



Otter

The
Summer 2008 Newsletter
Algonquin Backcountry Recreationalists



The **Algonquin Backcountry Recreationalists** represent the concerns of those recreationalists who want to preserve, protect and enhance wilderness-like experiences in the backcountry of Algonquin Park. The ABR's objectives are ...

- To minimize backcountry recreationalists' impact on Algonquin Park's campsites, portages and hiking trails.
- To minimize backcountry recreationalists' impact on Algonquin Park's environment, its forest and lakes.
- To convince society at large to protect and improve wilderness-like recreational opportunities in Algonquin Park.
- To react against influences which may negatively impact wilderness-like recreational experiences in Algonquin Park.

www.ABRweb.ca

Reduce Our Impact

Over past decades, society's increasing love of wilderness-like experiences in the backcountry of Algonquin Park has impacted heavily on its portages, trails, campsites and natural environment.

It is our hope to increase the awareness of recreationalists to the measures we can all take to reduce our impacts to the backcountry of Algonquin Park. Here are some important guidelines we can all adhere to ...

On The Move

When we follow a portage or trail, we should try to stay on it. We shouldn't step off the trail to avoid wet and muddy areas. Otherwise, if we step around wet areas, we'll trample the surrounding growth and over time increase the width of the eroded path's scarred area.

At canoe landings, we should come ashore at either the already heavily used areas or at solid rock areas. This will minimize shoreline erosion.

When one is "caught short", one should walk at least 50 paces from the trail, dig a "cat hole" (10-15cm deep and 15-20cm across) in the forest soil, bury used paper and refill the hole back to its original level.

Exposed roots should be stepped over, rather than be stepped on. If we impact tree's roots, we'll tear their fragile outer layers, cause them to die and prevent them from providing nutrients to the trees.

Around Camp

No one should be hammering nails into trees. Nails injure trees' sapwood, allowing infection and insects to get under the bark. Nails protruding from trees can also cause injuries to people.

Trees' bark and sapwood can also be injured by hot lanterns and narrow diameter hammock ropes hung on trunks, and by abrasive food-bag ropes repeatedly hauled over branches without the benefit of small suspended pulley wheels.

Biodegradable soaps still need the bacteria found in the soil in order to degrade. We should dispose of soap by-products and of dishwater, well back from the lakeshore and our campsites.

The "thunderboxes" (boxed pit privies), are only intended for toilet use. Things like food scraps, garbage or hygiene products shouldn't be put into them. Wild creatures can make an unbelievable mess when they are attracted by such inappropriate items dumped in a "thunderbox".

We should not dig trenches around our tents. Trenches cause erosion and are safety hazards. Tents should be located to minimize flooding from surface runoff. Properly laid "ground sheets" increase the protection of the floors of our tents.

By The Campfire

We should confine our campfire to our campsite's official firepit. The official firepits are comprised of a sand, stone or rock underground foundation, which keep high temperatures away from underground combustible organic materials.

It's fine to rebuild an official firepit to make it smaller or stronger, but don't relocate it or enlarge it to large bonfire dimensions.

Also, we should clear combustible ground debris at least 6 feet away from firepits. Live trees should never be cut for firewood. We should collect firewood from locations far away from campsites, thereby leaving the campsites' immediate surroundings in a natural state.

When one goes to bed or leaves a campsite unattended, one should first let the fire burn down and then extinguish its embers with plenty of water. One should be sure that the fire is DEAD OUT. Even small glowing embers can be re-ignited by a breeze.

We can all reverse some of the existing impact if we make a conscious effort to carry out any garbage we find, along with our own.

In addition, if we come across a damaged item such as a broken boardwalk or a damaged "thunderbox" .. or see a dangerous situation such as a dead tree hanging over a campsite .. we should accurately report it to park management when we leave the park.