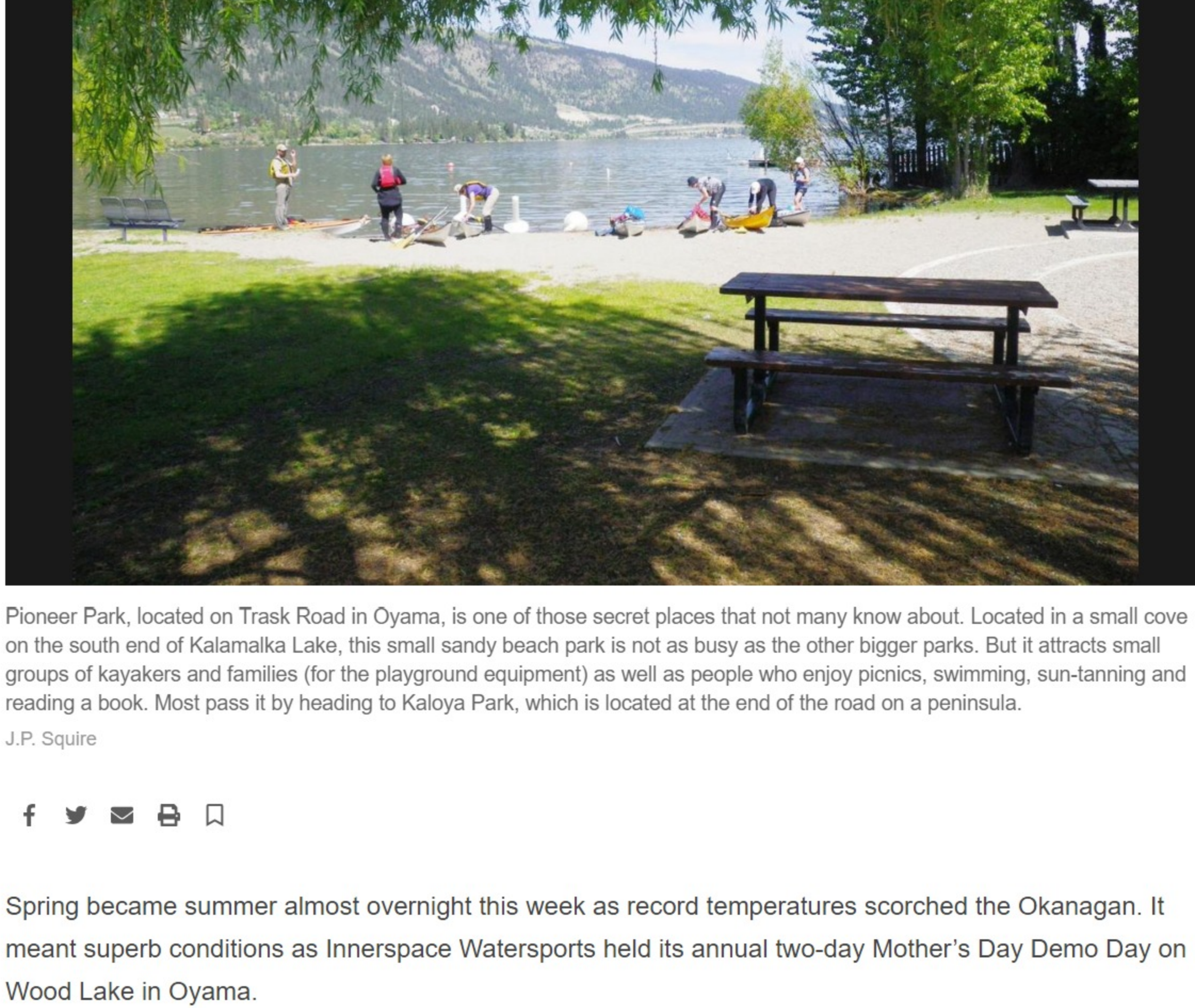


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Watersports enthusiasts had lots of craft to try

J.P. Squire **May 18, 2015**



Pioneer Park, located on Trask Road in Oyama, is one of those secret places that not many know about. Located in a small cove on the south end of Kalamalka Lake, this small sandy beach park is not as busy as the other bigger parks. But it attracts small groups of kayakers and families (for the playground equipment) as well as people who enjoy picnics, swimming, sun-tanning and reading a book. Most pass it by heading to Kaloya Park, which is located at the end of the road on a peninsula.

J.P. Squire

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Spring became summer almost overnight this week as record temperatures scorched the Okanagan. It meant superb conditions as Innerspace Watersports held its annual two-day Mother's Day Demo Day on Wood Lake in Oyama.

Both the Sheriff and Constant Companion Carmen tried out touring kayaks although one particular kevlar kayak was so tippy that the Sheriff ended up with a wet bottom along the shoreline.

The company brought 120 of its 300 watercraft so there was no shortage of human-powered boats and boards to try even though the water was still very cold.

The two of us and friends, who also checked out the kayaks and stand-up paddleboards, then paddled the east side of Kalamalka Lake, the best kayaking area on the Lake of Many Colours. You could tell it was finally warm enough to start the powerboat and personal watercraft season. We miss quiet April already.

We also didn't cycle the closed Okanagan Rail Trail on Mother's Day when there could have been hundreds of others also not using the 18-kilometre section of trail between Oyama and Coldstream. At times, there could have been bicycles trying to pass hikers and facing other cyclists passing pedestrians. Imagine what it will be like when it officially opens.

Speaking of official launches, the Kelowna Paddle Trail will have a ribbon-cutting and water parade at the Highway 97 tunnel end of Kelowna City Park today.

This outdoor event will occur at the south end of Hot Sands Beach from 9 a.m. until noon with the ribbon-cutting and speeches at 9 a.m. and what will likely be the Okanagan's largest flotilla of human-powered craft at 9:30 a.m. The flotilla, led by a dragonboat, is expected to include kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, outrigger canoes and dragonboats with all skill levels welcome.

The public is invited to participate in the water parade by bringing their own non-motorized watercraft.

Participants should meet before 9 a.m. with the flotilla heading north down the waterfront and turning around at Waterfront Park.

Event goers will then have an opportunity to try different paddle sports, watch races and demonstrations, and learn about water safety. There will be prizes and giveaways as well.

There is expected to be 100 to 150 participants in the flotilla with up to 200 additional spectators on the shoreline. Parking will be limited on-site, but a watercraft drop-off zone will be available in the far parking lot near the bridge. Participants are encouraged to arrive early.

While the event is free to attend and participate in, food items for the Central Okanagan Food Bank are greatly appreciated and will be accepted on site.

Mariko Siggers, the city's community and neighbourhood services manager, will provide a brief history of the Kelowna Paddle Trail and her Active By Nature program while Brad Dahl, the community volunteer who spearheaded its creation, will give it his official blessing.

The trail involved anchoring 22 buoys between Bertram Creek Regional Park at south end of Lakeshore Road to McKinley Beach in the north. The GPS-registered information buoys have a list of the beach

accesses along the trail and the distance between each, making it easier for paddlers to stay orientated along the waterfront, to know when a rest stop is coming up and even challenge themselves between each distance, said Siggers.

In 2015, the city launched Active By Nature, an online interactive route map and marketing program to encourage residents to get out and get active.

Active By Nature highlights Kelowna's extensive network of pathways, shared trails and beaches. For more information, including the interactive map, go online to: kelowna.ca/activebynature.

Nicole Cantley, the city's event organizer and a recreation technician, says information booths will be set up by the Kelowna Dragon Boat Paddling Society, Kelowna Paddle Centre, Kelowna Canoe and Kayak Club, Kelowna Rowing Club, Bust 'n Loose dragonboat group, Okanagan Dragonboat Racing Club, CRIS Adaptive Adventures, Brain Trust Canada, the city, regional district, Okanagan Basin Water Board, Paddle Lifestyle and Access Revolution.

Two Central Okanagan regional parks have opened in time for the long weekend.

Crews have completed raising the dike along five sections of the Mission Creek Greenway.

The four-kilometre portion of the trail is now open between KLO and Lakeshore roads.

The bridge underpasses at Lakeshore, Gordon and Casorso roads remain closed due to the unpredictable levels of Mission Creek.

The trail from Hollywood Road to Field Road in East Kelowna remains closed due to erosion caused by the high level and flow of Mission Creek.

A section of Glen Canyon Regional Park off Gellatly Road in West Kelowna has opened after repairs were done to the lower portion of the trail and the foot bridge affected by flooding of Powers Creek.

The parking area of Gellatly Road is also open.

Anyone walking near creeks and streams in the Central Okanagan is asked to use caution due to unpredictable water levels and flows.

Brian Sutch of Vernon had a few comments after reading the recent column on ticks.

"When (UBC Vancouver doctoral candidate) Jack Teng did the citizens-based tick survey (2008-09), myself and other members of the Pentiction Adventurers Club in Pentiction sent him quite a few ticks and some of us attended the presentation he did with his findings. One thing he told us was that the highest concentration of ticks is

often found around cattle water troughs and the salt block licks the ranchers put out. So they are two prime spots to avoid or definitely not linger if you have to pass by such spots.

"With regards to Lyme's disease, I spoke to a mother in Pentiction whose son caught Lyme's disease and she said the tourist people tried to tell her that there was no way her son could have picked up the offending tick in the Okanagan.

However, she said that she was a single parent and she couldn't afford to go on holiday out of the valley so she was certain he picked up the tick when her son was up in the Carmi area with his buddies.

"I was also made aware of one other case in Pentiction where a young lady had caught Lyme's disease, but her parents said they did not want any publicity and they could afford to have their daughter treated in the U.S. I have also heard of people in Kelowna getting infected.

In short, although instances of ticks carrying Lyme's disease are fairly rare, people should not try to make out it is non-existent in the Okanagan as the sooner one gets treatment the better and anyone having the large rosette (red ring) which is the giveaway for Lyme's should seek treatment asap."

The Central Okanagan received two awards at the recent BC Parks and Recreation Association (BCPRA) annual conference in Vancouver.

The association's 2018 Award of Merit was presented to the Regional District of Central Okanagan's parks service and the Community Recreational Initiatives Society, better known as CRIS. The award recognizes achievement in local government or special interest group involving

a significant and distinct contribution to the enhancement of local recreation and parks.

For many years, CRIS volunteers have provided no-cost, barrier-free access for those with physical challenges to regional parks through programs like Wild Walks, Take a Hike, and other activities and events.

In addition, Murray Kopp, director of RDCO parks services and former president of the BC Parks and Recreation Association, was presented with an Award of Merit from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA). This award recognized his national leadership efforts to champion and expand the recent Parks for All – An Action Plan for Canada's Parks community initiative.

Students are welcome to join EECO After School, a perfect activity for students of any age to have fun after classes are done for the day.

Each Thursday afternoon until June 28, free hands-on learning activities will explore the "wild" in local parks.

The one-hour program begins at 3 p.m. in the Environmental Education Centre for the Okanagan located in Mission Creek Regional Park, Springfield and Durnin roads in Kelowna.

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Parents of school-aged children can enjoy a child-free hour in the park by dropping off their child for the program. Pre-register for drop-off by stopping by the EECO, emailing eeeco@cord.bc.ca or phoning 250-469-6140.

Children aged three to five years and their caregivers all love Story Time at the EECO.

The free weekly one-hour drop-in program features nature-themed stories and songs followed by an art or craft project. The program is an excellent way for younger children to interact with others while learning more about the natural world.

Story Time runs at 10:30 a.m. each Tuesday until June 26.

For more information, go to: regionaldistrict.com/parksevents, drop-in or call the EECO at 250-469-6140.

You can still register for the free spring Tracks Walking Club, a beginner graduated walking program that offers a choice of

location on either side of Okanagan Lake.

At 9 a.m. Mondays and Wednesdays until June 27, participants walk along Mission Creek Greenway and in Mission Creek Regional Park (no walk on Victoria Day).

At 9 a.m. each Tuesday until June 26, you can walk around Gellatly Nut Farm Regional Park off Whitworth Road in West Kelowna.

There's no cost to sign up. Members receive a walking journal, walking tips, seminars and motivational tips that keep them moving.

Those at a beginner fitness level are encouraged to take part, gradually increasing their health, stamina and walking duration to 60 minutes. Tracks is offered in partnership with the Canadian Diabetes Association.

To register, drop in to the EECO in Mission Creek Regional Park or email eeeco@cord.bc.ca or phone 250-469-6140.

The Regional Waste Reduction Office is reminding everyone to do their part to keep neighbourhoods safe by managing wildlife attractants around the home.

Bears have already been spotted in several neighborhoods from Joe Rich to Peachland and the North Westside, and waste reduction facilitator Rae Stewart says it's that time of the year to be extra vigilant.

"The bears have come out of the long winter hibernation hungry and are on the prowl for food. The best advice if you live in an area susceptible to wildlife visitors is to reduce the risk of conflict by taking responsibility for your trash."

Stewart reminds residents not to put their garbage, recycling or yard waste carts out for collection until the morning of their actual collection day.

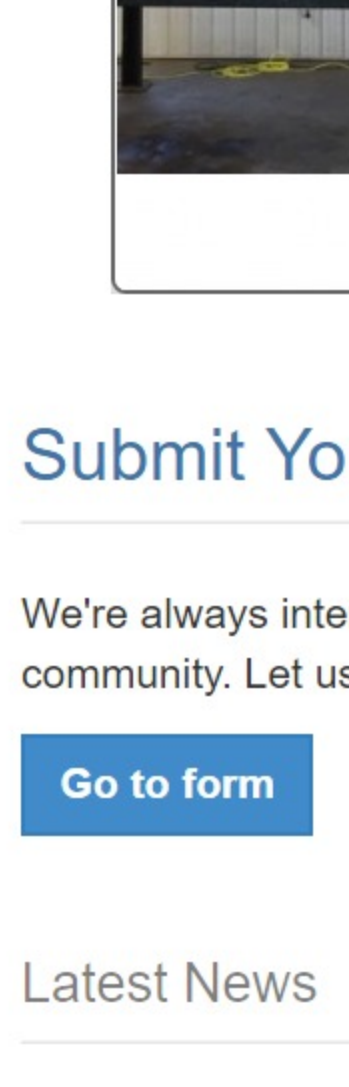
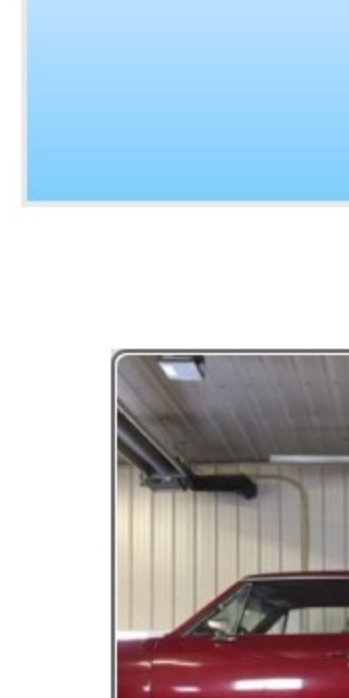
"Bears and other animals have a keen sense of smell so the idea is not to attract them to your garbage unnecessarily. If they find your waste, not only can they make a real mess but they can pose a risk to you and your family, your pets or to themselves by attracting the totally preventable attention of conservation officers."

Wildsafe BC has several tips to keep wildlife wild and to help prevent conflict: only put garbage out for collection on the morning of pickup, not the night before; encourage neighbors to do the same, offer to help if they are not able to put garbage out at appropriate times; secure your garbage on non-collection days; keep your barbecue clean and covered; pick ripe or fallen fruit, mix well into your compost bin or put in the yard waste cart; and clean up and properly store bird seed or pet food.

To report human bear conflicts to the BC Conservation Office, call 1-877-952-7277. For more information on deterring bears from your garbage, go to the WildsafeBC website: wildsafebc.com/about/

J.P. Squire, aka the Hiking, Biking, Kayaking and Horseback Riding Sheriff, is a retired Okanagan Weekend reporter and an outdoors enthusiast. His column appears every Saturday. Email: jp.squire@telus.net.

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