



The Otter

Summer 2009 Newsletter

Algonquin Backcountry Recreationalists



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

- To minimize backcountry recreationalists' impact on the campsites, portages and hiking trails of Algonquin Park.
- To minimize backcountry recreationalists' impact on the environment of Algonquin Park, 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.

The Case Against Nails

Anyone who's gone on a few backcountry trips has come across nails sticking out of trees around campsite fire-pits and tenting areas. Ranging from small rusty nails from years gone by to giant galvanized spiral nails; they serve as hangers for pots and pans, as tie-downs for tarp ropes and as a means to secure "camp furniture" to trees.

However, nails have no place in campsite trees. At first glance, that sounds like a pretty officious statement. But let's examine the various repercussions that result from nails being driven into campsite trees.



Nails driven into trees actually penetrate their life-giving sapwood. That in itself is bad, but the nails' very presence invites people to extract them and re-insert them in preferred locations. The very presence of the nails also gives people the incorrect impression that its OK to continue the use of nails and to even bring along their own supply of nails on subsequent trips.

Relocating nails produces open wounds which leak life-giving sap and allow destructive insects and fungus spores to enter the trees. The result is campsites overshadowed by prematurely diseased, damaged, dying and dangerous trees.

Even individual nails, driven into trees and remaining in their original locations, have doubly destructive potential.

Campers using nail-adorned campsites can be injured by protruding nails. In the poor light of dusk, in the darkness of night, or in momentary distraction, it can easily be assumed safe to slide close by a tree .. only to be snagged by a protruding nail.

Many trees will eventually grow around these nails, taking them within their wood. Many of these trees will eventually have to be removed by park staff for safety reasons. This will necessitate the use of a chainsaw on what are effectively "spiked" trees. No one deserves to be lashed by a flailing chain saw blade.

Park Wardens and Conservation Officers, who observe campers hammering nails into trees can place a charge under Section 2 (2) a) of the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act (PPCRA) Ontario Regulation 316/07 ('disturb, cut, kill, remove or harm any plant, tree, or natural object in a provincial park.')

Alternatives To Nails

The convenience of having hooks on campsite trees can be achieved by the following non-destructive alternatives ...



- Bungee cords around trees to take advantage of built-in hooks.
- 1/8" rope around a tree with a carabiner attached as a hook.
- Rope strung between two trees with carabiners hung from it.

And, should a nail be extracted for safety reasons, simply drive a small wooden plug flush into the hole to seal it from damage.

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