

*THE PACKRAT*

ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION

ACTIVITIES: Hiking, Skiing, Backpacking, Climbing, Canoeing, Cycling, Mountain-Biking, Snowshoeing, Educational and Awareness Programs and Social Functions.

OBJECTIVES: TO PROTECT the interests of the Ramblers and maintain their rights and privileges.

TO FOSTER a greater love and knowledge of the countryside.

TO ASSIST in the preservation of countryside amenities.

TO FUNCTION as a bureau of information.

TO FACILITATE public access to the mountains and woodlands.

TO ORGANIZE social functions for the members.

MEETINGS: WEEKLY -- Wednesday evenings at 8:15 pm  
Rosemont Community Hall  
2807 - 10 Street N.W.  
Calgary

AGENDA: Trip Organization  
Trip Reports  
Announcements  
Coffee  
Program or Social

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box 3098, Station B  
Calgary, Alberta T2M 4L6

MEMBERSHIP FEES: Annual Memberships: Single \$15.00  
Family \$25.00

TRIP INFORMATION: RMRA Trip Hotline 282-6308

EXECUTIVE - 1987-88

PRESIDENT	John Michi
VICE PRESIDENT	Frank VanDerVoet
TRIP COORDINATOR	Bob Scott
TREASURER	Tony Moran
SECRETARY	Dorraine Simpson
PROGRAM DIRECTOR	Dave Ladouceur
PACKRAT EDITOR	Barb McInnis
SOCIAL DIRECTOR	Darlene Weger
EQUIP. COORDINATOR	Gert Noer

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is hard to believe that nine months have passed since I became President of the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association. In other words, I am 3/4 through my term. One question often asked is: How is the Club doing? I, too, care how the club is doing.

### New Members

Once in a while the Club makes an extra effort to promote itself in order to attract new members, but most of these efforts result in very limited success. New members do come in regularly and join the Club, but they hear about the Club, by word of mouth, mostly, from RMRA members. As Wally Drew likes to point out, when you meet people on a trail, they will often ask about our Club. A club brochure and a friendly invitation to attend one of our meetings is the best way to attract new members. Each Rambler should have our crest on his or her pack or jacket and always carry a Club brochure on hikes. I might add that many of our members feel that we should not grow much bigger but rather maintain a steady membership. I agree and consider a membership of 150-200 a very healthy number.

### Responsibilities

Membership in any organization does have its responsibilities and the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association is no exception. Since we are in an active outdoor club there is always an element of danger involved as in any outdoor activity. The responsibilities of the coordinators are outlined in an available brochure as are participants' responsibilities. I strongly recommend that all members or those interested in becoming members read them. Please remember that the coordinators are volunteers. They have invested their time and money to qualify themselves for outdoor leadership. When we sign up for a trip, we agree to certain conditions, i.e. the route taken, the time of start, coffee stop or not, etc. Make sure you know what kind of trip you are signing up for; can you handle the distance? Can you manage the elevation gain? If in doubt, always discuss it with the coordinator. Once you have committed yourself to a hike, do your best to keep up, and stay with the group.

The coordinator will always consider the safety of the group. People who do not cooperate and stay with the group endanger themselves as well as the others. This places additional stress on the coordinator. If you have a problem on any trip, talk to the Coordinator's Council chairperson, Bob Scott. Let him know how you feel. Bob might be able to help.

continued...

One thing we must never forget: We are going out to enjoy what nature has to offer, it's a beautiful world and we in CALGARY are especially blessed. LET'S HAVE FUN!

I'm looking forward to some of our upcoming events: Stampede Breakfast, Annual Car Camp, Dinner and Dance.

UNTIL THEN, HAVE A GREAT HIKING, BICYCLING, CANOEING SUMMER.

John Michi, President  
July '88

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From Your Social Director

Does a hiking club need to have organized social activities? Have you ever listened to the din of conversation after a meeting? Have you lingered over a coffee before a hike? Lazed in the sun on top of a mountain paying more attention to the conversation than to the scenery? Need I say more? Not only are we hikers but we are social creatures too.

Social occasions offer you a chance to talk with not only the people you regularly hike with but it is also a chance to meet fellow Ramblers who may hike at a different level than you. Besides they are fun! So please mark the following events on your calendar. Everyone is welcome!

Stampede Breakfast

Saturday, July 9, 1988 9 A.M.  
2904 Conrad Drive N.W.

Cycle/Walk

Friday, August 5, 1988 7 P.M.  
Weather permitting  
Glenmore Park (end of 37 St.)

Annual Car Camp

September 9, 10 and 11  
Lower Lake, Kananaskis Country

Annual Dinner and Dance

Saturday, October 1, 1988 6 P.M.  
Southern Alberta Oldtimers Association  
3625 - 4 Street S.W.

### Ascent to Mt. Popocatepetl

From Alison Rath, a former member of the Ramblers. This is an account of her ascent of Mt. Popocatepetl in Mexico with a group from the University of Calgary as written to Jim Cunningham.

Dear Jim,

February 20, 1988

When I made the ascent to Popocatepetl (elev. 17,900'), I didn't know what I was taking on. This was likely the most exhilarating and dangerous feat I will ever do. (I think!)

We made the ascent across the Glacier Norde at an angle which was not our intended route. Nothing much that we did was actually intended. We had to climb in 2 days instead of 3, as one of our party of 5 was coughing blood from the altitude. He was a very fit young man, but it hit him hard. We acclimatized at Tlmacus Lodge (elev. 12,500') for one day and I was shown how to use the climbing gear, use the crampons and do a self-arrest with the ice axe. There was very little chance of my succeeding with a self-arrest on some of the glacier as it was solid ice. This was my introduction to glacier traverse -- solid ice at an altitude of approximately 15,500' with an angle of 35 degrees and a 40 lb. pack on my back. After the first section one of my crampons came off at the heel. We had to take a route which traversed a number of crevasses. Our mountaineer guide, Will Black, had to make a lot of decisions he didn't like because the options were worse.

Four of us did reach the volcanic center. Breathing was agonizing while climbing. At the rim of the crater I fell flat on my stomach and gazed into it. Jets of sulfur were streaming from holes in the belly of the crater. Huge igneous rocks of rich brown and blue colours stood around the rim on one section looking much like sculptured Aztec protectors. The sulfur had been taken by Cortez' conquistadores to use in gun powder to overtake the Aztecs in the 1500's.

After about 10 minutes of rest, horrendous winds blew up. They gusted and battered us about as we tried to find more shelter to look at the crater from other parts of the rim. We were separated, and for a while, I thought I'd seen my last days as I was so exhausted and the air was so thin and sometimes the volcanic dust obscured my vision. Then our guide reappeared, improvised a route downward that was not over ice, but rather over soft volcanic sand. It is possible to walk up this route although walking up 5000' of very soft sand is no fun. We thought the glacier route would be better. Will had originally wanted to take us over a hard-packed snow surface. We learned that the mountain tells you what you can and can't do.

We made it back to Tlmacus Lodge that night by 9:00 pm; our day had started at 3:30 am (leaving the mountain hut by 4:30 am we used our headlamps to discern the initial ascent route which was on scree and large rock.)

continued...

# England

## in the Merry Month of May

Never having been to England before my interest was piqued when the idea of a 'walking' holiday there was first raised nearly two years ago. This may seem an inordinately long time ahead to plan a holiday, however the planning paid off, and our three weeks in England and Wales were one of the most enjoyable holidays I have taken -- even the weather cooperated (most of the time).

The group started out somewhat larger but in the end only three Ramblers were left: Holly, Rob and yours truly. A large part of the success of the trip goes to Holly. She suggested possible locales for our walking and then chose some fine country inns for our home base in the various areas and then looked after all the details regarding reservations for the group.

After a couple of days in London, (Don't miss the British Museum if you are ever there!) recovering from the 8 hour flight from Calgary we took a British Rail train to the Exmoor area near the south-west coast. With its gently rounded hills and lush hedges it provided us with good walks to get in shape for the Lake District the next week. We spent 5 nights at the Royal Oak in Winsford, some 15 miles inland from the coast. The Royal Oak has to be one of the finest places to stay in England! Even the bar was open to residents outside of 'pub hours' so we were able to quench our thirst as

soon as we came back from our walks. (One does not go hiking in England, one goes walking.) To add charm to our visit there were even 6 two-tone brown geese, 24 cats (we only saw eleven at any one time in the back yard) and resident sheep.

From Winsford we were able to walk to the Tarr Steps (giant stones of unknown origin which cross the river like giant stepping stones) or up Winsford Hill to the Wambarrows (ancient burial mounds). The staff at the Royal Oak were also able to arrange transportation to the coast so we were able to take a 'rugged' coastal walk from Minehead to Porlock. As well we spent a morning in the interesting town of Dunster, took a taxi to Exeter, and then walked the five miles back to Winsford returning in time for a bitter before dinner. Speaking of food the meals at the Royal Oak were the best I have eaten anywhere. Each night (and the menu changed each day) we had a choice of several appetizers and at least five different main courses, which was followed by a selection of cheeses or sweets (or both if you wished!). Despite our walking I think we all started to gain weight that first week.

From Exmoor we took the train north to the Lake District where we spent several days in Ambleside before moving to Wasdale Head. Ambleside, located at the head of Lake Windermere, is definitely a tourist town. But for the buildings all being built of stone you could have imagined yourself in Banff! Yes,

we had left the green hedges of Exmoor for the stone walls of northern England. From Ambleside we were able to take a half day walk north, past two small lakes, Rhysdale and Grasmere, and back. From Ambleside our major walk was up High Pike, one of many enticing ridge walks in the area. Rob and Holly continued on around the horseshoe shaped ridge while I descended more directly back to Ambleside and was able to fill myself with traditional English chips before the Fish and Chip shop closed for the afternoon break.

The ride to Wasdale Head by taxi is not one we are likely to soon forget (nor the return trip). We had to cross two passes, Wrynose and Hardnott, the latter involving tight S-shaped turns (no guard rails) and a road which in many ways resembled a roller coaster ride. It required a strong stomach to survive the trip from the back seat of a small car.

The Wasdale Head Inn is a charming country inn, literally at the end of the road and is bounded on three sides by some of the highest peaks in the Lake District. To the west, on the fourth side is Wast Water, a lovely little lake complete with crags (cliffs) and the universal scree slopes. Here again the food was both tasty and abundant. My room had a full view not only of the pastures with their stone walls, but also of Great Gable and the Scafell range.

Their mountains are very different from ours, no jutting, glaciated peaks piercing the sky, but rather rounded tops with interesting crags between the valley floor and the summits. Excellent trails make all of the peaks very accessible.

With its head in the clouds our first walk out of Wasdale Head was to Great Gable. Part way up we bypassed the Tourist Route in favour of the Climber's Traverse. As the latter part of the route involves some rock scrambling we were glad to meet up with a group of British walkers whose leader was familiar with the area. This reassured us that we were more or less on-route as in the mist we could not see very far ahead. Indeed, surveying the route later, we agreed that perhaps it had been better that we could see neither up nor down.

There were a number of other people on the summit with more appearing from various directions out of the mist (having come up other routes we presumed). Then it cleared! There was a stampede for cameras and only then did we realize just how many there were on the summit! There were dogs, there were children, there were people with canes, and even a token sheep grazing among the rocks. It made us appreciate the uncrowded summits in the Rockies.

Several days later we set off to climb Scafell, the highest peak in England ( 3200 feet). The summit is marked by a large, round stone structure complete with several stairs to assist in climbing it. Again our ascent was made in the mist and it wasn't until we had descended several hundred feet that we could see across the valley to Great Gable.

Other ascents in the Lake district (made in good weather, I might add lest you get the impression we did all our climbing in the mist) were Lingmell and Kirk Fell. Again our taxi took us over the mountain passes and back to Windermere where we caught the train for Chester.

Chester embodies the best of the smaller English cities. The city center has retained many of its older buildings in a good state of repair. The old city gate and stone wall surrounding the original city blend in and the wall can be walked upon giving fine views of the streets and the river. We picked up our rental car early the next morning (again, Holly's planning paid off) and drove west into Wales. We stayed in Bed and Breakfast establishments in small towns and ate our meals in the local pubs. Having a car enabled us to see quite a bit of Northern Wales and the scenery varied from forested hillsides to rather desolate and treeless flatland. We visited several castles and as a result picked up some Welsh history and finished the visit with a trip up Snowdon. From the summit there are excellent views of the surrounding peaks and there are some fine ridges to climb in Snowdonia Park.

Our final night in Wales was at a 17th Century farm with a craft centre adjoining it. Then it was back to London to the Sandringham and then the long flight home to Calgary. A fine holiday with good walking and recommended to those Ramblers looking for new trails.

Bev Bendell

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Ascent of Popacatapetl continued

The following day we left Tlamacus Lodge and taxied to the little village of Amecamea. We had met a family member who insisted that we visit and we were all taken in and fed two full meals that day. The family members took turns showing us the market square, a beautiful church and other sights. Back at their home, friends and relatives continued to drop by and meet us. Outside the front door was a road of fine, powdery dirt, but all the family were clean and pleasant. The spoke only a little English -- and we, even less Spanish. In a friendly game that Will lost, he sang a hilarious Maritime song and they loved it. The mother made a huge duffel bag for me with fabric I'd bought in the market. (I needed something to carry my sleeping bag and gear back to Seattle as my rented backpack was headed back to Calgary.) So much for the myth of Mexicans who would rip you off.

Jim, if you submit the above to the Packrat, and if they want it that would be nice. I miss the Ramblers. I've joined the Mountaineers here in Seattle but it's a long time before an acquaintance becomes a friend.

Miss you, Love, Alison



# Tick talk

by *Alf Skrastins*

It is rumored that, after the success of *Jaws*, *Grizzly*, and similar exploitation films, Hollywood has ready for release a movie entitled *Blood-Sucker*, a story about a band of crazed ticks that terrorize a national park, leaving paralysis and spotted, feverish death in their wake.

Judging by the dread some people have for the little beasts, the film might be a financial success. However, a little knowledge of the enemy combined with some care can go a long way toward blunting the threat posed by ticks.

The tick that is of concern to mountain travellers is the Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever Tick or wood tick which goes by the scientific name of *Dermacentor andersoni*.

It is found throughout the interior mountains of British Columbia and the Rocky Mountains of Alberta and British Columbia as well as the far southern parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan. They become active as areas become free of snow, which, depending on the area, can be anywhere from March to May and the ticks remain active for about ten to twelve weeks. In dry areas "tick season" can be over by the middle of May while in some areas they can be active until well into June.

Although the nymph and larval stages of ticks require blood gorges to grow, it is the adult tick which usually attacks man. These ticks are about the size and shape of a sunflower seed, having a hard brown body, with grey markings. These arthropods have eight legs, two of which are used to hang onto brush or grass

along the trail while the other six are extended in search of a possible host. The movement of wildlife or man along the trail causes vibrations which stimulate the tick to begin questing motions with its outstretched legs, enabling the parasite to grab onto a passing host.

The tick then crawls up the host until it attaches itself in one of the hairy areas of the body, usually at the back of the neck and at the base of the skull. After burrowing its mouth parts into the skin, the tick begins to gorge itself on the host's blood, in order to get the nourishment it requires for reproduction.

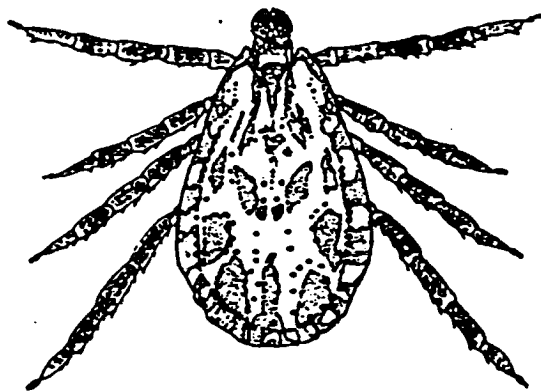
A toxin which is present in varying strengths in some, but not all, ticks can produce a condition known as tick paralysis. This seems to be more of a problem in the interior of British Columbia than in any other region, but it has been known to occur in Alberta.

The first symptoms of the paralysis occur about four to five days after the tick begins feeding. Paralysis starts with the legs and gradually ascending until within three days it affects the arms and finally the internal organs and throat. If the heart and lungs are not affected, recovery can take place within a few hours of removal of the tick. If the tick is not found, death may result.

Wood ticks are also carriers of the deadly Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, which is characterized by extremely high body temperatures, agonizing muscular tension, and a spotty looking rash.

To prevent ticks from attacking, it is a good idea to wear trousers tucked into boots when

## The wood tick



*Dermacentor andersoni*

hiking in infested areas. While hiking or during breaks, check areas like the back of the neck for what will feel like a small bump, and use a fine toothed comb to check the hair. Also keep an eye on your hiking companions who will not notice a tick crawling up the back of their shirts. Make extensive daily examinations for ticks, paying particular attention to the pubic regions and the back of the head and neck.

Ticks can be removed from the body by a very, very slow and gentle pull. Other techniques for removing them include covering them with vaseline or painting them with nail polish. Since ticks 'breathe' through holes in the sides of their bodies this will 'choke' them and force them to let go to fight for their lives. This will normally remove the tick mouth parts which are responsible for the paralysis and fever. Finally treat the wound with a disinfectant and if there is any indication of paralysis contact a physician immediately.

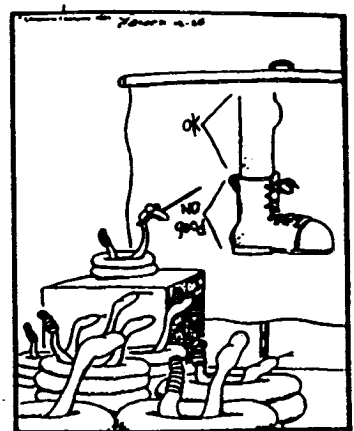
RMRA HISTORICAL COORDINATORS LIST AND PINS

RMRA HIST & PINS	COORDINATOR LEVEL	STATUS	PIN
98-04-15			
ASHION, CLAIRE	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
ANDERSON, HOWARD	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
ARNOLD, DAVE	ASSISTANT	ACTIVE	
BAKAITIS, MARIJA	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
BAXTER, BOB	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
BELL, JIM	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
BENDELL, BEV	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER IN 87
BORRON, ART	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
BRAUN, HANS	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
BRAUN, DICK	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
BROWN, DAVE	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
BROWN, LORNA	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
BRUCE, JIM	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER
BUCK, JACK	ASSISTANT	ACTIVE	
BUSCHERT, LOWELL	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
CAMPBELL, DOUG	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER IN 87
CARTER, JACK	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD
COUSS, HAROLD	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
CRUMB, BILL	FULL	ACTIVE	
CRUMMY, BRIAN	FULL	NON ACTIVE	GOLD
CUNNINGHAM, JIM	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER
DAVIS, ART	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD
DAVIS, BRENT	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
DEARING, DEANNE	FULL	ACTIVE	
DE VRIES, FRED	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
DE WAAL, TED	FULL	NON ACTIVE	GOLD
DE WIT, DEE	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER
DE WIT, REIN	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER
DES MOULINS, ALISTAIR	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD IN 86
DREW, WALLY	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD
ECKARDT, ALEX	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
FISCHER, PETER	FULL	ACTIVE	
FLANAGAN, TOM	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
FOLKINS, RON	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD
FORSTER, TONY	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER
FRYLING, REG	ASSISTANT	ACTIVE	
GALI, FRANCISCO	ASSISTANT	ACTIVE	
GARLAND, LILLIAM	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
GILLINGHAM, PETER	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
GORDON, BLAKE	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
GRAHAM, ART	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
GREGG, DAVE	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD IN 87
HAASE, ARN	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
HASLETT, BENITA	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
HASSETT, JOHN	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
HAYES, BILL	ASSISTANT	ACTIVE	
HEWLEY, ANGUS	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD IN 87
HODGSON, LESLIE	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
HOPKINSON, DON	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
JAMNICKZY, LAZLO	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
JONES, DAWN	FULL	ACTIVE	
JULL, DICK	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD
KAISER, ALBERT	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
KAM, ART	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
KIRKPATRICK, JIM	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER
KITTLE, KAY	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER
KOETSIER, HERMAN	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
KOSUGI, BRUCE	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
LADOUCEUR, DAVE	FULL	ACTIVE	
LANNIER, MEL	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
LAVALLÉE, DEL	FULL	ACTIVE	
LEACH, BILL	FULL	NON ACTIVE	GOLD
LEAHY, DENNIS	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
LIECHTI, MARTHA	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
LOWNDES, DICK	FULL	ACTIVE	
LYNN, ED	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
MARRINER, RAY	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER
MCCASKELL, ISA	FULL	ACTIVE	
MCGILL, PETER	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER
MCGILL, ESTER	FULL	ACTIVE	
MCINNIS, JOHN	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
MICHI, JOHN	FULL	ACTIVE	
MICHKÓFSKY, RON	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
MILLS, QUITA	FULL	ACTIVE	
MOHR, DIETER	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
MORAN, TONY	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD IN 87

RMRA HISTORICAL COORDINATORS LIST AND PINS

MULLER, GUNTHER	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
NICHOLLS, JEAN	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
NOER, GERT	ASSISTANT	ACTIVE	
OLIESMANS, HENK	FULL	NON ACTIVE	GOLD
OLSON, MERLE	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
PALLAT, MONIKA	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
PALLAT, ROLF	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
PATTISON, BOB	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD
PATTISON, HELGA	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD
PELZ, BRIAN	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
PECK, HUGH	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
PIPPY, SISAN	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
REED, FRANK	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
REID, DAVE	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER
SANEK, AL	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
SCHLEE, GERRY	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
SCHLEINICH, JOHN	FULL	ACTIVE	
SCOTT, BOB	FULL	ACTIVE	SILVER IN
SEGEREN, TOMY	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
SIMPSON, DOUG	FULL	ACTIVE	
SINCLAIR, ALASTAIR	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD
SMITH, DAPHNE	FULL	NON ACTIVE	GOLD
SMITH, ROBIN	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
STACEY, ED	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
STEEN, ORDELL	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
STEFFEN, DIETER	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
TAYLOR, MARY	ASSISTANT	ACTIVE	
THURSTON, RUTH	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
THURSTON, TOM	FULL	NON ACTIVE	GOLD
TURNER, PAM	FULL	NON ACTIVE	GOLD
TWELKER, WILF	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD
VAIR, NANCY	FULL	NON ACTIVE	SILVER
VAIR, SANDY	FULL	NON ACTIVE	GOLD
VANDERVOET, FRANK	FULL	ACTIVE	
VANDERWAL, FAY	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
WALLIS, IAN	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
WATSON, DICK	ASSISTANT	NON ACTIVE	
WATSON, KEN	FULL	ACTIVE	
WEBB, JACK	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
WEGER, DARLENE	FULL	ACTIVE	
WELTON, RICK	FULL	ACTIVE	
WESTCOTT, BRIAN	FULL	ACTIVE	GOLD
WHEADON, LYNN	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
WIECHEL, HANK	FULL	ACTIVE	
WILSON, JIM	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
WOODHATCH, JOHN	FULL	NON ACTIVE	
ZEIVIEC, JOSIE	FULL	NON ACTIVE	

A STATUS OF "NON ACTIVE" INDICATES THAT THIS PERSON HAS NOT CONTINUED TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE INDICATED COORDINATOR LEVEL AND MUST REAPPLY TO BE AN ASSISTANT COORDINATOR PRIOR TO ORGANIZING ANY FUTURE RMRA TRIPS



### Ladies Backpack (June 27 - 28)

The second annual Ladies Backpack was a resounding success - again. We arrived at Interlakes parking lot on Saturday morning and hiked to Forks campground, arriving 2½ hours later. After setting up camp, we explored the surrounding territory, which included a climb up to Astor Lake.

Sunday was an adventure-filled day, despite threats of foul weather in the morning. We hiked up to Lawson Lake and were overcome by the breathtaking beauty of the flower-filled meadows. Anemonies and Globe flowers were out in full force. The Anemonies or the Globe flowers (I can't tell the difference) have the freshest little faces with a center so yellow, it reminded me of the sun. Buttercups were also plentiful. They are an unappreciated flower, unless one takes a closer look; for their petals are so shiny, that they look like yellow plastic.

The trip to Turbine Canyon was certainly worth the effort. One look down into the 100' deep ravine gave me goosebumps for hours. The steep precipitous gorge with the riotous whitewater at the bottom might entice a suicidal maniac, but I kept my distance.

After an exciting time at Turbine Canyon, we hiked back to camp to prepare for the backpack out.

Because it was getting late, during the hike out, we encountered much wildlife including 3 moose, a rabbit, a grouse and several toads. Toads were loitering on the trail. They blend in so much that I was amazed none got squashed. I was tempted to kiss one, hoping it would turn into a handsome hiker, but considered the consequences - toad lips - and decided to stick to frogs.

On the very last stretch of the fireroad, after a long, long day, us three stragglers encountered a gorgeous hunk of moose. But after our feelings of awe and wonder dissipated, we realized how engrossed he was with his salad of leaves and buds. He was standing broadside on the trail and might as well have been a detour sign, because he was not going anywhere. We agreed not to confront him. Instead, we decided to go up the hill to the left and go through the bushes and trees around him, since moose apparently hate to climb. Despite our aching bodies and rioting feet, we climbed up the hill and bushwhacked around Mr. Moose (who disappeared) and thus our hike was complete.

B.M.

## WATERTON IN EARLY SPRING

Peggy Raite (humourist), Alistair Sinclair (lead hiker), Steve Logos (chauffeur) and I had a beautiful spring weekend, April 23-25, 1988 in Waterton National Park. Only the locals, lots of grazing mountain sheep, and an occasional tourist were in town as we settled into our housekeeping cabin (Aspen-Windflower Motel). It had excellent service including warm rooms, lots of hot water, and comfortable beds. Mornings started with Alistair serving tea in bed, Dee produced individualized lunches and supper was organized by all, with much free-flowing good advice following Happy Hour. Peggy slept best. She missed the night time noises (snoring, etc.) by taking the hearing aid out and sleeping firmly on the good ear. Hiking on Birds Eye Hill and the next day to the Oil Basin we saw 8-12 varieties of spring flowers, including the much sought after Yellow Bell, as well as mountain sheep, elk, deer, big robins, swans and an owl. Bear signs were there, as well, but the bears avoided us and the only tick we saw was one Steve brought home in his van. On Sunday we awoke to lightly falling snow and on that day we trekked to Crypt Point. Evenings were warm and calm, and we explored the townsite, lakeshore and falls as well as visiting the Kilmoray Lodge, an attractive place to stay if you don't want to cook your own meals. This was a great weekend for getting our spring start with lots of distance and not too much elevation.

Dee O'Brien  
April, 1988

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### Hummus

#### A Backpack Treat

½ cup peanut butter or tahini  
½ tsp. cumin (or more to taste)  
½ tsp. salt  
2 large cloves garlic  
2 tbsp. lemon juice  
3 tbsp. hot water  
1 19 oz. can of chick peas  
fresh parsley and mint to taste

\* dump into food processor bowl with blades on bottom, process until smooth  
\* makes 1½ cups  
\* serve with whole wheat pita bread.

# LOONS

Loons don't sing; they make music—unforgettable, haunting music, like the song of the humpback whale or the howl of the timber wolf. Loons don't warble and trill prettily, as do songbirds, nor do they quack and honk discordantly, as do most other water birds. Loon music is richly harmonic, full of unexpected intervals, wild to our ear. Loon music speaks to something deep and ancient in the listener, for its score is old—older than man, older than all birdsong. Loons have been around much, much longer than man, 40 to 50 to 60 million years longer. Loon music, like the bird itself, is primeval.

I often heard it when I was a child summering on a lake in Wisconsin, for the loon is a water bird that nests only in the North. I heard the yodel and the tremolo and the wail and the hoot and all possible combinations of these themes. I didn't, of course, know that these beautiful strains represented a kind of language—that the wail I heard, which would suddenly break the quiet of the northern waters at any time of day, was a call from one loon to

its mate, perhaps a summons for it to come and take a turn sitting on the eggs. Nor did I know that the undulating yodel was a male loon's warning to intruders to keep out of the pair's nesting territory. And I certainly was not aware that no two males yodel exactly alike and that individual birds can be recognized from spectrograms of their yodels. Finally, I could never have guessed that the tremolo, which sounds so much like crazy laughter, is no expression of mirth at all, but, rather, a conveyance of fear—fear for safety of self, mate, young, or nest.

The loon is a handsome bird. Both sexes are feathered alike. Velvety black heads are studded with ruby eyes and set off by a chic collar of white stripes. Black backs are flecked with white, like a night sky spangled with stars. But in my youth I seldom saw the loons I heard. Not that the species was so rare at the time, but the bird is shy. And well it should be. Though it can fly at speeds of 75 miles an hour and dive to incredible depths in a minute, the loon is helpless on land. It cannot walk. Like a seal, its remnant legs are encased in its body. What protrudes are oversize feet, tarsal bones covered with webbed flesh and set far back on the bird's stern. From this position, they can speedily power the animal down and through the water as it pursues its diet of fish.

But on land the loon can do no better than push its way

forward on its white breast. And so it must nest immediately adjacent to water, preferably on a secluded island. The loon has been known to use any available material in throwing together its untidy, make-do nest—from floating muskeg to sedge mats. And it's not particular about the nest's exact location, sometimes brazenly constructing one on a gravel bar or bare rock ledge. Here it lays one or two (rarely three) coffee-brown eggs. Later the sitting bird may make home improvements, reaching for what vegetation it can grasp with its daggerlike bill and then throwing this material in, under, and around itself and its eggs. The eggs of loons do not hatch for 28 days. Then the chicks require several months of parental care and feeding. Compare this with most songbirds, whose babies fledge two weeks after a 10-day incubation, allowing the parents time to rear a second and even third brood.

Loon chicks can swim within a day of hatching, but even at two months they can't fly, and so need further supervision. To gain lift, a loon must scoot across the water

for up to a quarter mile, all the while pumping its wings at a furious rate. By the time the northern lakes freeze, any youngster not ready to make the long flight to open sea will die.

It should be apparent then why any disturbance to nesting birds can cost them an entire breeding season. Eggs can grow cold while fishermen, picnickers, or boaters inadvertently hold a frightened pair off their nest. Sixty million years of adaptation have not prepared this shy relic of the Miocene to



Newly hatched chicks must battle buoyancy when attempting their first dive. Within days, they can go to 10 feet.

cope with hordes of water-loving vacationers.

Most people are unaware that mere human presence can foil reproduction in this slow-breeding bird, whose need for space and privacy is immense. It is thought that loons are tied to territory; long after all nest sites have been turned into boat landings and swimming beaches, there is evidence that the loons will return each year and defend an unproductive nest.

Even if the pair does lay a clutch of eggs on some as yet unexploited piece of shore, pet dogs or garbage-fed raccoons—the trappings of nearby human settlement—are likely to destroy or devour them. At the same time, power companies, supplying summer residents with electricity, may unpredictably raise or lower the lake level, either flooding the nest or beaching it. If, by some miracle, eggs do hatch, the chicks will need still another stretch of shoreline in which to hide, where they can practice catching aquatic insects and crayfish. And when in open water, the loon family must be given an inviolate circle of space.

*Hope Ryden is a naturalist, photographer, filmmaker, and author of nine books on North American wildlife.*

# LOONS

If boats or water-skiers separate parents from young, the birds may fail to get together again.

Though conscious of the loon's reclusive nature, I once alarmed a parent bird while taking a turn in a paddleboat. At the time I was far from shore and 100 yards from a little loon flotilla—two adults, each piggybacking a chick, bobbing in and out of view on the choppy water. I did not believe I would be a threat from such a distance.

The two chicks, however, had only recently pipped their way out of shells, one a day earlier than the other, as is usual. Within hours of the second hatching, the parents had lured the infants into the water. Never again would the little loons return to the nest. For how can a nonambulatory bird defend young on dry ground? A killdeer can decoy intruders by racing about and faking a broken wing. A grouse can signal its chicks to scatter and hide. But what can a land-clumsy loon do?

**S**o one-day-old chicks, still covered with black down, take to water. The precocial birds can't sink; in fact, for days they are too buoyant to execute a proper dive. Their parents must fish and beak-feed them as they paddle about. When tired or cold or harassed by a hungry pike, they clamber onto an adult back and nestle into feathers they do not yet have. If the parent wishes to jettison a chick, it compresses its feathers, squeezing out air until, like a submarine, it sinks out of sight.

I suspect that the loon who half-ran, half-flew across the water at me and skidded to a stop a few feet from my paddleboat was a male. To my astonishment, the irate creature began to perform the "penguin dance." Rising on his tail and crying the tremolo, he displayed his five-foot span of wings, which he then began to beat until I was splattered with water. Not until he was satisfied that I was in full retreat did he depart, flying directly back to his family.

I treasure that experience. I did not take the paddleboat out again, even though human traffic on the lake rendered my self-restraint meaningless.

Unfortunately, the loon's breeding range has shrunk, and chick production has declined sharply over the past three decades. No longer do loons breed as far south as Pennsylvania and Illinois. Several northern-tier states have

listed the species as threatened.

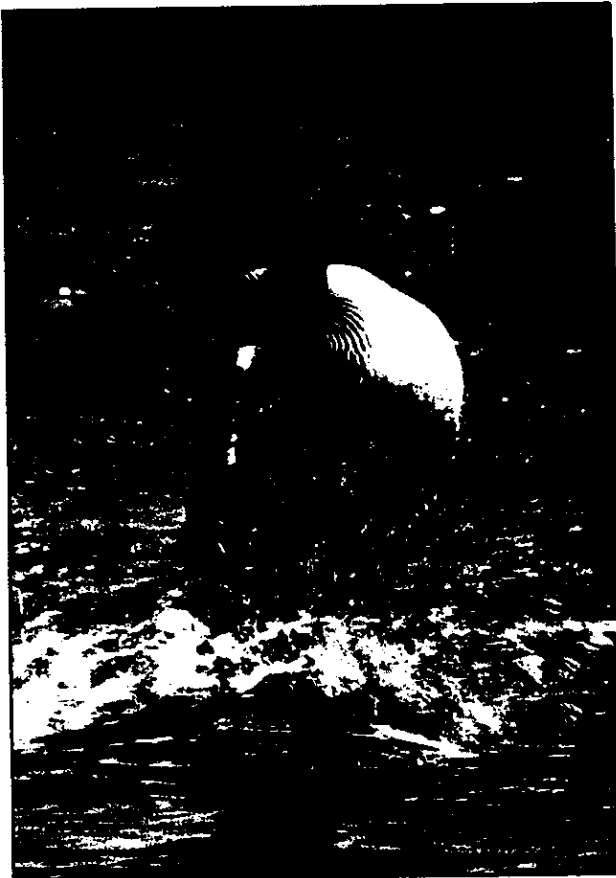
One nonprofit organization in New Hampshire, the Loon Preservation Committee, is working to reverse this trend and, over the years, has been joined by other organizations with similar objectives. Besides advising vacation-home owners about the sensitivity of breeding birds, Preservation Committee staffers petition power companies to delay manipulating lake levels until the birds have incubated their eggs. The group has also experimented with an artificial nesting island, a raft that would ride up and down with the rise and fall of the water.

Protecting loons on their northern nesting range is only half the challenge, however. Immature loons go to sea and stay there for the first three years of their life or until they acquire adult plumage. And all loons spend every winter fishing the nation's coastlines, where oil spills, pollution, and toxic waste present hazards. In 1983 some 2,500 wintering loons were found dead along Florida's coasts and, although a variety of causes were given for the die-off, many of the victims were found to be carrying heavy loads of mercury in their tissues. The debilitating effect of this poison is believed to be the indirect cause of the massive toll.

But where had the birds accumulated so much mercury? One likely answer is from acidified lakes in the Northeast. Mercury, long used as a fungicide in logging operations, is commonly

found in lake sediments throughout New England. Not until pH factors drop as a result of acid rain, however, does this heavy metal increase its rate of movement up the aquatic food chain and begin to accumulate in loon tissue. So even before the bird's fish diet has been destroyed by our inability or unwillingness to control industrial effluvia and automobile exhaust, loons are already succumbing to a by-product of acid rain.

Given the many man-related problems that beset this top-of-the-food-chain species, one wonders what lies ahead for other water-dependent creatures. And if we fail to act on behalf of the loon, could a merganser or a grebe or a heron or an osprey move us the way this unique bird does? They produce no music to reawaken our own need for wild places.



Head raised and body thrust forward, a threatened loon flaps its wings and issues a full-throated yodel.

## EDITORIAL

This particular Wednesday evening was exceptionally usual. I had a feeling that something was different, but the more I tried to put my finger on the difference, the more elusive it became. Everything seemed curiously ordinary. As usual, I was roaring up the 10th Street hill on my bike to a Ramblers meeting. I arrived early, made my usual low-key entrance and chatted merrily with some fellow members.

The meeting was called to order and proceeded with the usual agenda of announcements and trip reports. Toward the end, I announced my customary need for donations to the Packrat. This time, however, I felt a curious compulsion to fall down on my knees and beg for mercy, but decided not to make a spectacle of myself.

The meeting ended. I gathered up all my stuff from under my chair. When I looked up, I saw a swarm of people coming toward me from all directions. I started to feel claustrophobic. Then I saw they were all holding bits of paper; their arms were outstretched offering me these bits of paper. There was so much paper, and it was so blindingly white that I could not see. It was a white-out! Just as I was about to pass out, I saw that these bits of paper were really trip reports, articles, cartoons; thousands of contributions to the Packrat. I was so happy -- so overjoyed that I had kittens.

Then I woke up. It was a bleak Thursday morning: my head was pounding, and I felt a bit let-down. I rolled out of bed, dragged myself to the kitchen, opened the cupboard and retrieved a can of tuna. I opened it, gagged, fed my kittens and went back to bed.

Barb McInnis



*"We should have brought along a man to do the cooking!"*