional knowledge in order to make the VTA outings more enjoyable and less stressful for all participants. The course is tentatively scheduled for some time this fall, as Hike Ontario is presently revamping their course. Hike Ontario uses a manual called "The Backpacker's Field Manual" by Rick Curtis as part of the curriculum of the course. Even if you don't want to participate in the course itself, this manual contains very valuable information. It is available at any bookstore.

We are also offering a 2-day Wilderness First Aid course on the weekend of June 7 & 8th. This course ordinarily costs \$165 but the VTA will cover half the cost or \$80 per person. These courses will be offered in Sault Ste. Marie, but, if enough interest is generated, we may also be able to offer them at a local club level. For more information, or to sign up call (705) 779-3409.

As part of the training module component, the VTA is also working on PowerPoint presentations, such as "Bear Awareness", which will be available on CDs to all local clubs in the near future.



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As a hotel guest let us connect you with local individuals and businesses with specialized services such as equipment rentals or guiding services. Each Trailhead package is designed to be as unique as you are to make this a truly memorable vacation!



BILLY'S BACK-COUNTRY TIPS *by Bill Ralph & Alan Day*

Water, water everywhere, but...?

It's the first day of spring, the snow is melting, and soon the ice will be off our rivers and lakes. Naturally your thoughts turn to planning all those wonderful outdoor activities during the upcoming spring, summer and fall months. Thoughts of hiking the trails (both day hike and perhaps longer backpacking trips), of canoeing or kayaking. It's time to consider the question about WATER. You can't live without it and it can also be hazardous to your health. It can even kill you.

DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH TO DRINK?

Whatever you are doing when out and about, you will naturally have sufficient water to drink for that 3-5 hour day hike (about 2 litres). Your water is readily available on your hip or the straps of your pack. So it's a beautiful day and you decide to keep going for another hour or so. An accident might happen keeping you on the trail longer. You might find somebody else on the trail in distress. You might get a severe cramp and have to slow down.

It is always advisable to carry extra water in your pack to meet any emergency. In addition, your personal emergency kit (first aid, etc.) should contain one of those water treatment kits so you can get additional water from a creek, stream or lake. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding the retention times to ensure the water is safe to drink, but you will ensure you can have enough water.

Also, in your kit, you should include some electrolytes you will need to maintain your electrolyte levels. As a bonus, if you have to use your water treatment kit, it helps take the taste away.

On your longer trips you should carry sufficient treatment kits for your daily requirements plus two additional days. The alternate is a good quality water filter.—the filter removing micro organisms and bacteria. If viral infections are suspected in your water source, you will need to treat the water with iodine prior to filtration. Now you have a good supply of safe drinking water at all times.

WHAT'S THAT IN THE WATER?

Of course paddlers and hikers are not the only creatures to emerge in the spring. In about 6-8 weeks all those dormant larvae will start their life cycle in water and BUG SEASON will be upon us. With the (ever increasing) risk of West Nile Virus spread by the female mosquito (the males don't suck blood), it is wise to take precautions. Carry a BUG SHIRT (jacket and pants). Be prepared to wear long sleeves and long pants, especially in the early mornings and the evenings when mosquitoes are at their

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YOU'RE GOING TO DO WHAT? by Jack Donald

That was the reaction of a few when I mentioned, last December, a trip I had signed on for.

On the evening of January 31st, twelve brave souls from across Canada gathered at Toronto's Pearson Airport—destination Guyana. Remote Area Medical Volunteers (Canada) was taking another medical team (about 15 teams have gone over the past eight years) to treat patients in the remote areas of Guyana. This team was made up of two medical doctors, one dentist, one optometrist, three nurses, a team leader, and four support staff to assist wherever needed. Since we had to be completely self-supporting, we had about 800 pounds of food, cooking equipment, and medical supplies and equipment.

Guyana is a former British colony on the northeast coast of South America, bordered on the west by Venezuela, the south by Brazil, and the east by Surinam (formerly Dutch Guiana). The population of 700,000 is made up mostly of the descendants of immigrants from India and black slaves from Africa. We visited native (called "Amerindian") villages located along rivers well away from population centres.

An overnight flight from Toronto took us to the capital, Georgetown, a grubby city with little going for it and a great deal of street crime. We were advised to not walk the streets even in daylight. After a long drive from the main airport to a smaller one, we packed ourselves and all our stuff into two small ancient piston-engined aircraft, which did not engender feelings of confidence, and struggled into the air for a one hour flight over solid jungle, to an Indian village with an airstrip.

On landing, we transferred all our cargo to a 30-foot open boat with outboard motor, for a two-hour trip up the river to our first work location. Every arrival and departure from this craft involved negotiating a steep and sometimes slippery riverbank.

Over the next ten days, we visited five villages, working one or two days at each. Each village had a medical building with some basic supplies, and a Medical Worker with qualifications lower than an RN but with some midwife training—family planning is nonexistent and babies are plentiful. We would set up shop in or beside this building with our gaggle of sleeping tents nearby. The people are relatively small with round faces and chocolate-coloured skin. They are very shy at first and soft-spoken, but if we talked to them and played with the kids, they would eventually become more open and communicative. The official language is English, although there are also local native languages. Elementary school attendance is compulsory, and neat, clean uniforms are worn. The people are all well-dressed and appear to be well-fed.

The villages operate almost as a cashless society. They grow all their own food and their only source of income is if some of the men get work in one of the mines in the region. They have no opportunity to sell any excess

produce which they might grow.

Travelling on the rivers, we might go 30 minutes without seeing a sign of human habitation, and then we would see one or two people in a dugout canoe, fishing or travelling down the river.

At the end of our work schedule, the team had seen over 1,200 patients, dispensed 230 pairs of glasses, and extracted 230 teeth.

Near the end of our stay, there were two noteworthy events. Someone discovered a metre-long snake in the process of eating a huge lizard. We all watched closely as, for about 20 minutes, the lizard very slowly disappeared inside the snake. Just when the action was completed, one of the locals came along, declared it to be a poisonous snake, and promptly clubbed it to death. Then on our return flight to Georgetown to return home, we detoured for a brief stop at the very impressive Kaieteur Falls with a vertical drop of 740 feet, one of the highest in the world. All the cameras were clicking.

Our return trip home was uneventful, but, having had good weather, good food, and a great group of people, nobody regretted having made the trip. On the trip home, there was much talk about a possible return trip sometime down the road.



BACK-COUNTRY TIPS

(Continued from page 2)

most active. Use a good BUG REPELLENT. DEET is still the best, even if Health Canada in its infinite wisdom has placed limits on its strength—down from 98% to 30%!

WATER CAN KILL!

Sad to report in Canada in 2002, there were over 600 deaths by drowning, many of which involved canoes and kayaks. NONE OF THOSE DROWNED WERE WEARING THEIR PFDs (personal flotation devices)! Between the opening of the water and August of 2002, 11 people died in canoe/kayak related drownings in Ontario. Over 93% of these fatalities would have been prevented if those involved had worn their PFDs. 25% of these fatalities also involved alcohol or drugs.

The moral of this unhappy tale is:

ALWAYS wear your PFD when on or near the water. ALCOHOL and/or DRUGS don't mix with paddling. ALWAYS ensure your canoe/kayak is equipped with all the safety equipment required by law. NOTE: The OPP and the Coast Guard can and will stop and inspect any vessel. For each item of missing statutory, required equipment, a fine of \$100 can be imposed!

Water, water everywhere, so enjoy all of the pleasure it brings, but be prepared for its hazards.



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