

SIDEROADS

Of Muskoka

Spring 2011 Complimentary

Bring on the S'mores!

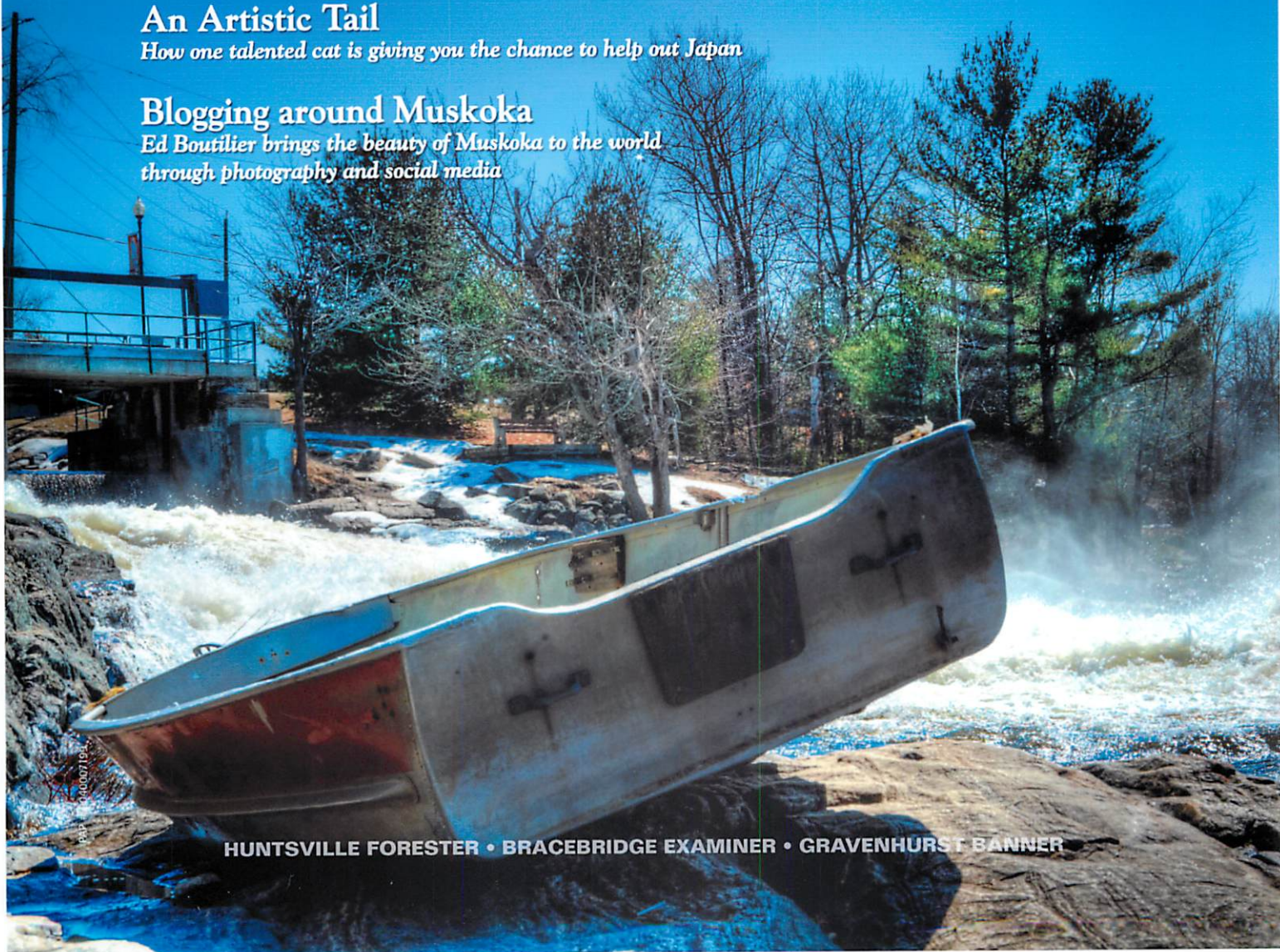
Our annual camp guide has everything you need to know about Muskoka's summer camps

An Artistic Tail

How one talented cat is giving you the chance to help out Japan

Blogging around Muskoka

Ed Boutilier brings the beauty of Muskoka to the world through photography and social media



HUNTSVILLE FORESTER • BRACEBRIDGE EXAMINER • GRAVENHURST BANNER



The world according to Ed

One Muskoka blogger takes the web by storm

STORY, SARAH RYELAND • PHOTOS, ED BOUTILIER



10 Sideroads Spring 2011

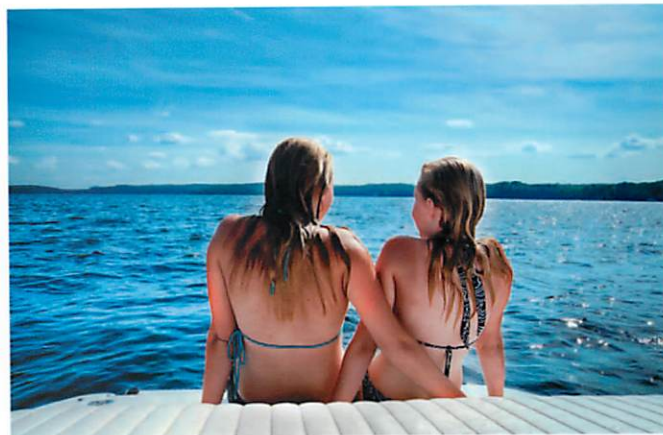
Muskokans often pride themselves on their ability to unplug and get away from it all. One of the main goals of cottagers and year-round residents is to come up here to disconnect, turning off mobile phones, stowing laptops and enjoying a tech-free world.

But for some of us, Muskoka inspires a different reaction.

For Ed Boutilier, coming up to his northern home is a chance for him to connect to the wilderness – and the Internet. An avid photographer, Boutilier shares his passion with followers of his blog, MuskokaBlog.com.

Dubbing himself a "weekend warrior", Boutilier sheds his nine-to-five businessman persona when he gets to Muskoka and takes to the road to find inspiration for his art.

"I've been coming to the Muskoka area most of my life to go fishing, hiking, camping and visiting friends," says Boutilier. "I didn't grow up with a cottage in my



family and it was always a dream to one day own my own. I've been fortunate to now find myself on Lake Joseph where I spend most of my time when I'm not exploring the area taking photos."

And he loves to share those photos with the world.

Starting out with the domain CottageBlog.com in 2008, Boutilier's body of work started to grow – as did his fan base. He has now changed the domain name to the more specific MuskokaBlog.com and is excited about the new site, which will include some design tweaks as well.

But what it really comes down to is the love of photography.

"I've been playing with photography on and off for many years," says Boutilier "but not in any serious capacity. I have no formal training; I just keep experimenting and learn as I go."

The results are some seriously stunning shots.

Using techniques like High Dynamic Range, Boutilier finds inspiration in every detail. Dilapidated buildings, old cars, frozen ponds and landscapes are a few of the works he displays to his online readers, and he encourages fans to interact with him through the site.

In a post he titles 'Dangling Shooz', Boutilier writes: "So I am driving in the middle of nowhere and I see these shoes dangling from a hydro wire. Does anyone know if this means something? Did some kids just drop by and throw a perfectly good pair of sneakers up for fun?"

And of course, the comments are as colourful as the picture itself.

So, for a blogger who snaps shots of both the beautiful and bizarre, what's the inspiration? For Boutilier, it's all about people.

"I'm inspired by people who continually create, whether it's a new product, a work of art, music, or solving a complex problem," he says. "Creative people break through by taking risks and coming up with fresh perspectives and I find that exciting. Most people have creative abilities, however our reptilian brain talks us out of taking a chance to make something happen."

It's safe to say that Boutilier has unleashed his creative side.

"I like to photograph swamps. I think there's a prehistoric swamp monster hiding within and I can be the first to capture it," he laughs. "Well seriously, I think being out alone and capturing the beauty of nature and bringing it back for others to see is a lot of fun. I find it provides me with a creative outlet which balances



Health & Wellness

HUNTSVILLE DENTURE CLINIC
HEALTH AND WELLNESS PAGE
2.000X35COL-4C
R001459214SALESREP:MHIL

MUSKOKA LASER CLINIC (CC)
HEALTH AND WELLNESS/WAGJAG
2.000X35COL-4C
R001459530SALESREP:MHIL



the day-to-day linear thinking involved in running a business."

MuskokaBlog.com is this artist's way of branching out and sharing his photography with the world, but he didn't expect to gain such a following. Requests have been coming in from fans wanting to purchase prints and use his photos for brochures and web sites, catching Boutillier off guard.

"I really didn't plan to get involved in this sort of thing," he says. "However, I think it represents a great opportunity to give back. In the future I plan to monetize some of these opportunities with a hundred per cent of the profits going to a charity that will send underprivileged kids to a camp. Giving children the opportunity to experience camp simply by taking some photos would be awesome."

In that way, the photographer would be giving the gift of Muskoka just by taking some pretty pictures.

And it's not all about MuskokaBlog, either. Boutillier supports his fellow bloggers by following their work online.

"I follow quite a few Muskoka-based blogs," he says. "They're artists, photographers, politicians, environmentalists, writers and lovers of the area. I also stay connected through social media, web sites, magazines and newspapers."

So it's safe to say that even though Boutillier has to be away from his beloved Muskoka during the week, he's definitely not out of touch. And he encourages others to get in the game, too.

"I usually tell people that are starting off to just go out and create something. Whether it's a blog or taking photographs, just start somewhere and let it evolve. They will be surprised what happens. When learning photography just photograph everything; plants, animals, trees, cars, boats and people. Learn from it, ask questions, experiment, listen and listen more. Go out and make a dent in the universe."

MuskokaBlog.com's traffic tends to be higher in the summer months, but Boutillier likes to keep things fresh and tries to update the site a few times a week. From iconic boathouses and historic sites to nature shots and kooky pastimes, there's nothing that can escape Boutillier's lens. And that's exactly what his followers love.

But for him, it's all about Muskoka.

"It's the raw, natural beauty," says Boutillier. "It's like walking through a Group of Seven painting. The big skies, clear lakes, towering pines, pink granite and the ever-changing weather are things I never take for granted. I feel strongly connected and by the frequent responses I receive, I know many others do as well."

For the blogosphere, that's great news. And for Boutillier it's humbling to know that his love for Muskoka and passion for photography are so well received.

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