

Wilderness Program has lots to offer

by Alison Butlin
Ministry of Natural Resources

In search of some winter wilderness frolic? A little unsure of yourself in the back-country? Then head for Frontenac Provincial Park—the training

ground which can build your knowledge and confidence for exploring the great outdoors.

A recent addition to Ontario's outstanding system of provincial parks, Frontenac—40 minutes north of Kingston—is the first to

offer a comprehensive wilderness skills training program. It introduces enthusiasts to the skills necessary to tackle some of the more challenging wilderness provincial parks, such as Killarney near Sudbury or Quetico in northwestern Ontario.

"The park is situated on the southernmost extension of the Canadian Shield, and provides an unusual blend of the geography characteristic to both northern and southern Ontario," says Mike Walton, Frontenac's assistant park superintendent and the winter programs coordinator. "It's close to roads and cottages, so it offers visitors a less intimidating introduction to the wilds."

Following the success of its summer program, Frontenac is now providing 10 sessions of instruction in winter activities ranging from cross-country skiing and snowshoeing to winter camping and photography. The first of these workshops—ice fishing—was held January 13. Subsequent courses will be offered on weekends until March 24.

Whether your interest lies in a one-day outing, a weekend excursion or series of ongoing visits, Frontenac's winter skills program is for you.

For example, a late-January session provided an opportunity for both novices and those with some experience to learn the many facets of snowshoe travel. The workshop began in the morning, with an informal talk on the background, equipment and techniques of snowshoeing. The participants then put this training to practical use with an afternoon walk on some of the 160 kilometres of trails within the park's 70 square-kilometre area.

Another session on January 27 was devoted to examining and

discussing the latest equipment used in winter camping—an activity Mike Walton refers to as "a demanding, but always exhilarating winter experience."

As with all courses provided, the instructors are volunteers from local groups and association, or professionals within their field of specialization.

For instance, crosscountry skiers will be introduced to waxing techniques and advised on the appropriateness of their equipment by representatives from the Canadian Association of Nordic Ski Instructors.

Later in the season, individuals may wish to return for a full weekend of instruction. On February 9, the Canadian Ski Patrol System—Nordic Patrol will conduct a lecture and practical demonstration on cross-country ski safety. The next day, the Canadian Ski Association offers a discussion and tips on single- and multi-day touring. Toward the end of the month, a cross-country ski day will provide a final review and a testing ground for the skills learned.

All participants choose whether to gain this experience in a complete unit of courses or in individual segments. "The ultimate goal of the program is to prepare people to enjoy a wilderness outing to its fullest and in ways compatible with the natural surrounding," said Natural Resources Minister Allan Pope.

The season at Frontenac winds up with a winter photography workshop, allowing the trained snowshoer or cross-country skier to capture better the many moods of winter on film.

In preparation for this coming summer, the park is offering trip planning for the canoeists as well as a rock climbing clinic—

warm weather wilderness workshops that provide a transition to a whole new season of outdoor experiences.

The \$2.50 daily vehicle permit fee is the only cost for nine of the 10 sessions. An additional \$10 is required for the winter touring session offered on February 10.

All the workshops begin at the newly-constructed trail centre—a veritable oasis amidst the vastness of its surroundings.

The centre's concrete structure houses a comfortable, friendly,

carpeted interior, adorned with pine fixtures. A fireplace at the base of a semi-circular amphitheatre provides the hub of activity for all workshops, as well as a rest stop for skiers and other outdoor recreationists.

Information on the trails and park highlights are outligned on the 10 colourful display panels and cases surrounding the fireplace area. In the theatre, visitors can be treated to an audio-visual presentation

"Threshold to Wilderness," which captures Frontenac Provincial Park in all its seasonal splendor.

The Wilderness Skills Program at Frontenac is a pioneer within the field of teaching outdoor recreational skills to tenderfeet. Whether the park's facilities are used as a stepping stone to more challenging natural environments, or simply a source of weekend fun, Frontenac Provincial park offers an experience which shouldn't be missed



Winter camping

Air Cadet Brian Flint was one of a number of local air cadets and sea cadets who spent a recent weekend in Midland's Little Lake Park preparing for winter camping. The young people also spent time on more practical matters, such as building winter shelters.

SCOUTING AROUND

by HARRY BROWN

Looking around South Georgian Bay District these days, you won't see much Scouting activity, but there's a lot about to happen.

The boys are looking ahead to the Snow Frolic on Feb. 10 and on that subject, John Baker hasn't received many calls. Cheques should be sent to him for registration before Feb. 3. There are many expenses to be met and John would like to know if you are going.

Scout-Guide Week begins on Feb. 17 this year. Many groups are sharing with the public their activities.

First Midland church parade is Feb. 17 at 10 a.m. The Parent and Son Banquet is on Feb. 22.

Don't forget, as if you would, the Cub Car Rally on March 2, and the Scout Scooters Rally on March 10.

District executive met on Feb. 4. Next general meeting is on March 4, following the pot luck supper at LaFontaine. Plan to attend one of these fun evenings and share in the pot luck supper and the worthwhile meeting. They don't run late. Supper is at 6:30 p.m.


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We're still waiting for the groundhog

The only animal to surface in North Simcoe on Groundhog Day, Saturday, Feb. 2, was this deer on Dianne Maynard's front lawn in Wasaga Beach. Maynard reports the buck got

a brief glimpse of his shadow (six more weeks of winter) before being buried under another 18 centimetres of snow over the weekend.

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