

turtle tracks

Friends of Misery Bay 400 Misery Bay Road Evansville ON, POP1H0

friends of misery bay @gmail.com

miserybay.ca

Fall/Winter 2021



Updates from the Chair And Merry Christmas 2021!

Hi Friends of Misery Bay and Merry Christmas to all of you.

I received an early Christmas present last week while visiting Misery Bay Provincial Park (MBPP) and checking some of the trail for blowdowns. First Rose and I saw a flock of at least 70 White-Winged Crossbills voraciously feeding in

spruce trees and then as we were leaving the park, a beautiful adult goshawk barreled down the trail in front of us – hopefully he did not get the grouse we had seen earlier. Misery Bay

never ceases to amaze and continues to always be a special place to visit. As Friends of Misery Bay, it is very special that we get to help operate this unique place on our planet.

Follow along with me as I highlight events at our park this year:

Lake Levels

All of us have been following the rising water levels of Lake Huron the last few years. I am happy to say that they are dropping rapidly. The attached picture shows a great shot of our Coastal Alvar Trail, with the water at least 150 feet out in the lake; last year it was right on the shoreline in the picture. Water levels have dropped at least 18" since this spring. Our Coastal Trail is coming back to us- and one can now follow it right along the shoreline with just a bit of bushwhacking- and on a really important side note- both of our shelters are high and dry. You will remember that last year at this time we were moving Our Friends Shelter inland another 40 feet. It is now safe and secure and firmly established.



Putting the Alvar back in the Coastal Alvar Trail!

Summer Staffing and Visitors.

We have had an excellent summer, meeting and greeting visitors, welcoming well in excess of 6000 people. Our summer student staff members, Rachel Auckland and Emma Turner-Theijsmeijer, along with all of our FOMB weekend volunteers (organized by Ken Mackenzie), did a great job introducing them to our park. The Covid protocols put in place by Ontario Parks were adhered to and ensured that everyone had a safe visit. Interesting to note that a lot of visitors were first time visitors (see article by Jane Hohenadel, p. 5). Misery Bay is really getting known out there - as is Manitoulin Island - and we can expect to see more and more visitors. Rachel and Emma did regular walks to Our Friends Shelter while checking on trail conditions and picking up garbage. A slight increase in garbage was noted.



Strange fruit hanging from spruce tree

One disconcerting development was the increasing number of filled doggie bags being left beside the trail, under the Shelter, on the bench at the Centre and even some thrown high up into tree branches beside the trail. This seems unbelievable – but the picture above shows it all. I myself have located three of these. It seems beyond belief in this day and age that someone would go to the trouble to pick up after their pet and then toss the

filled bag up into a tree – visible to all park users. The old adage "leave nothing behind but your footprints" is not getting thorough to this very small percentage of park users!

Website and Social Media

I encourage all of you to check out our Friends of Misery Bay website at www.miserybay.ca – Dave Clark has it up to date and you can find a lot of info on FOMB activities and projects. You will also note from the attached picture that we are trying out an online store – just a few items for now (crest, stickers, children book and Alvar flowers) – but we are hoping to expand the list for next year. We have filled a lot of orders for crests and stickers and some books. Click on the More button and check out **Store** under the drop-down menu.



Misery Bay Swag!

Our Social media pages- Facebook and Instagram are being looked after by Jane Hohenadel- a great way to keep up on "All Things Misery."

Special Projects

Volunteerism is alive and well at Misery Bay, as always. Thanks to a whole bunch of Our Friends volunteers, we were able to exceed our targets for projects this year. Our plan was to install bird dot deterrents on 11 panels on the deck. We have had several bird fatalities over the last season due to collisions with the glass panels. We were hoping to get 11 panels done, and lead by Jane and our summer staff Rachel and Emma, we now have 21 panels done along the deck. We will complete 3 more next season.

The article by Megan, our trails team leader (see p.7) – speaks to the success of upgrading sign posts at all 16 intersections and replacing plastic trail markers with wooden blocks, painted the right colour (yes, we have a real attitude with plastic being used on our trails).



Rose and Dale replacing trail markers

A big thanks goes out to all volunteers and also to: Blake at Roundtree Co of Ice Lake for crafting the new trail posts for us and for all of his volunteer time in cutting 100's of blocks for trail markers, and Julie at Beacon Images for her design work on trail maps and plaques for posts. We are blessed to have amazingly talented people

here on Manitoulin that we can partner with.

Virtual Presentations

If you were following us last year- we were able to partner up with the Manitoulin Nature Club and offer several virtual presentations on our Webex platform. We are doing so again this year and will keep you advised. At present we can confirm a presentation by David Legros on the Red Wolf Study in Algonquin Park. This will be on Jan 14, 2022. We are trying to confirm several others, so stay tuned to your email address.

Upcoming Projects

We had a great meeting with Erika Poupore and Rob Fortin of Ontario Parks – our Park Super and Assistant Park Super respectively. Kudos to both of them- they somehow run four operating Provincial Parks, including Misery Bay and a number of cluster parks.

Discussion focused on the following:

- Access to the West Side of Misery Bay Provincial Park (there is no legal road access for visitors and of course the beach crossing is under water)
- Replacement of existing boardwalk on Coastal Alvar Trail to Mac's Bay Trail Repairs to Centre (windows, deck, and rock slabs)
- Signage in Parking Lot
- Requirement for more benches along trails
- Seasonal Ontario Parks position at Misery Bay Provincial Park

These topics and more were discussed. Our update in January will describe the projects we would like to undertake in 2022.

A special thanks to Ron Bailey, who lives just down the road from MBPP. Ron has been the maintenance/repair person for many years at MBPP- fixes everything and keeps the washrooms up and running all summer. Suffice to say- without a special person like Ron- it would be difficult to operate at MBPP.

In closing – a big thanks and a hug to all of you who support our efforts at making MBPP more special, by volunteering at our park, and/or donating monies to help us.

All the best to everyone in the Xmas Season and into the New Year.

Thank you!

Cheers!

John Diebolt
A Friend of Misery Bay



PARK VISITORS FOR 2021

As the Chair Updates point out, Misery Bay had a great year for visitors! To break it all down, Jane Hohenadle – our Social Media coordinator – has compiled the for following statistics that show who our visitors were – real and virtual – for the 2021 season. Thanks Jane!

SOCIAL MEDIA

REACH: (The number of people who looked at content from our page or about our page) Below is a comparison between the summer (July and August) of 2020 and 2021 of the reach of the Friends of Misery Bay Facebook and Instagram pages.



For Facebook, the blue line represents 2021, while grey line represents 2020. For Instagram, the red line represents the daily reach while the grey line represents 2020. There is significantly more activity on the Instagram page in 2021, while Facebook seems somewhat higher on average. The spikes depend of course on when something of interest is posted.

CHANGES IN 2022

Before the new park season (May 2022) we plan to have new pages and page names that reflect Friends of Misery Bay more so than Misery Bay Provincial Park. Stay tuned in the new year for more information.

VISITOR CENTRE STATS

The Visitor Centre was staffed most summer weekdays in 2021 from June 28th to September 6th. We did have some gaps in our weekend coverage due to the challenges in recruiting volunteers to cover a few hours each Saturday and Sunday. This was partly due to COVID-19 concerns, and partly due to the small core of Friends of Misery Bay members who offer to "volunteer" in the Visitor Centre.

Based on the "clicker" count when staff or volunteers were at the Visitor Centre, over 5000 visitors were seen.

Here are some of the stats we pulled from the Visitor Information Sheets completed when people came into the centre.

Average Number of Visits by Day of Week

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
64	76	78	92	77	82	90

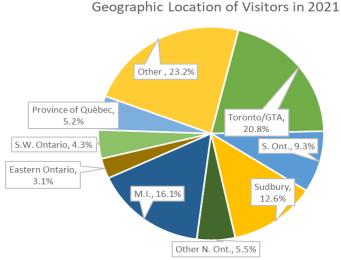
Thursday appears to have had the highest number of visitors during the week, on average. That may partly be due to being later in the week and free admission to parks Monday to Thursday. The weekend numbers are under reported, but at least it gives a sense of the regular flow of visitors to the park.

First Time Visitors

69% of groups included first time visitors to the park (all members of a group of visitors, or at least one person in the group).

Geography

From the data available (> 600 responses) most of our visitors live in Ontario. We did have visitors from other provinces - Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec and Newfoundland and we also had some out-of-country visitors from Belgium, France, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Switzerland and U.S.A. Here is the distribution of visitors by area in Ontario.



All these visitors need looking after, as Ken reminds us:

The 2021 season proved to be challenging for our volunteers due to Covid restrictions and protocols. Nevertheless, FOMB came close to its yearly goal of covering at least 90% of the possible shifts at the Visitor Centre, missing only two weekend shifts in July & August and one shift each in June, September and October.

To compare with "normal" years, in 2018, more than 30 volunteers covered 90% of the possible shifts and in 2019 they covered amazing 94% of the possible shifts. In 2021, a reduced contingent of 12 members still managed to cover 86% of the possible shifts (43 of 50). Special acknowledgement needs to be given to Phil and Midge Dean, Pauline Head, and Board members, Dagmar, Dave and Peg.

Half a dozen more volunteers would make all the difference and lighten the load for our current volunteers – hope you can consider it for next season!

TRAIL PROJECT UPDATE

By Megan Bonenfant

Haul out the snowshoes, folks – winter has arrived. I love winter. The sweaters, the slippers, the animal tracks! On one short morning walk this week I saw tracks from white-tailed deer, snowshoe hare, red squirrel, ruffed grouse, deer mice, and an English mastiff. So much fun to find! If you're looking to learn a bit more about winter tracking, this Ontario Park Blog entry from last January is a great place to start: How to be a winter wildlife detective (ontarioparks.com).

It was a busy summer and fall on the trails at Misery Bay. As we mentioned in the Spring, the trail map posts along the trails on the eastern side of the park were replaced. A huge thank you to all the volunteers who assembled and installed these posts. They look amazing out there! All the posts have been generously sponsored by supporters of Misery Bay – recognition plaques will be installed in the spring so please take a moment when you're peeking at a map to see who sponsored the post. Planning for posts on the western side of the park is underway.



We also moved forward with replacing the plastic trail blazes with wooden ones. We've changed out the blazes on the Inland Alvar (yellow) Trail and most of the Coastal Alvar (red) Trail so far. Again, a MASSIVE thank you to the volunteers who came out in less-than-wonderful weather (and ruined dinner plans!) to install these

things and trim the trails, and to our summer staff for their painting skills. Have you seen these new blazes yet? Let us know what you think!

In terms of trail maintenance, Manitoulin Tree Services has cleared the dangerous trees along the Coastal Alvar (red) Trail and it looks magnificent. The Board is discussing options with Ontario Parks for the short boardwalk at the beginning of this trail. Please use caution if using the existing boardwalk in the meantime! There are now some larger trees down on the Inland Alvar (yellow) trail that need attention – hikers can get around the downed trees thanks to some volunteer efforts!

Have you checked out Misery Bay's iNaturalist project yet? Do yourself a favour and DO IT! Here's the link: Misery Bay Provincial Park · iNaturalist. It's the most fun you'll have on social media this year. There are some stunning photos uploaded in the last month, including some fantastic moss and lichen shots. The project has a total of 1,303 observations of 447 species from 105 different observers. Fun fact: the most observed species to date within the park is Prairie Smoke (one of my personal favourites!). Think something else should be at the top of the leader board? Get out there and mark it!

Wishing you all a safe, cozy, and rejuvenating winter! Cheers.



Emma putting up new trail post with map

Painting the Alvar

by Marcel Bénéteau

At first glance, can anything seem to be as colourless as a limestone alvar pavement? Flat, featureless, monotone grey, occasionally relieved by cracks and glacial chatter marks and those strange little pockmarks known as pit karren? Hard to imagine a harsher, more lifeless environment, freeze-dried in the winter, flooded in the spring and charbroiled in the summer. And yet, these iconic features of Misery Bay Provincial Park constitute one of the most dynamic habitats you will ever come across.



Fig. 1 Shoreline alvar pavement

Nothing remains static in nature. Small depressions in the rock eventually accumulate organic matter, lichens and mosses take hold, moisture persists in the cracks and hardy grasses and sedges take root. Little islands of vegetation establish themselves and over the years a thin layer of soil forms over parts of the alvar, hardy junipers and jack pines dig in, grassy meadows spread out. Seasonal vernal pools provide even more diversity. While the limestone bedrock is never far underfoot, alvars come to support an amazing variety of plant life and, like a desert after a rain, they become one of the most colourful environments you can imagine. This column will focus on some

of the hardy wildflowers that do their part in painting the alvar.

Like any good artist, Mother Nature paints with a broad palette, splashing some colours on in wide swaths and applying others in striking little highlights. Low Calamint (*Calalamintha arkansana*) is often in the broad canvas category, spreading over large patches of alvar like a pale purple carpet. This is a powerful little mint, no more than four or five inches tall. It is quite unobtrusive before it flowers, but even then, if you happen to trample some leaves on the edge of a trail, you will immediately look around to see who just cracked open a stick of Doublemint Gum™ (Fig. 2 & 3).



Fig. 2 Low Calamint carpeting the alvar



Fig. 3 Low Calamint, closeup of flowers

Another flower that takes over large patches of alvar is one of Misery Bay's most iconic flowers: Lakeside Daisy (*Tetraneuris herbacea*, formerly *Hymenoxis herbacea*), locally known as Manitoulin Gold (Fig. 4). This plant is endemic to the Great Lakes area and is in fact occurs naturally only on limestone alvars on Manitoulin Island, the Bruce Peninsula and one nature reserve in Ohio. It will grow wherever there is sufficient soil on the alvar and often follows the

grikes (wide cracks in the alvar) even in the most inhospitable surroundings, tracing deep yellow lines across the pavement. Some of our visitors never get to see these famous flowers, as they bloom from mid-May to the first couple weeks in June, just before tourist season kicks in.



Fig. 4 Manitoulin Gold colonizing the alvar



Fig. 5 Lance-leaved Coreopsis

Visitors do get so see a close facsimile though, in the form of Lance-leaved Coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*) (Fig.5),

another composite flower that springs into bloom just about the time Manitoulin Gold starts fading out. A somewhat taller plant, with a smooth, slender stem, it also differs from Manitoulin Gold in having sharper-lobed and slightly upturned petals. If you compare the two (fig. 6 & 7), you will see that that Manitoulin Gold has many more petals, laid out in two or three layers; Coreopsis only has a single layer of petals.



Fig. 6 Manitoulin Gold, layered petals



Fig. 7 Lance-leaved Coreopsis, fewer petals

About this time (mid-June) you will also see another bright yellow daisy-like flower – this one much smaller (half an inch across) but spread out in a wide branching panicle. Balsam Ragwort (*Packera paupercula*) is not restricted to alvar environments like some of the other plants shown here but adapts very well to the harsh conditions there (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8 Balsam Ragwort

Other splashes of colour compete with the yellows. Cut-leaved Anemone has deep pink petals and, unlike its close relatives Canada Anemone and Thimbleweed, whose white flowers bloom in more woodland settings, it stakes out its territory on the alvar (Fig. 9 & 10, next page). It flowers for a brief time in mid-June, looking a bit like a wild rose, opening up completely only in full sunlight. There are usually five dark pink petals, but plants with up to seven or eight are not unusual. The petals set off the bright yellow stamens that radiate out from the thimble-shaped pistils in the centre of the flower.

Another vividly coloured plant is Indian Paintbrush, also known as Scarlet

Paintbrush (*Castilleja coccinea*). Once considered part of the Figwort family, it is now classified with the other parasitical



Fig. 9 Cut-leaved Anemone plants



Fig. 10 Cut-leaved Anemone, close-up

plants of the Broom-rape family. It grows in grassy areas of the alvars where the soil retains some moisture. It varies in colour from scarlet to yellow, with most flowers tending towards different shades of orange (Fig. 11). It is a very unusual plant; although it can survive on its own, it will attach itself to the roots of various

sedges and grasses that grow on the alvar and divert some of their nutrients for its own purposes. What we see as the "paintbrush" is not made up of petals but of modified leaves known as bracts. The flowers themselves are the long green tubular structures with an orange border you can see poking out from the bracts (Fig. 12). Ruby-throated hummingbirds are apparently important pollinators for these plants, as their long beaks can reach down into the flowers to get at the nectar as they hover about.



Fig. 11 Scarlet Paintbrush



Fig. 12 Scarlet Paintbrush; note green flowers

Harebells (*Campanula rotundifolia*) are another alvar specialty that show amazing tenacity for such a delicate-looking plant (Fig. 13 & 14). Their wire-thin stems support several five-pointed sky blue bell-like flowers that stand up to conditions on some of the driest and rockiest parts of the alvar – although they can also thrive in much more hospitable conditions.



Fig. 13 Harebells



Fig. 14 Harebells

This native plant is part of the Bellflower family and should not be mistaken for

Peach-leaved Bellflower, which is a garden escapee that lines many of Manitoulin's roadsides.

Many flowers in the composite family seem particularly well-adapted to life on the alvars; not only Manitoulin God, Coreopsis and Balsam Ragwort, but several thistles and many of the goldenrods and asters thrive in this environment. These last two genera deserve an article onto themselves, but for now we can add one more composite flower that finds a foothold on the alvar pavement: the spectacular Cylindrical Blazing Star (Liatris cylindracea) adds late summer splashes of deep reddish purple to the canvas (Fig. 14). Each flower head is composed of many individual florets; long pale stamens protrude from the corollas and give the flowers a shaggy, somewhat dishevelled look (Fig. 15, next page).



Fig. 15 Cylindrical Blazing Star

Far from being a barren desert, the alvars of Misery Bay host some of the most colourful flowers in the park. Plenty more to see - these are just a few of the hardy inhabitants you can find in this remarkable environment!



Fig. 16 Cylindrical Blazing Star with protruding anther filaments

References:

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- Holt, Margo, Alvar Specialty Plants of Central Ontario, The Couchiching Conservancy, 2009.
- Morton, John, with Joan Venn and Judith Jones, *A plant list for Misery Bay Provincial Nature Reserve*, The Friends of Misery Bay, 1997.

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Where It All Began: the west side of Misery Bay and the Sifferd Cottage

by John Diebolt

When one thinks of Friends of Misery Bay and how it all began, we could reference January 1, 1996. That date is when Friends of Misery Bay (FOMB) was officially registered as a Charitable organization. Before getting to that stage, of course, a lot of people had already expended a lot of time and energy.

A steering committee organized by Judith Jones had established the Friends of Misery Bay (FOMB) in 1995. Along with Judith, the founding members were Doreen Bailey, Bonnie Bailey, Gaynor Orford, Heather Baines, Steve Hall and Roy Campbell. Some of these folks have since left us, but people like Judith and Gaynor are still active members. Gaynor of course was the first treasurer and had

successive terms as a board member and Chair. Judith's name is synonymous with all things flora and fauna on Manitoulin and throughout Ontario. Doreen was of course that driving, indomitable force who kept things really moving. There are hundreds of other names that should be acknowledged but space does not allow – kudos too them all for their vision and guidance in all things Misery Bay!

BUT...

None of this would have happened without the foresight of two folks from Michigan who had a vision.



Sifferd Cottage

Eunice and Cal Sifferd, through a series of circumstances (another great story) ended up on Manitoulin in 1959, where they bought property from the Ainslie family on the west side of Misery Bay. That's where they began building the Sifferd Cottage. Their daughter Ellie and her husband Tom Moore spoke fondly of the number of summers they spent at the Sifferd property building that cottage. Tom has very specific memories of hauling all the big stones that went into the chimney.



Cottage side view showing chimney and well

The cottage was extremely well built – a fact that became immediately apparent when the idea came about a few years ago to maintain, renovate and upgrade the building for use as a research station for Ontario Parks. I contacted a local engineer to determine whether the cottage met the Ontario Building Code and was worth the cost of upgrading it. After a detailed inspection, this engineer laughed and stated: "Whoever built this knew what they were doing – it is so above the requirements of our code it will be here long after we are all gone."

The next date that pops up is 1972, when the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (now Ontario Nature) began looking at various locations to determine their suitability for a Nature Reserve. Manitoulin was one of the places under consideration. At that time, John Harvey was the chair of FON's Nature Reserve committee. A teacher from Woodstock (and an active FOMB member to this day), he hired a former student of his, Stewart Hilts, to check various locations on Manitoulin. Stu spent several summers on Manitoulin and the path inevitably led to the Sifferds. Ontario Nature, the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Province of Ontario all became involved in this process.

By 1978, the Sifferd property, through a gifting/purchase agreement, had been transferred to the Nature Conservancy of Canada and then in 1979 to the Province of Ontario. In 1989 it became a Nature Reserve under Ontario Parks. Since then, other properties owned by the Whites, the Robinsons and others also became part the nature reserve. Interesting to note that the land where the Shelter at Saunder's Cove sits was formerly owned by George Whyte, another FOMB member, who has a place on Murphy Point.

It all started with the Sifferds on the west side. At the beginning, when FOMB came into existence in the early 1990s, all of their activities took place on the west side on the former Sifferd Property. Access was through the Little Lake Huron Road. There was no road into the east side, and of course no Centre – but that's another story.



View from new deck of Our Friends Shelter

I'm sure that Eunice and Cal and family and friends spent many an evening and early morning, before their work began, viewing the east side of the park from the deck at their cottage. They have of course left us, but my belief is that they are still very much aware of how much has been accomplished to make Misery Bay so important a place for all of us.

Who would have thought that a forced longer than planned stay on Manitoulin for the Sifferds, because of a car breakdown, would have led to Misery Bay Provincial Park and that three generations of Sifferds would have taken part and continue to take part in all that is Misery Bay? From Eunice and Cal to Ellie and Tom Moore and

now onto Mindy and Brian Kerr (Mindy is Ellie and Tom's daughter and the Sifferds' granddaughter) - the Sifferd vision and legacy carries on.



New trail post at intersection to Sifferd Cottage

The Sifferd Cottage is still very much recognizable as the place that The Sifferd Family built. But thanks to former Park Superintendent Ryan Gardner's initiative and continued by the present Park Superintendent Erika Poupore – the transformation of the Sifferd Cottage into a research facility, complete with lodgings, is nearly complete. Ontario Parks has spent close to \$100,000 on maintenance and required upgrades. In addition, the Sifferd Family – led by Mindy – has arranged for most generous funding to continue and complete the upgrades, all of which had to be done to the required building code (which of course has changed a lot since the cottage was built). Mindy, Ontario Parks and Roland of Aeschlimann Woodworks have worked together on this project. Roland has filled me in on what has been accomplished to date:

- removal of all floor tiles and replace with all new modern waterproof flooring throughout
- removal of all panelling from ceilings and walls and replaced with local cedar/pine Vmatch vapour barrier used throughout.

- removal of all single pane windows and replace all with double pane windows 32 windows in all
- complete new deck
- complete up to date solar system along with complete electrical wiring of cottage, both to code and approved by ESA
- redesigned loft with new stairway now to code with 2 entrance/exit points
- install of new fireplace insert now to code
- existing outhouse refurbished and porcupine proof (an important detail)

Still to do

- new kitchen being built with black walnut wood from the Sifferd Family
- all new wooden doors with windows
- replacement of well hand pump with new one
- upgrade to parking lot turnaround for better vehicle access

The outside of the Cottage remains the same, as does the amazing structure, as does the amazing view across the Bay, as do all the amazing memories absorbed into this building. The required upgrades and renos will change none of that but will fulfill Ontario Parks' plan of using this special building for research teams from Ontario Parks, Universities, naturalist groups and others.

I'm thinking that Eunice and Cal would approve.

Kudos to all!

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PARK SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Friends,

It was great to see the FOMB back in the visitor center this summer! Ontario Parks saw record breaking numbers this year, and Misery Bay was no exception as more and more visitors came to explore the beautiful trails and scenery of Misery Bay Provincial Park.

I continue to receive feedback from park visitors on how much they enjoyed their hike or their time in the Visitor Centre. They are always so complimentary and appreciative of the volunteers and staff and come away learning something "fantastic" about Misery Bay!

The Ontario Parks mandate is to protect ecological integrity while providing outstanding recreational and educational opportunities. With the help of the FOMB, Misery Bay accomplishes this each and every year!

I would like to personally thank all the volunteers and Board members of the FOMB. Your ongoing dedication has made this past season a success. I want to give special recognition to your Chair (John Diebolt) and your Vice Chair (Dave Clark) for their tireless efforts and continued dedication and passion. I would also like to thank Ron Bailey for all his hard work at the Visitor Centre. They all represent the FOMB vigorously and are excellent ambassadors.

Best regards,

Erika Poupore

Parks Superintendent

Friends of Misery Bay Board of Directors

2021

Friends of Misery Bay 400 Misery Bay Road, Evansville, Ontario POP 1E0

705-771-0635 (seasonal, when the Centre is open)

friendsofmiserybay@gmail.com

Chairperson/President John Diebolt, 705-348 0400

Mindemoya, ON, P0P 1S0 (2nd elected term ends 2022)

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(1st elected term ends 2023)

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Gore Bay, ON, POP 1H0

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Municipality of Gordon/Barrie Island ON

(1st elected term ends 2022)

Member Dagmar Werkmeister

Gore Bay ON

(1st elected term ends 2024

Member Jan McQuay

mcquay@amtelecom.net

Mindemoya, ON

(1st elected term ends 2023)

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Keep up with news, happenings and friends on FOMB Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/MiseryBayProvincialPark/posts/4017836374912769