



VOYAGEUR TRAIL NEWS

No. 87 SPRING 2004

EDITOR: Cheryl Landmark

LAYOUT BY: Gayle Phillips

Published by the
VOYAGEUR TRAIL
ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 20040
150 Churchill Blvd.
Sault Ste. Marie Ontario
P6A 6W3

Toll Free 1-877-393-4003

e-mail address:
voyageur.trail@sympatico.ca

INFORMATION LINE
705-253-5353
Select message No. 9999
on your touchtone phone

Visit our web site at:
<http://www3.sympatico.ca/voyageur.trail>

*A member of
Hike Canada En Marche,
Hike Ontario,
Ontario Trails Council, and
Trans Canada Trail.*



INSIDE

- A Day In Mississauga... 2
- Saulteaux News.....4
- Outing Schedules..... 5-6
- President's Report..... 7
- New Members.....8
- Privacy Issues.....9
- And much, much more!

FRIENDS LOST...



**Norm Lediett
1913 - 2004**

The Voyageur Trail Association is sorry to report the passing of long-time member and VTA advocate, Norm Lediett in Blind River on Feb. 5, 2004.

Norm was instrumental in building the Voyageur Trail in and around the Blind River area and was our "chief sign maker" for a long time. He taught his family to love the outdoors and they report that, "Through his work with the Voyageur Trail Association, he found a vehicle by which his principles of sharing the bush could be manifested."

Our sincere condolences to the Lediett family.



John Kovala

The VTA's deepest condolences go out to the family of Mr. John Kovala of Sault Ste. Marie, who tragically passed away in early March of this year.

Mr. Kovala was an avid outdoorsman, who lived life to the fullest and enjoyed the spectacular beauty and uniqueness of our northern landscape. He enjoyed backcountry skiing, telemarking, biking and kayaking. He was also a geologist who loved exploring the wilderness and interpreting the mineral wealth out there.

While not a member of the VTA, he shared many of the values and interests of our Association.

The VTA would like to acknowledge and thank the families and friends of Norm and John for the many generous donations that were made in their memories to the Association. These monies will be used to further the common objectives shared by these two men and all of us who enjoy and participate in the great outdoors.

Shop VTA... Besides VTA memberships, guidebooks, crests, t-shirts & sweatshirts, we are now offering a Canadian Geographic Ecotour Highway Guide for the area from Sault Ste. Marie, east to Midland for only \$14.95 (plus shipping). (The Sault Ste. Marie to Thunder Bay guide should be ready soon.) Full of up-to-date information, maps, photos and tidbits from history and special points of interest, this booklet is the ultimate tour guide through the area. Visit www.canadiangeographic.ca for more info. Call (705) 949-4105.

A DAY IN MISSISSAGI PROVINCIAL PARK *by Kas Stone*

The day began like all my other days that week at Mississagi Provincial Park - being awakened shortly before 7:00 by the clatter of rain against my tent. With several damp days behind me, and only one (apparently equally damp) day left in the park before I was due to move on, I decided the best plan was to ignore the weather. So, while the few other campers in Mississagi's Semiwite Lake campground lingered over their bacon and eggs, I bolted down a bowl of soggy granola, packed provisions for the day, and set out with my yellow waterproof bag and my yellow Labrador retriever, Skye, for the day's adventure.



I launched my canoe into Flack Lake shortly afterwards. Across the lake, rising more than 700 feet from the mist on the far shore, was our destination - the rocky hump known as 'Old Baldy'.

Old Baldy, an outcrop of ancient quartzite jutting from the surrounding boreal forest, is an impressive example of the Canadian Shield landscape that sprawls across Northern Ontario. Mississagi Provincial Park is perched on the southern edge of this Shield. It is large, wild, and still delightfully undiscovered and unspoiled except for some lingering remnants of its logging past. It encompasses many rolling hills and craggy cliffs, numerous lakes and long sections of the Boland and Little White Rivers, and an expansive stretch of bog known as the Stag Lake Peatland. And Old Baldy, of course, on the western shore of Flack Lake. Which is where Skye and I were heading.

Flack Lake was completely deserted, with not a boater or a camper to be seen anywhere. It was, after all, mid-week in mid-September, a time when most holidays were over and most people had returned to work or school. So, apart from the inevitable pair of loons, we had the lake all to ourselves.

It was dead calm, and sultry. And from the west came the ominous grumble of distant thunder. They had been dogging me for several days, these grumbling thunderclouds. The weather all week had been grey and inclined to drizzle, but so far I'd been lucky with the thunderclouds, which had always managed to hold off until evening brought me back to the protection of my campsite. So I continued paddling, sticking close to shore 'just in case', aiming for the abandoned cabin at the end of the lake which was the starting point of the Old Baldy hiking trail.



We were almost there when the storm overtook us - a wall of ground-level cloud with earth-shaking claps of thunder and pelting rain. I dove for cover. Easier said

than done! The shoreline was little more than a jumble of jagged rocks rising up out of the water to meet a tangle of vegetation. I scratched quite a lot of paint off the bottom of my canoe as I dragged it ashore. Then I scratched a bit more off when I inverted it and wedged it into the branches overhead! For a full forty-five minutes we huddled beneath the boat, drinking tea from a thermos and sharing a bag of trail-mix, before the storm abated and enabled us to finish our paddle in safety.

At the abandoned cabin (once used by the people who manned the nearby, and now also abandoned, Wilkie Firetower), I hung my wet outer-clothes over its broken window-frames and spread various other soggy items around its comparatively dry interior. Shouldering my day-pack, I set out, initially along the track that leads inland towards the firetower, then sharply left to follow the trail upwards towards tiny Old Baldy Lake and its namesake beyond.

Part way up, I noticed several enormous, berry-filled mounds of rather fresh-looking scat. Undoubtedly they'd been left by several enormous, berry-filled black bears, which were almost certainly lurking behind the next rock. Knowing I was the only human for miles around, and knowing that the bear-bell on Skye's collar was completely inadequate for its intended purpose, I felt a little nervous. It didn't help that I kept getting lost along the trail, which was ill-marked, rock-strewn and overgrown. In the absence of any noisy kitchen utensils, there seemed to be no alternative but to sing, very loudly, a curious mixture of tunes from my distant past - old Beatles songs and church anthems. (I dare say it is the first time that Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da and Here Comes the Sun have been paired in a recital with O For the Wings of a Dove! And no doubt naturalists will be wondering next year what happened to the park's bear population.

(Continued on page 3)



A DAY IN MISSISSAUGI PROVINCIAL PARK *(Continued from page 2)*

I have the answer, which I shall call The McCartney-Mendelsohn Effect when I write a treatise about it someday!) Anyway, with the bruins at bay, we proceeded upward.

As if in response to my songs, the swirling thunderclouds dissipated in the gathering wind, and the sun emerged as we did, onto the summit of Old Baldy.

What a view! It was much more than the 360 degrees that people always talk about, because I kept turning around and around to admire it - shimmering lakes and ribbons of river winding their way through the hills, and the whole scene crowned with sparkling blue sky, billowing clouds and glittering quartzite cliffs. There were only a few specks of human habitation to interrupt the scene - a bit of roadway clambering up Boland Hill to the north, the abandoned Wilkie Firetower poking through the forest to the west, and on the northern shore of Flack Lake where it tumbles down the river into Mikel Lake, a cluster of buildings at the Laurentian Lodge.

We parked ourselves at the top of a brilliant white rock and tucked into our lunch. It had been a long time since breakfast! The furnace stoked, we were ready for the rest of the day. After making our way down the path back to the cabin, I had a quick swim in the lake and retrieved my now-dry gear. Then we clambered into the canoe for a lengthy paddle, mostly (as usual!) into the wind, first northward to the rough portage into Mikel Lake, then westward to the disappointing trickle that, on the map, called itself Wilkie Falls. From there the homeward journey was more of a sail than a paddle, with a fierce westerly blow and a half-metre swell propelling us back to the Flack Lake launch - all I had to do was steer.

I returned to camp feeling windblown, sunburned, exhausted - and entirely satisfied. Surely there can be no greater pleasure than a day spent hiking and paddling in

beautiful northern country like that at Mississagi!

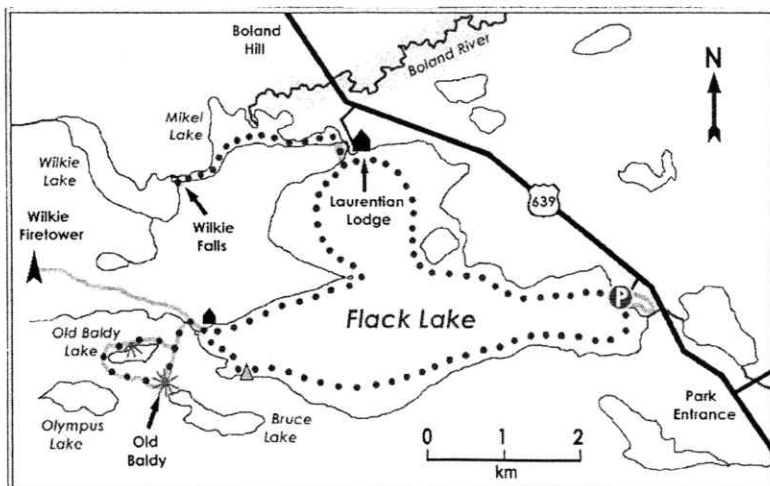
Practical Information:

How to get there: via Hwy 17 from the east (160kms from Sudbury) or west (190kms from Sault Ste. Marie), then north via Hwy 108 and 639 to the park entrance 25kms beyond Elliot Lake.

Mississagi Park: a 4,900-hectare Natural Environment Park, with more than 75kms of hiking trails, access to many kilometers of lakes and rivers for paddling, and camping at the 90-site Semiwite Lake campground or one of the park's many backcountry sites. For more information call Mississagi at (705) 848-2806 (June to September) or (705) 865-2021 (October to May), or write P.O. Box 37, Massey, Ontario, P0P 1P0, or check the Ontario Parks website at www.ontarioparks.com.

Flack Lake and Old Baldy: via the Flack Lake access point (which has ample parking, toilets and a boat launch, and requires a day-use park permit, available at the park entrance), then a 6km paddle (each way) and a 5km hike (with a vertical climb of 215m).

Maps and Guides: an indispensable, detailed, waterproof, topographic colour map at a 1:50,000 scale, entitled Mississagi Provincial Park & Area, showing campsites, hiking trails, canoe access points and portages (and giving detailed natural and human history, together with hiking, paddling and other practical information on the other side!) is published by Chrismar Mapping Services as part of their Adventure Map series. For more information see www.chrismar.com. The map is available for sale at the park office, and from many outdoor supply stores across the province. An excellent hiking trails pamphlet is also available from the park office. As Old Baldy is technically outside the park boundary, it is not included in this guide, but many other admirable hikes, from the 0.8km Flack Lake Nature Trail to the 22km McKenzie Interior Trail, are included.



When does your
VTA membership expire?
Check the date printed on your
VT NEWS envelope label!

VTA Membership Secretary
705-949-4105

