

# Nature Notes

## Myrtle Junction



Whether hunting, fishing or skiing, Kimberley residents have always had a strong connection to the outdoors. Many of the early people in town spent hours in the bush exploring, developing trails, and enjoying the surrounding areas in all four seasons. Being so close and accessible to town, the area now known as the Kimberley Nature Park was an oft-used part of the landscape.

Winter sports enjoy a long history in Kimberley. Scandinavians strongly influenced recreation in Kimberley by building a ski-jump on the hill overlooking today's Overwaita in 1930. Role models with names like Helland, Luberg, Olsen, Christensen and Lindquist soon popularized ski-jumping so that by 1933 the first tournament took place with competitors travelling from Vancouver and Revelstoke to take part. That same year a demonstration of slalom skiing took place on the lower part of the hill. The new sport quickly caught on and by the end of the decade the Kimberley Ski Club was formed. Volunteer work parties constructed the first downhill ski hill on Myrtle Mountain, in the heart of what is now known as the Kimberley Nature Park.

Many a young Kimberley-ite became adept at slalom skiing on the new ski hill and used the warming cabin built at the base of the hill, now known as Myrtle Junction, to warm chilled fingers and toes. For about a decade the Myrtle Mtn. ski hill provided the community with an important recreational outlet but after the Second World War, interest in downhill skiing skyrocketed and the Ski Club developed plans to build a bigger facility on North Star Mountain.



Myrtle Mountain was soon abandoned as a site of down-hill skiing but the park trails around it continued to be used by snowmobilers, snowshoers and cross-country skiers while local mountain bikers have built a daring ride down the former ski slope. The original cabin burned down and was re-built only to be burned again in the 1980's. A kiosk is now the only shelter to be found at Myrtle Jct.

Today the Kimberley Nature Park carries on the legacy of those early residents by providing a place where the trails are enjoyed throughout the year by hikers, bikers, X-C skiers and snowshoers. And Myrtle Junction continues to this day to be a place where Park users gather and re-group.

Visit [www.rockies.net/kimberley/naturepark](http://www.rockies.net/kimberley/naturepark) for a hard copy or more information about Nature Park events.