

Snowmobile theft quickly becoming most pervasive of crimes in the snowbelt

A friend had the world's most expensive hamburger last winter. His sled was stolen in broad daylight during a 15 minute lunch at a popular trailside eatery. Small consolation that several others disappeared too. Or that the OPP were sympathetic. He still had to hitch a ride home.

The "expletives deleted" were hot and heavy as he rode shotgun. But nothing compared to those heard when his insurance company said the cash settlement would take six to eight precious winter weeks.

Desperate at being shut out of his favourite season, he arranged financing at the bank—only to discover that the new machine of his choice were sold out. He had to buy a used sled that he never liked and still missed out on three weeks of great riding. Not a happy camper.

My friend is one of many who are falling victim to that most pervasive of snowbelt crimes—snowmobile theft. But you can take deterrent steps to reduce your risk of being victimized.

Bluntly, your sled has to be more difficult to steal than the next one. If so, thieves will usually move on to easier pickings.

I always park my sled in a highly visible location, preferably within my direct sight line on pit stops, and where it's well-lit at night. I try to park my sled beside a pack of high price and more desirable muscle machines, but I've never had the nerve to display a sign reading: "The next sled over will be easier to sell."

Snowmobiling businesses would be well-advised to increase their own security and to provide safer overnight parking—a lockable, fenced area, or wall hooks to secure sleds to, or at least bright perimeter lighting. Those that acquire reputations for high theft rates will lose business.

But location alone isn't much defense against a determined thief. Neither is leaving the key in the ignition, a common mistake. So I never leave my sled without a lock. Overnight, I use more than

one. Remember, there are two sled scenarios to prevent: one, that a slick someone hot wires it and rides off; and two, that a rambo someone manhandles it onto a truck and drives away. And never confront the hulk one who can lift that sled all by himself.

When I'm towing, I chain mine to the trailer and put a lock through the trailer tongue lever so it can't be released from the ball. A new lock called EZ TRAXX slides into place to prevent the sled track from turning. This device is plastic coated, heavy-duty and the lock is weather-proofed. It can be transported either under the hood on the spare belt clip, or on the rear bar behind the seat.

If two sleds are overnighing on the trailer, I'll also use a U-shaped Kryptonite bicycle lock (available at any bicycle shop) to secure the two adjoining front ski legs together. No one's going anywhere at this point, especially me if I lose a key. Unless they steal the vehicle too. Who said life was perfect.

On tour, I carry the bike lock because of it's proven theft deterrent value. A T-joint pipe fitting of appropriate size placed over the locking end of this lock makes it virtually impossible to break. Overnight, I secure two machines together at the ski legs in a front-to-rear configuration that increases lifting difficulty. I also lock on to any available stationary object.

Recently, I started using the new Sled Sentry 110, a cable style lock with an alarm that is both motion and tamper sensitive. At about one pound, it's handy to prevent crimes of opportunity at pit stops by emitting a 110 decibel scream. With the sentry's proliferation, I can foresee the day when there won't be any moving around parked sleds without tripping an air-raid cacophony of alarms. Get the ear plugs and brace yourself for the mad dash to the parking lot!

Security measures are necessary because snowmobile manufacturers have failed to address theft adequately in



Craig Nicholson

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continued on page 14

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MNR changes result in "new" Nipigon District

by Dave Jackson
Special to the Gazette/News

The "New" Nipigon District

The Ministry of Natural Resources' recent organizational changes have resulted in a "new" Nipigon District - consisting of the District Office in Nipigon in addition to Area Offices located in Armstrong and Terrace Bay. In an effort to keep the public informed regarding resources throughout the district, this column will be appearing monthly.

O Christmas Tree

The MNR spends taxpayers' money each year establishing and monitoring spruce and pine plantations throughout Nipigon District. Unfortunately, this time of year exposes our plantations to pressures other than fire and insects—the search for the perfect *Christmas Tree*.

This may seem like a petty complaint during such a festive time of the year, however, these plantations are of value to the local economy due to the close proximity to the mills and investments made to ensure that concentrations of the desirable species are established.

The damage does not come from the removal of a single spruce tree, but by many people continually removing trees from plantations in places such as Limestone Lake, Hele, Corrigal or Strey Townships. The removal of any tree on a plantation is against the law and could be prosecutable under the criminal code.

The use of balsam fir for your Christmas tree

is recommended and they can be taken from anywhere on Crown land. If you are unsure what a balsam fir tree looks like, drop into your nearest MNR office for information. If your search includes only spruce, please take them from places such as powerlines, pipelines or highway right of ways—not private land.

With the increasing value of these plantations, we must all make an effort to protect them the best we can.

The Outdoors Card

You may have recently received an application for your *Outdoors Card*. Beginning in January 1993, a new card-based licensing system for Ontario's resident hunters and anglers will take effect.

Under the new system, Ontario residents will need an Outdoors Card to buy a license and to legally hunt or fish. The new card will be valid for three years and will serve as an identity card. It will cost \$6.00 (\$2.00 per year), including GST. Most forms of angling and hunting licenses will take the form of stickers, called license tags, which will be attached to the Outdoors Card.

The Outdoors Card will resemble a credit card, with the name and description of the license holder on one side, and a magnetic strip and spaces for license tags on the other.

Although there will be two versions of the card—one for resident hunters and one for resident anglers—you will only require one card.

continued on page 6