

Algonquin's beauty remains in winter

By David Featherstone

Many of us are familiar with the natural beauty of Algonquin Provincial Park.

In the spring, hundreds of anglers descend upon the park to sample the area's fabled trout fishing. During the summer months, the campgrounds along Highway 60 allow family groups to enjoy a wilderness experience seldom to be found in the urban areas to the south. Canoe trippers find access to the park's interior throughout the ice-free months.

However, during the winter months, Algonquin is all but forgotten by the hordes of seasonal visitors. The stores, campgrounds and museums along Highway 60 are closed.

Ice fishing is forbidden within the park as a measure to protect its sensitive trout fisheries from over-harvest. Little is left, it would seem, to offer winter visitors.

After New Year's, I had the opportunity to travel to Algonquin Park with a German couple who were vacationing in Ontario. We

found the experience most rewarding. Unlike the summer months, the accessible hiking trails were uncrowded.

In fact, according to log books along the trails, we were the first people to hike the trails in over a week! Keep in mind that these were the shorter (easier) trails, all of which were less than three kilometres (two miles) in length.

The solitude of these winter trails, the silence of the forest, and the crunch of freshly fallen snow underfoot combined to create a unique experience.

Along the Peck Lake trail we encountered a white pine that must have been nearly two metres (six feet) in diameter.

Animal sign was abundant. Snowshoe hare tracks were widespread along the trails. We followed the hoof prints of a moose onto Peck Lake.

Along the Oxtongue River we discovered otter slides that ran from steep riverbanks into the river itself. At dusk, as we were leaving the park, we stopped to admire a young bull moose foraging along

Dave's Diversions

the highway.

To truly enjoy Algonquin in the winter months, one must be prepared to deal with severe winter conditions.

Phone ahead to check on road conditions before setting forth. A bright, sunny day in Toronto may be accompanied by violent snow squalls north of Barrie.

Once in the park, be prepared to shuffle through some significant snow accumulations. Try the shorter trails first before venturing out on longer treks. Above all, dress warmly from top to bottom.

Our visitors from Germany were impressed by Algonquin. Much of the indigenous wildlife in Germany has been displaced by human activ-

ities. There are few large stands of undeveloped wilderness in Western Europe and none that can rival our province's older provincial park for the quality of wilderness experience.

If you have the opportunity, visit Algonquin Provincial Park this winter and experience its unique splendor.

A biologist by profession, David Featherstone devotes a large portion of his spare time to volunteer groups which are working to protect and enhance the environment. David hopes to provide readers of Halton Hills This Week with a mix of interesting and informative outdoor and nature articles.

Steve Podborski hosting Easter Seal ski event

On Monday, Feb. 8, Olympic bronze medallist and World Cup champion skier Steve Podborski will host the first annual ski with Steve Podborski for Easter Seal Kids at Craighleith Ski Club. Registration begins at 8 a.m. so start planning now for a great day of skiing and the opportunity to do something special for children with physical disabilities.

Participants are entitled to unlimited skiing, free ski clinics with Steve, a complimentary BBQ lunch and the chance to win some fantastic ski packages. For instance, a Canadian Holiday ski week for two to Banff/Lake Louise and

Charlton's Resort (\$3,000 value).

Pledges are what it's all about and your \$50 entry fee will be refunded by raising only \$100 in pledges. Your chances of winning one of the terrific prizes increases with every \$50 you raise (after the initial \$100).

Join Steve Podborski at Craighleith Ski Club on Monday, Feb. 8, not only for a great day of skiing and hot tips from Steve, but to raise funds that provide essential services and programs to almost 8,000 children across Ontario.

For further information about this event and pledge sheets, contact Richard Fenton at the Easter Seal Society, (416) 421-8377 or 1-800-668-6252.

Novices capture victory

The Georgetown minor novice Raiders opened their opening-round playoff series with Flamborough on a winning note last week.

Travelling to Flamborough, Georgetown played a strong defensive game, allowing only four shots.

The contest remained scoreless until the third when Brett Velten scored on a wraparound pass from Adam Kemp, who had taken a nice backhand pass from Andy Burns. Georgetown goaltender Donnie Lane might not have been busy, but he still recorded the shutout, his first of the season.

The Raiders then continued their road ways, travelling to Chinguacousy for their final game of the regular season. The home side dominated the contest, taking a 6-0 victory.

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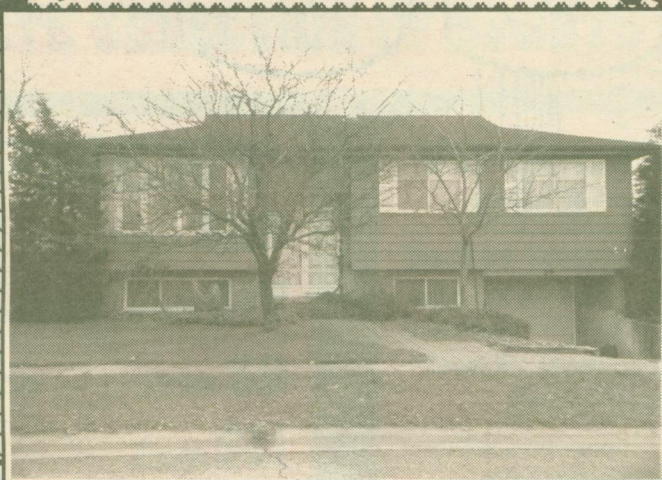
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