



turtle tracks

Friends of Misery Bay
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Fall 2020

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Message From The Chair for Fall 2020

2020 was a very different and challenging year for all of us, and, of course, Friends of Misery Bay (FOMB) and Misery Bay Provincial Park (MBPP). Your FOMB board decided in mid-June, after a lot of serious discussions over the previous two board meetings, to not use our members to staff the Centre for a number of obvious reasons. By the end of June, it was decided to cancel our Summer Jobs Program (we had been successful in being

approved for funding for one position). We simply decided that we could not risk exposing our members and staff to the thousands of visitors who descend on Misery Bay Provincial Park during the course of the season. Accordingly, the Center was not open for the season. A very difficult decision – but the right one to make – and of course we did not ignore our park completely. We carried on as follows:

- regular trail inspections organized and conducted by our new trail leader and board member – Megan Bonenfant – meant we were able to keep trails clear of blowdowns and check on overall conditions- and yes - pick up some garbage.
- Ken Mackenzie – another of our board members and his wife Connie – did a lot of hiking and kept track of our two shelters and the challenging rising waters levels of Lake Huron.
- some of our members spent some time at the Centre entrance (Covid protected of course) and on one day greeted 70 visitors in 2 hours. I was amazed at the donations visitors made – they really like our park! From all reports and our own observations, it was a very busy season for MBPP and all of Ontario’s Provincial Parks.
- board members Jane Hohenadel, Marcel Bénéteau and Dave Clarke along with Maddie Wagar spent a lot of time working on our new website and getting it up to date. Check it out at www.miserybay.ca. **Please send us some comments on any thoughts you have on it.**
- a big thanks to Marcel and Sabine for all the photos of wildflowers they took and joined up with Dave to put on our website. Dave is looking after keeping our website current.
- Jane Hohenadel, with help from Maddie Wagar also took on the challenge of our Facebook page – check it out to keep track of what we are doing – it is quite current and Jane has figured out some of the intricacies of Facebook and is now working on Instagram.



Picture of Shelter at Saunder’s Cove taken in mid fall. Lake levels had already started dropping by then. One can see where the storm wave surge swept partially under shelter. With the lake dropping- it should be okay for the winter season.

High water levels in our Great Lakes – especially Lake Huron – are having quite an impact on shorelines around the Great Lakes- and it is no different at Misery Bay. The high water levels have meant that almost all of our coastal hiking trails are closed, as the high water has inundated them. While the Shelter at Saunder’s Cove (picture above) is still relatively safe, the situation with Our Friends’ Shelter definitely required some action. The

picture below shows the view from Our Friends’ Shelter looking west across the bay. The entire beach is under water and the small Pitcher’s thistle population that was on the sand dunes is gone. Looking west towards the Sifferd Cottage, one realizes just how high the water is. This picture was taken in October of 2020 – and bear in mind that the water levels have already dropped at least 8 inches in the last few months!



View from Our Friends’ Shelter, before the move.

You will all recall that we had already moved Our Friends’ Shelter 40 ft. inland *last* fall, because of the high water flooding it out. The picture on the next page shows Our Friends’ Shelter this past October, with the effect of the high water.

The supports undermined are undermined and tilting slightly, with the water level within 7 ft. of the shelter – the whole structure was in imminent danger of toppling over.



In late November of this year, with the quick action of Erika Poupore of Ontario Parks (Misery Bay's Park Superintendent) facilitating it and giving us the green light to go ahead – **we were able to move the shelter again.**

Manitoulin Timber Frames, FOMB and Ontario Parks joined forces and Our Friends Shelter was not only moved another 8 ft. inland, it was settled into a

semi-permanent position, making it instantly useable for the rest of this season, and most importantly good to go for 2021.

Manitoulin Timber Frames provided the expertise and the know-how to move the shelter faultlessly and also to craft and affix a unique set of stairs to it. Pictures below show the shelter ready to go with George, Blake and Richie.

***funding for this project was shared equally by Ontario Parks and FOMB*



Crew from Manitoulin Timber Frames with newly secured Shelter

At the same time as we were settling OFS into its new home, volunteers from FOMB were able to spend some time doing maintenance on our handicap access trail, sections of which had been eroded by

tropical style torrential rainfall in October and November. We were able to distribute gravel to various locations along the trail and get it back into shape for the rest of this season and next year.



Ken Mackenzie, a Friend of Misery Bay and also a board member, with his shovel, showing how things are done.

Projects for 2021

Although there was a collective pause on a lot of happenings world-wide in 2020, your board still met monthly (in June, July and August at the waterfront area in Kagawong- conveniently close to Chocolate Works) and the rest of the time virtually through WebEx as set up by Dave Clark. Some of our discussions focused on planning for 2021 and getting things happening at Misery Bay Provincial Park. Among other things, we discussed replacement of our sign standards at all

trail intersections. The ones we have were put in place over 8 years ago and are showing their age – and some along our coastal trails have outright disappeared. Our Trails Team, led by Megan Bonenfant, are looking into suitable replacements. The following photo shows one that can now be found at the alvar arena location – one of our busiest spots. This wonderfully crafted signpost was built and donated by George Kopylov of Manitoulin Timber Frames.



Two members of Ontario Parks with new signpost during a visit to Misery Bay and a meeting with FOMB members in October 2020.

Other things being planned for 2021:

- reinstalling a wheel chair ramp into Our Friends Shelter. The most recent move of this shelter, meant that the wheel chair ramp had to be disconnected. To install a new ramp will be just a little bit costly-will keep you posted on this also.
 - build a new boardwalk on the inland portion of the Coastal Alvar Trail that takes one to Mac's Bay. The existing one, while not really a boardwalk, has become somewhat decrepit and needs to be replaced.
 - Ontario Parks is planning for and hoping that they will be able to
- install a new pay and display machine in the parking lot, replacing the one that is now by the Centre entrance. The new machine will issue permits on a per vehicle basis and the receipt will be left on the dash of the vehicle. This of course depends on the required funding happening.
 - Ontario parks is also planning on replacing and upgrading the existing signage in the parking lot with new signs. The handicap parking signs need to be replaced and some of the existing signage is somewhat redundant.

In closing, 2020 was a very difficult year for our Friends of Group. A lot of them did not come to our Island for obvious reasons, and a lot of our activities were cancelled or curtailed. Not to worry though – our motto is “Misery Loves Company” followed by my own personal

motto “Every Day Is A Good Day and Every Day at Misery Bay Is Just a Little Bit Better!” Your board is getting organized for 2021 and we will find a way to welcome back everyone back to all that Misery Bay Provincial Park offers next season ‘cause...

‘MISERY LOVES COMPANY’

John Diebolt
A Friend of Misery
Chair for the FOMB board

Report from your Volunteer Coordinator

You were probably expecting “nothing to report” or a blank spot in Turtle Tracks – but just to let you know we are still counting on you!

Whether the Park Centre is open or not in 2021, depends upon “the higher powers” but I think we volunteers can be present there in doors or out of doors, come what may. Our chairperson and his able assistant (Dave Clark deputy-chair) reported how well received they were by Park visitors when they greeted the public on the deck. This deck will soon have (a) refurbished picnic table(s) and or perhaps Kitchissippi chairs (!) Shade could be provided as needed by a portable canopy (I predict that this will be provided by the FOMB Board [?]) Whether on the deck or on the trails, **only volunteers** or staff can make the public feel welcome, can provide current and timely updates about the trails, or recent sightings and can address random questions. **Only volunteers** or staff can solicit information about where visitors come from; how they heard about the park and of course the approximate age mix of hikers. Relying upon the public to accurately fill out paper or electronic forms seems to me like wishful thinking.

I will soon send out a note to previously active volunteers so that I can update my contact lists and get feed back about this proposal to “meet and greet” the public at the Park Centre whether inside or out.

Ken L. Mackenzie , Volunteer Co-ordinator

Check out videos, photos, history and information on our newly updated website at

<https://miserybay.ca/>

Keep up with news, happenings and friends on FOMB Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/MiseryBayProvincialPark/posts/4017836374912769>

A Miser(y)able Fall

by Megan Bonenfant

There are few things I've loved more in this life than an invigorating hike on a crisp fall day. Everything about it – from digging out my favourite toque, to the sound of leaves crunching under my feet, to the little clouds of vapour escaping my mouth with every breath – fills me with a

joy and sense of adventure I find difficult to describe. This fall, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, I've needed that adventure and escape more than ever and, judging by the number of visitors I've seen in the park each time I've been there, I'd say I'm not alone.



Misery Bay, of course, is my preferred local spot to hit the trail. Even with the western trails closed due to the near-record high water on Lake Huron, there are more than enough kilometres of inland trail to keep my feet busy all season long. Things change so quickly in the fall,

ecologically speaking, that even if only a week passes between one trip and the next, well-worn trails feel brand new each time I visit.

Misery's trails that ARE open are in great shape. A couple of heavy wind events this

summer knocked a few trees down and recent rains have left some sections a bit waterlogged, but otherwise the trails are ready and waiting for you. The Friends of Misery Bay board members visit the park as often as we can to keep an eye on things and make note of any maintenance that needs doing, but we can't be out

there all the time. If you happen to notice anything that you think needs attention (e.g., a tree down across a trail), please let us know – you can email us through our website at <https://miserybay.ca/contact-us>. We'll need some basic details, like what type of hazard it is and where it is located.



The Visitor's Centre is closed for the season, *including the washrooms*. This means there are no facilities, and no one checking the parking lot at the end of the day to see if everyone made it out. If you're heading into the park this fall (or even winter), I strongly recommend:

- Checking the weather forecast before you head out;
- Dressing in layers;
- Wearing good, sturdy footwear. You *might* be able to get away with exploring Misery in flip flops in July, but late fall means slippery rocks, leaves and mosses;

- Letting someone know where you're going and what time you expect to be back; and,
- Carrying a well-stocked backpack (or, in northern Ontario parlance, a 'pack-sack') with you. Some things I always carry are:
 - Cell phone, battery fully charged
 - Toilet paper and a baggie to pack out any used tissue in
 - Extra socks
 - A delicious snack or three
 - Water or herbal tea
 - Matches
 - Small first aid kit
 - An empty bag for picking up litter
 - Seasonally relevant field guide(s). I know there are fancy cell phone apps now, but I prefer my dirty, dog-eared books.
 - Notebook and pencil (super handy for making note of any trail hazards!)
 - Camera

This has been an interesting year, to say the least. As fall progresses and we face the prospect of a challenging winter, I hope you find some time to get outside and stretch your legs for your physical, mental and emotional health, wherever you may be. Stay safe and Miser(y)able, everyone – I'll see you on the trails (from at least 2 metres distance, of course).



Shinleaf, Pyrola, Wintergreen - What's in a Name?

By Marcel Bénéteau

The plants referred to by the common names in the title above once all belonged to the *Pyrolaceae* family but have now been reclassified a part of the Heath or *Ericaceae* family that includes Blueberries, Labrador Tea, Ghost Pipes and Bearberry. They are widespread throughout the park but often overlooked because of their small size and the shadowy habitats they prefer. But their delicate beauty, along with their many interesting characteristics, makes searching them out a very worthwhile activity for any flower hunter.



Fig 1. Shinleaf, Wintergreen or White Pyrola

All of these plants share some common features. First of all, they all have small, pale and waxy flowers that usually droop down from their stalks like so many tiny umbrellas. Most of them have oval or elliptical leaves that are indeed evergreen – hence the common name “Wintergreen” used by some people – even though that name is employed for many other plants. The leaves of all species have analgesic and

antiseptic properties and were used by First Nations and European settlers alike to treat a variety of ailments; the name “Shinleaf” refers to a poultice applied to bruised and scraped shins. And Pyrola – from the Latin *pyrus* (pear) refers to the pear-like shape of some species. The three names are used indiscriminately by various authorities.



Fig. 2 Shinleaf flower detail; note long style

Like many other members of the Heath family, Pyrolas are partially mycoheterotrophic, that is to say, they are dependant on mycorrhizal fungi to obtain at least a part of their nutrients from the soil (see the Spring 2019 issue of Turtle Tracks for more information on these types of plants). All of them feature a very prominent style (the long tubular part of the pistil) that seems disproportionate to the size of the flowers but provides the flies that pollinate them with a convenient place to land.

Shinleaf (*Pyrola elliptica*) (Fig. 1 and 2) is probably the best-known member of the

group. The stems are usually from 6 to 10 inches in height (10 to 25 cm) and bear a dozen or more waxy white flowers in a loose spiral that bloom throughout the month of July. The long drooping style gives small pollinators something to latch onto and climb up to the pollen-bearing anthers tucked up underneath the petals. The large elliptical leaves form a rosette at the base of the hairless stalk. The plants prefer damp shady areas along forest edges and trails.



Fig. 3 Pink Pyrola plants



Fi. 4 Pink Pyrola flower details

Two other species which can be found in the park differ from Shinleaf mainly in the colour of their flowers. Pink Pyrola (*P. assarifolia*) (Fig. 3 and 4) blooms a little earlier (mid-June to mid-July) and can be found in similar settings to Shinleaf, while Green Pyrola (*P. chlorantha*) is more common in drier coniferous forests (Fig. 5). All three of these species are commonly seen along the wooded sections of Misery Bay trails. There is a fourth species in this group: American Pyrola (*P. americana*, not pictured here). It is very similar in appearance to the white-flowered *P. elliptica*, the main difference being that it has rounder leaves, with a thicker, leathery feel to them. It is quite rare in the park, restricted to remote cedar swamps.



Fig. 5 Green Pyrola

The other members of the former Pyrola family offer some interesting variations on the previous four. One-flowered Pyrola or Wintergreen (*Moneses* or *Pyrola uniflora*), like the name indicates, bears a single flower drooping from the end of a delicately curved stem. These tiny plants – usually no more than 3 to 4 inches tall (8-10 cm) – grow in the sphagnum moss of damp shady cedar groves. Coming upon a stand of these little jewels is like gazing from on high on

the scattered parasols of some Lilliputian sidewalk café (Fig. 6). Only when you get down on your hands and knees do you begin to appreciate the intriguing structures hidden beneath the petals, with the coiled anthers radiating around the incongruously large pistil with its round ovary and crown-shaped style (Fig. 7).



Fig. 6 Stand of One-flowered Pyrolas



Fig. 7 Close-up of pistil and stamens

One-sided Pyrola (*Orthilia* or *Pyrola secunda*) is without a doubt the plainest and least conspicuous member of the former Pyrola family. Like the name says, all of its

flowers are on the same side of the stem, causing it to bend 90 degrees as they grow (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8 One-sided Pyrola



Fig. 9 One-sided Pyrola flowers close-up

The flowers are a pale green colour, and the petals remain closed until the oversized style and anthers burst their way out of this tight sheath; not long after pollination occurs, the outward structures of the flowers more or less fall apart as the seeds develop. The midge perched on the terminal flower bud in Fig. 9 gives a good idea of the diminutive size of these plants.



Fig. 10 Pipsissewa plants

One last Misery Bay's plant formerly included in the Pyrola family is the stately Pipsissewa, also known as Wax-flower or Prince's Pine (*Chimaphila umbellata*). This little evergreen perennial is sometimes classified as a shrub, as it has a semi-woody stem. It can grow up to 25 cm (10 in.) in height, although most specimens are about half that size. Its long, glossy dark green leaves are its most noticeable feature and

can be spotted from mid-July to early August along most trails that run through drier mixed or coniferous forests. The umbel-shaped cluster of half a dozen flowers is fairly non-descript when viewed from above; once again you must get down to their level to appreciate the beauty of the outward-facing pink-tinged flowers, no more than half an inch across.



Fig. 11 Pipsissewa, close-up of flower

Whatever name you wish to call them by, these closely related little flowers cannot but enrich your walks along Misery Bay Provincial Park trails. They are well worth the effort and concentration needed to spot them amid the constant play of shadow and light on the forest floor. The more you learn about nature, the more you find out how much more there is to learn!

References:

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Bald Eagle, Hwy. 540 on the way to Misery Bay, Nov. 5, 2020

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