

McCrae Lake – Why I Love It!

The Barrie Canoe & Kayak Club (BCKC) has traveled to McCrae Lake as a “quasi-wilderness” experience for new trippers since 1977. It is a beautiful lake with lots of bays and inlets, private campsites, loons, lake trout and bass, a fabulous jumping rock and cliffs that look out over Georgian Bay -- and it is only an hour’s drive north of Barrie!

The first record I have of personally leading a trip to McCrae Lake was in July of 1999. Do you see any familiar faces below?



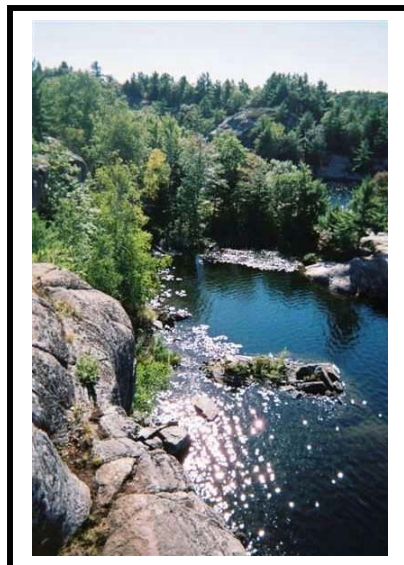
A 3-year study entitled “Natural Heritage Evaluation of Muskoka”, completed in 1994, identified the following rare species in this area:

Wildlife:

- Prairie Warbler
- Eastern Fox Snake
- Eastern Massasauga

Plants:

- Maidenhair Spleenwort
- Long Sedge
- Panic Grass
- Sweet Coltsfoot
- White Fringed Orchid
- Pinedrops
- Grass-leaved Arrowhead
- Claspingleaved Rose Twisted Stalk
- Marsh St. John’s Wort
- Slender Yellow-eyed Grass



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world,
indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”

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By 2001, the lake had been designated a Conservation Reserve under Ontario's Living Legacy "Lands for Life" initiative. A snowmobile trail, connecting local trails to Parry Sound trails, crossed the portage trail between MacDonald River and McCrae Lake.

The BCKC joined "The Friends of McCrae Lake" in their bi-annual cleanup of campsites for the first time in 2001. Our efforts have continued ever since, typically on the weekend following the long weekends in May and September.

Members paddle and portage into the lake, camp for the weekend and enjoy taking photos, reading, fishing, swimming, hiking, paddling and socializing. Part of our time is also spent cleaning garbage off the sites and relocating fire pits.



This year we began a thunder box maintenance program; installing, relocating and adding composting solution, as required. In the early spring of 2010 we plan to inspect those units and install additional units where required. Installations will be accomplished in stages due to the challenges of access and depending on the number of volunteers available. We hope providing thunder boxes will help cut down on "paper flowers" in the bush and make sites cleaner and more appealing.

Each year we find evidence of more destruction and overuse in the lake. People are damaging trees with axes, cutting down living trees, creating new trails with ATVs, bringing more motorized boats into the lake and establishing more campsites (there are now approximately 70 sites on McDonald River and McCrae Lake combined).



We are pleased to be working with the following partners to educate lake users to be more aware of their impact on the environment:

- Canadian Canoe Route (CCR) members
- Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Township of Georgian Bay
- Toronto Police Service Recreational Outreach Outtripping Program (TROOP), who partner at-risk youth aged 12 to 18 years old from across the city with officers, teachers and outreach agency workers for canoeing trips.

If this sounds like a lake you'd like to explore, we'd be happy to provide you with the details on how to get there.

If you were willing to participate in one of our clean-up weekends, we'd welcome your assistance!

Please feel free to contact me at mclark@csolve.net.

I'm sure you'll love McCrae Lake as much as I do!



Photo: H Teitelbaum - CCR

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