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Fires Impacting Canoe Routes & Caribou Habitat: A Cautionary Tale

The Mission: On June 10, 2023 three paddlers (*Vern Fish, Dave Fish and Hank Ostwald*) and two canoes were flown into the heart of the Wabakimi Wilderness, Whitewater Lake. This is a big lake located in north central Wabakimi Provincial Park. Our goal was to work our way north from Grayson Lake up to the height of land and try to find a way to get into the Montcrief River system.

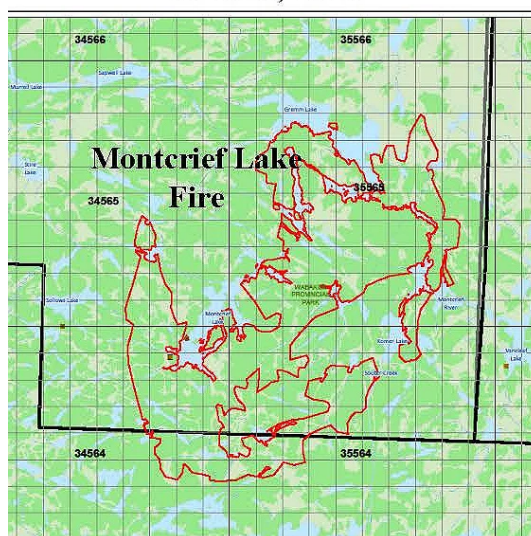
We had planned to meet a fourth paddler at Montcrief Lake who would be conducting bird surveys as part of the Ontario Bird Atlas.

Fires to the North? As we paddled north of Best Island, along the north shore of Whitewater Lake on our second day, we spotted a column of white smoke reaching into the sky over the north shore. Later I found out that this smoke was about 16 kilometers or 10 miles to our north. We knew that there were fires popping up across Canada because the smoke was blowing into the lower 48 states and making headlines. However, to our knowledge there were no fires in Wabakimi Provincial Park upon our arrival.

I used my In-Reach satellite device to report this sighting to our outfitter, Wabakimi Fishing & Canoe Outfitters. *"Column of smoke to our north"*

Lindsey David, who was our contact with the outfitters, responded: *"Jun 11, 2023 5:34 PM Small fire started a few hours ago about 1 km east of Montcrief."*

June 19, 2023



[Here's Vern's full report posted on our Web site under News & Updates!](#)



Park Management Plan - The First Step

Recently, a very positive step towards the creation of the Wabakimi Park Management Plan was released. This document is called [Wabakimi, Kopka and Whitesand, Background Information*](#).

This document consolidates information about the park's natural and cultural features, recreation activities and park users. Preliminary identification of management topics is also summarized.

Obviously, the Friends of Wabakimi welcomed the arrival of the Background Information as a beginning step in the park planning process. We are impressed with the work that went into creating a document of this scope and depth. We asked our membership, which stands at 320, and board members to frame their responses to this document. [Our formal response was submitted on June 3 and has been posted on the FOW website.](#) This response includes letters posted by individual board members.

2023 Photo/Video Contest; Recreational Barrel Works, Inc.; Quasi-Endowment Fund established; Bird Song meters report; New Route Maps

[The 2023 Photo & Video Contest is on. Your submissions are welcome.](#) The deadline is Oct. 1st, but please don't wait. The Photo Contest 1st Prize is [Chris Huband's Mischkow River book](#) & [an Ostrom Barrel Harness](#) and the Video Contest 1st Prize is [Recreational Barrel Work's small barrel/harness combo.](#) All prize winners receive extensions of their FOW memberships. ([2022 YouTube Video!](#))

[Andy & Marion Baxter, Recreational Barrel Works Inc.](#), of Peterborough, ON, are our newest business members. Thanks for your support and donations.

Coming soon! FOW is putting the finishing touches to

[Here's a summary of our response.](#) Some of our responses echoed what Phil Cotton wrote in his document, **Recommendations for Management Plans for Wabakimi, Kopka River and Whitesand Provincial Parks**, several years ago. Thus, the current board is seeing some of the same issues but they have also identified several new challenges that must be addressed.

The FOW is excited and poised to lead, support and collaborate on many of our recommendations. Over the past few years the FOW have worked closely with the park staff to raise money for debris clean up, interpretative signage and song bird meters. We have worked hand in hand with the park staff and a local artist, [Kevin Belmore, to create a signature piece of art called Wabakimi.](#) This art will be used on the interpretative kiosk being placed in Armstrong and is being sold locally in Thunder Bay. The profits from these sales are going to the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre.

As a part of our efforts to make Wabakimi “**an exceptional wilderness destination**” our volunteers have been to nearly every lake, portage, rapids, swift and waterfall in the Wabakimi Area. This knowledge has been used to create the Wabakimi Planning Map which we recently updated in partnership with the park staff. Working with Laurence Mills, who is a Canadian map maker and serves on our board, we are creating an extensive series of route maps which will eventually cover almost all of

a new Wabakimi legacy fund.

Lovers of the Wabakimi Provincial Park and Wabakimi region, wouldn't you like to make a donation or legacy gift to help keep this wilderness paradise wild and accessible for generations to come?

Well, soon FOW will be launching a new legacy fund to do just this. You will be able to donate any amount at any time. Maybe times are tight and that's not feasible. Here's another way we hope you might want to help – you could add Friends of Wabakimi to your will! Again, any amount; for example, gifting a percentage can make it easy. And there is no immediate out of pocket expenditure.

Our FOW Treasurer has already established a new, federally - insured bank account, with mechanisms to receive funds from Canada and the United States. We are putting the final touches to the security and control mechanisms .

To be technical, the fund will be a “ Quasi Endowment Fund” (QEF) for the safekeeping and use of gifts over the medium to long term. The QEF will be under the control of the FOW Board of Directors, with a suite of policies approved by the board regulating it. Management of the fund will be fully transparent. We will outline this in our next newsletter. Donors and potential donors will receive a full information pack, including copies of board policies, and periodic fund reports.

The fund is the brainchild of your President, Vern Fish. Your Treasurer, John Holmes, and

the historic routes that cross both Crown land and provincial parks in the Wabakimi Area.

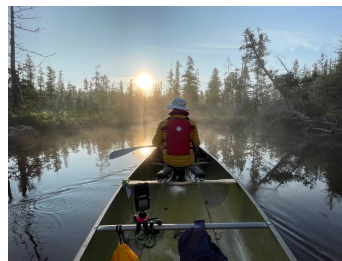
We offer a member newsletter and maintain a social media presence with a website (www.wabakimi.org) and a [Facebook page](#). We collect and post trip reports and other information on our social media. We host webinars, rendezvous, photo contests and provide visitor education that aligns with the preservation of the wilderness. In the last year the FOW have hosted informational booths at five large paddling expos and outdoor shows in both Canada and the USA. Our international board is working to both promote and protect this huge boreal wilderness. We are an active, hands board of directors with diverse background who meet regularly with working committees. **We are ready and able to work with Ontario Parks on the park management plan.**

[*https://prod-environmental-reg...](https://prod-environmental-reg...)

Board Director Trevor Twose have been working to make it a reality. Please feel free to ask questions or make comments to info@wabakimi.org, and we will get back to you. Watch out for more details soon, including how you can make a donation or plan a legacy gift.

[Bird Song Meter Update. See W.P.P. Biologist Shannon Walshe's detailed report!](#) The eleven meters donated by FOW are out in the field now and we're hoping they survive the fire season.

[FOW Route Map Updates.](#) Several route map sets have been added in the last month. incorporating existing maps and info into this accessible and easy to read format. [See all our offerings in our FOW Map Store.](#)

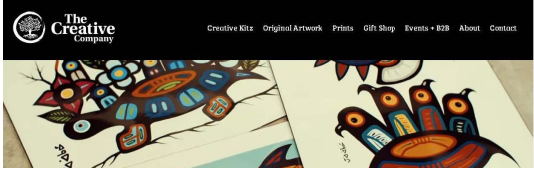


In early June, Lindsey David and FOW Board member Beth Rausch completed a full set of 25 point counts for the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas Square 16UCA17 (Onamakawash Lake). This project represented a collaboration with [Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas](#), the Wabakimi Provincial Park Biologist, and [Wabakimi Outfitters](#).

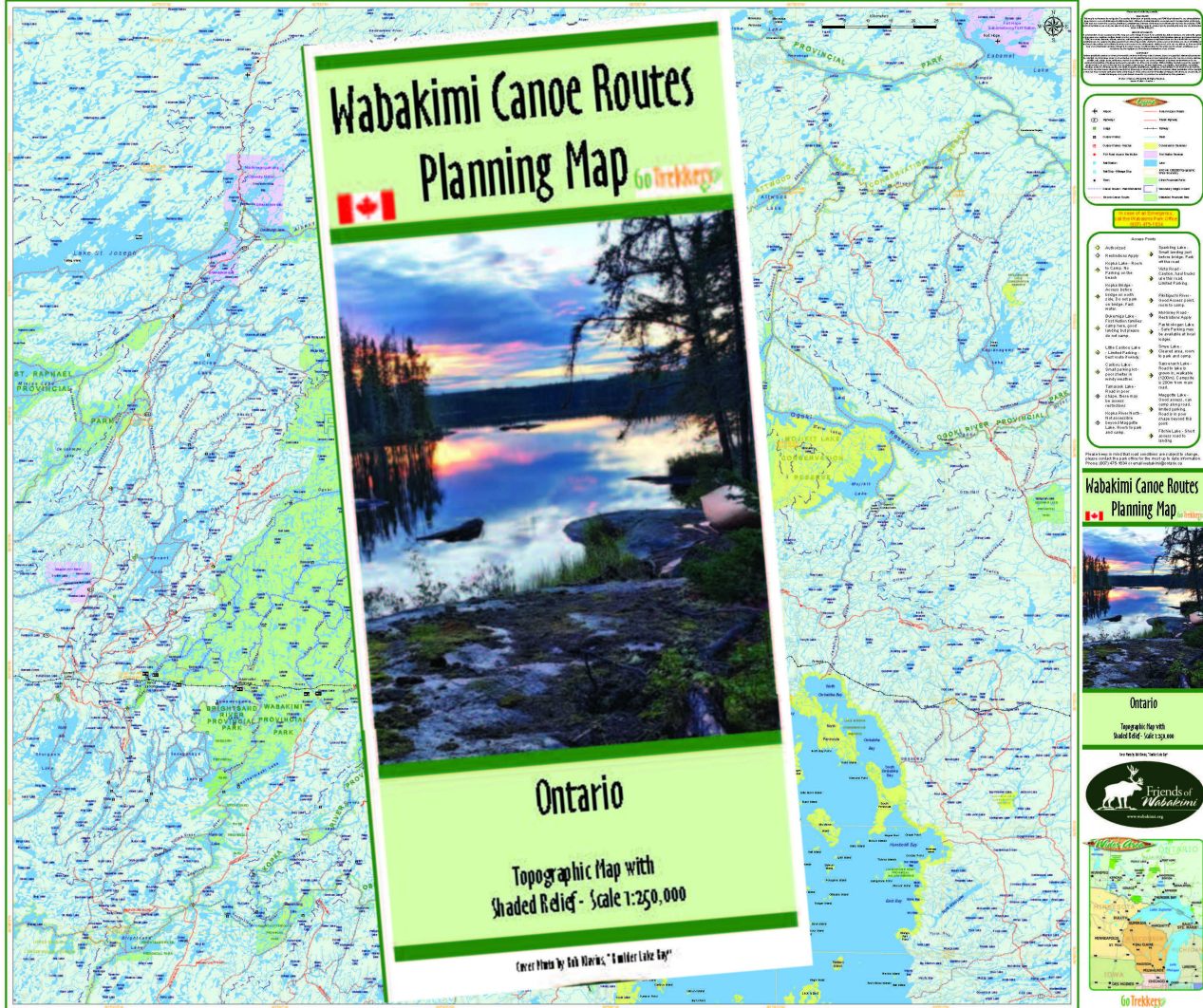
[Wabakimi Paddlers - We need your](#)

[Trip Reports!](#)

[Thanks to our Business/Sponsor members](#)



Join or Renew your FOW Membership Today!



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