

A Beginner's Guide to: CATCHING SMALLMOUTH BASS

Spring 2020

CottageTIPS MAGAZINE

ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR RENTING OUT THE COTTAGE

**12 TIPS
FOR THE BBQ**

**How to prevent
theft at the lake**

**Bats in the Cottage:
Now What?**

Bonfires 101

PLUS

**How To Photograph
Wildflowers**

Tips for Cleaning Boat Stains

Kathy's Steak Fajitas



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EDITORIAL

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The More Things Change...



A new decade is upon us and such a milestone often triggers a few moments of reflection on what we want to achieve in our lives over the coming years.

For my part, more time spent at the cabin is certainly high on the list.

The lake is known as a sanctuary for being with family and friends. It is also the ideal spot to set aside quality personal time to recharge and pursue hobbies. Fishing and taking photos of the flora and fauna around the cabin are popular activities for

those seeking to unwind. Our wildflower photography tips and beginner's guide to catching smallmouth bass should help cottage shutterbugs and cabin anglers find success.

Family meals in the city used to be sit-down gatherings. Today, they are often quick dashes into the kitchen to grab a bite before running out the door. At the cottage, however, dinner is still prepared and enjoyed together in a leisurely way. Kathy's fajitas recipe is a tasty and festive feast that can help make the occasion a perfect event.

A concerning change at the lake is the rise in cottage break-ins. Unfortunately, the days of simply leaving the door unlocked all summer in case the neighbour needs to borrow some sugar are coming to an end. While it is impossible to protect our properties 100% against thieves, there are ways to minimize the risks and the feature on how to prevent break-ins offers a few helpful tips.

On the financial side, cottage ownership has become expensive. New buyers need deep pockets to join the club and maintaining a lakeside property isn't cheap. Renting out the cottage is one way to help offset the rising costs and our article on the topic explores the process cottage owners should go through when evaluating this option to help pay the bills.

To round things out, the Cottage Tips team has put together some great tips for tackling boat stains, dealing with bats, troubleshooting the barbecue, and addressing pet safety at the cabin. We hope you find them useful.

It's anyone's guess what the next decade will bring, but one thing we know for sure is that the cottage will always be our special place to relax, reflect, and create wonderful memories with family and friends.

We hope your 2020 cottage season is the best one yet!

Andrew
editor@cottagetips.com



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PHOTOGRAPHY

How to photograph Wildflowers

By Cottage Tips Staff

Wildflowers bloom by the thousands around the cottage every year, but there is a short window of time to get the ideal shot of your favourite flowers at the lake.

The best wildflower photos are captured when the plants begin to bloom and that requires being present during the critical days when the process occurs.

Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. This is certainly the case with some of the plants we consider to be weeds. Thistles and dandelions, for example, when photographed at the right moment can be a source of fabulous wall art for the cottage.

Knowing a few tricks on how to photograph flowers in the forest is the best way to get wonderful shots.

WIND SCREEN

Bring a cardboard box to block the wind while you take your wildflower photos. A plastic sheet taped between two sticks also works to help minimize movement on a breezy day.

FOCUS

Use the manual focus on your Digital SLR camera to get the ideal photo of the wildflower at the proper distance. Play with your aperture, shutter speed, and ISO settings to find the right depth of field and ensure a crisp shot.

LIGHT

When you have the time, try to take shots at different hours of the day to use the best natural light conditions.



Early morning allows you to catch the dew and use shadows that are softer than those that occur in the middle of the day. Consider adding artificial light to offset shadows. You can use a piece of white paper to reflect light. Cover your flash with a piece of toilet paper or a tissue to balance the exposure when shooting very close to the plant.

COMPOSITION

The great thing about digital photography is the ability to take

thousands of shots in the search for a perfect photo. Have fun experimenting and try different angles when taking photos of the wildflowers. The view from above, below, and a mixture of side shots will produce very different pictures.

Note: Watch out for the ants if you lie down in the grass or field to get your dream photo.

BACKGROUND

A trick to deal with a troublesome background is to place a piece of construction paper behind the plant to isolate the flower and control the background colour.

STABILIZATION

Holding the camera in your hands might work, but using a tripod, a rock, or even a piece of wood to stabilize the camera should result in better photos.

It is also worthwhile to invest in a remote control to get the best quality shots.

TIMING

Shoot over the course of a few days if the plants are blooming in stages to get the best selection of shots.

THE END RESULT

The cottage is the perfect place to hone our photography skills and wildflowers make fantastic subjects. It is easy to spend countless enjoyable hours shooting nature's natural beauties and once in a while a masterpiece emerges to decorate the cottage wall.

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Steak Fajitas

Meat lovers will enjoy this simple and tasty meal for feeding family and guests at the cottage.

THE INGREDIENTS YOU NEED

To Be Cooked

1 pound (approx. 1/2 kilo) of beef tenderloin or sirloin
3 sweet peppers (red, yellow, green)
1 sweet onion
1/2 pound of mushrooms
1 clove of garlic
butter
olive oil
soy sauce
Montreal steak spice mix
fajita seasoning package (Old El Paso)
Soft tortillas (large or small depending on your preference)

The Toppings

fresh tomato
iceberg lettuce
sour cream
shredded cheddar cheese
sliced jalapeño peppers

THE GEAR YOU NEED

large frying pan
garlic mincer (optional)
container for marinating the meat

PREPARING THE MEAT

Mince or finely chop the garlic. Slice the steak into thin strips and marinate with soy sauce, olive oil, and the garlic. You can do this for a few minutes or for several hours depending on how much time you have and the quality of the meat you are using. Tougher cuts of meat should be marinated longer.

PREPARING THE VEGETABLES

Slice the sweet peppers into strips. If you like the peppers to stay a bit crunchy, it is best to cut them into thicker slices. Slice the sweet onion. Slice the mushrooms. Slice and dice the tomato. Slice and chop the lettuce.

COOKING THE FAJITAS

The secret to getting great fajitas is to cook all the parts separately in stages and then add them together at the very end.

First, sprinkle some Montreal steak spice mix on the meat. Melt enough butter in the fry pan to coat the bottom. Flash fry the steak strips to sear on them both sides. Remove and set them aside. Brown the mushrooms in a bit of butter. This should take less than five minutes. Set them aside.

Fry the sliced onion in a bit of butter or olive oil until it is brown. Set it aside. Fry the sliced sweet peppers in olive oil until they are seared. They should be a bit soft but still crunchy.

Add the meat, mushrooms, and onions together with the sweet peppers and mix them all together. Add the fajita seasoning. Sprinkle in a bit of soy sauce and mix. **Special Note:** Do not add in the marinade sauce.

SERVING

Warm up the tortillas in the microwave or oven. Serve the fajitas and add the peppers, tomato, lettuce, cheese, and sour cream as desired.

Steak Fajitas

Preparation Time: 25 Minutes

Cooking Time: 15 - 20 Minutes

Makes: Generous servings for 4 people

Steak Fajitas are easy to prepare and make the perfect dinner choice for a weekend party with friends and family at the cottage.



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12 Troubleshooting Tips for the BBQ

By Cottage Tips Staff

TROUBLESHOOTING

The cottage barbecue is famous for malfunctioning at the worst possible moment.

1. PREPARATION

Before doing any troubleshooting on your cottage BBQ, turn off the gas at both the grill and the tank and disconnect the tank from the unit.

2. BBQ WILL NOT IGNITE

If you have a battery-powered spark system, change the battery. If the battery is good, or if you have a manual spark system, you need to check the igniter(s). Remove the grill and locate the igniter at the burner. Push the ignition button and look for the spark. If you don't get a spark, the igniter is probably plugged. Clean the igniter and try again. If there is still no spark, the problem is likely with either the wiring or the ignition button and you will have to get new parts.

3. BURNER FLAMES ARE WEAK

Use soap and water to search for leaks between the tank and the BBQ. Next, check to see if the gas valve coming into the burner is partially blocked. This requires removing the burner. The obstruction could be a spider web or dirt. It doesn't take much to disrupt the flow. Then reset the pressure going through the regulator (the disc attached to the hose).

4. HOW TO RESET THE BARBECUE GAS PRESSURE

Turn the propane tank off. Disconnect the hose from the tank. Open all the BBQ dials to full and leave them open for a couple of minutes. Close all of the dials again.

Reconnect the hose to the propane tank. Open the tank valve slowly until it is fully open. Turn on one of the dials and attempt to light the barbecue. If the pressure is still too low, the regulator might need to be replaced.

5. BARBECUE BURNERS ARE NOT GIVING ENOUGH HEAT

The gas comes through a small tube into the bottom of the burner and is then distributed evenly around the burner. Sometimes the individual burner holes get covered with grease, food, or rust. Remove the burner. Use a wire brush to clean the burner. Replace the burner and light the barbecue. **Note:** When turning the propane gas back on, always do it slowly.

MAINTENANCE

Simple maintenance and proper planning keep the barbecue in good condition and ensure it is ready to use whenever you need it.

6. RAIN

To extend the life of the cottage BBQ, keep it covered and out of the rain when you are not at the cabin. This not only protects it from rainwater that can cause early rusting, it also helps to keep the spiders and bees from making a nest in the unit.

7. BEARS

Always clean the grill after every use to avoid attracting bears. Anyone who has been startled out of a deep sleep in the middle of the night because a bear just knocked over the barbecue can attest to the importance of keeping the grill spotless.

8. GAS PORTS

Periodically remove the burner and clean it with a wire brush to keep the gas ports clear of debris. This ensures the gas flows correctly. Food, grease, and spiders can quickly clog up the ports.

9. BACK-UP TANK

Keep a full tank in reserve. For the added cost of having a second tank it is good to know that you always have enough propane. Cottagers always run out at the worst possible moment, which is inevitably when they are entertaining guests. It is often a long trip to go get the tank filled.

10. TREES

Place the BBQ in an open area away from trees. Pine needles, leaves, and bugs will fall into an open unit and clog the gas ports. Pine needles are extremely flammable and a burner flare-up could torch the whole tree!

11. SUPPORT

Ensure the barbecue is firmly supported. A strong gust of wind that comes when the top is up can blow the unit right off the deck. This is not only expensive if the barbecue is damaged, but it is also very dangerous if the burner is on at the time the wind arrives.

12. STORAGE

To extend the life of the barbecue, always keep it stored in a sheltered area. This helps keep the rain and dew from causing premature rusting. At the end of the season, be sure to clean the BBQ thoroughly before putting it away for the winter.



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Preventing Cottage Theft

By Andrew Walker

Break-ins are on the rise in cottage country and that has people increasingly worried about the safety of their properties and belongings.

Modern Cottages Attract Thieves

As lakefront living has evolved from being simple and rustic to grand and extravagant, cottages and their contents have become more upscale. Unfortunately, criminals are taking notice. Today's lakeside sheds harbour ATVs, personal watercraft, and top-of-the-line fishing gear.

Inside the cabin, state-of-the-art entertainment systems have replaced the old AM/FM radio and many cottage owners keep their humble weekend homes fully stocked with fine wines and succulent steaks.

As such, the potential plunder for opportunistic thieves has increased greatly in recent years. Add to this the fact that most properties sit vacant for the majority of the season and you have the ideal recipe for a break-and-enter bonanza.

To reduce the likelihood of being robbed, owners of recreational properties need to start thinking about the different ways they can make their cottages less attractive to thieves.

Which cottages are most at risk?

Cottagers often think that thieves prefer to rob road-access properties but this is not always true. Thieves have boats, and boats don't leave tracks. In the fall months, water-access properties can be particularly susceptible.

Cottage activity on the lake is very low at this time of the year and most break-ins aren't discovered until the spring when owners arrive to start the new season.

Unfortunately, the damage can be extensive and any evidence that might have been available for the police is often no longer present.

Burglars might find it more convenient to target water-access cabins over the winter months. The ice roads that

cross some lakes see regular and heavy use from the ice fishing crowd and other sports enthusiasts. Anglers in search of constantly moving fish will often try their luck near islands and this activity would probably draw less attention. Given the size of many lakes, most winter visits to island properties are less likely to be noticed than those occurring on the mainland.

How to protect the summer property?

Break-ins are normally crimes of opportunity and thieves will look for easy targets. Fortunately, most of the steps cottagers can take to reduce the risk of a break-and-enter are essentially common sense.

It is worthwhile for cottage owners to sit down with the family and put together a list of things they can do to better protect their belongings at the cottage.

The following tips would likely be the first to come to mind, and should get you off to a good start.

Valuable Equipment And Personal Belongings

One way to minimize the risk of a break-in is to refrain from advertising that your cottage is ripe to be ransacked. Avoid leaving valuable sporting equipment outside in plain sight while you are away from the cottage.

Even if you are doing a quick run into town, take the time to put the gear away and lock the storage sheds.

Inside the cabin, make sure expensive electronic items such as computers, tablets, flat screens and stereo systems are not easily noticed through a window. Always lock your cottage door when you leave the property.

When you plan to be away for long periods of time, consider taking the expensive equipment home or store it in a protected facility in the local town near the cottage. Remove all firearms and alcohol when the cottage is closed for the winter.

Boats and Watercraft

Small boats, canoes, and personal watercraft should not

be left near the shore. Instead, bring them higher up on the property and beyond the line-of-sight of passing boaters.

Ladders, Tables and Chairs

Take ladders home or put them in storage. Outdoor furniture, picnic tables, and benches should also be locked up so they can't be used to enter the building through a window.

Lights

Using automatic timers on indoor cottage lights may be enough of a deterrent to keep potential thieves away if they are doing a drive-by in search of possible targets. Having the place lit-up at night also makes it easier for neighbours to see if there is any suspicious activity. Outdoor motion sensor lights can be effective and may help keep away less brazen break-and-enter criminals.

...continued on page 16

PREVENTING COTTAGE THEFT CONT.

Maintenance

As with the house in the city, it is important to make sure the cottage looks like it is being maintained on a regular basis. Consider paying the local handyman to cut the grass, clean up any debris that has washed ashore, and remove fallen tree branches. Shoreline garbage, long grass, and fallen trees can indicate the property has not been used for an extended period of time.



Consider paying the local handyman to cut the grass, clean up any debris that has washed ashore, and remove fallen tree branches.

Gates

If your property is a road-access cottage, one option to discourage thieves is to install a gate at the beginning of the driveway. Intruders want to get in and out as quickly and quietly as possible. Having a gate at the entrance to the property might be enough to dissuade a potential break-in.

Alarm systems

An alarm system is another way to help protect your cottage from thieves. While a system installed at a remote property may be less effective than one hooked up in a cottage closer to town, it is still one more factor that could make the thieves think twice about targeting your place.

Doors and windows

Many older cabins and cottages have flimsy doors and simple windows that are easily forced open. Exterior doors should be fitted with solid dead bolts. Windows can be boarded up for the off-season. Sliding doors should have a piece of wood placed in the track so they can't be opened. Protective exterior shutters can also be installed to deter thieves and keep people from being able to see inside the property.

Cameras and remote monitoring

Technology has evolved to the point where remote monitoring is capable in many areas. Even off-grid properties can use solar panels to power cameras and other devices. Thieves might abandon a break-in if they realize the property is being monitored. Otherwise, the video footage should help the police and will be useful for dealing with the insurance company.

Lists, photos, and videos of cottage items

It is important to properly document all of the items at the cottage. This includes taking photos or a video of the inside of the cottage, keeping purchase receipts and recording all serial numbers. In the event you are a victim of a cottage robbery, having your papers in order will make it much easier for the insurance company when you go to file a claim.

Informing Neighbours

Assuming you trust your cottage neighbours, keep them informed as to the times your cottage will be unoccupied. Be sure to provide your up-to-date contact information so they can quickly reach you in the event they see some dubious activity on your property.

It is also a wise idea to have someone stop by and check the property on a regular basis. The sooner the signs of damage or foul play can be reported the better it is for both the police and the property owner. Inspections can be done by a local security company if you are not comfortable relying on friends or family.



Thieves might abandon a break-in if they realize the property is being monitored.

Cottage Watch Associations

Organizing a Cottage Watch group in your lakeside community is a good idea. This is often put in place in cooperation with the local police force and is a great way to help protect all properties in your part of the lake.

Programs often include the installation of signs to let everyone know the network has been established and to remind cottage owners to report suspicious activity in the area.

Note For Thieves

Type out a note that says all items have been marked and that all alcohol and firearms have been removed from the property. Place the note in plain sight so potential thieves will see it. You might think this is a silly idea but it shows criminals you have thought about their activities. After seeing the sign, they may decide it will not be worth the trouble to break into the cottage.

THE BOTTOM LINE

While it is impossible to be 100% sure we won't be victims of a break-and-enter crime, we can certainly do our part to discourage thieves and minimize the loss in the event that a break-in occurs.

STEPS TO FOLLOW AFTER A BREAK-IN

Call the police as soon as you realize thieves have entered the cottage. Avoid touching anything at the crime scene. Several break-ins might occur in the same area and the police could find evidence at your property that links to possible suspects in other break-and-enter cases. Once the police have been notified, you should contact your insurance company. After the police have had a chance to investigate, the next step is to take a careful inventory of any items that are missing as well as the damage that may have been done during the intrusion. Take pictures of the broken doors or windows where the thieves have entered the building. Inspect the surrounding property for stolen items that may have been dropped, abandoned, or hidden by the thieves.

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ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR RENTING OUT THE COTTAGE

By Cottage Tips Staff

Renting out the cottage can help pay annual cabin expenses, but careful consideration and planning is required before handing over the cabin keys to strangers.

WHY RENT OUT THE CABIN?

Owners rent out their cottage for a number of reasons. Young families often buy a cottage with a plan to rent it out for a number of years to cover the expenses until their incomes increase.

In other cases, people might have an unexpected change in their income level or cost of living that requires a creative solution to keep the property.

If you are planning to sell the cottage, renting it out for a few weeks each year is a great strategy to find potential buyers.

On the investment side, cottages are increasingly held as part of an overall wealth management strategy. In this case, renting the property out is the main purpose for the ownership.

Regardless of the reason, it is important to plan properly and discuss the decision with the entire family before taking the plunge.

WHOM SHOULD YOU RENT TO?

A problem renter is the last thing you want to deal with at your cottage, so it makes sense to carefully screen your prospects. After all, the property is your retreat from hectic city life and shouldn't be the cause of more stress.

Extended Family

When you decide to make the cottage available for rent, don't be shy about considering this crowd. Extended family can be a good option for finding renters, as long as you have the right relationship.

Friends of Neighbours

Word of mouth is often the best and cheapest way to find renters for the cabin. Let your neighbours at the lake know that you plan to rent out the cottage. If they are uncomfortable with the idea of strangers being at your cottage they might do the work for you and find someone they know and trust who would be interested in renting your cabin.

Your relationship with your neighbours is key and it is worthwhile to consider the type of visitors they normally have before making the suggestion.

Couples

Renting to a couple without kids might be the best option if you have a small cottage or cabin. They are often looking for a quiet place to get away for a holiday and are unlikely to cause grief for you or your cottage neighbours.

Families

Small families are a good choice if your cottage suits their needs. Safety for children is always a concern, so

be sure to fully inform them of key points of interest. With a bit of luck, you can find reliable families that will rent from you for years.

Groups

If you have a large cottage, you have to be wary of big groups. You are better off trying to rent to families who can afford to pay more, than to a group of twenty who are looking for the cheapest cost per person. Besides the obvious concern for your property, you also risk being kicked off the lake by your cottage neighbours if big parties occur at the property.

HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU CHARGE?

A number of factors have to be considered when determining how much you will charge when you rent out your cottage. Taking time to run through the numbers is important, as you might decide the net gains are not worth the trouble.



Cleaning Costs

Someone has to clean the cottage before your guests arrive and after they leave. Whether you pay a cleaner or you make an extra trip yourself, the expenses have to be considered.

Advertising

Newspaper ads and online listings can become expensive if you don't get your place booked quickly.

Maintenance And Repair

Even if you have the perfect guests, there will be added wear and tear on your cottage furniture, equipment, and appliances.

Utilities

Propane, electricity, firewood, water, and Internet access all have to be provided and paid for by someone. Most guests will want these costs included in the rental price. ...continued on page 20

FEATURE STORY CONT.



Insurance

You have to let your insurance company know that you plan to rent out the cottage. There may be extra fees added to your policy to cover increased liability, damage, and theft risks.

Agent Fees

You can hire a third party to look after some or all of the work related to renting your cottage. These services are not cheap but could be worth the convenience.

Your Time

Trying to find reliable people to rent your cabin can eat up a lot of your time. Advertising, responding to questions, getting deposits, giving directions, cleaning up, and meeting people at the cottage requires hours of commitment. Remember, time is money.

Price Limits

There is a limit to how much you will be able to charge for your property. This depends on the location, size, and features of your cottage, as well as the rates charged in the area.

WHEN TO RENT OUT THE CABIN OR COTTAGE

How often have you decided at the last minute on a Friday evening or Saturday morning to make an unplanned trip to the cottage? Maybe it was a tough week at the office. Maybe the weather was going to be perfect. Maybe your neighbour called to say the fish were biting.

Whatever the reason, you were able to go because

you knew the cottage was available. Be honest about what that freedom is worth to you. Avoid letting greed get in the way of your leisure time when you decide how many weeks you plan to make your cottage available for rent.

If you must rent out the cottage to make the numbers work, consider making it available during the peak summer season. You will be able to charge higher rates and can avoid the busiest weeks on the lake. You could then decide to pull the kids out of school for a week in the spring or fall to make up for the time that you plan to rent out the cabin during the summer.

MAKE A COTTAGE INFORMATION KIT

An information kit should include all the details a potential renter needs to know. You want to get the right people. The more information they have at the beginning, the less likely they are to call you after they arrive.

List the maintenance equipment, kitchen appliances, bathroom facilities, consumables, indoor and outdoor furniture, local rules, emergency numbers, interesting historical sites and local events. Be specific about property location, water depth, and the number of stairs from the dock to the cottage. If the property has a steep slope, you must tell people about it. Itemize the recreation equipment that is available and permitted for the renters to use.

Summarize the presence of wildlife both in and around the cottage. When people know they might see a mouse in the cabin, they are less likely to complain when one appears. If you have resident skunks or porcupines, the renters should know this in case they decide to bring their pets.

Set up a simple website to promote your cottage. It is a great tool to help advertise your lake property while allowing potential renters to get most of the information they need before deciding to contact you. The website should include recent photos, a calendar showing availability, pricing information, a copy of your rental agreement, and contact information.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Renting out the cottage can be a successful and stress-free experience. It should be a family decision, and understanding whom you want to rent to, as well as how much money you really need, will help make the process go smoothly.



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Bats in the Cottage: Now What?

By Cottage Tips Staff

Bats are useful for controlling insects around the cabin, but they become a big problem when they decide to move into the building. So, how do you get rid of bats once they are living in the cabin?

BAT HABITAT

Bats need to spend the day in very warm places that are safe from predators. When all the available options are considered, an insulated cabin roof or attic that receives a lot of sunshine throughout the day is an ideal spot. Most cottages and cabins only see weekend use and are located near the water. For a bat, this is a dream location. It is generally quiet and situated close to the breeding ground of its favourite meal. Getting rid of a bat colony once it is in place is tricky business and cleaning up after the bats are gone is a different issue altogether.

WHEN DO BATS MOVE INTO THE COTTAGE?

In the spring, female bats gather in colonies to give birth to their offspring. These colonies can range in size from a dozen to hundreds. The babies are not able to fly until the end of July or early August. If you are unfortunate enough to have bats in your cottage you must be careful.

HISTOPLASMOSIS AND RABIES

Bats make a terrible mess. The droppings, called guano, can be a severe health risk. Histoplasmosis is a respiratory disease caused by inhaling the spores of a fungus that can grow on the bat guano in certain conditions.

Bats can also carry rabies, which must be treated immediately after a bite. Bat bites are dangerous

because they are very small and difficult to detect. Sealing the bat's entry point to the cabin before the end of the summer will only trap the animals in the attic. The adult mother bats will search for another exit, usually into the living area of the cottage, increasing the risk of a bite. Anyone who has experienced the challenge of trying to catch bats in the cottage with a fishing net knows that this is a good thing to avoid.

GETTING BATS OUT OF THE COTTAGE

Install a one-way exit for the bats in late August, as the young ones should be able to fly. This can be done using a strip of mesh screen that is stapled over the hole and runs about 12 inches along the side of the cottage. The bats will be able to wiggle their way out at dusk but can't get back in when they finish feeding. Over the course of the next week, all of the bats should be gone. Seal up the hole during fall closing. Put up a bat house on a pole the following spring. It should be at least 20 feet high and receive a minimum of eight hours of sun exposure during the day.

SPECIAL NOTE:

If you find a bat in the sleeping area of the cottage, especially in rooms where children are sleeping, try to capture the bat using a net and thick leather gloves and take it to the local health unit to be tested for rabies. It is also advisable to visit the doctor or hospital to see if your family members should get the required rabies shots.

Bonfires 101

By Cottage Tips Staff

The bonfire is the highlight of many weekends at the lake. With a bit of preparation the cottage campfire will be a safe and memorable event.

Fire Bans

Fire bans are common during dry periods of the summer. Always check with the local authorities to see if fires are permitted when you are at the cabin.

Wind Risks

Windy conditions are dangerous and can change quickly at the lake. If the wind doesn't die down at dusk, cancel the plans for the fire. You don't want to be immortalized as the person who wiped out the entire cottage neighbourhood.

Fire Location

Locate the fire pit away from trees and outbuildings, preferably near the shoreline or a source of water. Using a fire bowl is a great way to protect the shoreline rocks from cracking and makes it much easier to clean up.

Preparation

Always keep a pail of water, a fire extinguisher, and a shovel ready for unexpected problems. A sudden gust of wind or a burning log that rolls out of the fire can cause the fire to spread quickly.

Extinguishing The Campfire

Always put the fire out completely at the end of the night. Soak all the coals with water and stir the mixture. Take the time to do this thoroughly. Add water until there is no more steam rising each time the water hits the coals.

Children

Kids are fascinated by fire and they don't always have a full grasp of the danger it presents. Supervise children at all times. Make them sit a safe distance from the fire and don't let them play with burning sticks.

Make sure everyone knows the STOP, DROP, and ROLL rules for dealing with clothing that catches on fire.

Stop, Drop, and Roll

Make sure everyone knows the STOP, DROP, and ROLL rules for dealing with clothing that catches on fire.

Designated Burner

Choose a "designated burner" to be the sober person responsible for building and maintaining the fire for the entire evening. Booze and bonfires don't go well together.

Bonfire Size

Keep the fire small and under control at all times. A modest campfire is more than adequate for providing a source of heat and a comfortable place to cook some campfire food.

Campfire Food Ideas

When the fire burns down and everyone is starting to get hungry, it's time for your favourite food. Here are some of the classic campfire choices:

- Sandwiches
- Pies
- Burgers
- Waffles
- S'mores
- Hotdogs
- Marshmallows

Tips for Cleaning Boat Stains

By Cottage Tips Staff

The boat takes a real beating during the cottage season. Mud, coffee, mink poop, and bird droppings all find their way onto the boat carpet. Waiting to the end of the season to clean things up makes the job more difficult, and in some cases, nearly impossible.

Normal Stains

The nature of the stain determines the ideal mixture for removing it. The best all-purpose cleaner for basic boat stains is a pail of hot water mixed with a cup of white vinegar and some liquid dish detergent. Use a brush with stiff bristles to spread the cleaner around so that it gets right into the material. Allow the mix to soak into the carpet for 45 minutes. Use thick rags to dab-dry the carpet, rather than scrub. Nasty

boat stains might require the use of glass cleaner. Let the glass cleaner soak for 5-10 minutes. Dab dry with a rag. Use a spare piece of carpet to scrub the stain out rather than scrubbing with the rags. The carpet works better and is useful for bird droppings, mink poop, and other organic stains.

Nasty boat stains might require the use of glass cleaner. Let the glass cleaner soak for 5-10 minutes.

Vomit stains

When the guests or dogs lose their lunch in the boat use club soda or a mix of baking soda and cold water to attack the acids. Remove as much

of the mess as possible with a spoon before pouring the club soda or baking soda and water mix on the stained area. Let the mixture absorb the stain for 15 minutes and then use a vacuum. Next, apply a white vinegar and liquid detergent solution and repeat.

Fish blood

Fish blood can be a problem for boat carpet because it is easy for the stain to become permanent. Use cold water mixed with dry laundry soap to make an absorbent paste and apply it to the area of the boat carpet that is stained. Wait for the mixture to dry. Use a light brush or a vacuum to clean it up. Then apply the solution recommended for vomit stains.

Special note: Do not use hot water to clean up fish blood. It could make the stain permanent.



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A Beginner's Guide to: Smallmouth Bass

By Andrew Walker

Smallmouth bass, otherwise known as smallies or bronzebacks, might just be the most exciting fish to catch in the lakes and rivers of cottage country.

Famous for their strength and fighting ability, smallmouth bass will often leap clear out of the water in an effort to spit the hook. Smallies longer than 20 inches and heavier than four pounds are regular catches in some areas.

The gear you need

Reliable beginner equipment would be a six-foot, light-to-medium action rod and spinning reel combination with six-pound line. In areas when there is a high risk of the fish heading into underwater cover, such as submerged trees, it might be better to go with slightly heavier line.

Popular lures include jig heads with rubber tails, spinner baits, imitation minnows, and diving crank baits. Live bait is also effective. Common choices include dew worms (night crawlers), crayfish, minnows, and leeches.

Where do you find smallmouth bass?

Shortly after the spawning season in early summer smallmouth bass will be closer to shore. They often move to deeper water in July and August. The best water temperature for smallmouth bass, according to the Ontario MNR, is about 24 degrees Celsius (75 degrees Fahrenheit). Other resources indicate a preference that is a bit cooler towards 21 degrees Celsius (70 degrees Fahrenheit). Anglers should seek out fishing spots with clear, fast-moving water. Smallmouth bass often hang out near narrow points in a river where the bottom is rocky. Smallies are regularly encountered in groups. If you find one, there are likely others in the same location.

How to catch smallmouth bass?

In conditions where the water is deep, use diving crankbaits to cover a larger area in search of the fish. Once you know where the fish are, jig heads tipped with

live bait, such as dew worms or leeches, can be effective when bounced along the bottom. Smallmouth bass will also hit a jig with a rubber tail.

Shallow water conditions are ideal for spinnerbaits using a medium-to-fast retrieve. In the early summer smallmouth bass are quite aggressive and will even hit topwater lures.

Casting a fat dew worm with little or no weight and using very light line also works well. Try to let the bait rise and sink as you reel it back to the shore or boat. The fish will often bite when the bait is falling.

This technique is especially effective in areas with lots of rocks that will cause sinkers or jig heads to get snagged.

Special Note: A bass has a tough mouth, so it is important to set the hook firmly when the fish takes the bait. Smallies are famous for leaping out of the water when hooked, and a hook that has not been set properly will often shake loose.

Landing a smallmouth bass

It is always best to have a net handy when fishing for smallmouth bass. They are fast, very strong for their size, and tend to dart away when they realize they are in trouble.

Smallmouth bass do not have sharp teeth like a walleye, pike, or muskie, so you can grab the fish by the lower lip when removing the hook.

Largemouth or smallmouth?

How do you tell the difference between a largemouth bass and a smallmouth bass? In areas where both largemouth and smallmouth bass are present, it may be difficult for a beginner angler to tell which species is on the line, especially with mid-sized fish.

The easiest way to tell the difference between a largemouth and a smallmouth is to look at the lower jaw, which extends beyond the eye on a largemouth bass, but does not go that far in the case of a

smallmouth bass. Smallmouth bass also tend to have a pattern of darker lines that run vertical, whereas largemouth bass often have a line that runs horizontally along the side of the fish.

Colour and pattern distinctions can vary from region to region so the lines may be less obvious in some cases.

Underappreciated

A smallmouth bass is sometimes viewed as an annoying fish that takes bait meant for a walleye, but smallies deserves more respect. They are pound-for-pound the best fighters among the fish commonly caught by cottagers. Some people also claim that smallmouth bass taste great and can be a fantastic alternative to walleyes for shore lunches or cabin meals.

Smallmouth Bass



Largemouth Bass



Interesting Fact

Populations of smallmouth bass in many northern lakes and rivers are not native to the area. According to a number of reports, the fish arrived when the railway lines were being built. Avid anglers apparently brought the bass to stock the newly accessible locations.

Pets at the Cottage

By Cottage Tips Staff



Pets can have a ton of fun at the lake, but there are a number of things to consider before taking the family dog or cat to the cottage.

On The Road - Travelling With a Pet

Travelling in a vehicle can be stressful for pets. A small meal before you hit the road will put some food in the pet's stomach and help reduce the risk of motion sickness.

Place the pet in the back of the vehicle and keep it in a travel cage or secured with a special pet seatbelt. Maintain the temperature in the vehicle at a comfortable level. Turn the music down. Pets have very sensitive ears.

Plan regular food and toilet breaks that are convenient for both you and the pet.

Remember to attach the harness or chain to the pet before getting out of the vehicle at a rest stop. Animals love exploring new surroundings and valuable cottage time could be lost if the pet gets away.

Around The Cottage - How to Keep a Pet Safe

The fields and forests around a cabin can be dangerous worlds for Fifi and Fido. Ensure you have the proper collars and medication to help fight ticks and fleas. Inspect your pet's fur every day for parasites. A quick stroll through the woods or long grass can result in dozens of ticks hitching a ride and making their way through the fur to a meal.

Write down the contact information for the nearest veterinarian in case your pet runs into trouble. Wildlife encounters often end badly for domestic animals.

Porcupines and skunks might seem like interesting new friends, but the pet will quickly find out the feeling isn't mutual and a mouthful of quills or a blast of skunk spray will ruin the holiday.

Wolves, coyotes, and bears could attack a pet if they feel threatened or see it as an easy meal. Owls are also a risk if the pet is small and left outside in the evening.

Trigger-happy neighbours might mistake a dog for another animal. Some people also have traps set on their properties, so it is best to keep the family pet close to the cabin.

Disease is another risk to consider. Rabies is rare but always a threat. Ensure the pet has had all of its required shots.

Blastomycosis is a fungus found in some cottage regions and can be fatal for dogs. If the animal gets sick after a recent trip to the cottage, make sure the veterinarian is aware the dog has been in the woods.

On The Water - Pet Safety in the Boat

Safety on the water is just as important for the family pet as it is for everyone else. A pet lifejacket is a good idea when the animal is in the boat, especially in areas with strong currents and cold water. Remove collars and chains before allowing the pet to swim. Submerged tree branches can easily hook the pet's collar and cause the animal to drown. Inspect your dog for leeches after it has been in the water.

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