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On this page, clockwise from left: JASON VAN BRUGGEN PHOTO, SCOTT PARENT PHOTO, KARI MEDIG PHOTO, COLIN FIELD PHOTO.

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PUBLISHER

GLEN HARRIS glen@mountainlifemedia.ca

CREATIVE DIRECTOR & PRODUCTION MANAGER

AMÉLIE LÉGARÉ amelie@mountainlifemedia.ca

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

LOO MONILLTY loo@mountainlifemedia.ca

PHOTO EDITOR

GLEN HARRIS glen@mountainlifemedia.ca

FINANCIAL CONTROLLER

IDA GIBSON ida@mountainlifemedia.ca / 705 443 1934

CONTRIBUTORS

Leslie Anthony, Dave Barnes, Alija Bos, Melanie Chambers, Andy Christie, Andrew Findlay, Ken Haigh, Erin Hogue, Adam Hunt, Bruce Kirkby, Marc Landry, Kari Medig, Ethan Meleg, Jack Morgan, Scott Parent, Nelson Phillips, Richard Roth, Dan Rubinstein, Tim Shuff, Jason Van Bruggen, Michelle Ward, Willy Waterton.

ADVERTISING ACCOUNT MANAGERS

SIMONE STERIO-RISK	simone@mountainlifemedia.ca	705 888 1959
BRYAN GRUNDMANN	bryan@mountainlifemedia.ca	416 300 1307
MARYLEE HETHRINGTON	marylee@mountainlifemedia.ca	519 599 1021
GLEN HARRIS	glen@mountainlifemedia.ca	705 441 6334
JON GREEN	jonny@mountainlifemedia.ca	705 443 7600

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EDITOR

NED MORGAN ned@mountainlifemedia.ca

EDITOR AT LARGE

COLIN FIELD colin@mountainlifemedia.ca

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

ALLISON KENNEDY DAVIES allison@mountainlifemedia.ca

WEBMASTER

KEVIN CRAWFORD kevin@mountainlifemedia.ca

DISTRIBUTION

BRENDAN THOMPSON brendan@mountainlifemedia.ca

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FIELD**NOTES**

FIRST RIDE OF THE YEAR

We're going riding for the first time this year. I'm stoked. My buddy's waiting in the pick-up truck outside and I'm running around the house trying to find all my gear. When I grab my CamelBak from the depths of my closet it's dusty, dirty, and still has water in it from my last ride of 2013. And what's this in the pocket? A crushed tall can. I remember this can. It was from a ridiculous trail-ride with a friend. We ended up bush-whacking (as I inevitably do with him), crashing through thick, thorny, burry bush, totally lost. But not *really* lost, he would defend.

At about the halfway point, sweating and exhausted, we panted on the top of a knoll trying to catch our breath. Then he pulled the tall can out of his pack. It gleamed in the sunlight and we chugged from it deeply while passing it back and forth. The view was incredible. Looking out into the Pretty River Valley, the sun dropping low in the western sky, we regained our composure slowly while laughing, talking and dreaming. We knew this was the last ride of the season. And that we had something to celebrate. We remembered great rides and proud accomplishments. We looked forward to snow.

Then I crushed the can. A subtle, confident stomp on flat solid ground with my flat shoes – yet another reason I don't ride clipless – did the trick. Then I picked up the can, debated chucking it in my buddy's bag, but chucked it in mine instead and forgot about it. Until now. That dusty crushed can brings back so much for me. It reminds me why I do this. Why I love riding so much. Why ripping through the woods on a narrow ribbon of dirt defines me. Why I spend countless hours and dollars on my bike, and why, no word of a lie, riding a bike makes me a better person.

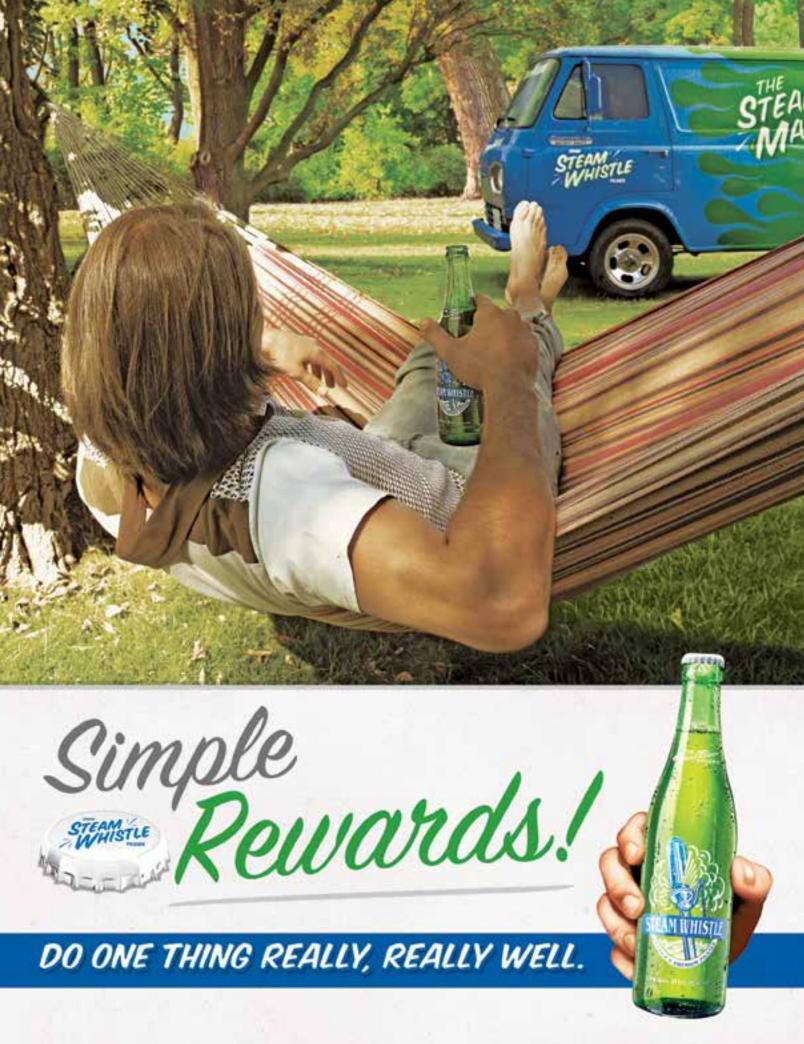
Some people say a bicycle gave them their first sense of freedom. Others claim riding is as close as we'll ever get to flying. I think they're both right. The sensation of riding allows us to live entirely in the moment for brief stretches of time – a difficult thing to do. And the camaraderie that comes along with riding, those friendships that develop from a shared experience, are a priceless byproduct.

As I run through the garage, throwing that nostalgic piece of garbage into the recycling bin, I grab my bike and chuck everything into the bed of the truck. Then I make eye contact with my buddy and put up my index finger, silently explaining, "One more second."

I run back into the garage and grab two tall cans from the fridge. After all, it's the first ride of the season. We're both excited. And there is an entire season to celebrate.

-Colin Field, Editor-at-Large

Chantal Horning on the final grind to a tall can. COLIN FIELD PHOTO.









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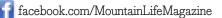
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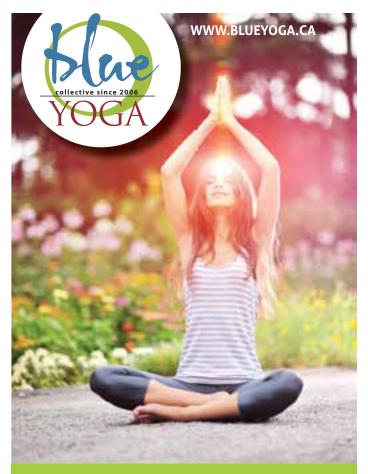
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THURSDAYS

6:30 - 7:45 pm Intermediate Hatha Yoga with Lise Ravenna Hall, Ravenna

FRIDAYS

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BLUE MOUNTAIN'S EPIC SEASON

2013/14 was one for the ages

As I write this story, it's a balmy -22°C. With "spring" just a few weeks away, the snow banks are towering, children are still being bundled, and skiers are hitting the slopes with more concerns about frostbite than goggle tans. Simply put, spring is nowhere to be found.

And while I'm starting to long for those days of riding slushy, forgiving snow and sipping pitchers on outdoor patios, the folks at Blue Mountain are celebrating one of the best snow seasons they've had in years.

"If someone asked us to describe Blue Mountain's snow conditions for the 2013/2014 season in one word, it would be epic," explains Blue's Ashley Boland. "The snow came fast and early this winter and brought with it one of Blue Mountain's earliest opening days on record - November 30, 2013."

While November openings are not unheard of, this season hasn't seen the typical January thaw, or a thaw of any kind for that matter. While snow days have caused more than a few closed roads, the locals have been treated to fresh powder regularly, often on days when no one further afield could make the drive.

An added bonus to these primo conditions was the much-anticipated launch of Blue's newest terrain expansion: The Orchard. "Mother Nature continued to be on our side throughout December and helped us open The Orchard well ahead of schedule," says Boland. "Arriving as an early Christmas present, The Orchard officially opened to the public on December 24. With seven new trails, including the longest green circle run in Ontario at 1.6km, feedback on Blue's new terrain has been overwhelmingly positive.'

As March dawns at Blue Mountain, the snowpack is in good shape for one of the best - and possibly longest - spring skiing seasons in years. "Today, Blue's snow base sits at 145cm which is enough to survive any future thaws and hopefully take us well into spring riding," says Boland. "With over 130,000 visitors at Blue to date this season, and the best snow conditions we've seen in the last five years, there is still a lot of season left to go before we push pause on the chairs."

So go ahead, dig out your jeans for a day of slushtacular fun, book an après-ski tee time, or dig out the neon zinc you've been saving for the slopes: spring skiing will be going off at Blue Mountain.

- Allison Kennedy Davies

Howell greets fans at Horseshoe Resort, Ontario, March 2014. ALLISON KENNEDY DAVIES PHOTO.

MUSKOKA'S GOLDEN GIRL

Dara Howell's journey to Olympic gold

By Allison Kennedy Davies

At 18 months of age, Dara Howell strapped on a pair of skis for the first time. Born into a passionate Muskoka ski family and hailing from a long line of ski instructors, Howell literally grew up on the slopes of Hidden Valley Highlands. Nearly two decades later, Howell's story has captured the hearts of Canadians. At just 19, the Huntsville native brought home the gold at the 2014 Sochi Olympics in the inaugural Slopestyle Ski event. With a single, perfectly executed run, she went from one of slopestyle's most promising young athletes to a household name.

Truth be told, I first tried to interview Howell a few months before the Games. I was told (by both her team and her family) that Dara wasn't available; that she was focusing on training and training alone. I was disappointed, admittedly, as I had a gut feeling that Dara was going to shine in Russia. But I couldn't argue, as clearly I know zilch about what it takes to be an Olympian.

As the Olympics got underway, I tuned into the slopestyle event, and soon saw Howell's patented ear-to-ear grin blazing from the top step of the podium. Her pre-Games focus had clearly paid off, and I knew then that I wanted another chance – a chance to find out how a young Ontario skier had made the leap from winning the Horseshoe Open to the Sochi Olympics in just a few short years.

Not quite a month after that gold-medal day, I got my shot. Howell was signing autographs at the grassroots Ontario event she'd won back in 2011. In a quiet pressroom, away from the long lineup of fans waiting for autographs, we finally sat down to chat.

Mountain Life: First of all, congratulations on your performance in Sochi. Has it sunk in yet?

Dara Howell: It's starting to sink in but I still have my moments for sure, where I just stop and think back and say, "Wow, that actually happened" *llaughsl.*

ML: From the comfort of my couch, you made it look easy but I could tell from your reaction after your first run that you knew you'd put something special together. Tell us a bit about how that gold medal run went for you.



Dara Howell launching at the 2013 World Cup Slopestyle, Cardrona, New Zealand. ROXY/MATT GEORGES PHOTO.

DH: Going into the Olympics, I just wanted to put in a run that I could be proud of. I had really bad training runs leading into the finals. I hadn't landed anything and then to come down and land one of the best runs of my life, I was just really excited – even before my score came up. Then my score came up and I freaked out, as you could clearly see on TV *llaughs1*.

ML: That run was early in the day's competition. When did you realize you would get the gold?

DH: With our sport, things can change in an instant. Any of those girls is capable of being on top of the podium, so definitely sitting around waiting kind of sucked, but thankfully I had my coaches and my physiotherapist up at the top with me. I had to wait; I dropped last. We just went with it, what could we do? It was so cool to have my coaches up at the top with me when I realized I'd won. Usually you find out at the bottom, but since I was the last rider, I was with them. My coaches are so important to me – I've been with Toben Sutherland from the start – it was a really special moment for all of us.

ML: So, with the gold in the bag, how did you feel about putting in a final run?

DH: At that point, I decided I wasn't going to do my full run again, I was just going to go out and have fun, case a couple of jumps *llaughsl*. I was pumped to get to the bottom. It was pretty crazy to see my family and to do the flower ceremony. My dad had brought a flag from home that a bunch of people had signed, so that was really cool. The whole day was a roller coaster – we had to do the flower ceremony, then a press conference, then drug testing... it was really crazy but really fun.

ML: When the Canadian national anthem was played and they put the gold medal around your neck, can you even begin to explain that feeling?

DH: For me, leading into the Games, I just wanted to do well and I had accepted that whatever happens, happens. But I feel like that moment – that's what you dream of – not just standing on the podium but actually hearing your country's national anthem play. To actually have it happen to me – it was just crazy. My coaches and my parents were in the crowd and I kept looking out and seeing them and seeing the Olympic torches in the background. I got off the podium and I was like, "I want to do it again!"



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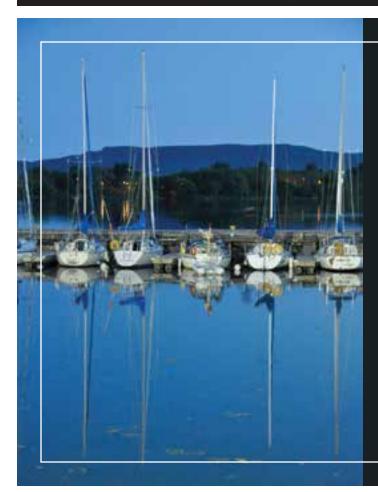
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"There was so much hype about the Olympics and how different it would be but really, for our sport, it was just another competition but with a lot more media."

ALLISON KENNEDY DAVIES PHOTO.

ML: Oh I suspect you will...

DH: Hopefully [laughs].

ML: You're young and this was your first Olympics. What surprised you most about the event and the atmosphere?

DH: There was so much hype about the Olympics and how different it would be but really, for our sport, it was just another competition but with a lot more media. Once you got on the hill, everything was essentially the same.

ML: What was being part of Team Canada like overall? Are the athletes close across all the sports?

DH: It was really cool to hang out with all the Canadian athletes. Everyone competed at different times so everyone was in their own bubble a bit. We all hung out in the athletes' lounge and watched a lot of Olympics together, though.

ML: You went to Sochi as an accomplished athlete in your sport, but you came home famous. What has life been like since you got home?

DH: It's been busy but good. I'm just happy to be hanging out with my friends and trying to be a normal kid – sort of. I'm just enjoying the experience with my family and enjoying seeing my parents be so proud of me – it's really neat. I still find the whole thing hard to believe myself sometimes.

ML: I'm not sure about "normal"; I just watched you sign about 300 autographs and take as many pictures with your medal. How do you feel about all that attention?

DH: It's pretty cool. I got to hold [trampoline gymnast] Rosie MacLennan's gold medal for the first time this summer and just having it in my hands was so cool. I want to share that feeling with other people. I'm happy to pass the medal – and the experience – around.

ML: Tell us a bit about how you got started in the sport. What are some of your earliest ski memories?

DH: My parents put me on skis at 18 months and I spent my winters growing up at Hidden Valley, just being members and racing on the weekends. It was just the regular Muskoka winter life. We are a full-on ski family – you ski every weekend, that's just what you do. Now I get to ski every day, it's awesome *llaughs1*.

ML: You grew up competing. When did you realize that slopestyle was evolving into a career?

DH: Honestly, I think maybe I've just realized now that this can be my career [laughs]. I raced at first and then I figure skated a bit. I really liked the jumps in figure skating but I didn't like the footwork. I have my Level 1 Ski Instructors and I taught for a winter. I've done it all. When I first got into freestyle skiing, our sport wasn't in the Winter Olympics so X Games was the first goal. I was just having fun and progressing and my parents kept giving me the opportunity to continue. Then the Olympics got into Sochi and I decided I wanted to go. My dad said, "Well maybe in 2018" but I was determined to go this time. It was pretty shocking for my parents - they knew what I was capable of - but to see me win the gold this soon was surreal

ML: Was there a lot of pressure heading into the Games?

DH: I feel like the only real pressure is the pressure you put on yourself. I have such a good support system behind me that I never really felt much pressure. My dad travelled with me to almost all the events this year. I think the pressure coming into the Olympics was self-imposed. The night before our event, I went up to my coaches and I just said, "Thanks a lot. We did it." I was just proud to be at the Olympics. I also said, "It will be what it will be and we can't change it." I was just proud to be at the Olympics and representing Canada and I couldn't really change the outcome either way. I took that attitude with me into the next day and, somehow, I pulled it off *llaughsl*.

ML: You've been asked about Sarah Burke's influence many times and you were quoted saying you hoped a Canadian would bring home the gold for her. What was it like to be the one to win gold for Sarah?

DH: When I said that, I definitely wasn't expecting to be the person bringing home the

gold medal. Sarah pushed so hard to have slopestyle and halfpipe skiing included and these games were definitely for her. Every one of us was definitely carrying Sarah with us. She just really wanted to see the sport progress and to make sure that we were having fun. I think we really left a mark on the world in Sochi and she was a huge influence on that.

ML: Did you ever get to compete alongside Sarah? Were you star-struck at the time?

DH: I did get to compete against her once. She was larger than life to me, for sure. She dropped in before me and I was like "Oh my gosh! It's Sarah Burke." I met her at a summer camp and she was so nice to me. I learned rodeos for the first time that year and she was so excited. It was amazing to see her get so excited about other people's success and other people's progression.

ML: Do you think younger riders in the sport will be looking up to you now?

DH: Yes, but it's pretty crazy. I feel like I am still so young and I still look up to so many people too, so to be a role model myself feels crazy. I still just feel like a kid [laughs].

ML: What advice do you have for up-and-coming freestyle skiers?

DH: You should go out there every day – in whatever you're doing – and have fun. Make sure you love what you do and make sure that you always, always smile. That's what life is about... smiling.

ML: A gold medal in slopestyle's Olympic debut is a huge achievement. Where do you go from here?

DH: Well, I'm done competing for this season but I feel like I am really just getting started in my career. There are so many things I want to do outside of the Olympics but I definitely want to be back for the 2018 Winter Games.

ML: Congrats again and thanks.

DH: Thanks and we'll definitely see you around!

A FISH TALE

By Leslie Anthony

There are many things in this world that make you go "Hmm..." Some fall into the category of inexplicable human actions (e.g., littering, murder, conservatism – oh hell, let's throw increasing carbon emissions in the face of certain climate change in there as well), challenging our understanding of our species. The lion's share of entities termed wonder-inducing by humans, however, stem from the realms of physics, chemistry and, most often, the organic world of plants and animals. Reasons for the latter are manifold, but best summed up by our affinity to – and sense of place in – the natural order.

There's a word – biophilia – that describes this instinctive bond between humanity and other living systems. Famously coined and elaborated by the evolutionary ecologist E.O. Wilson in an eponymous book, this relationship – comprising a spectrum from our anthropomorphic connection with baby animals to the calming effects of a forest – is what this new column intends to explore.

As a biologist and science journalist I am familiar with many of Mother Nature's more byzantine aspects and I find myself less surprised by the wonders gurgling up from nature's depths than the litany I've already absorbed. For example, I know that an Australian frog (now sadly extinct) could turn off its digestive juices, swallow its tadpoles, and raise the kids in its stomach; I understand that flamingos are pink because of pigments sequestered from the shrimp they eat; and, by passing a particularly tough genetics exam, I have subsumed the arcane knowledge that although some of the DNA in booze-producing *Saccharomyces* yeasts is gene poor, repetitive, and transiently silenced, it nonetheless evolves rapidly due to transposon activity, increased recombination and a surprising level of nucleotide divergence (hence the many kinds of wine and beer brewing). All this is cool in its own right, of course, but the demonstrable relationship by descent of humans to flamingos and gastric-brooding frogs – even yeast (not to mention our making beer together) – is positively pride-inducing. Yay team.

Not all organisms spark such instant affection. Who, for instance, has ever understood those miserable little metallic commas found, even in the most fastidious of bathrooms and kitchens, surreptitiously circling faucets and scuttling over countertops? No one, yet they're as seemingly mundane in our lives as junk mail. So I put it to you now with appropriately Seinfeldian succinctness: what's up with silverfish?

These denizens of darkness, exclusively revealed when you flick on a light, are always a nasty surprise. Perhaps not the horrifying revelation of a rat, or the gross-out of a cockroach, but begging similar questions. Where did they come from? Do they bite? Do I have an infestation? But here's the real question: what's up with a critter that according to Carboniferous fossils has lurked in identical form for some 300,000,000 years but whose natural habitat now seems to be my sink? The animal hasn't changed, but something's fishy. Hmm...

Predictably, the explanation is a good news/bad news scenario for biophiliacs.

GOOD: although sink-and-bathtub-sightings of silverfish are a worldwide phenomenon, most involve a single ubiquitous species – *Lepisma saccharina*, a small, wingless insect of the order Thysanura. *Lepisma* have primitive mouthparts, don't bite, and don't spread disease. Best of all, in light they're defenseless and, as you've likely discovered, easy to squish, leaving an insubstantial smear not unlike that found under your fingernails after playing Scratch 'n Win.

BAD: also called fishmoth, carpet shark, or paramite depending where you live, "silverfish" (in use since 1855) combines colour with the piscine movements of the animal's well-jointed body, while the scientific moniker (traceable to 1758 and the father of modern taxonomy, Carl Linnaeus) refers to its diet of simple polysaccharides – sugars and starches found not just in the food stores it happily infests, but in glue and adhesives, book bindings and paper; in carpet, clothing, cotton,

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A silverfish, ready for your smorgasbord. TED ROGER KARSON PHOTO.

Not all organisms spark such instant affection. Who, for instance, has ever understood those miserable little metallic commas found, even in the most fastidious of bathrooms and kitchens, surreptitiously circling faucets and scuttling over countertops? No one, yet they're as seemingly mundane in our lives as junk mail. So I put it to you now with appropriately Seinfeldian succinctness: what's up with silverfish?

silk, leather and synthetics; even in body exuvia like hair and dandruff. In short, 21st century humanity offers silverfish an unparalleled smorgasbord: they'll eat your pancake mix, leave holes in your clothes, destroy your books, and even set off fire alarms (a measurable percentage of fire department false alarms can be traced to the shortcircuiting of alarms by peckish silverfish).

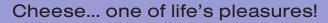
GOOD: it's not just your house. Like fleas, silverfish have accompanied human habitation since it began – wild *Lepisma* favour caves and other dank areas with high humidity (I found one for the first time ever in the wild this past summer). You find them in sinks and bathtubs not because they live there, but because their Carboniferous-crafted appendages do poorly on the modern world's smooth surfaces; they've simply become trapped there, attracted by the moisture and food prospects rising from your drains (de facto encouragement to keep these clean).

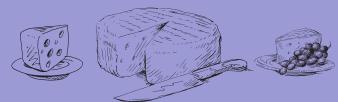
BAD: unlike more ephemeral insect pests, an unsquished silverfish can live out of sight in your home for up to eight years and go a full year without food (starting to be impressed...)

GOOD: reproductive rate is low; a single female lays fewer than 100 eggs in her lifetime. These can take months to hatch; if they dry out, they're toast.

BAD: predators of silverfish are fellow cave-happy things you aren't psyched about seeing around the house: spiders, earwigs and those über-creepy, long-legged house centipedes known as scutigers. Scutigers are also frequently found "stuck" in sinks and bathtubs because they were hunting silverfish. That's cool, and knowing it will make me think twice before I squish them. Sometimes a little knowledge is a terrible thing. Hmm...







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CHANNEL QUEEN

In its 40th year of service, the M.S. Chi-Cheemaun continues to ply the hazardous open-water channel between Georgian Bay and Lake Huron

Words and photos by Scott Parent

The ferry run between South Baymouth, Manitoulin Island and mainland Tobermory dates back to the 1930s, starting with the wooden *S.S. Kagawong* and *M.S. Normac*. Multiple steamers and diesel-powered vessels have stitched the route over the years, transporting passengers and automobiles across one of the moodiest open channels on the Great Lakes. By the 1970s, traffic had reached an all-time high. In 1974, the old ferries were retired from service and made way for a ship that would become known as The Big Canoe.

Designed by British Columbia naval architects, and one of the last hulls manufactured at the Collingwood Shipyards, the *M.S. Chi-Cheemaun* (Ojibwe for "big canoe") or simply The Cheech, would be the largest vessel to ply the route. It was designed to carry 143 vehicles, and 648 passengers onboard. That is one big canoe.

Today the ferry service has an estimated economic impact regionally of about \$25 million per year. Not only does it connect the north and south of Highway 6, the service has become a tradition for many people on either side. It has bridged the fathoms of fresh water bridling the 40 kilometres between wharfs for 80 years. Forty of those years have been served steadily by the *M.S. Chi-Cheemaun*.

Winds can howl in from multiple directions over the colliding seas of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. They merge in an open channel riddled with reefs and islands and laced with shipwrecks that lie far below the azure. In prehistoric times the water level was much lower and the Niagara Escarpment bridged the distance and a waterfall cascaded from present-day Tobermory at the tip of the Bruce Peninsula to Manitoulin.

The ferry route carves through the middle of Fathom Five National Marine Park. Adorned with limestone islands capped with ancient white cedars, the park is a gem. The route passes by the Cove Island lighthouse that since 1858 has guided vessels entering the archipelago. These northern waters are frigid the majority of the year. The shipwrecks on the basin floor are testament to the navigational trials faced by mariners of yesteryear.

Chi-Cheemaun Captains Robert Schreiber and Kerry Adams know Fathom Five and surrounding waters intimately. They run the route back and forth four times daily throughout the summer. In the shoulder seasons, the Cheech is often the only vessel out there. Her crew is "Education is a natural process carried out by the human individual and is acquired not by listening to words, but by experiences in the environment."

- Dr. Maria Montessori





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Her crew is longstanding, and some have served most of their lives. They have seen it all. Second Mate Murray Addison and AB Wheelsman Steve Paterek recall stories of waves crashing upon the wheelhouse glass 55 feet above the water's surface.

longstanding, and some have served most of their lives. They have seen it all. Second Mate Murray Addison and AB Wheelsman Steve Paterek recall stories of waves crashing upon the wheelhouse glass 55 feet above the water's surface. They recount when the "bad neighbour," now a bald rock exposed south of Lucas Island, was once submerged just below the surface. No one knows the crossing as intimately as the crew of the *Chi-Cheemaun*.

The Big Canoe is manned in accordance with the Transport Canada Minimum Manning Scale. At all times there is a Captain, a First Mate, Bridge Watch, Chief Engineer, and Engineer of the Watch onboard. Twenty-three others serve as Steward, Cook, Service Aides, Mechanical Assistants, and Deckhands. Skilled Dockmen stand in position at the wharfs, wired to catch the monkeys' fists tied to the ends of receiving lines. The ferry service employs additional staff depending on passenger volume.

Two mezzanine decks added in 1982 increased carrying capacity to 240 vehicles. It seems like a logistical nightmare, but the crew aboard and on-shore are very skilled and well rehearsed. Turnarounds happen within just twenty minutes. Trips from wharf to wharf take about two hours per crossing.

The ports of Tobermory and South Baymouth begin and close their season based on the ferry's operating schedule. The Big Canoe is not only the soul that connects the regions, enables tourism to circulate, and completes a traffic circle around Georgian Bay. It is also a destination in itself, replete with maritime heritage and intrinsic to the history of the Great Lakes. **ET**

Check **gb.mountainlifemag.ca** for a photo gallery plus vintage videos of the Cheech in action.







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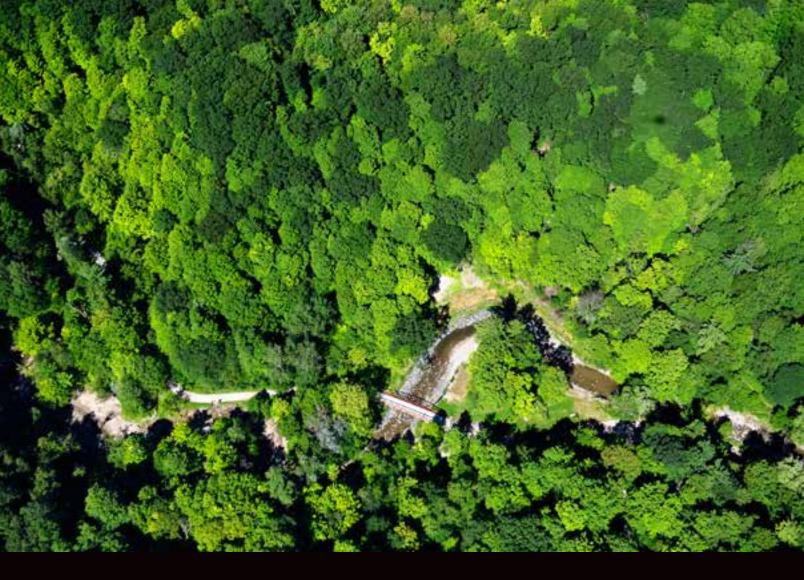
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RAVINE REVIVAL

A master lensman frames the places and people behind a renewed effort to conserve downtown Toronto's onceforgotten backyard

Photos and captions by Jason Van Bruggen

Southern Ontario's Greenbelt preserves 1.8 million acres of crucial biosphere and agricultural land, radiating out from Lake Ontario in the midst of the Golden Horseshoe, Canada's most urbanized region.

It is the world's largest greenbelt – permanently protected land where stricter zoning laws aim to curb urban sprawl and keep farmlands, forests, Escarpment features, wetlands and watersheds intact.

We tend to identify rural or semi-rural regions with the Greenbelt, but it connects with downtown Toronto's own, erstwhile forgotten belt of green – the ravine system of woodlands and waterways snaking throughout the city. Jason Van Bruggen's photos bring out all the living dimensions of these precious places. -Ed.

Lovetheravines.com #lovetheravines @lovetheravines

LEFT PAGE

When seen from the air during peak summer, the canopy covering the banks of the Don often obscures the river itself. Bike trails and footpaths weave in and out of the dense deciduous forest, across the river and through various urban features found in the Valley.

ON THE RIGHT

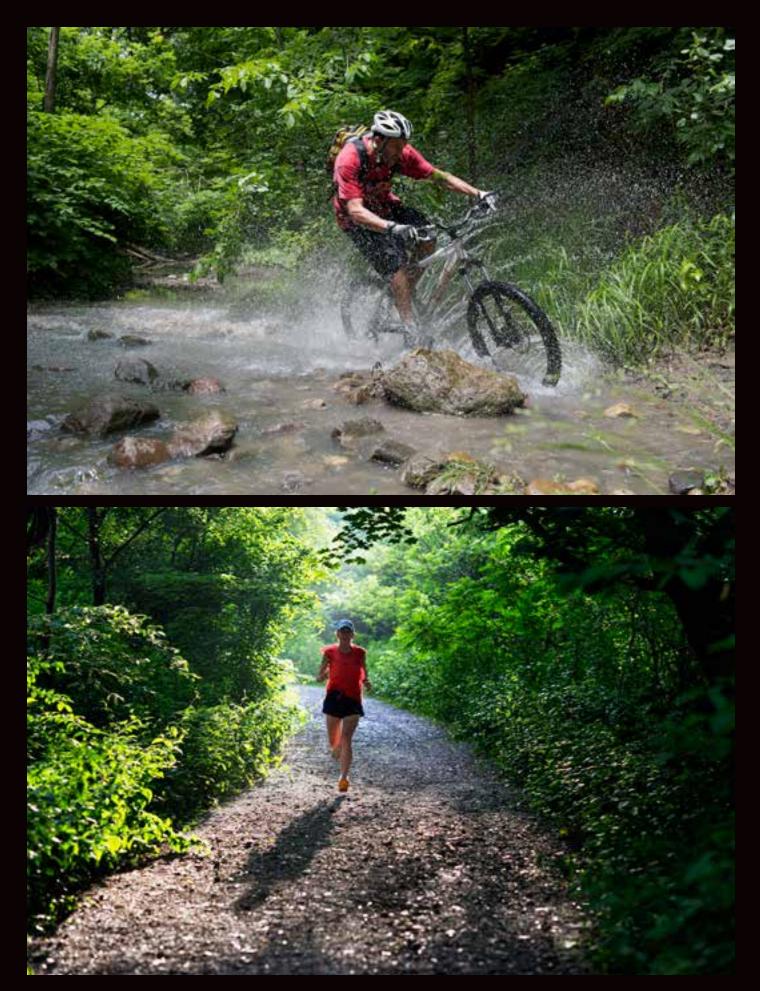
Carp jumping at the Old Mill dam on the Humber River. I saw a few steelhead (who typically run in March/April) make it over the dam, but these carp never came close.

D BELOW

One night in September, we had Love the Ravines teams out in various part of the city painting these signs (in biodegradable chalk) with the hope of guiding people to access points along both the Don and Humber. One of the things we have discovered during our campaign – and hope to rectify – is a surprising lack of information available to the public on the recreational opportunities that exist within these remarkable urban waterways, coupled with a poor understanding of how to access them.







LEFT PAGE TOP

Willie Macrae honed his mountain biking skills as a long-time resident of Whistler, BC. After returning to Toronto, he discovered a love for the recreational opportunities found in the ravines, particularly the mountain biking in the Don. He spends time in the ravines with his young family and commutes (by bike) along the Don trails in all seasons.

LEFT PAGE BOTTOM

Dr. Jean Marmoreo is a family physician and a lecturer at The University of Toronto. She founded Jean's Marines, a women's marathon group. Toronto's ravines provide miles of unpaved terrain ideal for much of her training. Jean is an accomplished runner, having placed first in her age group among women in the Chicago Marathon, the Ottawa Marathon and twice, the Marine Corps Marathon. Jean holds the Canadian Marathon record in the Age 70-74 category and has hiked 1,000 miles of the Appalachian Trail. Toronto's ravines are her backyard and you will find her in all seasons blazing past fit people half her age. Jean ran to meet us for this photo shoot, and then ran home.

TOP RIGHT

Adam van Koeverden is one of Canada's greatest Olympians. He is a four-time Olympic medalist and was Canada's flag bearer at Beijing in 2008. The Humber River is Adam's training ground and gym. At dawn on any given day of the spring, summer or fall you will find Adam paddling the Humber between Lake Ontario and Highway 401. Having an urban waterway of this length and quality is a gift to paddlers of all sorts and a main ingredient in Adam's success as the most decorated member of Canada's Canoe– Kayak Team. Adam is currently in training for the Rio 2016 Olympics, so keep an eye out for his red-and-white boat and water flashing off his paddle at sunrise.

BOTTOM RIGHT

A long exposure of the Don Valley Parkway from the Gerrard Street bridge. This was one of many unusually significant thunderstorms that erupted over Toronto in the summer of 2013. The Don Valley Parkway was completely flooded twice. I saw cars underwater and passengers stranded. It felt like a pretty convincing proof-point for climate change to me.









O TOP

Rob Krueger is an avid fly-fisherman and outdoorsman. In addition to annual trips to some of the world's most exotic locations in search of trout, Rob often fishes for steelhead and brown trout in the upper and lower stretches of the Humber. He frequents a number of spots in each season where he's consistently found fish over the years. He declined to share specifics.



Every May, hundreds of Torontonians get out and paddle the Don, usually in canoes. It's always interesting to see the different skill levels and ages of participants. Here, a few boats head southbound towards the Lake. This year's Paddle the Don event is on May 4th.



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RICHARD ROTH PHOTO.

FIRST TRACKS ON THE CLARKSBURG BRIDGE

The big winter of 2014 saw plenty of new lines. None will quite match up to Max Hill's

By Colin Field

Sure, the Clarksburg Bridge has history to it. It was built in 1923, to span the Beaver River and yeah, it's architecturally interesting: known as a bowstring arch bridge, its concrete arches span the river.

But that isn't the history we're interested in. The fact is that if you wanted to you could walk right over the top of the arches. And over the decades scores of people have done just that. At about 70 centimetres wide, it's a pretty easy thing to do as long as you have the cojones for it. I've seen guys do it, gals do it, I once even saw a drunken man try to urinate off the top of it (the fear gave him stage-fright though and he couldn't make it happen). Not that we condone that kind of thing, but this is the sort of history we're looking at here.

And as early as 1956, guys like Ralph Fisher, Dave Hammond and the McAteer boys were dragging their old CCMs to the top of the arch and riding down the other side.

"The bikes didn't make that trip too many times until the forks broke," recalls Ralph Fisher. "It was a pretty rough drop in at the bottom."

In 2009, Cory Gibson did the same thing on a skateboard. But neither stunt was quite what we all imagine; not quite that epic roll up one side, crest the top of the arch, then speed back down the other side. That is until the winter of 2014.

That is until Max Hill.

Now Max Hill is a bit of a ski legend in these parts. Sponsored by Line Skis, Full Tilt, Sabre and Joystick, raised on the hills of Blue Mountain and Craigleith, he's an absolute ripper on skis. And in his recent edit for freeskier Sean Petit's Super Proof project, the opening sequence dialogue says it all:

"Max, I took a look at your files here, and you have no contest results, no major film parts, and you're not going to the Olympics. So basically, you've done jack shit in the past couple of years."

But don't let that fool you. He's just doing everything his own damn way; including blowing off all of *Mountain Life*'s attempts to interview him in 2011.

The Clarksburg Bridge had been on his to-do list for years. And when there was enough snow to make it happen, he did his own damn thing yet again. "The heavy snowfall around New Year's opened up a lot of opportunities and the bridge was on the list," says photographer Richard Roth. "The idea was to prepare the in-run the day before so that we could show up, shoot and roll out. Things never happen that quickly, though; continuous traffic and head games had us waiting around for an hour."

And the head games were justified.

"I started shooting urban features with skiers and snowboarders about a decade ago," says Roth. "Over the years we have come across some intimidating features with pretty serious consequences if not done properly; spots that would leave riders with serious injuries. As bad as those were, there was never any chance of something really severe, like death. This wasn't the case in Clarksburg."

"Over the years we have come across some intimidating features with pretty serious consequences if not done properly; spots that would leave riders with serious injuries. As bad as those were, there was never any chance of something really severe, like death. This wasn't the case in Clarksburg."

-Richard Roth

"This was one of the scariest things I've ever watched a friend do," Roth adds. "His left ski actually slipped off the bridge support on the way up which could have made him fall off the water side, a 'mellow' 30-foot drop into shallow water and rocks with a guard rail to bounce off on the way down... But luckily none of that happened and I didn't have to jump in after him."

On January 9, 2014, Max Hill added yet more history to the Clarksburg Bridge. History that should probably never be repeated.

Check out more of Richard Roth's photo shoot at gb.mountainlifemag.ca FOOD

wild leeks

wild ginger

fiddlehead fern

FORAGING FOR BECINNERS

Foraging tips to promote a cautious understanding of the wild edible landscape

By Melanie Chambers

Ass's foot? Cough wort? British tobacco? In Ontario, this common weed is called coltsfoot - it grows in ditches, looks like dandelion, and infused into ice cream, tastes like fresh melon.

A few summers ago, I foraged in Ireland. Our guide took us to the ocean where we plunged our shovels into the sand dunes and hauled out roots that when mashed created a spicy horseradish. Near the shore, in pockets of puddles, we found sea cactus that tasted like salty pickles. The forest was the same: a hodgepodge of completely new tastes and textures.

In Ontario forests, if you know what to look for, coltsfoot is only one of many treats you can find in this adventurous country market.

"It's about understanding your landscape in an edible sense," says Miriam Streiman, co-owner of Mad Maple Country Inn, a two-bedroom inn on a 100-acre farm near Creemore. On the menu: the Ontario forest. "Everything we do is showcasing southern Ontario and Toronto and

coltsfoot

bringing people closer to nature... Iit's about asking] what season are we in – and what can I make that really honours the integrity of those ingredients?"

But as any expert forager will tell you, don't start picking random roots and mushrooms – unless you're up for a potential Age-of-Aquarius trip – or worse, a bout of stomach pains from eating raw fiddleheads (note: blanch first to remove toxins) – or much worse, death from a poison mushroom (never eat anything not 100-percent identifiable).

Streiman recalls meeting Jonathan Forbes, owner of Toronto's Forbes Wild Food, whose company features foraged ingredients from across Canada. "He took us through the woods and showed us what was what." Eating from the forest demands a certain responsibility, she adds, and a reverence for the ingredients. When you're harvesting from the woods, it's not the grocery store – not in taste, texture, or quantity.

Foraging in Ontario starts in the spring tapping maple trees for syrup. Then, just under the last layer of snow, you begin to see the magic happening: a root, or a bit of greenery peeking through. One of the most popular and plentiful is the wild leek. Use the greens for pesto and the bulbs for pickling; however, don't stock up: found in patches, wild leeks don't cultivate on their own. That means foragers should harvest only five percent and leave the rest to regenerate. "Wild leeks have a seven-year cycle from seed to seed, so you can see that by taking out five percent per year, by year seven you have removed 35 percent," says Forbes. He goes one step further: if you come across a small patch, only remove the leaves - forgo the bulbs.

One of Streiman's favourites is wild ginger for

making candies and syrups; she also replaces molasses with wild ginger in her thumbprint cookies – expect a peppery flavour similar to ginger with a bit of heat. And did you know that a wild lily flower added to a stew will thicken the broth? Or that removing the flower's stamen and adding it to stew has an effect similar to saffron?

chokecherries

Later in the summer, chokecherries are on the menu. Found along bushes or shorter tight trees, unlike a regular cherry, chokecherries are inedible raw: soak and then dry them before eating. "They make beautiful syrup, jellies and even sauces for braising meat such as venison," says Streiman.

Foraging encourages us to consider where our food is coming from. Streiman adds: "It gives you a newfound respect how to take care of the land around you and how important it is to preserve that knowledge... because foraging existed since the beginning of time."

We recommend foraging only in the company of an expert. For a recipe for chokecherry cookies, check **gb.mountainlifemag.ca**

> trout lilies

44

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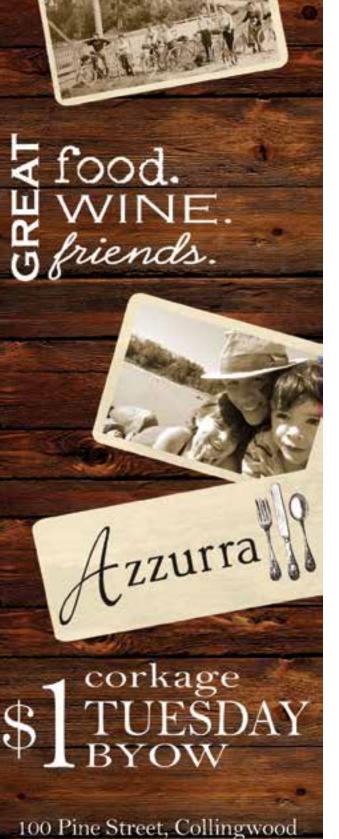
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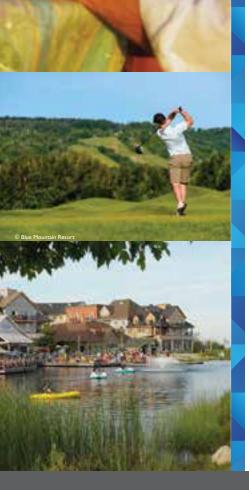


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TOM ARBAN PHOTOS.

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Continued



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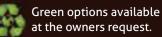






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IN THE LAND OF THUE

AN ABORTED SKI TRIP TURNS INTO A WHALE-WATCHING SAIL OF A LIFETIME ALONG GREENLAND'S COAST

The village of Kangaamiut.

Words by Colin Field. Photography by Kari Medig.

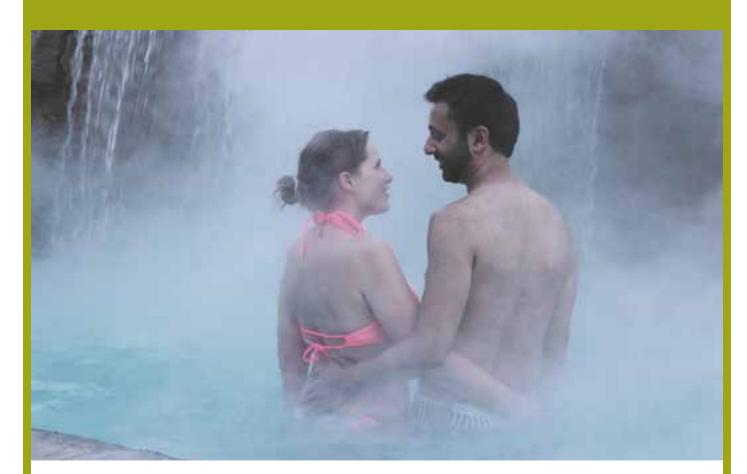
It was supposed to be a ski vacation in Greenland. The plan was to hop on a sailboat, sail up and down the fjords, skin up mountains, ski down them, then hop back on the boat. I waited and waited in Reykjavik for my connecting flight to Greenland's capital city of Nuuk, but it never happened. My plans were dashed on the bergs of Greenland by weather. I simply couldn't get there on time. There was an arctic storm in Nuuk and nothing was flying in or out. And when the storm was still raging the next day it became clear – I missed the boat. I literally missed the boat. And there was no way of catching it.

A week later, the flight to Nuuk went as planned. And my next flight from Nuuk to Maniitsoq also went as planned even though, to a non-northerner like myself, it seemed like a blizzard outside. The locals claim Greenland has some of the best pilots in the world. I don't doubt it. The only problem was that this week, there weren't any skiers on board. I wouldn't be burning 5000 calories a day. I wouldn't leave the trip fitter than I'd been all year and I wouldn't have the thrill of a lifetime skiing down into the fjords of Greenland. Instead, I would spend the next week whale watching. Something I would never sign up for.

They call our trip an expedition. Anywhere else in the world, it would be a tour. Or a cruise. But because of the extremes here – namely, the remote and unforgiving environment – they call it an expedition. And it feels like one.

From the second I board the 56-metre schooner *Rembrandt* van *Rijn*, and sail away from the tiny harbour town of Maniitsoq, I'm captivated. I'm okay with the fact that I won't be skiing. There is already so much to see.

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ABOVE: A bowhead whale dives for krill. NEXT SPREAD: The 56-metre Rembrandt van Rijn dwarfed by the Eternity Glacier.

Greenland is so desolate, so sparse, so barren, and so unforgiving that it's hard to imagine why anyone would choose to live here. And not many people do. Evidence of Paleo-Eskimo cultures have been discovered around Disko Bay that date to about 2500 BC. They survived in the harsh climate until the Thule people arrived in the 13th century AD. Considered to be the ancestors of all modern Inuit, sharing cultural, biological and linguistic characteristics, this culture, and these people, survive in Greenland to this day.

Europeans started arriving in 982 AD. Exiled from his home country of Iceland (due to "some killings"), Erik the Red spent three years exploring the west coast of Greenland. When he returned to Iceland, he brought tales of a land ready for settlement. He called it Greenland, knowing that people would be interested if it had a favourable name. And he was largely successful. He returned to Greenland in 985 with a large number of Norwegian and Icelandic settlers, and established two colonies. The settlement grew to 5000 until the Little Ice Age arrived in about 1350, making the land marginal for European lifestyles.

From Mannitsoq we sail north. The ultimate goal is Disko Bay where bowhead whales are known to feed this time of year. But that's 400 kilometres and six days north. For now, we explore the fjords. And our first outing is at Ikamiut. Climbing down ladders off the side of the boat, we load into the Zodiacs that take us to shore. And once on shore we don snowshoes for a hike to the remains of a Thule settlement.

As we hike over a ridgeline, we see it. This is where the Norwegian missionary Hans Egede searched for the

descendants of Erik the Red's settlers. He found none. They had all left, or died. Instead, he found only Thule people. So he began trying to convert them.

And it is here we find the obvious remains of very small structures. Peat moss is piled in rounded rectangles about 6 by 10 feet in size. It is sobering to imagine what the winters were like here all those years ago. They must have been miserable.

"So this position here, is this where the missionaries were?" photographer Kari Medig asks Jan Belger, our expedition leader.

"Yes," says Belger.

"So this is the missionary position?"

The guide smiles wanly. Medig makes sure the guide gets it, and he does, he just doesn't think it's funny.

"You can use that with future guests if you want."

"I don't think so," says Jan.

Greenland is mostly ice cap. There are no roads here besides a few in the capital city of Nuuk. But even those don't really lead anywhere. There's nowhere to go. The few towns are spread along the coastline. Roads don't connect Greenlanders; the ocean does. The only real way to get around here is boat, plane or helicopter. Inland there is nothing but ice. The majority of the island is covered in a massive ice field that compresses the land, crushing it and sending glaciers crawling outwards.



THE ENGINE SHUTS OFF AND THE SILENCE OF THE SCENE IS CALMING; THERE'S NOTH-ING TO DO BUT STARE IN AMAZEMENT AT THIS INCREDIBLE PLACE. MOUNTAINS RISE 2100 METRES STRAIGHT OUT OF THE OCEAN ON EITHER SIDE OF US. THE BLACK ROCK OF THE CONTINENT BREAKS UP THE WHITENESS OF THE SNOW AND COULOIRS SHOOT DOWN INTO THE OCEAN LIKE GREAT SNOW-COVERED HALLWAYS.

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As we sail up the Eternity Fjord, we finally have a favourable wind and put up the sails. The engine shuts off and the silence of the scene is calming; there's nothing to do but stare in amazement at this incredible place. Mountains rise 2100 metres straight out of the ocean on either side of us. The black rock of the continent breaks up the whiteness of the snow and couloirs shoot down into the ocean like great snow-covered hallways.

We sail past large car- and house-sized chunks of ice that have split off the glacier and float in the frigid waters. And then we hear it. The massive *whoosh* of a whale breaching. It is our first whale sighting and everyone runs from one side of the ship to the other, hoping to see these mighty creatures. And everyone does.

Mother and calf humpbacks circle us at a distance as we sail up the fjord. We see them breach multiple times. It is a beautiful sight. The Greenland Institute of Natural Resources has strict guidelines about following whales, so we just sail past them and continue up to the terminus of the fjord.

Once there, we disembark and drive Zodiacs toward the glacier. We're mesmerized by the calved icebergs that float in the cold deep cobalt-blue of the fjord. We are hundreds of metres away from the glacier, but it has an incredible hue to it. Varying shades of translucent blue shine from the massive glacier as we sit in the boat quietly, just observing. Then a loud crack like a gunshot echoes through the fjord. We look all around us waiting to see where it came from, and then we do: a building-sized block falls off the cliff-like face of the glacier. It plummets into the water in one giant chunk and throws up a shockwave that is gobbled up by pack ice surrounding the glacier.

It is a humbling experience. As the ice tinkles around us, we scoop up a basketball-sized chunk. It is uniformly dimpled like an over-sized golf ball, and is perfectly clear, like a giant hunk of crystal. It makes for a delicious post-dinner scotch on the rocks.

After a puke-inducing sail up the Davis Strait, we finally arrive in Disko Bay. We spend our last day here. This is where icebergs from the Ilulissat glacier gather and speck the sea with surrealistic scenery. The blue and white ice floats in unreal shapes and patterns that you can stare at for hours. It's a perfect day: bluebird skies, zero wind, zero waves. The sun is strong and warm and it's hard to believe we are now above the Arctic Circle. We're searching for whales here. And then we spot one. The first one appears as a speck off in the distance. A spurt of water shoots up into the air as the whale takes a deep breath and then drifts calmly. We watch as he drifts along, relaxing in the warmth of the sun before he dives, sending his massive tail above the waters and disappearing from view. Then we spot another. And another.

"They're bowhead whales," says Jan. "They're hunting for krill together."

For the rest of the day the 23 passengers run from port to starboard, from bow to stern, their cameras snapping away every time a whale surfaces. The captain lets the vessel drift quietly, occasionally turning the engine on to manoeuvre around icebergs.

"There's one!" shouts the Danish passenger.

"And another!" shouts the Briton.

Scanning from horizon to horizon, we see whales everywhere. All of them bowheads. All of them eating, breathing and diving, sending their tails into the air before they disappear.

The day is so beautiful the crew sets up a barbecue on the back deck and serves a big bowl of what they call Greenlandic punch and just before the chicken, ribs and sausages are served, someone shouts: "There's one *right there!*"

And there it is. A massive male bowhead whale surfaces 15 metres to starboard. We can hear him breathing. We can see the imperfections and scars in his grey mottled skin. He drifts there silently, head pointing directly at us. Behind him a 55-metre-high iceberg floats majestically. It is the scene we have all been waiting for. Every passenger and crewmember is perched along the starboard gunwale, knowing that the trip's climax is seconds away. And then he dives. He curves gently downwards, and the length of his body slithers through the water silently. Then the silhouette of his massive tail breaks the ocean and curls in the air silently as his body swims downward. The sheer size of the animal is stupendous. Everyone on board ahhhs with delight and then the whale is gone. He probably swims directly beneath us. It is 97 metres deep here. Just the kind of depth bowheads like. Everyone stares in wonder. It is an incredible moment. One I will remember for the rest of my life.

With that, dinner is served, drinks are passed around and festive music blasts from someone's iPod. We feast the trip to an end. We drink to the crew. To the new friends we've made, and of course, to the whales. The sky takes on a magnificent alpenglow of yellows, reds, pinks and purples. The icebergs and mountains create scenery in all the brightest colours you can imagine. And around us, the whales continue to surface. They're all keeping their distance now, but they're there. We see them in groups of twos and threes, spurting out water and then showing their tails in beautiful displays of nature. We feast to the experience, to the adventure, but most of all we feast to Greenland.

This place captured my imagination the instant I saw it on a map in public school. Why was such a large white island called Greenland? I never thought I'd actually get the chance to visit the place. But I feel absolutely blessed to have done so. As does everyone on board.

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When you gaze across the mighty expanse of Lake Superior from a canoe, the spirits of the lake are all around you." DAVE BARNES ILLUSTRATION.

TEMPTING THE STORM SPIRITS

Survival on the Unforgiving Waters of the White River and Lake Superior

By Andy Christie

Hunkered down in the bow of a tripping canoe, bouncing atop the relentless waves of Lake Superior – and 500 vertical feet of dark, icy water – I wondered if it was possible to die of hypothermia and drowning in one horrible moment. Following four days of whitewater river paddling, we had anticipated a one-hour sprint along the shoreline of Superior. Instead, our last day in the wild had become an eight-hour quest for survival, lost on the largest and least forgiving lake in the world.

Five days earlier, as we drove up the dramatically beautiful, mountainous northeast shore of Lake Superior from Sault Ste. Marie, I imagined completing our wilderness adventure leaving no trace of our passage. Man's propensity for destroying natural things is difficult to grasp when one examines this much natural beauty firsthand. In light of the epic scale of everything, and happily unarmed with explosives or chemicals, it appeared much more likely that this land would leave a permanent mark on me, than I upon it. We were on our way to the aptly named White River, a seemingly endless series of rapids, chutes, and waterfalls guarded by millions of regal evergreens. If you make good decisions and get a bit lucky – avoid drowning, getting pulped against rocks in the rapids, falling off a cliff, or being ripped to pieces by bears, for example – after four or five days of paddling and portaging, the river will spit you out into – or hopefully onto – the moody waters of Kitchi-Gummeeng, Lake Superior, the Big Water.

The guys had laughed at me, of course, when I asked: "Hey, should we not have a guide for this kind of crazy adventure?" I had no interest in being nurse-maided down the river, but I felt obligated to verbalize the question. "What fun would that be?" laughed Dave, my jovial, diminutive, wiry pal from TO. "Wouldn't a guide keep us out of life-threatening situations? If so, why go?" Rob – my most loyal (and daring) adventure partner and best friend of 38 years – looked down at me from his close to seven feet of height, apparently to see if I had gone completely mad. His response to my question was more succinct: "Don't be an idiot," he instructed flatly, without insult. Okay, then – no guide.

An hour or so of pleasant, flat-water paddling followed our departure from the beach at White River Provincial Park, and preceded our immersion into a world of whitewater tumult. On the first day we ran or avoided a series of five sets of rapids marked on the map, and another handful of rapids that are not. During the meltwater mayhem of spring, the average water flow on the White is about 150 cubic metres per second. On this trip, which began on Labour Day, the water flow was reduced to about 50 cubic metres per second. In other words, doing this trip in spring may well be suicidal. ISince the author's trip, we've received reports that hydroelectric dams have reduced the average flow of the White, and diminished its appeal to paddlers. -Ed.]

The greater challenge in late summer involves avoiding the legions of rocks that emerge from the lower water level, or hide just below the surface, poised to rip one's canoe in half. Our plan involved stopping before each rapid or waterfall to scout and assess the probability of survival if running it. I pre-judged most of the

Continued on p.66





Before us was a minefield of rocks, standing waves and hydraulics that looked like a thousand cotton-topped sharks biting upward, jaws moving, waiting to smash – then swallow – naïve humans at play.

Teeth of the White River's countless rapids. OTMPC PHOTO.

rapids somewhere between screaming disaster and invitation to death. Rob thought they were all pretty much "doable." "Andy, I think it's doable," he would encourage at each reconnaissance. My response to Rob's enthusiasm was typical. "You really have no idea what the hell you're talking about, do you?"

Dave and Jamie's more fragile Kevlar canoe which Rob and I had named the "Ned Beatty boat" - filled with water during our first serious rapid, the Kapok Rapid. Rob and I made it through unscathed in our hardy plastic "Burt Reynolds boat," but it was my first lesson in respect for the power of the water; you basically followed the route the river wanted you to, which usually resulted in a not-insignificant amount of scraping and crunching against the rocks. We provided helpful coaching as the boys baled their craft, and a Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) helicopter circled above, snapping a few photos of the scene. As whitewater seethed and flowed around us, it felt like the freshest, cleanest, most amazing place I had ever been.

According to the MNR, we were only the third group to canoe down the White River that year. I think the prospect of a super-challenging portage experience likely kept people away. By the end of the first day – or was it the first portage – I was calling it Sherpa Boot Camp. The portages are not maintained along the White. No kidding. How many workers would it take to dismantle gigantic piles of logs, or revise mountains of rock deposited by landslides, or tossed about by the mighty river, all hundreds of miles from "civilization"? We submitted the coordinates of the most challenging portages to the Canadian military for training purposes.

The Native people of this area believe in a myriad of spirits. The natural power of the river and everything around it has inspired plenty of spiritual daydreaming. A new masterpiece of living art - water-washed rock, trees blending into water - greeted us around every bend in the river. According to prolific Native Canadian author Basil Johnston, "The Ojibway felt the waters of lakes, rivers and seas were generous, abundant beyond saying. It was like the soul spirit of man, shrouded in mystery." I had read about the most feared of the Manitous (Native spirits), the Weendigo, an enormous but ever-hungry cannibal who feeds only upon human flesh, bones, and blood. According to Native beliefs, the Weendigo was able to consume only the foolish or the improvident. I reminded myself to avoid such behavior.

As we approached our second set of whitewater - the Abitibi Rapid - my confidence had been bolstered by our success at the first challenge. We stood upon an island as I listened to Rob explain his plan. We were to paddle full-hard toward the river-left (R-L) rock wall before drawing like demons in an attempt to pull us between two intimidating features, possibly small islands. It appeared to be the only viable paddling option, but I was skeptical; before us was a minefield of rocks, standing waves and hydraulics that looked like a thousand cotton-topped sharks biting upward, jaws moving, waiting to smash - then swallow - naïve humans at play. I reluctantly agreed to help carry out his maniacal plan.

At the crux of it, we pulled hard while trying to stay centered in the boat, and I thought for a moment we would make it. Turning a canoe sideways in a raging river, however, is impractical: the boat filled completely with water in about a microsecond. The physics of it all was enlightening; I suppressed a chuckle and went into the feet-up-and-forward position. The river carried me, butt bouncing over rocks. I was hoping to avoid severe bludgeoning by a iammed log, or some other unseen hazard. At the rapid's end, as I swam like an Olympian downriver, chasing one of our food barrels, it occurred to me that I had no idea what kind of exciting feature - such as a giant waterfall, for example - would greet me around the next bend in the river.

I asked David Begg – who owns Yamnuska, one of the most successful guiding companies in the Canadian Rockies – how a group of adventurers decides whether or not they need a guide. Yamnuska has not lost a client in the 20 years since Begg bought the company.

"You have to know yourself and the group," he advised. "Does the group have the cohesion and leadership to go along with knowledge? Taking on a leadership role based upon personality is not appropriate. That person may not have the skills and judgement necessary to lead. When we guide experienced adventurers, most of what is learned is more about judgement, and less about how-to."

After running a few more rapids, we reached Jumbo Rapid in the late afternoon. Jamie and Rob – the two less cautious, possibly more intrepid, members of the group – ran the rapid after emptying the gear from the Burt Reynolds boat. By design, it's more hardy than the Ned Beatty boat. Dave and I captured the two keeners on video from an island of rock. They were pummeled by water, sank, and Rob lost his Indiana Jones hat. Dave and I tried to shout encouragement and convey empathetic concern, but we were laughing too hard. After setting up camp and eating, we had little energy for cards or anything else. The river and its portages had taken all our energy. Not for the last time on the trip, one of us passed out on the ground beside the campfire.

The wonder of Day 1 in this whitewater paradise was displaced by a feeling of absolute remoteness on Day 2; we were immersed, purifying. We could not have been any farther, I thought, from the petty stresses of urban and semi-urban culture. It was very difficult to assess where one rapid ended and another began. Consequently, it was sometimes difficult to decide where to re-enter the river after a portage. Following the portage at the unbelievably beautiful, frighteningly powerful Chicagonce Falls, we spent half an hour hiking up and down the riverbank trying to find a safe re-entry point. According to Basil Johnston, "The river is the giver of life, and the taker of life."

A cross is anchored in the rock above Angle Falls, a memorial for brave kayaker Jerry Cesar, who plunged to his death there. The portage around Angle Falls was downright medieval, possibly the best workout of my life. We ran the Domtar Rapid, in spite of my protests. It looked like a bunch of rocks with a few rivulets running through. I had visions of hauling pieces of a canoe alongside the river for a few days, and reminded the team that we couldn't just leave our dead canoes in the pristine wilderness. The guys laughed at my cautious approach as Jamie applied duct tape to a puncture in the Ned Beatty boat.

Following a liftover at the Baptisimon Rapid, and a confusing portage, we travelled through a time machine to the campsite at the Ess Rapid. The rapid looked stunning and deadly. We portaged around it, and enjoyed a couple of hours of afternoon sun at the most beautiful site of my life. Partly treed and sandy, it was positioned between the bottom of the rapid and a network of short cliffs. It included a small beach, a natural kitchen and fire area, and an active bear den close by. The site had a prehistoric feel to it. We were sure people had been camping at this location for thousands of years.

Pictographs on the rock walls surrounding the campsite would have been fitting, but those who travel here are reluctant to tarnish the natural



beauty, I'm sure. I've never felt – and perhaps have never been – farther from civilization. As the sun set, Rob threw a fishing line and caught a very large pike in less than a minute.

Day 3 was another whirlwind of wild rapids, ankle-twisting portages and fresh air. As we approached Umbata Falls – the largest waterfall on this trip, and the site of a new hydroelectric station – I realized there is a special kind of butt-clenching horror experienced only when perched (too close, in a canoe) above a gigantic waterfall. Who can confidently assess the point at which the river's current reaches out and

"The water appears soft, but it is the most powerful force in the world. It will wear away rock and put out fire. But when you look into it on a calm day, our reflection shows us what our soul spirit should be: calm, placid." – Basil Johnston

pulls cavalier paddlers over the falls, to their frothy, bone-crunching, flesh-rending deaths? We could hear and feel the power of Umbata Falls from just above Take-out Rapid. I wanted to get the hell off the river.

People often ask me – after I return from canoe trips – if I've seen any bears. ("Did ya see any bears?") My response is always the same: "No, and we don't want to see any bears. We make enough noise to keep them away."

On the third night, near the head of Umbata Falls, after being somewhat unnerved – at least I was – by the biblical quantity of bear crap on the portages, we found four colourful packages of bear bait hanging from a tree beside our camp fire. Whose sinister work was this? It was the only campsite in the area. Leaving the bear bait in the tree was not an option. We considered sending the bear bait downriver, but feared promoting a future encounter with the bait – and bears it would surely attract. Everyone felt relieved as we burned the baits in our pre-dinner fire, but I half expected them to explode – bear bait bombs – and kill us all. On a number of portages we could smell and feel the bears in the forest nearby. I carried an Uzi of pepper spray, but it gave me little comfort.

On Day 4, our scramble down the edge of the Canadian Shield into Pukaskwa National Park revealed the most dramatic terrain of the trip. At 1878 square kilometres, Pukaskwa is one of the largest wilderness parks operated by Parks Canada. It has been left in its natural state: no paved trails here. Surely, this was the place where the colours bronze and copper were first identified. They intermingled with slate greys and the purest, rock-washed greens of nature. Just breathing here was bliss. In 1850, George Copway published a groundbreaking book called The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation. In it he wrote: "The mountains, rivers, lakes, cliffs and caverns of the Ojibway country (north of Superior) impress one with the thought that Nature has there built a home for Nature's children." His book was the first history of Native North Americans to be written by one of their own people.

Halfway through the fourth day we came upon an incredible waterfall – perhaps the frothiest, most tumultuous – yet accessible – waterfall on the trip. We sat upon black platforms of rock, mesmerized by a circus of white. Incredibly, the waterfall was unnamed, according to the map.

Eagle's view of the White River. OTMPC PHOTO.

In light of Rob's relentless enthusiasm toward running every single feature, we named it Doable Falls. Soaring cliffs of gold, bronze and copper frame the unnamed - or recently named - Doable Falls, and the 50 metres or so of wild rapids below the waterfall. The great walls of rock introduced a beautiful valley that had not been named either. Surely, some adventurer, prospector, hydro worker, hunter, angler or surveyor must have named it the Valley of Gold before we did on this trip. We scrambled over about a hundred partially submerged boulders to reach the bottom of the falls. It felt like a place Neil Young would sing about. The Valley of Gold inspired within me the deepest joy and the most intense melancholy. It was the unreachable rapture, the place you could never find, where the coolest people went, those you could never quite catch up to. It was the end of summer. It was lost love and sad change. It was everything superb and unexplainable about Canadian summer. I wanted to stay forever, and snapped photos like a pastel-shirted tourist while Rob paddled us around the valley's giant sand bar, and way too- soon out of the Valley of Gold.

We were numb from the beauty of Doable Falls and the Valley of Gold as we approached Chigamiwinigum Falls. The little boy inside me – part of whom may have been lost since my first canoe trip, or my first day at summer camp – emerged fully to embrace the Indiana Jones coolness of the suspended cable footbridge that spanned the river ahead, 60 or 70 feet above the water. Presumably, the bridge was built for hikers on the Coastal Hiking Trail, but I was certain, on this sunny late summer day, no one had ever seen it the way I did. It is simply the most awesome, fitting, man-made thing anywhere in the wild.

Continued on p. 68



The deceptively placid Lake Superior shoreline. OTMPC PHOTO.

Paddling the flatwater section approaching Lake Superior felt like a warm-down walk after running a marathon. Two bald eagles soared high above. I wondered if we appeared to them as a topographical anomaly, in light of the rarely interrupted absence of boat traffic on the White River. I watched the eagle perform a long, curving dive. It landed gracefully upon the very top branch of a hundred-foot evergreen, disappearing completely, literally one with the land.

We found our campsite near the mouth of the White. After walking through the partly forested site, and scrambling over a number of housesized rocks, Lake Superior revealed herself in the afternoon half-sun. She looked like the Pacific Ocean. Three- to four-foot waves crashed into the rock shore. We wondered how many days we would have to wait until it was calm enough to paddle this big water to the safety of Hattie's Cove, and the end of our journey.

That night, sitting on logs beside the fire, Dave and I talked about the possibility of dying on the world's largest lake. We knew the water was very cold; survival would be unlikely if we capsized a significant distance from shore. We had both promised our families we would not die on this trip. Months before, the focus of planning discussions was an amazing four or five days on a whitewater river. The crossing of a tiny slice of Lake Superior was an afterthought, a side note. "Oh, yeah, and we finish up by paddling across part of Lake Superior," Rob had said. I remember my response: "Are we going to book a water taxi?"

Lake Superior is the largest freshwater lake in the world by surface area at 82,400 square kilometres (32,000 square miles). It creates its own weather systems, and is known for fierce storms. Twenty-foot waves are common. The average depth is 147 metres (482 feet). There is enough water in Lake Superior to cover all of North and South America with one foot of water. To lend perspective – if that's possible – we would be paddling atop about 4 million 50-storey skyscrapers worth of water.

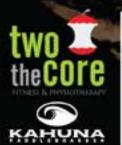
At 7 am, the lake was calm. We skipped breakfast and coffee to maximize the probability of safe passage before the lake's mood changed. Within half an hour we were paddling hard into a west wind that pelted us with sheets of cold rain. Our plan to stay close to shore was easy to abandon, as the relentless waves spun and propelled us toward the rocky shore and small islands of crunchy-looking rock. We sprinted across a series of channels and bays, none of which appeared to be the way to Hattie's Cove, our safe harbour, and the way home. After leaving the safety and frame of reference near shore, and following a wild argument about doing so, we became lost, primarily because we were focused on what we thought were key landmarks. Beside the gargantuan features of the north shore of Superior, however, directional guesswork was misguided to say the least. Fifty kilometres looked like ten. I knew the mood of the lake could change quickly, and thought our end was near when - peering southward - the edge of a storm was visible, a wall of black in the port sky. Funnel clouds shot from its belly, dancing, twirling, surreal. We just kept paddling.

For hundreds of years, the Anishinaabe people have presented offerings to the Witch Tree in conjunction with some pipe smoking - to appease the Storm Spirits of Kitchi-Gummeeng. In light of our dumb decision to paddle canoes across a substantial chunk of frigid, open water on Superior, and because we had made no offering at the Witch Tree, I felt exposed to the wrath of the Weendigoes and the Storm Spirits. When you gaze across the mighty expanse of Lake Superior from a canoe, the spirits of the lake are all around you. The big lake's epically powerful aura would rival - I was certain - that of Mount Everest. The worst part - notwithstanding the mind-numbing proximity of the storm - was the rollers: elevating whirlpools and masses of water that lifted and spun us toward the rocks: beautiful, deadly, water-filled pillows of the deepest grey. Chest-tightening fear mixed with rollercoaster thrills as we dug paddles hard in an attempt to maintain some form of directional control. I can speak only for the Burt Reynolds boat, but I'm certain Rob's knack for aligning the bow with the vectors of the waves saved our lives. We could have - maybe should have - been swamped or capsized a hundred times. I asked Basil Johnston what he thought of us being out on the open waters of Superior in canoes. "That's just damned silly," he said.

Six hours into our journey, cold, exhausted and entering the realm of exhaustion-driven hallucination and revelation, we watched the shoreline straighten into a ten-mile-long, 40-foot-high embankment of softball-sized rocks. A large antenna reached for the sky atop the mammoth north shore. Rob and I scrambled up loose rock, causing small rockslides as we climbed. A series of fences were intermingled with low buildings and liquid holding areas. My first thought was we had entered a bear preserve. Perhaps a worker at this science fiction-esque facility could help us find our way. We found no help, though - only an eerie, ghost-town aura. I felt weak and a bit overwhelmed for a moment; lost on an inland sea, our energy and the day's light both fading. Following a series of meetings on and near the water, however, we concluded we had paddled about 30 kilometres too far west, and steeled ourselves for the journey back to Hattie's Cove. As we dug our paddles hard, eastward across a large area of open water, a floatplane flew over at a reasonable height. The plane circled back, however, and did a 'fly-by' about 20 feet above us. It was aviator language for: "What are you idiots doing paddling canoes on the open waters of Lake Superior?" Obviously, they wanted to determine whether we were in distress. I wasn't sure whether to wave a white flag or not. We just kept paddling as he flew off to the southeast.

Seeking a history of death on Superior is similar to seeking the same for the Atlantic Ocean. Every town on the lake has its own, sometimes morbid, history. I asked Basil Johnston what paddlers might be exposing themselves to – on a spiritual level – in open water on Lake Superior. He thought about it for some time. "Awesome power," he said. "The water appears soft, but it is the most powerful force in the world. It will wear away rock and put out fire. But when you look into it on a calm day, our reflection shows us what our soul spirit should be: calm, placid. That reflection is what we should try to glean from life, I think."

I felt simultaneously at my smallest - buffeted by the wind, waves and rollers on this inland sea - and at my strongest, ready to become as comfortable as necessary with being uncomfortable, long enough to survive, paddling forever if necessary. Ultimately, we turned an apparent one-hour sprint into an eight-hour quest for survival. The Native people call Lake Superior the Unforgiving Water because she never gives up her dead. The water is too cold for elevating gases to form inside corpses. If Kitchi-Gummeeng had not been in a forgiving mood that day in September, we would be perfectly preserved in open, icy graves, about 500 feet below her surface. Months after our northern odyssey, we have forgiven each other long after being spared - perhaps forgiven - by the Unforgiving Water. The Storm Spirits allowed us safe passage in spite of our carelessness. As I kissed the sandy shore in Hattie's Cove, I was certain - and quite satisfied - that Lake Superior and the White River had left more dramatic and permanent marks upon us than we did upon them.

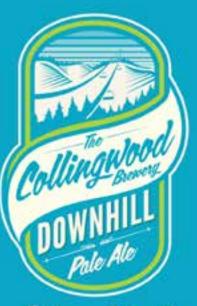


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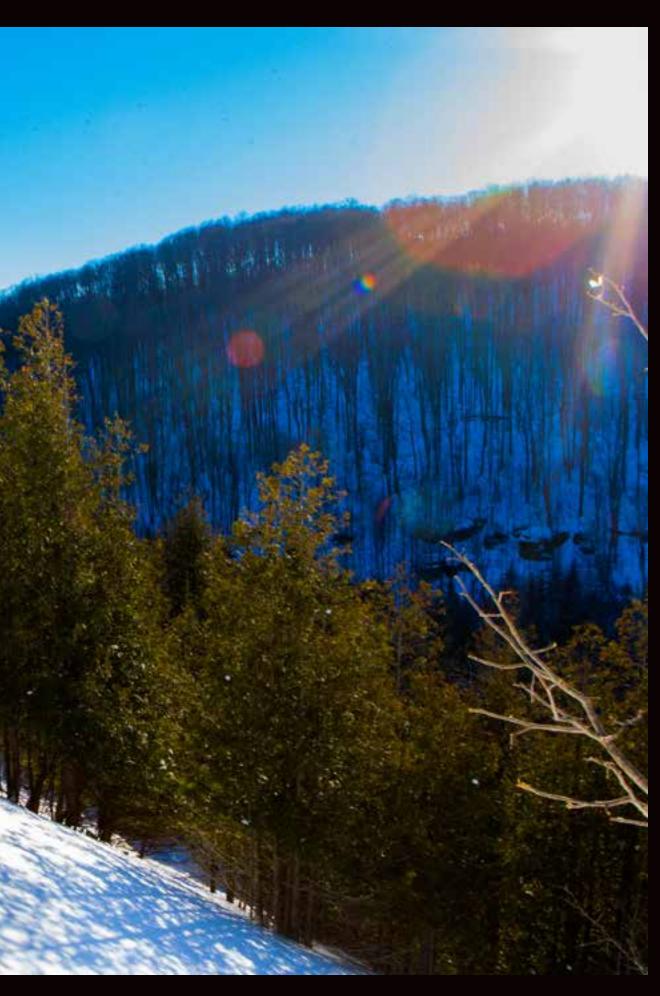






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ABOUT THIS SHOT

Model: Canon EOS-1D X Shutter Speed: 1/500 sec Exposure Program: Manual Aperture Value: f/16 ISO Speed Ratings: 2000 Focal Length: 24 mm Lens: EF24-70mm f/2.8L USM

Kyle Easby in the Beaver Valley. COLIN FIELD PHOTO.



ON THIS PAGE

Model: NIKON D7000 Shutter Speed: 1/25 sec Exposure Program: Aperture priority Aperture Value: f/11 ISO Speed Ratings: 3200 Focal Length: 10.5 mm Lens: 10.5 mm f/2.8

Williams Lake, near Chatsworth, Ontario. ALISON KENNEDY DAVIES PHOTO.

LEFT PAGE (TOP)

Model: NIKON D3 Shutter Speed: 1/1600 sec Exposure Program: Aperture Priority Aperture Value: f/5.6 ISO Speed Ratings: 200 Focal Length: 14 mm Lens: 14-24mm f/2.8

Sand jump in Newmarket, Ontario. Rider: Brett Rheeder. MARC LANDRY PHOTO.

LEFT PAGE (BOTTOM)

Model: NIKON D80 Shutter Speed: 1/10 sec Exposure Program: Manual Aperture Value: f/4.8 ISO Speed Ratings: 100 Focal Length: 55 mm

Audrey Armstrong on the Bruce Trail near Woodford. WILLY WATERTON PHOTO.



ABOUT THIS SHOT

Model: NIKON D300 Shutter Speed: 1/2500 sec Exposure Program: Aperture priority Aperture Value: f/3.5 ISO Speed Ratings: 200 Focal Length: 10.5 mm Lens: 10.5 mm f/2.8

Self-portrait, fly-fishing in Lovers Creek near Innisfil, Ontario. ALIJA BOS PHOTO.





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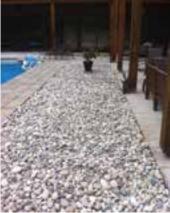




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Icebreaker merino wool is built for extremes – breathable in summer, insulating in winter, yet exceptionally soft and lightweight. The innovative and enviro-focused Kiwi company has pioneered the use of merino wool in the wilderness since 1994 – fusing nature and technology to create durable and earth-friendly layers for the outdoors, for performance sports, and for the city. Made from a lightweight merino-cotton blend, the Rover is a rugged cargo style, with button-close pockets for valuables: in other words, the ideal pair of summer shorts. *icebreaker.com*

NEMO NOCTURNE 30 UNISEX SLEEPING BAG (\$350)

Nemo's innovative spoon-shape sleeping bags give you extra space where it matters most. Wide in the shoulders, the bag tapers down to the hips then gently flares back out to allow room for your knees to naturally bend and shift throughout the night. The result is comfort, thermal efficiency and low weight. Features include DownTek water-resistant down, skin-friendly interior lining, a retractable Blanket Fold for cooler nights, and a waterproof/breathable footbox. Weighing in at 900 grams, this is a premium lightweight, packable summer bag, rated to 30F/-1C. nemoequipment.com

BOGS URBAN FARMER WOMEN'S BOOTS (\$90)

This 100% waterproof, lightweight laceup boot is constructed with durable, hand-lasted rubber, and lined with Ever-Dry and Max-Wick technology to absorb and evaporate sweat for all-day comfort. Features include an internal rigid steel shank for shovel use in the garden, and DuraFresh bio-technology to fight stink. Seamless construction and a dual-density, contoured EVA insole sweeten the deal. The Urban Farmer 2 Eye Lace comes in four fresh colours for spring. *bogsfootwear.ca*

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- ✓ Lunch at Duncan's Cafe
- Try to keep my wife out of Tweed \$ Hickory and Poise on Main
- Check out the wakeboarders and the bands at Wakestock

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The Beta is a masterpiece of pro-level waterproof/breathable/windproof protection that packs down small and light. The specifically mapped use of different materials (including two types of Gore-Tex) creates a hybrid that delivers durability where it's needed, and leverages lightweight fabric technologies where they perform best. Anatomical shaping and ergonomic patterning combine for fit, comfort and mobility. Gussets under the arms allow the arm to flex without the sleeve riding up, and the hood cinches securely to move with the head, increasing freedom and peripheral visibility. Women's and men's styles available. arcteryx.com

PLATYPUS SIOUXON WOMEN'S HYDRA-TION PACK

The new Siouxon (*Sue-sonn*) is built to fit like it's not there, and made to ride with you all day. Shoulder straps and back panel are designed to fit a wide range of female body types and promote airflow in all riding positions. The 2-litre Big Zip BPA-free reservoir features a low-profile shape and a wide-mouth opening that locks securely. Built-in carry system makes it easy to transport a full-face helmet and pads when you're climbing or shuttling. Packed with functional extras including a fleece-lined eyewear pocket.

cascadedesigns.com/platypus



NORTH FACE ULTRA TRAIL SHOES

Tackle long runs through muddy trails and rugged terrain with the protection of this new lightweight, waterproof Gore-Tex running shoe that's finished with trail-specific Vibram soles. The North Face's recently launched Ultra Protection Series is designed to provide critical impact and element protection while eliminating excess weight, for performance on any terrain. Pebax Cradle technology in the midsole is engineered to naturally absorb impact, stabilize the foot and promote a biomechanically correct stride to achieve the perfect balance of stability, cushioning and comfort. Women's and men's styles available. *thenorthface.com*



MOUNTAIN HARDWEAR SUPER CHOCKSTONE JACKET (\$140)

This wind-resistant alpine and rock-climbing softshell jacket boasts double-weave fabric that's ultralight, abrasion resistant, and super-stretchy for excellent mobility. With UPF 50 for sun protection and a waist cinch that's single-hand adjustable, the Super Chockstone makes a handy, air-permeable second layer over a base or under a shell. The DWR finish repels water. Women's and men's styles available. *mountainhardwear.com*

M232 MONKEY LIGHTS

Want to cause a scene every time you ride your bike at night? Get some Monkey Lights. Fitting into your spokes, and installing easily, these weatherproof lights fit 20-inch wheels and larger. As their website states, they're sure to start a party, wherever you go. The M232 has 32 LED lights and as the wheel spins, different designs become visible. With 48 themes including fishbones, stars, rainbows and more, your wheels become rolling pieces of flashing art. Staying safe has never been this fun. *monkeylectric.com*



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MOUNTAINSMITH BOREAS JUNIOR SLEEPING BAG (\$70)

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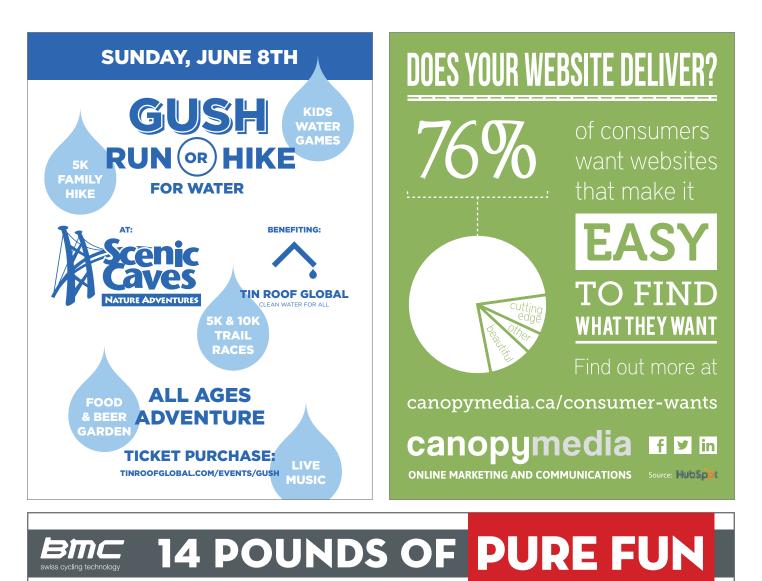
THULE RACEWAY BIKE CARRIER (\$269.99 2-BIKE; \$299.99 3-BIKE)

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LOCAL**PICKS**

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(jimmylewis.ca 705.429.0318 @JimmyLewisCA)

Assos T.Cento Men's Cycling Short

These high-performance shorts feature the new Assos comfortFit: less compression and a less restrictive fit on the waist and abdominal areas. The unique insert is a masterpiece specifically designed for long-distance missions. The ergonomically shaped, higher density memory foam with shock absorbers features another Assos invention, the kuKuPenthouse, a section of the chamois that brings cocoon-like comfort yet holds everything securely. Deanne, Squire John's, Craigleith (squirejohns.com 1.800.303.1334 @SquireJohns)



Julbo Stony Sunglasses

For men and women who adore the outdoors in all forms, these shades – from family-owned master sunglass maker Julbo Eyewear – are the ideal companions for long and happy days. Unbeatable hold thanks to curved temples and a wraparound frame; pinch-free comfort, wide and perfect vision with leading-edge lens selection, and a Universal Nose Clip to adjust the shades to your facial shape.

> Frédérick, Julbo Canada (julbo-canada.ca @JulboEyewear)

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Armand, Envy Eyewear, Blue Mountain Village (envyeyewear.com 705.445.3168, direct Toronto line 416.238.2743)

Keen Rivington Mary Jane

This Mary Jane is ready for an adventurous summer, combining classic style with the lightweight, flexible performance of Keen's CNX line. Fit and support come from the reverse strobel construction, full-grain leather upper and sweet Zorb footbed with a metatarsal ridge. Pairs with anything in your closet. Heather, Keen Canada (keenfootwear.com 1.866.853.6322 @KEENCanada)



Teva Terra-Fi 4 Sandals

The newest interpretation of Teva's classic sport sandal, the Terra Fi 4 includes a shock-absorbent heel, anti-microbial protection and Teva's justly famous Universal Strapping System. On the trail, in the desert or under water, this sandal will always prove its rugged utility.

Kathryn and Chrystle, Teva Canada (tevaonline.ca @Teva)

Flatter:Me – The No-Bump Belt

Flatter:Me's super-flat buckle keeps pants snug, and stays invisible under fitted shirts. This belt doesn't care if you're size 2 or 22 – it's comfy, adjustable, and strong, so you can take it travelling, wear it through pregnancy, try it cinched up over your dress or tunic... and machine-wash it in your belt loops (hang to dry). Dana, Echo Trends, Blue Mountain Village

(Echo-Trends.ca 705.446.1496)





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BLUE MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

LOCAL**PICKS**

C4 Belts

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Kelly and Kim, The Tack Shoppe, Collingwood (705.445.4041 thetackshoppe.ca @TheTack_Shoppe)



Sporter Scooter

A 3-wheeled scooter kids can power by swinging their legs from side to side. T-bar it very compact and providing years of use.

Jeff, Minds Alive, Collingwood (mindsalive.ca 705.445.6222)



Rocky Mountain Thunderbolt 730

Stormtech Metro Hoody

and men.

@stormtech1977)

Urban style meets performance and comfort

underarm and side body panels. Canadian

company Stormtech's quality is legendary

Apparel (Stormtech.ca 1.866.407.2222

in this full-zip hoody which features con-

trast-colour zippers and textured ribbed

since 1977. Styles available for women

Christine, Stormtech Performance

The all-new offering from Rocky is an attainable, sub-30-lbs, Toonie race messiah. The agile and playful Thunderbolt, standing on 120mm of travel and equipped with 27.5" wheels, delivers a great mix of intuitive XC capabilities and pure playful trail fun. Take one for a ride today and become a believer.

Devin, Skiis & Biikes Collingwood (skiisandbiikes.com 705.445.9777 @skiisandbiikes)

blundstone.ca

Troy Lee Designs A1 Helmet This lightweight all-mountain helmet not only looks great but it offers serious protection for your next epic ride. Be sure to check out the premium fit and superior venting of the Troy Lee Designs A1 in drone matte grey.

Kris, Kamikaze, Collingwood (kamikazebikes.com 705.446.1234)

Olukai Sandals

519.599.5013)

Blundstone Ute

The new Ute takes safety over the

top with highly flexible, super-comf

guards, steel toes, protected side

elastics, bulletproof Kevlar stitching,

and shockproof soles. 100% Blund-

stone laceless comfort now with

even more protection.

Poron XRD foot-top metatarsal

Inspired by the feeling of bare feet in wet sand, Olukai builds their footwear with anatomically contoured footbeds to deliver the perfect balance of instant comfort and lasting support. From water-friendly sandals to upcountry boots, their footwear is designed to deliver unparalleled comfort from the ground up. Leslie and Scott, Evolution Him & Her, Thornbury (evolutionformen.ca

Maui Jim Kanani Women's Sunglasses

Put on a pair of Maui Jims and instantly, 99.9% of glare disappears. 100% of harmful and damaging UV is gone. The world's true colours come shining through like never before: bolder, richer, crisper. The patented, colour-infused PolarizedPlus lens technology works as an optically correct, distortion-free lens allowing you to see your world with blazing yet cool clarity. mauijim.com

handles can be raised and lowered, making A sturdy, yet lightweight design ensures that the scooter can be carried and used safely.

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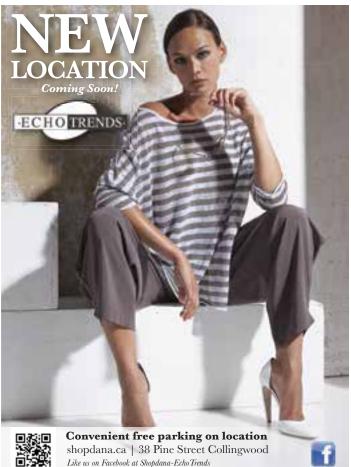
Keep your drinking water safe on your next trip outdoors with the SteriPEN Ultra. The economical, UV-technology device purifies 200 litres of water on just one set of AA lithium batteries. This and other water purification equipment available at The Water Store Collingwood. Isabel, The Water Store Collingwood

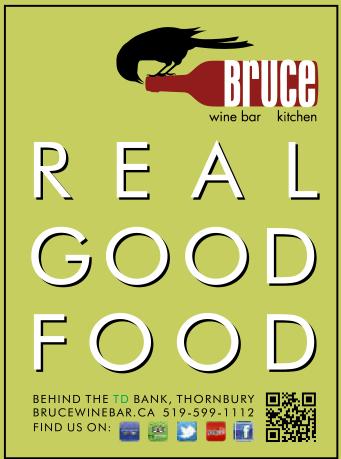
(waterstoresgroup.com 705.446.1330)



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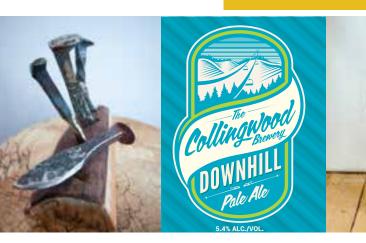
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RELAXATION, REJUVENATION AND HEALING

LOCAL**PICKS**





Tonic Free Spin Tank Top

From Tonic, a Canadian manufacturer from Vancouver, this tank has a scoop neck and a no-cling relaxed fit with built in Supplex shelf bra and removable cups. Made from Elevar Light, the wide banded hem sits mid-hip in length. Brenda, One Tooth Collingwood and Blue Mountain Village, and Kim, One Tooth Barrie (onetoothcollingwood.com 705.445.5239 and onetoothbarrie.com 705.733.3663 @onetoothontario)

Railway Spike Cheese Knives

Upcycling, art and food at its best. Stratford railway spikes from the 1800s are reworked into modern cheese knives. Artist Glen Beald works outside over open flame to heat and reshape each spike into a unique, functional piece of art. Knives are food-safe with a beeswax finish. The perfect complement to your cheese board.

Casey, The Cheese Gallery, Thornbury (thecheesegallery.com 519.599.6699 @cheesegallery)



Delicious is simple. Made in Collingwood with just four ingredients, this beer blends a firm maltiness with an assertive hop character. The result is perfection. Like a weekend away or a quiet night with friends, Downhill Pale Ale celebrates the simple things in life. Available beginning in May. Chris, The Collingwood Brewery (thecollingwoodbrewery.com 705.446.6287 @CollingwoodBeer)

Grace & Lace Nellie Knit Leg Warmers

Knits are the hit all season long at Georgian Christmas! These thick textured custom cable-knit leg warmers are the perfect addition to your wardrobe. Pulled fashionably to the thigh or slouched effortlessly to the calf, they feature a fold-over cuff and tassle tie. Get cozy by the fire or enjoy a wintery walk without your legs freezing in the cold. Denise, Georgian Christmas, Blue Mountain Village (georgianchristmas.ca 705.444.0222)









Danica Tin Mugs

The world of Danica Studio offers a host of design options for both the eclectic curator and the impeccably coordinated. Their stylish, au courant accessories include this one-of-a-kind series of tin mugs.

Tarren, Gaia, Thornbury (gaiaboutique.ca 519.599.3040)

Shredz Thredz – Beach/ Board Style Clothing

Collingwood snowboarder/Instructor Shred (aka Allison Church) has turned her passion for board sports into an active lifestyle clothing line. Introducing SHREDZ THREDZ – the soul of surfing and snowboarding. High quality tees, hoodies, tanks and more. Allison, Shredz Thedz (shredzthredz.com or facebook.com/ ShredzThredz)

Westcomb Echo Vest

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Fielding, Polartec (polartec.com @polartec & shopwestcomb.com @westcomb 1.888.204.9140)

In the Footsteps of the Group of Seven by Sue and Jim Waddington

Richly illustrated with reproductions of the original artwork by the Group of Seven and photographs of the locations where these legendary paintings were created, the Waddingtons have created a journal to document the landscapes that help define us as Canadians.

Joan, Jessica's New Books, Art & Gifts, Thornbury (jessicas.ca 519.599.7361)



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LOCAL**PICKS**





The Wave Rider iSUP 10.6

Ontario-based Blu Wave SUP has launched their all new Wave Rider 10.6 iSUP (inflatable SUP). Constructed using heavy-duty double layer PVC drop-stitch construction, the Wave Rider iSUP provides maximum durability, portability and performance suitable for rivers, surf and flat water. Includes carry bag, pump and repair kit. Available at Southwinds Marine -Collingwood and Blue Surf - Craigleith. Aaron, Blu Wave SUP (1-866-404-3155 bluwave.ca @BluWaveSUP)

Rooster Tail Wheat Beer

An American Pale Wheat beer with a silky body, crisp malt character, low bitterness, and loads of bright citrus aromas from select American hops. Enjoy Northwinds' latest beer as they continue to kick up dust in the construction of their Brewhouse & Eatery opening this summer.

Geoff, Northwinds Brewhouse & Eatery, Collingwood (northwindsbrewhouse.com 705.888.3550 @Northwindsbeer)

Jo Totes Rose Camera Bag

This vintage-inspired handbag is perfect for carrying your camera and an extra lens alongside your purse items. Adjustable pads and dividers customize your kit and protect against shock. Also includes large padded divider for ipad/tablet; removable and adjustable crossbody strap; optional-use magnetic closures on top for times when your bag is less full, or in place of zipper for quick access.

April, Jo Totes (jototes.com @jototes)



Sleeptek Organic Mattresses

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Trish, Thornbury Bakery Café (thornburybakerycafe.com 519.599.3311 @ThornburyBakery)

BLUE MOUNTAIN RESORT PHOTO.

Mountain Bike Season Pass

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JOHN JAMES AUDUBON ILLUSTRATION from Birds of America, 1829.

CHAMPLAIN'S BIRD: AN ORNITHOLOGICAL MYSTERY

By Ken Haigh

In the autumn of 1615, French explorer Samuel de Champlain and his Huron allies were returning from an unsuccessful raid on an Onondaga village in what is now upper New York State. On their journey home to Huronia, the war party paused somewhere northwest of present-day Peterborough to partake in a communal deer hunt to stock up on meat for the coming winter. On his way to join the hunters, a flash of colour in the trees caught Champlain's eve. He spied an unusual bird "with a beak almost like a parrot, as big as a hen, yellow all over, except for its red head and blue wings, which made short successive flights like a partridge," he wrote later. He pursued the bird from tree to tree hoping to get a clear shot, but it eluded

him. Finally stopping to look around, he realized that he had become separated from his party. The future Governor of New France spent the night shivering beneath the boughs of a large tree, and it took him three days to re-locate his companions.

When I first read this passage in Champlain's journals many years ago, his description puzzled me. Its individual attributes could be applied to any number of native bird species; taken together, they described nothing I'd ever heard of. I canvassed birdwatcher friends and scoured numerous guidebooks but nothing matching the Frenchman's description ever turned up. For years it remained a mystery – both to me and to Champlain's many biographers. Until now.

The explorer spied an unusual bird "with a beak almost like a parrot, as big as a hen, yellow all over, except for its red head and blue wings, which made short successive flights like a partridge."

The first clue turned up in an archaeological dig near London, Ontario, in 1983. Digging in a Late Woodland village (circa 1100 A.D.) archaeologists uncovered three small bones which after much sleuthing were identified as belonging to an extinct bird species: the Carolina parakeet, *Conuropsis carolinensis*. The archaeologists concluded that the bones were part of a complete parrot skin – probably acquired through trade with First Nations communities south of the Great Lakes – once used for ceremonial purposes.

The Carolina parakeet once ranged in great numbers up and down the eastern seaboard of the United States from the Gulf of Mexico to southern New York State, but, like the passenger pigeon before it, was eradicated by a combination of habitat loss and over-hunting. Market hunters sought the beautiful plumage for women's hats, and farmers frequently shot the bird as a crop-devouring nuisance. The last known Carolina parakeet died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1918. Today, its appearance can only be surmised from a few moth-eaten museum specimens and from the illustrations of artists like John James Audubon.

An amateur archaeologist named Clyde C. Kennedy first made the connection between the three small bones discovered near London, Ontario, and Champlain's journal. Writing in *Arch Notes* (the newsletter of the Ontario Archaeological Society) Kennedy noted a further clue: a circa-1640 clay pipe, shaped like a parrot, unearthed at a dig near Grimsby, Ontario. Kennedy's conclusion, probably read by only a few people, went unheeded.

Last year, Suzanne Needs-Howarth, a zooarchaeologist and self-proclaimed "bone librarian," arrived at the same conclusion independently, and published her deduction in the McGill-Queen's University Press collection *Before Ontario: The Archaeology of a Province.* She declared that Champlain's description fits the Carolina parakeet "to the letter."

One question remains: what was the parakeet doing in southern Ontario? Was it what ornithologists call a "vagrant," a bird that had strayed outside of its normal geographical range? Or was the Carolina parakeet a regular visitor to Ontario woodlands in the pre-European era? We shall never know. Perhaps the bird was just lost, like the errant French governor.

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