

Exploring Copper Island

A *Shuswap Passion* column for the Shuswap Market News

By Jim Cooperman

If there was just one geographic location that epitomizes the Shuswap Region, it could well be Copper Island. Standing on the top with magnificent views of the lake and above it the mostly green hills with the mountains in the background, one is in the midst of everything Shuswap. And on this one and only Shuswap Lake Island is a diversity of ecosystems from the moist and mossy cedar forest on the north side to the dry and now dead Ponderosa pine and grassland on the south side.

It is only a half-hour canoe paddle out to the island from the Shuswap Lake Provincial Park boat launch, and the only major challenges are the waves and exhaust fumes from the speedboats and jet-skis. There are just three access points to the island and the 2.8 km trail network, with the east point the best place to land a boat. Access to the island has remained difficult all these years to discourage any camping or fires, both of which are banned.

The effort to protect the island began in 1945, when it was established under the Forest Act as a UREP (use reserved for the enjoyment of the public). In 1956 the 115 hectares was purchased for \$37,000 and turned into a Class A Park. Soon after, the island was added to the park, but it wasn't until 1993 that the 25 hectares of foreshore surrounding the island was added.

Hank Dueck worked for the park service at Shuswap Lake Provincial Park from 1957 to 1988 and helped supervise construction of the original infrastructure including the trails on the island, the monument at the summit and the benches built by renowned, but now deceased, Shuswap Artist Jack Hunt. Hank remembers more the one night during the summer that they had to go out to douse a campfire and he recalls, "back when the lake used to freeze over more often there were a lot of deer on the island."

No doubt the English name for the island comes from the colour of the massive rock face one sees from Blind Bay, but apparently there was a scheme once to explore for copper ore. It took some effort with various government agencies for the former Park Warden, Phil Rathbone to halt the exploration work. Thankfully, the bluffs were left relatively unscathed, as this massive rock formation always makes the trip around the island spectacular.

The island was likely significant for the Shuswap people, although there are only a few pictographs remaining on the rocks, as it is likely some have been chipped away. A few legends remain. One concerns a great bear called Ta Lana that sleeps under the island in a large cave and now that is the name of the bay to the north. Another is a legend recorded by George Dawson in his 1888 diary about "two creatures with heads like human beings and tails like fish, long hair and about twice the size of a man." These creatures lived up at Adams Lake in a cave, but eventually one went down the river to Kamloops and the

other one went to Copper Island where they were called “Kul-a-moo-whot-kwa meaning water people.”

The goal for most people who visit the island is to jump of the cliff into the seemingly bottomless drop-off. On a busy weekend in the summer, there can be a dozen or more speedboats lulling about and even a houseboat store that sells burgers, pop, beer and fireworks. Cliff diving and jumping was always the feature we headed to, until one day in the fall a few years ago when we finally hiked the trails. To our surprise we heard a chainsaw and feared the worst, only to come across a dedicated park lover, who voluntarily keeps the trails open as he lives near Reedman Point and likes to hike there frequently.

During a recent visit as part of the research for this column, we skirted by the cliff jump water circus of boats and headed to the backside where we found a private houseboat moored for hopefully just the day and a family having a picnic. The swim off the rocky beach was exhilarating in the warm water. As we continued around the island we encountered a number of baby ducks, including one that made a racket as it quickly flapped away. No wonder, as there was a mink swimming through the water. We watched in amazement as it scurried up the rocks and into a small crevice.

Copper Island is the only natural island in the Shuswap Lake. According to legend, Ta Lana the great bear sleeps under the island in a large cave. There is a hiking trail to the top of the island. The island is only accessible by boat (or a very strong swimmer). Copper Island also has some of the Shuswap's pictographs as seen here.

This section features only a sampling of those artists connected to The Group of Seven or the Individuals of the Group of Seven. Many of these Artists associated with the Group of Seven, and even worked with them in many different capacities. As a result of the interactions with the Group of Seven or the Individuals, Group of Seven Contemporaries exhibited a style or influence that was clearly within the style, focus or interpretation of the Group of Seven.

The most popular destination on the lake is Copper Island. It is a small day-use island located just 2 kilometres from the main provincial park boat launch. There is a 2.8 km hiking trail on the island and some day moorage for boaters. There is no camping or fires permitted on the island.

Closer to home, in the park, is a series of hiking trails leading to some view points looking out over the lake. And also, just outside the gates of the park there is a selection of businesses providing para-sailing, horseback riding, bumper boats, mini-golf, go-carts, whitewater rafting, boat and jet-ski rentals.

Shuswap Lake is the main source of entertainment in the park with fishing attracting allot of attention year round because of the over 15 different species of fish in the lake including Trout , Dolly Vardens, Kokanee, Burbot, and Whitefish. Fishing is reported to be good around Copper Island.

During the winter months, after the snow has fallen, the park trails become cross country and snowshoe routes. Although, be reminded the park is not maintain during the winter months and services are non existence.

How to Get to Shuswap Lake Provincial Park: The Provincial Park is located on the north shore of the main arm of Shuswap Lake including Copper Island. From Hwy #1, west of Sorrento and north of Chase, turn onto the Squilax Road and continue driving for 19 kilometres on paved roads to the park. Copper Island is only accessible by boat.

The **primary role** of Shuswap Lake Park is to provide major provincial park opportunities on Shuswap Lake, supporting provincial and regional tourism and recreation interests for destination, transient and day use activities. Shuswap Lake Park along with Herald Park serve as the two major provincial park holiday destinations on Shuswap Lake Park, and are both fully occupied through the summer months.

The park is situated on the old delta of Scotch Creek, on the north shore of Shuswap Lake.

Shuswap Lake is provincially recognized for its tourism and recreation attractions and Shuswap

Lake Park, with 1 kilometre of beach and pleasant uplands is considered as a prime destination

for vacationers from the Lower Mainland and Alberta as well as regional residents. With over 271

campsites, the park is considered the largest and most popular destination campground facility in the Thompson Region, and one of the largest and most popular in the province. The park also serves as a regional day use focus for swimming, beach use and boating access to Shuswap Lake.

As a **secondary role**, the park protects a Copper Island as a special feature on Shuswap Lake, representing natural dry habitats of the IDFmw2 subzone/variant. The small size of the park (149 hectares - 115 hectares of upland and 34 hectares of foreshore) combined with the extent of facility developments and recreation use limit the viability of maintaining natural habitats and conditions on the remaining portion of the park.

Gallery

Short Description

Donald was a prolific painter who painted purely for the love of painting. Other than a few paintings exhibited with Lawren Harris in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Donald did not exhibit his work. It is only since his passing that his works are being shown.

Biography

Dr. Flather was a highly talented man who combined his love of the outdoors with his love of art to produce many wonderful works. Over his lifetime, he produced in excess of 400 paintings, which extensively covered Canadian landscapes from coast to coast, as well as plants and animals. Although a teacher by vocation, he dedicated a great deal of his life (circa 1919-1990) to his painting and developed his own unique style which combines elements of French Impressionism and the Group of Seven.

Dr. Flather was a colleague of Lawren Harris, founder of the Group of Seven, and the two men worked together for several years on the executive of the [Federation of Canadian Artists](#) (click here to go to their site), of which Dr. Flather was an original member. From 1938, Dr. Flather exhibited many times with the B.C. Federation of Artists (of which he was Secretary of in the 40s and 50s) in Vancouver, and displayed a few paintings at The Art Gallery of Toronto. Following this, he also acted as National Treasurer of The Federation of Canadian Artists. He was a very modest man, and did not devote much time or effort to showing his art, rather he preferred to circulate it amongst friends and family. He even did not sign some of his paintings on the front, as he believed it to be unnecessary, detracting from the beauty of the painting and never really intended to sell them.

After growing up in the Shuswap Lake region, Donald Flather came to Vancouver in his twenties, at which time he began to paint more in his free time. He graduated from U.B.C. with his B.A. and M.A.. He took teacher training and began teaching at Templeton, and taught at Britannia and King George High Schools. At King George he was Vice Principal, and he organized the Vancouver Night School for several years at King Edward Campus. Dr. Flather's Ph.D. in Education was conferred at the University of Washington in 1950. He and his lovely wife Grace raised a family of three boys, Elwood, Barrie and Verne- all of whom went on to become medical doctors, raising families of their own.

Dr. Flather's works show a wonderful combining of his roles of teacher, botanist, biologist, scientist and painter, and successfully integrate his knowledge with his art. One of his greatest wishes was that others be able to view and enjoy through his paintings the world as he saw it- full of beauty.

His works are now widely held across Canada, the U.S, Asia and Britain.

