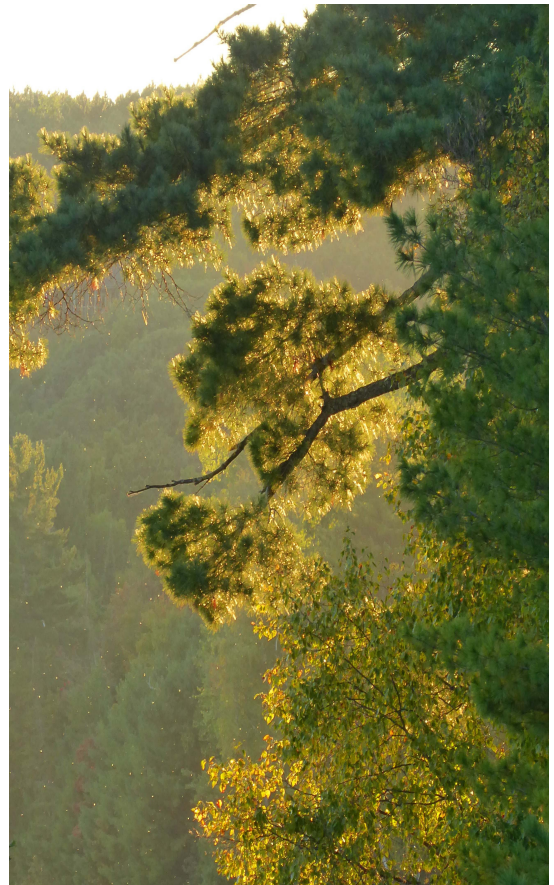


Fall Photographic Perspectives on the lower Oxtongue River

Autumn is a great time for photographers. Forests are by far the most beautiful subject to shoot at this time of year due to the splendid palette of colours revealed in their foliage. The best time to shoot outdoors during the fall season is during the 'golden hour'; the short window of time right after sunrise and again just before sunset when sunlight has a flattering golden hue and shadows are soft giving dimension to your photographs. That soft dimensional light allows creative effects that aren't possible at any other time of day. Even a back-lit branch of an Eastern White Pine tree can evoke ethereal qualities. And when combined with the reflective tranquility and intimacy of the Lower Oxtongue River, photography almost becomes a creative spiritual affair.



Exploring the river in search of photo opps can be a



leisurely and fun adventure.

Paddling by kayak or canoe (or even paddle-board) provides the advantage of accessing shallow waters and oxbow wetlands as well as all the nooks and crannies along the river's meandering banks.

At this time of year the water levels and flows into Lake of Bays are drawn down as part of the overall Muskoka River Water Management Plan.

One interesting aspect of having a low water level is the visibility of submerged logs and exposed tree roots along the river banks; especially around the delta at the river's mouth.



One of the reasons why motor boats may not want to approach Marsh's Falls too closely is because the low water level barely cover the minefield of boulders and rocks that could shear the pin of an outboard motor's propeller.

However if you do reach Marsh's Falls during a period of low water, you can see the submerged dry-dock that was used to build and launch George Marsh's *Mary Louise* steamboat in 1884. The dry-dock was laid down as a series of logs and planks next to George Marsh's water-powered sawmill on the right bank (facing downstream) below the falls at the foot of the 6000 year old Chippewa portage trail. The *Mary Louise* was one of the first steamers of a fleet owned by the Huntsville and Lake of Bays Navigation Company.



This past summer photographers captured images influenced by climate change. The frequency and intensity of storms made us wary of their potential destructive damage to our beautiful Muskoka forests. As summer temperatures rose micro-bursts generated 100 mph winds in a matter of minutes and thunderstorms generated devastating bolts of lightning that could ignite forest fires. For several weeks this past summer our skies were veiled by smoke from burning wild fires in the forests of Northern Ontario and Western Canada. Layers of wildfire

smoke accentuated our sunsets with vivid red and orange glows by scattering incoming light into the long wavelengths of red light. Those long wavelengths ultimately give the sky a reddish-orange tint.

The tree in this photo was struck by lightning, splitting the tree in two and charring the wood. Fortunately this targeted tree collapsed into the Oxtongue River's mouth which perhaps prevented the spread of a forest fire. In the eye of this photographer the stricken tree is symbolic of the Greek's mythological Phoenix rising, expressing the hope for mankind to resurrect balance to the world's climate.



And now that fall has arrived colours are showing on the river banks as well as around the Oxbow pond by the LBHF's Education Centre at Marsh's Falls. The combo of the pink Hydrangeas and yellow Goldenrod surrounding the Oxbow pond are always spectacular.



I would encourage you to make the most of these fleeting moments of inspiration and reflection on the Oxtongue River. It won't be long before these geese fly south for the winter.

by Brian Simpson

