nastawgan

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magpie river west

A 225-km, 10-day canoe trip from Lake Eric to Lake Magpie.

Article: Paul Barsevskis and friends
Photos: Simon Rivers-Moore, Paul Barsevskis

There is a moment of truth in every canoe trip when you realize that it has finally begun. For us (Paul Barsevskis, Igor Devreeze, Joanne Hale, Mark Riddell, Simon Rivers-Moore, Trudy van Dinter) that sense of commitment came when the train (Québec North Shore and Labrador Railway) dropped us off at Lake Eric at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, 20 August 1985.

Thinking back over the last few hectic days one remembers the scenic drive to Sept-Iles, hitchhiking back from the car shuttle, the breakfast at Tim Horton's, and the last beer on the train. Not to mention the frantic borrowing of camping and photography equipment after my house had been burglarized the Friday of our scheduled departure.

In fact, up until the last month, there had been a question as to whether we should paddle the Magpie at all. This river first came to our attention in the book Guide des Rivières du Québec. Here it was described as a very difficult grade 3+ whitewater river for experts only. This image was perpetuated by articles in River Runner and Canoe magazines. A more accurate picture emerged after talking to Eric Bailley in Florida who had been down it in the summer of 1984. We also obtained extremely useful maps from the "Fédération Québecoise du Canot-camping Inc.," prepared by Raymond Boyer from a 1981 expedition. His notes not only graded the rapids, but indicated desirable campsites.

We were not the only group of canoeists standing by the tracks as the conductor waved goodbye from the departing train. There was another party of Magpie aspirants consisting of a federal MP, his son, and four other young men. They wanted to do a more challenging river after having paddled numerous ones in Ontario. They appeared confident of their abilities and showed their optimism by bringing along only tarps instead of tents. Having been carried away by blackflies on the Moisie River the previous year, we wondered if they knew something that we didn't about the Québec bug population.

It felt good to be on the water. That first afternoon we travelled 20 km under cloudy and drizzly skies. We passed the other group and hoped to have the river to ourselves.

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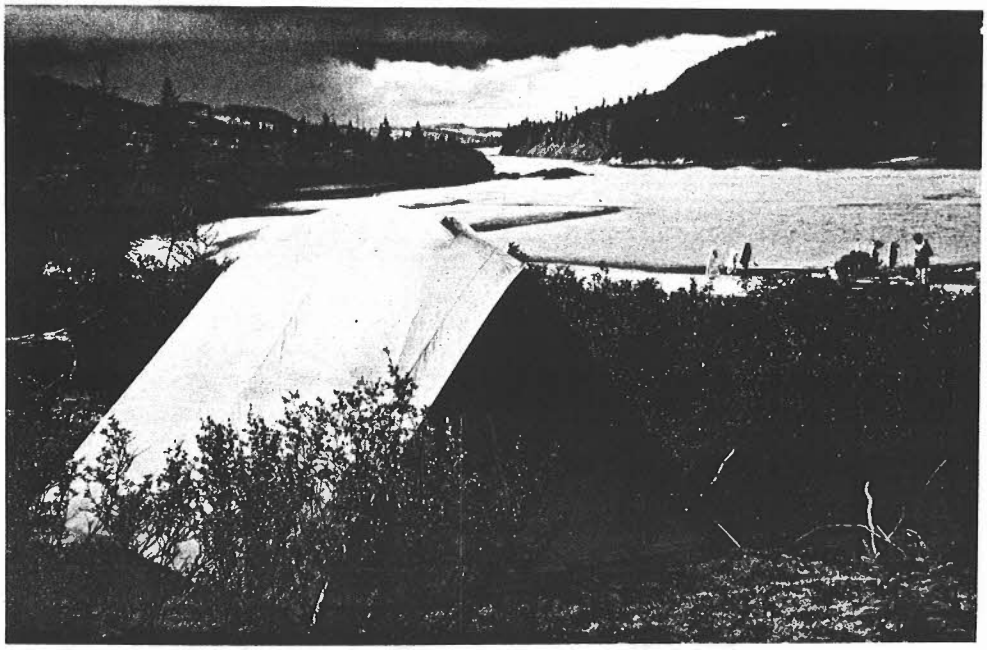


For the first 100 km the west branch of the Magpie wound its way through flat countryside. Campsites were plentiful as long as one did not mind sandy beaches. Vegetation consisted mainly of black spruce, alders, Labrador tea, and reindeer moss. Playing word games in the canoes made the time pass quickly. With the rain and blackflies as constant companions we reached more rugged terrain on the third day. Our campsite that night had recently been frequented by bears feeding on grubs and blueberries. As an extra precaution, we put the food into a canoe and anchored it a good distance from shore.

On day 4 the true nature of the Magpie emerged as it plunged over large drops and sped down steep grade 3 and 4 rapids. The only traces of portage trails were around waterfalls. Otherwise we had to run, line, or carry over the rocks on shore. Mark and Joanne dumped that morning. A blazing fire and hot soup were welcome antidotes to the cold water and the exhausting swim. This incident resulted in the loss of, not a canoe or gear, but rather some confidence; and that proved to be a vital commodity for this river.

We only progressed six kilometres on day 5. The canyon in this section of the river was full of a seemingly endless number of unrunnable ledges and violent rapids. The lining harnesses proved their worth and minimized much of the carrying. The spraycovers were invaluable for the parts that we did run. In contrast to the upper reaches, the river seemed to be quite high, no doubt swollen from the previous days of rain and the numerous feeder streams.

The time spent in preparing our equipment now seemed a very worthwile investment. All three boats had homemade spraycovers fastened to the gunwales with snaps. Mark's and Simon's required each paddler to wear a skirt that fitted over a hoop on the main cover. Both were constructed in two sections to make removal easier for portaging. Mine was an open cockpit design, with 15 cm vertical baffles to deflect the water. It sufficed, but the completely closed canoe concept with skirts proved to be far superior.

Finally, clear skies on day 6! This was a superb day with several exciting runs and little portaging. After lunch we stopped and bathed at a particularly scenic spot and spent several luxurious minutes soaking up the sun's rays. Later, Igor and Simon executed a daring run down a difficult rock garden with large standing waves and numerous ledges. We now felt at ease with this river. It was more a friend than an adversary.

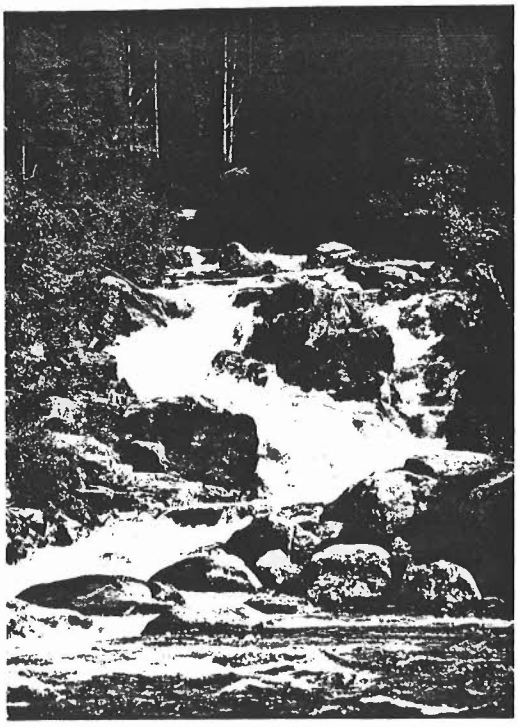
Not all perfect days end perfectly. Towards evening a rain shower coincided with us lining the canoes along a steep and rocky shore. Mark and Joanne's boat overturned on a ledge. We all watched helplessly as the powerful current wrested the rope from their hands and proceeded to carry the canoe down the rapid. It came to rest 200 m downstream pinned on a rock. Very fortunately the only damage sustained was a broken gunwale and a rip in the kevlar. Equally fortunately there was a beautiful campsite nearby where we retreated to ponder the day's events.

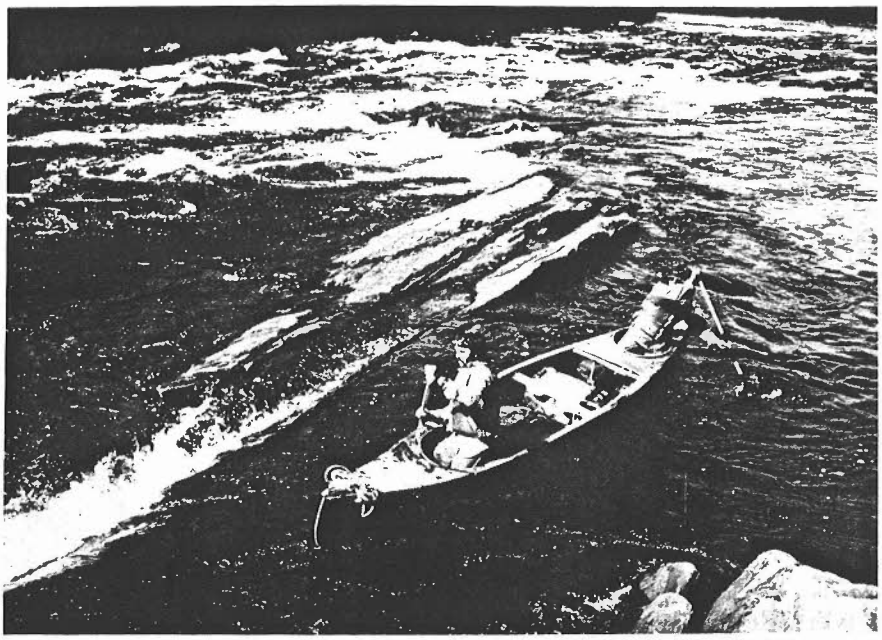
The next morning we spliced in a supporting gunwale on Mark's canoe. It wasn't quite as good as new, but it did look rather sporty with the brightly colored orange string.

By mid afternon we had entered a 20 km canyon section where the river drops at a disconcerting rate of 9.5 m/km (50 ft/mile) before emptying into Lake Magpie. This was the most scenic and wild part. Progress was very slow with few calm stretches between the spectacular drops and turbulent rapids. A beach below a waterfall provided an elegant campsite. A colorful display of northern lights concluded another rewarding day.

The maps indicated that the next section would be quite difficult. That proved to be the case as we tried in vain to find a portage trail that Eric Bailley had reported using the previous summer. In frustration we left the canoes and started bushwhacking with our gear. After two hours of slogging and feeding the blackflies we finally reached the end of the rapid and set up a makeshift campsite on a tiny beach. It was Trudy's turn to make dinner that night. It was a good thing too, because she appeared to be the only one capable of the task. Even Igor, who could always be depended on for a whimsical perspective, found no humor in the situation. An emotional low settled over the group.

During a steady and cold rain the next morning we went back for the canoes. This time we paddled and lined a little further downstream and then did discover the reported portage trail. Back at the campsite for lunch we were pleasantly suprised to see a group of five kayakers. These men from Pennsylvania were expert paddlers and they were thoroughly enjoying the river having to do far less carrying than we. They were travelling extremely light and were resolutely surviving on freeze-dried food only. They





reported that the other party of canoeists that we had met on the train had badly damaged a boat, lost some supplies, and were now waiting for a rescue helicopter.

That afternoon it continued to rain. At one point Trudy and I underestimated the power of the current, were unable to do a proper backferry, and ended up going over a ledge where it should never have been run. Luckily, this served as a useful warning, and a canoe full of water was the only damage. Everyone's confidence had plummeted as we spent the rest of the afternoon lining and negotiating our way over the dangerously slippery rocks. The total distance covered on day 9 was only three kilometres. That evening a tarp sheltered us from the cold rain as we ate dinner huddled around a reluctant fire.

The food on this trip really helped hold body and soul together. A variety of menus was ensured by rotating cooking duties. There were always eager takers for Simon's munchies of home-dried fruit leather and beef jerky. Bannock with raisins or chocolate chips, baked over the evening fire, never lasted beyond the next lunch. Freshly-caught trout once supplemented a breakfast. We may have envied the kayakers in their ability to run rapids, but we revelled at the superiority of our cuisine.

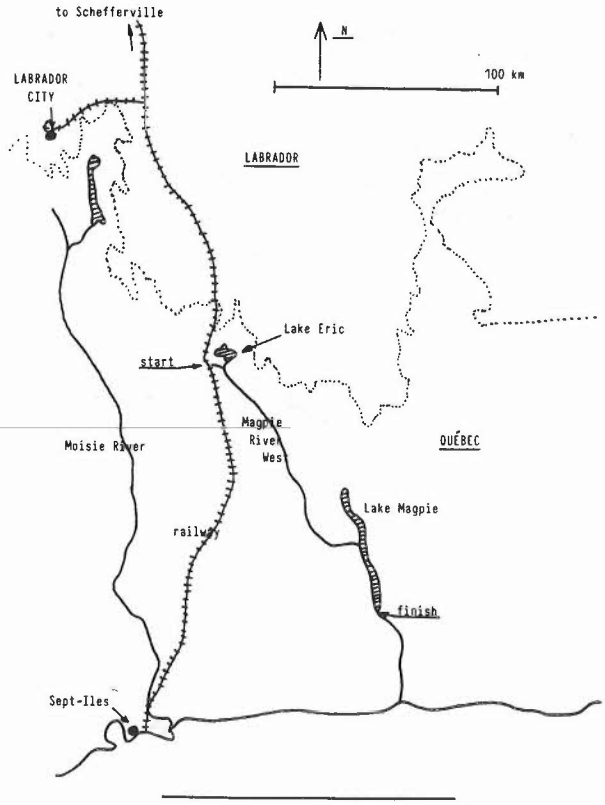
Brilliant sunshine after the last two miserable days was more than welcome. Just before Lake Magpie, at the end of a gorge, the river narrows down and froths through a seven-metre gap between two boulders. This marked the end of our last portage and provided an ideal luncheon spot. Whitecaps and large swells greeted us on Lake Magpie. Fortunately the wind was blowing in the right direction so we lashed the three canoes together, erected a sail, and set off down the lake in regal fashion.

The 30th of August turned out to be the last paddling day of the trip. We happened to meet the caretakers of the hunting and fishing cabins on Lake Magpie and considered the option of flying out. To finish the last 50 km of river would mean getting home two days behind schedule. The realities of our working and everday world tipped the scales in favor of leaving as soon as possible. The men said that they would radio for a plane, as we proceeded to the south end of the lake to await its arrival.

It was in such an anticlimactic fashion that we left a river that was so full of superlatives. Of course we remember the challenges, hardships, and thrills; but most of all we recall the comradeship, the unflagging spirits, and the helping hands in times of trouble.

The Magpie is a superb river and some of us will paddle it again. More time and better weather would have considerably added to its enjoyment. Contrary to some exaggerated and sensational reports, it can be safely canoed by experienced paddlers with solid whitewater skills, The eastern Québec region is a goldmine of wilderness rivers and the Magpie stands out as one of its most challenging and beautiful.

Paul Barsevskis



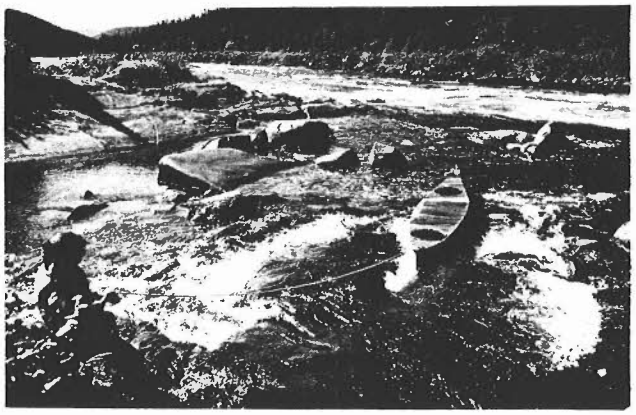
We all know how it is when people return from a wilderness trip. They get together and, well, they gush -- about the fabulous rapids,the wonderful weather, the great food, and all that. Well, our group succumbed to that urge with a passion and with hearts grown much fonder with absence. I couldn't believe my ears as the delightful, happy recollections surfaced! Knowing my companions well and realizing that the amnesia runs deep, I have taken upon myself the unpopular task of telling it like it really was.

Did we really forget the never-ending drizzle which seemed to chill us through to ur bones? Or being faced at 7 a.m. with the choice of a variety of damp to wet clothes to force onto our protesting bodies? How about slogging our way (with packs waterlogged to backbreaking weights) along treacherous rocks; or feeling the discouragement after yet another decision to line rather than run because of the awesome volume of the R3 rapids swollen to R6 levels? I recall images of tired, drenched bodies reaching into soggy packs to pull out mysterious bags of spices, lentils, dried vegetables; drawing on energy reserves from somewhere to whip up unbelievably delicious conconctions for the crowd. And who could forget the blackflies? Daily morning reports were given (free of charge) on the states of Paul's arm and my face, both swollen to hideous proportions by the little creatures, whose armies attacked faithfully at regular intervals.

One day was a particularly low one. The first sign was when Mark, whose stamina leval borders on the insane, actually took a sitting break on the portage trail. Then our Great White Leader, the ever-calm, tactful, unflappable Paul, to our horror raised his voice and, yes, uttered an expletive! That evening Simon's dry wit around the campfire began to sputter and fade, and Igor the Bear, our entertainer, masseur, and spiritual guide, felt a need to wander off and be by himself. Oh! we were in trouble! The clincher came the following morning when Trudy and I (priding ourselves on being independent women committed to doing our share, carrying our weight, etc.) voiced not even a whisper of protest when the men gallantly volunteered to go back for the boats. We spent a lovely morning gossiping and doing the dishes!

But even I have some positive memories: soothing backrubs, crazy word games, the splendor of sunshine (at last!) on our faces as we raced down the lake on our handcrafted catamaran, breaking up with laughter at the revelations of our fortune teller, the running commentary from a certain tent when the snoring began, the sparkling eyes and proud grins after a superb whitewater run. My lasting memory from the Magpie is a sense of closeness and appreciation for my canoeing companions who are also my friends, for their toughness, their resourcefulness, their support and their laughter on a trip that pushed us close to our limits.

Joanne Hale



I generally remember the Magpie as a trip that often had high levels of difficulty, danger, and discomfort. However, we survived rather well with a combination of good equipment, excellent food, a sense of humor, and a really strong group of people.

A night I fondly remember followed a rough day of running, lining, and lifting over numerous drops. It was a cold, clear night and we sat around the fire eating Simon's wonderful bannock and drinking coffee. Prior to this we had had a clothes-washing and bathing session. Our good spirits, which were up due to the lack of bugs, the panoramic view, contented stomachs, and clean bodies, were futher heightened by a spectacular display of northern lights.

A contrast to this was two days later, after a wet afternoon of lining along the side of a very dangerous rapid. We were forced to camp at a somewhat questionable location, with Joanne and I perched on a large rock above the river. The cold driving rain made it a major effort to keep the fire going. To make matters worse, I made a large incision across my thumb while sawing wood. At some point I retired to the tent to warm up and pull myself together. It was great to have the rest of the group carrying on with the dinner and the fire.

What impressed me most was that despite the accidents, injuries, rain, and cold, the group held up extremely well and probably could have survived even greater stress. It is an understatement to say that water levels and weather can adversely affect an already challenging trip.

Mark Riddell

The people you trip with are the difference between success and disaster. This is particularly true when conditions are extreme. On the Magpie River, which is wonderful and challenging under ideal conditions, we encountered what felt like constant rain. Any eastern trip expects blackflies and hard to find campsites as standard, but waking up to the sound of rain, knowing you had to crawl back into your wet clothes almost every day, is the limit. Despite the many liftovers on dangerously slippery rocks and trail-less portages through alders, the Magpie is not only a positive memory but something I would do again without hesitation with this group. There was always a joke when it seemed like we couldn't go on, or a back rub after a really bad day. Word games, fortune readings, excellent food, northern lights in the real outdoors with people you could trust with your life, is as close to heaven as some of us will ever get.

Simon Rivers-Moore

I had never heard of the Magpie before Paul mentioned it, but it sure sounded exciting. After reading the article in River Runner I thought it might be a little TOO exciting.

We had a great time! It was a terrific group of people and we all managed to hang in when things got rough. The weather didn't always co-operate but the seemingly never-ending rain gave way to spectacular double rainbows and beautiful early morning mist.

At times the campsites were spacious, other spots barely had room for a tent. The food was delicious and plentiful. The portaging and lining over slippery rocks was balanced by fun rides over exciting rapids. A couple of nights we were treated to beautiful northern lights. Camped at the end of Lac Magpie was the first time I had ever heard a wolf howling, a sound made even more eerie by a full moon.

The Magpie was both physically and psychologically demanding. The trip made me appreciate the beauty of the outdoors, the value of a capable group, and the determination needed to meet the ever-challenging wilderness.

Trudy van Dinter

by David F. Pelly

Photo: Michael Peake

It was a quiet Sunday morning in Baker Lake. As usual in the springtime, half the town had gone out on the land for the weekend; the char were running in the stream mouths all along the north shore of the lake. Most of the other half were still in bed. Our canoe was pulled up on the beach in front of Tulurialik's shed; we'd carried all our gear down from the house. It was time to load the canoe and push off for the short paddle across the ice-free rim of the bay, out to the airport, where our chartered single-Otter waited for the flight to the Hanbury-Thelon confluence.

A shout from behind, calling my name, made me look up from my task. Down the gently sloping foreshore hurried a local man with his rifle. He'd been watching for us out the window of the church, where the morning service was just beginning. "Take my gun," he insisted. "You'll need it up there if you see a grizzly!"

This hunter was the last of many in Baker who tried to convince me that it would be basic common sense to carry a rifle while paddling down the Thelon — an area they consider to be prime grizzly country. These men of the land, for whom I have tremendous respect, are genuinely frightened of grizzlies. One must presume they have good reason.

Though I did not carry a rifle, despite even my friend's last-minute appeal, all the concerned comment during the weeks which preceded our departure did cause me to think somewhat more than usual about just what I would do upon encountering a bear and, more important, how I would try to avoid those encounters. Not only was there lots to fuel my thoughts in those conversations with local hunters, they also had several useful suggestions -- besides borrowing their rifles!

One hunter told me that if I wouldn't carry his rifle, then I must take his dog. Bears, he said, are afraid of wolves. And we all know how wolf-like those dogs can appear: witness the convincing performances in the movie version of Mowat's Never Cry Wolf. It must, he insisted however, be one of the white dogs -- the bears are smart enough to know that wolves in that area are supposed to be whitish grey. That is, he told me, the main reason he takes his dogs out on the land with him.

In the end I compiled a list of tips on the subject, most provided by the hunters and the local Wildlife Officers.

1. Keep your camp clean; don't leave food scraps or garbage around -- that's basic, we all know it, but it cannot be overemphasised.

2. If you suspect there may be bears in the area, try to camp on an island, or at least on the opposite bank.

3. Wash all dishes and pans before retiring for the night.

4. If you suspect there may be bears in the area, forego the fish dinner and opt for something with less savor; freeze-dried foods are relatively odorless (some would say tasteless too!).

5. Don't clean fish in camp; I make it a habit to clean them where I catch them before getting to camp.

6. Separate your food storage and cooking area well away, but visible, from the tents.

7. Don't take food into the tent with you for the night.

8. Don't camp in the middle of a berry patch.

The major precaution we took was the daily organization of our campside. The tent was always well removed from the "kitchen," where the food was carefully packed up every evening and placed under a tarp held down by rocks. Normally the tent was downstream from the food. Farther downstream, our canoe was ready to go. Thus, in the event of sighting a bear at the food, which we could always see from the tent, we could make good our escape (downstream) without having to approach the bear in order to access the canoe.

Supposing that all these precautions don't work and you are faced with a bear, what then? I received no shortage of advice on that matter too.

One Baker Lake man recounted a story he had heard about a hunter who was sleeping in his tent when a bear stuck its head in through the door--to examine the menu, so to speak. The undaunted hunter is reported to have stared right into the gaping jaws of the grizzly, gathered up all his might, then slammed his fist into the back of the bear's throat. The intruder, I am told, backed off. I am not at all certain that, given the same circumstances, I could come out swinging like that. The common wisdom is to lie face down, motionless.

If you have more time and space between you and the bear, on the open tundra for example, a lot of noise will likely scare the bear off. Some people carry firecrackers to accomplish this. Banging pots and pans, or just screaming, are not bad alternatives.

A final bit of knowledge which I picked up through all this will never be useful to me ... I hope. If you do have to shoot a grizzly, don't aim for the head. Most bullets will just ricochet off the skullbone, and somewhat anger your assailant. A deadly shot must be carefully aimed at the front shoulder, in order to penetrate the heart. Since, like many other barrenlands canoeists, I refuse to carry any firearms, I do not expect to ever use this gem of wisdom.

The Thelon is probably the river in the Barrens where one stands the greatest chance of seeing a grizzly. Last summer we did not. With neither rifle nor dog in company, we paddled and hiked the river corridor for three weeks without so much as sighting a bear in the distance, a pile of steamy dung in the Ursus Islands being the closest we came.

The story, of course, has a moral. Not unlike many other aspects of barrenlands canoeing, an attitude of preventative awareness helps to ensure safe travel -- and that's no dung!

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nastawgan is an Anishinabi word meaning 'the way or route'

EDITORIAL

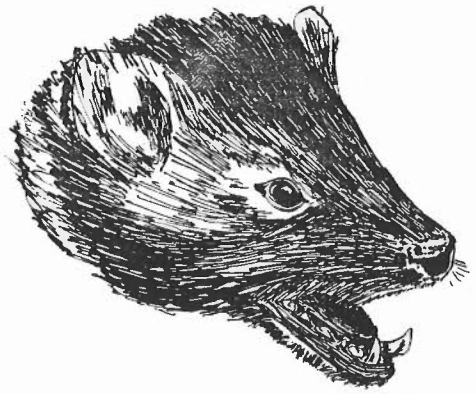
In the last three or four issues of our newsletter a trend has become apparent towards rather long articles about tough, extended trips in faraway locations by highly experienced canoeists and hikers. This trend is not part of editorial policy but rather the result of the kind of material received from the contributors.

Although this kind of article will always be most welcome for publication in Nastawgan, the danger exists that long stories about exotic trips are getting too much exposure over the simpler, closer-to-home trips of the less experienced canoeists. So, if you think we are leaning too heavily towards the Barrens and Labrador, send me the stories about your own experiences in the locations you know best and have learned to love. What is especially needed are short articles (up to about 2000 words) that can be used as fillers to round off a page, articles on equipment, technical tips, anecdotes, thoughts, ideas, humor, etc., etc. And please, don't forget to send in your reports on WCA trips. The outings are a most important part of the activities of the WCA, and several trip reports should appear in each issue of Nastawgan.

Also, don't spare me your criticism. If you have ideas to improve the contents and appearance of Nastawgan, contact me and we'll discuss your proposals. It is, above all else, your newsletter and we need your input.

To assist future contributors in submitting their material in such a way that both the writer and the editor will benefit most, a simple sheet of Contributors Guidelines is being prepared which should be available upon request before the end of April. Contact me then and I'll send you a copy. In the meantime, keep writing those magic stories.

Toni Harting



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The publishers of NASTAWGAN: the Canadian North by Canoe and Snowshoe wish to thank the Wilderness Canoe Association for the support you lent to this book. From the fine name, NASTAWGAN, which you provided, through your assistance with promotion, to the early production of a review, you have demonstrated a concerned awareness of the importance of serious wilderness literature in Canada. That is, in our view, a role which suits the WCA.

Your last issue's review, in particular, deserves comment. Sandy Richardson wrote a very fair and reflective critique, for which we are grateful. It is abundantly clear that he put a great deal of thought into his task.

There is one point in the review which deserves a moment's more attention from the community of canoeists in the 1980s. Regrettably, in referring to a sentence on page 27 of NASTAWGAN, Sandy discovers a "glaring error" -- a misunderstanding symptomatic of the modern canoeist's perspective. [It is only fair to admit that we reacted in the same way when we first read Ned Franks' manuscript two years ago.] Referring to David Thompson, the full quote reads: "His 1837 survey of the Muskoka and Madawaska Rivers was one of these late-in-life, money-earning tasks which altogether added another 30,000 miles to his travels, making a lifetime total of over 80,000 miles." [Underline added for emphasis.]

Today when we think of wilderness travel we usually only contemplate a few hundred miles, at most, at a time. Very often our wilderness travel is preceded and followed by trips of longer distance in modern conveyance, necessary to access the wilderness we seek. So when we go for a week's canoe trip in Northern Ontario, we probably travel about a thousand miles, though only a fraction of that is paddled. That was not so in David Thompson's time. In order to do a border survey to the west of Lake Superior, he had to get there from his home in Montreal, most of the way through wilderness. Our perspective on travel has changed.

The statement in the book says that after his retirement from the Northwest Company, from 1816 on, he travelled a total of 30,000 miles. There is not a suggestion, as the review implies, that the Muskoka/Madawaska survey alone added this distance. When you consider the miles necessary to accomplish, over ten years of travel back and forth, the survey of the Canada-U.S. border from St. Regis in Québec to the northwest angle of Lake of the Woods -- not to mention his subsequent, extensive survey work in Québec -- it is not surprising to learn that this inveterate traveller of the Canadian wilderness thus accumulated 30,000 miles to make a lifetime total of 80,000 miles.

That is an accomplishment which we, the modern-day canoeists, can admire as we drive our cars north on Highway 400 or fly over the tundra in a float plane, bound for a few weeks in the wilderness.

The Publishers
of NASTAWGAN,
The Canadian North
by Canoe & Snowshoe

too close for comfort

Bill Ness

Peter arrived on the scene first, just ahead of me, and waded right in to help recover the canoe.

The couple had dumped while playing in the rock garden below the falls and now their craft was locked in an intimate embrace with a chunk of granite. The Minden wildwater course was sure doing its best to live up to its reputation as a boateater!

I worked my way out from shore to assist in the unwrapping of the Royalex doughnut, but quickly discovered, as the water came above my knees, that I risked being swept off my feet and washed down through the succeeding drops. Needless to say, I quickly retreated to shore to exercise my supervisory skills as Peter and the gentleman wrestled with the canoe, while his forlorn-looking partner on the bank hung on to the painter.

Finally the boat swung free with a lurch, the painter knot did the old yellow polyropylene self-untying rope trick, and the canoe went on its merry way to the bottom of the rapid.

Suddenly the reovery team found itself floating free in the strong current. Peter made a mad dash for shore and clambered out, but the other fellow wasn't so lucky. Stumbling forward off-balance, his foot had caught between the rocks. The erstwhile rescuer was pitched over and pushed under by the tremendous force of the Gull River crashing over his back.

For an instant I felt stunned, paralyzed. I couldn't believe this was actually happening. I knew that if his foot was tightly wedged in there, he was probably beyond

a special weekend in **algonquin park**

Gail Vickars

Thursday, while looking out the window at work, watching the rain pour down in sheets and splash off the concrete, I thought, "Welcome to my world, guys." Hopefully there would be a change in the weather. The next day, 15 November, I was meeting at my home three members of the 3rd Aurora Venturer Company (one of the teenage sections of Boy Scouts of Canada). Later Mike and Diane Wills would be picking up most of the equipment as it wouldn't fit in my car.

During the drive up, I discovered that some of the Venturers had not been to Algonquin before. This would be a new experience for them. We were to find out that was true in more ways than one.

We were the first campers to arrive at Mew Lake Campground. "There's no one else here," came a remark from the back seat of my car. "Isn't that great!" I responded, ignoring the tremor in his voice.

We found a suitable campsite and amidst a lot of clowning around, set up tents by starlight. It was interesting to watch these guys in their new situation. I realized that they represent the majority of the population who are uneasy away from an urban environment, while those of us who feel at home alone in the woods are in the minority. One guy didn't want to go into the woods alone in the dark while another thought we could turn on a tap to get water. "Don't you think it's frozen?" I asked. Maybe, but he thought we should try anyway. We did, with no results, so then went to the lake and broke a hole in the ice with my shovel to get water for supper.

The air was turning colder. I was starting a fire in the firepit when someone commented, "Hey, there's a fox!" I looked around and sure enough, there it was, and it appeared friendlier than any other fox I'd ever met. I wondered about him (or her) at first as he came so close to us, but he seemed to know what he was doing so I stopped worrying. We figured he was just used to people and had followed his nose to the food.

At 10:30 p.m., just as dinner was cooked and the fire was going warmly, Mike and Diane showed up and the fox left. We were sure glad to see the rest of our gear, especially the warm clothes. We stood around the fire to eat.

In the morning Diane informed us that the temperature had fallen to -15°C during the night. It took us a while to cook, eat breakfast, pack our gear, and be ready to move off down the trail. We weren't used to carrying camp on our backs and had much more equipment than was needed, nor were we used to pack and run. It was about lunch time when we left. Mike went into town to have a tire fixed. From the Highland Trail parking lot we set off down the trail to Provoking Lake. Diane, Trevor, and Derek ran ahead, while Greg and I sauntered along, enjoying the scenery. We were soon joined by our foxy friend. It would have been nice if it was our magnetic personalities he was interested in, but he kept eyeing my apple. After I had reluctantly given it to him, he burned it and then went to sponge off the other group.

Mike rejoined us just before we reached our campsite near the small falls on the Madawaska River. The weather was definitely becoming warmer. We set up camp and then hiked up the hill, returning by a different route, just in time for supper in the rain. The aroma of Mike and Diane's soup brought the fox back. We'd strung our food in a tree while we were hiking. When we returned, one of our group took it down to get some food and left it on the ground. The fox headed straight for it, but he was quickly deterred.

Sunday morning it was either snowing, raining, or both. We were quicker in packing and moving out than before. Sadly, there was no sign of the fox as we headed back to the road. It was a tranquil scene we enjoyed, standing on top of the hill and looking out over the frozen lake covered with a layer of water.

When I reached the car the guys were already inside and had changed into warm, dry boots. I suggested we stop at Ragged Falls for lunch. "Would we have to get out of the car?" they asked. "Well, you can't see the falls without getting out of the vehicle and walking a few feet," I answered. They declined, "Maybe some other time."

As we drove out, big fresh snowflakes were falling gently on my windshield. We were surrounded by lakes, some of which were frozen, some open, all fringed with white. The view we left behind gave us a feeling of peace.

"Yes, guys, welcome to my world!" Or was it the other way around? We drove back listening to their music, talking about videos which I hadn't seen. I heard via the grapevine though, that when they got back, they spoke to others about wet tents, hiking, new experiences ... and a fox! Welcome to each other's world!

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too close....

help. Those few agonizing seconds that ticked by while he was under, before he wrenched his foot from that lethal trap and broke the surface, I would never want to repeat.

It was a situation that should never have occurred. Neither of them should have been out in water that deep. All of us should have known that, but there they were in the river, and neither I nor the belayer voiced any protest.

Maybe it happened because it was late in the day and we were tired and off-guard. Perhaps, too, we had grown complacent, having seen other paddlers do it, or even acted as offenders ourselves on past occasions without incident. Whatever the reason, the results were the same: that fellow came uncomfortably close to cashing in on his life insurance.

While canoeing can never be made as safe as tiddlywinks since even the most skilled and experienced canoeists occasionally make mistakes or are confronted by unforseen and unknowable events, the hallmark of the competent paddler is the ability to remain in control of the situation and minimize the hazards. Such a canoeist leans not on lady luck but on a practiced low brace.

When a potentially hazardous incident does occur among competent paddlers, it is subsequently frankly and openly discussed by the group as a learning experience to determine why it happened, how it could have been avoided, and how the resulting emergency could have been best handled.

However, as anyone who has spent much time on the rivers knows, this philosophy of competence is far from a universally held ideal. Too often it is supplanted by a naive belief in benign providence coupled with a casual disregard for safety.

When paddlers adopt the standard of carelessness rather than competence, they hurt not only themselves, but also those they paddle with, and their sport in general. At the very minimum, thoughtless persons delay and inconvenience their party. No one enjoys having to fish people out below a run they didn't have a hope in hell completing. And giving them their spare clothes because they didn't bring any, or had put them in a leaky trash bag.

More seriously, when a canoeist gets into trouble he may jeopardize the safety of his fellow paddlers by forcing them into dangerous rescue situations.

Finally, experienced river rats should remember that, whether they want to be or not, they are role models for the newcomers. They'll learn your bad habits as easily as your good ones. Do them a favor, and do yourself one too: teach them by all you say and do that if they want to play the game, they better play by the rules because the river gods can be harsh judges of transgressors.

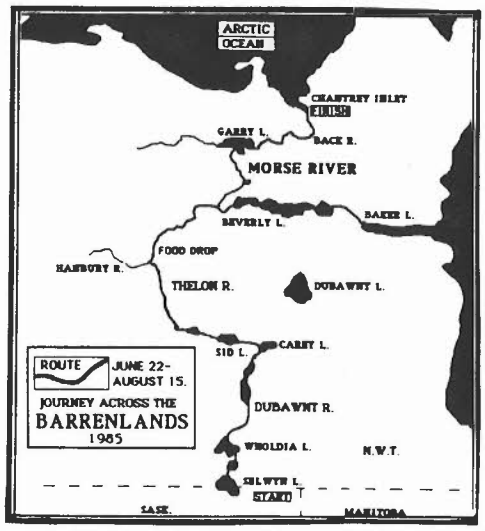
journey across the barrens

the morse river expedition

Article: Bill King
Photos: Michael Peake

Eric Wilton Morse is a name familiar to many in the WCA. Historian, author, and canoeing-pioneer, he is a member of the Order of Canada and the only Canadian member of the prestigious Explorers' Club of New York. His first canoe trip took place in 1918, an era when the canoe was the exclusive craft of fishermen, trappers, and others whose business required them to travel through otherwise unnavigable waters. In the 1950s and 1960s, with a group of companions nicknamed "The Voyageurs," he retraced many of the historic fur-trade routes and became the first modern canoeist to travel many of the rivers of the barrenlands. He has truly earned the title, "Dean of Canadian Canoeists."

As Eric Morse told us at the 1984 AGM, the wilderness is retreating. Many of the trips which he pioneered are now becoming commonplace. I'm sure that this fact was in the back of Geoffrey Peake's mind as he studied the map of the Northwest Territories, researching access routes to the remote Back River. He discovered a major unnamed river running north into Lower Garry Lake on the Back at approximately 101 degrees west. Further reading over the next several months unearthed no account of any previous travel on this river. Why not, he thought, combine a first descent of the river with naming it officially after Eric Morse? Although the latter project proved much more complex than originally envisioned, the idea produced enough enthusiasm in the members of the "Hide-away Canoe Club," (the Peake family plus additives) to result in the Morse River Expedition -- 1985.



Reproduced by permission from Che-mun

Even scaled down from the impossible undertaking originally conceived, the Journey Across the Barrens (or JATB, to save space) was still a formidable trip. A 55-day, 1500-km, south-to-north traverse of the Northwest Territories, it would start at Selwyn lake on the 60th parallel and follow three major river-systems, the Dubawnt, the Thelon, and the Back to Chantrey Inlet on the Arctic coast. Several problems soon became evident. Advice from all sources was unanimous that we should not get caught on the Arctic coast after mid-August; but how early would ice on the southern lakes permit us to start? Fortunately the second and third problems had a combined solution. There was no way that Peter Brewster or I could afford to take two months off from our jobs in order to do the entire trip. It was also obvious when we started calculating the amount of food necessary for six hearty eaters, that there was no way that it would all fit into two canoes. The solution: that Peter and I would join the other four, Mike, Geoff, and Sean Peake, and Peter Scott, at a pre-arranged time and place bringing the food for all six for the second half of the trip. That solved, all that remained was the planning of logistics and outfit, and arranging, as far as possible, for sponsors to pick up the tab. This was largely the job of Mike Peake who, fortunately for the rest of us, both loves, and is very good at, that sort of thing.

The morning of 17 July saw Peter and I standing on the pontoon of a Latham Airways Beaver in the Thelon River just below its junction with the Hanbury, unloading a small mountain of gear and food. We felt very soft and white compared to the sun-browned, fly-bitten, and battle-scarred veterans who confronted us. After twenty-five days on the river they seemed unperturbed by the biting north breeze or by the blackflies which emerged with its every lull.

Their adventures from the first half of the trip would occupy more than one campfire. They began even before the start of the trip when Geoff Peake got off the train for supplies at a whistle-stop between Thunder Bay and Winnipeg and was left behind! Lightly-clad and with no food and little money, he had to hitchhike all the way to Lynn Lake, Manitoba, arriving, sadder-but-wiser, just before the scheduled departure of their charter flight.

Or there was the ninety-kilometre flatwater day! Realizing that a missing rainsuit had to have fallen from the pack on the previous day's portage, they went back for it, only to have to go back again for the equipment lost on the rescue trip.

The predictions of trouble with ice were fulfilled when on 5 July, on Sid Lake between the Dubawnt and Thelon Rivers, the way was blocked. For the next two days the canoeists became sled-dogs, rope-hauling their canoes along the shore ice. But it was not all hardships. The alternating sun and showers produced magnificent rainbows and the many eskers made superb campsites, commanding a wide view of the flat surroundings.

At the Thelon Canyon, the only major whitewater on the Thelon River, there was a brush with disaster. While lining one canoe through a bad section, the upstream end got a little too far out into the current and, as Mike described it, "felt as though it had been attached to a passing freight train!" The canoe got away and rolled in the heavy waves but was retrieved by the downstream crew and, because of the tight spraycover, didn't even swamp -- a lucky escape!

Our first day in the Thelon Game Preserve seemed to set the tone. After seeing isolated caribou or small groups of two or three, toward evening a herd of fifty or more swam the river right in front of our canoes. The clatter of their arrival on the rocky shore flushed a moose who had been resting in the bushes and, as we looked around, we were able to pick out three other moose on the far shore. So popular was this crossing area that what appeared to be a white bathtub ring along the shore proved, on closer inspection, to be caribou fur! We also began, on the following day, to see isolated musk-oxen although we would not see larger herds until we left the river for less-travelled back country.

The next day also found us making the mandatory pilgrimage to the Hornby cabin where John Hornby and his two young companions starved in the winter of 1927, their last days movingly documented in the diaries of Edgar Christian. Standing at their simple graves in the warm summer sunshine we all had a solemn moment to reflect that this unforgiving land shows no mercy to the unprepared. On a lighter note, a well-built cairn on the riverbank contained a letter from David Pelly and Donna Barnett who had passed by on 5 July, doing a peregrine falcon survey. (See Arctic Journal, Nastawgan, Vol. 12, No. 3.) Canada Post should only be so efficient!

That afternoon brought one of our most thrilling sightings. An "unusually-light-colored musk-ox" proved to be a mother barrenland grizzly with two cubs. Honey-blond, with facial markings like a panda, she was as big as a small horse! The cubs, frolicking in play, responded to her sharp grunt when she detected our presence by dashing to her flank and then, safe at mother's side, stood on their hind legs to get a better look at us. After inspecting us for a full minute while cameras clicked frantically, the family wheeled and made off over the ridge. How exciting to see these rare creatures.

The Thelon had other gifts for us as well. Peter Brewster, our avid fisherman, was in heaven. Five-kilogram trout were his for the taking and I'm sure, were we not so well stocked with other food, we could have eaten fish for every meal. We also took full advantage of the firewood available along the treed shores of the Thelon, knowing that once we left this river we would see no more. We were well prepared with two stoves, a Coleman Peak I and an Optimus 111B, and several gallons of fuel, but for now we could be prodigal with our fires.

Just after the Ursus Islands we parted company with the Thelon to begin our ascent to the headwaters of the Morse River, a climb of approximately 140 m. We were now in untravelled country with no route descriptions or trip reports to guide us, although well-armed with maps and aerial photos. What admiration we felt for men like George Back who could make their way through such country with nothing but their compass and sextant and lots of determination. The initial part of the ascent consisted of wading or tracking our canoes up an unnamed river which was usually too swift and shallow to permit us to paddle. In one section we approached to within a metre of a "black rock," paying scant attention to it as we concentrated on keeping our footing on the slippery shore, when the "rock" got painfully to its feet in an attempt to escape. It was a lone musk-ox whose one rear leg was shattered, rendering it virtually immobile. It would be short work for the first predator to come along.

For the next 2½ days we "puddle-jumped," portaging from one small lake to the next and relearning a lesson which I had previously observed on the Nahanni, that "grassy meadows" are seldom what they appear. Wet and poorly drained, each depression was a network of spongy knolls and ankle-deep bog, a strenuous test of men and footgear. The weather was exceptionally fine for the barrens, sunny, warm, and still -- ideal to allow the insects free access! I don't remember who it was that first coined the term "dry rain" for the sound which the blackflies would make as they hurled their bodies against our tents or protective clothing. I doubt that any man among us would have accepted an offer of $1000 for his headnet! As Geoff expressed it in one of our discussions, the bugs, more than the weather or the remoteness, are the true guardians of the wilderness.

Despite our labors and the conditions, the beauties of the land we were passing through kept all our spirits high. In one of the small lakes we encountered a herd of twenty-two musk-oxen grazing by the shore. In the Akiliniq Hills north of Beverly Lake we found the easiest method of ascending several substantial rapids was to wade right up the middle, desperately holding on to the canoes to maintain our footing on the slippery rocks. In this area the play of sun on the rockfaces and whitewater was so lovely that Peter Brewster was moved to express a desire to build a summer cottage there. Wouldn't that put you one-up on the people who complain about commuting to Muskoka?

On 28 July we crossed the Arctic watershed (a most unimpressive, one-foot-above-lake-level bog) and, after navigating the most difficult terrain of the trip, reached "Morse Lake," the designated headwaters, about ten o'clock that night. What a feeling of success! With the prospect of a rest the next day, we sat up far into the night devouring specially-conserved gourmet treats and drinking Eric Morse's carefully-protected bottle of cognac "for the worst night of the trip" (although in our euphoria, I think we may have confused best and worst). The next day, the now-empty bottle was filled with water from the Morse River for representation to Eric.

The 29th of July was a day for resting and mending, for the building of a commemorative cairn on the highest point of land, and for taking of the publicity photos which our sponsors had been promised. Mike Peake was right in his element with frequent cries of "just one more." The six cans of Molson Canadian which we had lugged along through the five days of the ascent were produced, photographed, and consumed with great relish about thirty seconds later. We left the traditional message-in-a-bottle buried in the cairn, not without wondering whether anyone would ever read it.

After all the festivities, the actual descent of the Morse was somewhat anticlimactic. One highlight was another encounter with musk-oxen, this time a herd of forty to fifty animals containing many young. Disturbed by our presence, they retreated perhaps 300 m and then formed their classic "covered wagons" circle. Just like in the picture books! At the outlet of the Morse into Lower Garry

Lake was evidence of a substantial Inuit camp with several tent rings and the bones of many caribou in a rocky cache. While in Baker Lake awaiting our flight out, we met an Inuk of about my age named Tom Iksiraq who, as near as we could reckon, was born close to this spot. He said that they frequently hunted up the Morse River which they called Kuugaryuk, meaning "little river."

A brief digression for a few words about equipment. Travellers above the tree line had better be sure to have four things -- a good canoe, a good tent, good raingear, and good bug protection! To reverse the order, we found that the only satisfactory bug protection was adequate clothing. The problem isn't bites, it's the swarming of the blackflies in their millions which interferes with every activity of daily living. We soon learned to live in headnets and thick, impenetrable clothing, even on the warmest of days. Northern bugs are remarkably resistant to cold, remaining active down to 3°C, but are poor fliers and can't cope with more than a light breeze. Alex Hall, the well-known barrens guide who had given us a lot of valuable advice during the planning stages, closed one of his letters -- "may the wind always blow in your face." At home this had seemed an odd wish for a bunch of canoeists, until on the river we found ourselves unconsciously orienting to face into whatever breeze was available. On the lee side a person might appear to be wearing a black, fuzzy sweater! When insects got into the tent (as was inevitable) we also learned to kill all the mosquitos but ignore the blackflies who, once confined, lose all interest in you and are only trying to escape (the same applies inside a headnet).

Our raingear was partially donated by Patagonia and was extremely high-quality (although correspondingly expensive to buy). We were lucky with our weather in that we always had a drying day following each day of rain. However, we would certainly agree with the manufacturer that, on rivers like the Back where frigid rains may last for days, "non-breatheable but bomb-proof" is the way to go.

We had three different tents, all of which performed adequately. The "Cadillac" of the three was Geoffrey's North Face Pole Sleeve Oval. A marvel of geodesic design, it sat firmly and hummed in even the strongest winds and, though rated as a three-man tent, had lots of room for the six of us to cook supper inside. However, everything comes at a price. If buying this tent in Canada, don't expect to get much change from a $1000 bill!

Lastly, canoes. We had three Old Town Trippers, a 17 ft. high-capacity, keelless, moderately-rockered, ABS canoe which, although presumably slow in flatwater (we had no standard of comparison), was a delight in a rapid, riding the waves with ease and responsive to manoeuvers even though loaded to capacity and beyond. We all felt that without the toughness, flexibility, and slipperiness of ABS, the trip, as we did it, would have been impossible. Our canoes withstood an incredible amount of abuse. But please, boys -- next time how about carrying yokes for us "older fellows!"

It is hard to find appropriate words for the Back River. Remote, ruggedly beautiful, mighty — all apply and yet fail to convey the totality. A casual inspection of a barrengrounds landscape reveals only desolation and yet, as the eye accustoms, there are subtleties of color and of mood in rock and vegetation, in water and sky, which bring a variety of distinctive beauty equal to anything found below the tree line. Add to that the breadth of horizon and the profusion of animal and bird life and it is understandable that, despite its hardships, the barrenland makes addicts of so many canoeists.

The Back is also a whitewater paradise with many named, and justly-famous, rapids. Several highlights stand out in my memory. At Sinclair Falls the unusual grey of the rock combined with the overcast day and a looming esker, forcing a detour of the river, to create an air of brooding malevolence, as if the river was lying in wait for the unwary. As with most of the other rapids, the high water level enabled us to find a "sneak route" along the shore rocks so that, with careful scouting, we seldom required a portage.

At Escape Rapids, fully 1.6 km in length, there was a plateau about halfway down the rapid and about ten metres above the water which made an idyllic campsite. It could only be reached by running the rapid but this didn't prove as difficult as the rapid's reputation would suggest. A layover day at this site enabled us to explore the area and, in particular, to search for and find a wanigan abandoned by a 1975 American canoe party who lost a canoe in Escape Rapids. Although all the contents, except a useless rifle stock, were lost, our own gear was now considerably lighter and we decided to bring out the wanigan in the hope of eventually returning it to its owners.

Or then there was the unnamed rapid with the inescapable eddy. We were following our usual practice of hugging the shore when a sharp bend in the river produced a large eddy — almost a whirlpool. Paddle as hard as we might, we could make no headway against that current! The only escape was to allow ourselves to be carried out into the main channel where, with our hearts thumping, we were whipped around the corner at express-train speed.

At Wolf Rapids we had another brush with disaster. This rapid, which claimed the lives of two American canoeists in 1967 and the worst portion of which follows a blind corner, warrants careful scouting. Our lead crew failed to make sufficient allowance for the slipperiness of ABS. Their canoe slid off its parking place as they scouted and was sucked into the rapid. It was recovered in mid-rapid by the second crew -- no mean feat in grade III to IV whitewater! Again there was no equipment lost but we didn't want to push our luck much further.

The North had yet one more twist in store for us. As we left Escape Rapids, relaxed and ahead of schedule, we should have been paying more attention to the sound of the wind. Although in that location we were well-sheltered by a range of hills, we would have had a better perception of what lay in store for us around the corner. Thirty minutes and 200 m later we had to declare ourselves windbound. The currentless river expansion before us looked like a grade III rapid — and running the wrong way! We might not have been quite so frustrated if we hadn't taken the day before off. Much as we wanted to move on we had to stay put for the next two days while the winds continued to blow. We caught up on our journals, read paperbacks, and fretted. In reviewing my trip journal I note that on 9 August I lamented that with 270 km to go we wouldn't be able to make Chantry Inlet by our 15 August pick-up date. I gave too little credit to the Peakes' single-mindedness in pursuit of a goal! Aided by four days of perfect weather, we covered the 270 km, all but 40 of which were flatwater, in the next five days and even had half a day to spend at Chantry Inlet Lodge (closed for the season on 13 August), letting Peter Brewster enjoy for free the fishing which rich Americans pay $3000 per week to experience! Enroute we took time to climb Mount Meadowbank and McKay Peak -- it's amazing what a view one can get in that flat country from an altitude of less than 30 metres.

Just beyond McKay Peak the river narrows to produce a minor riffle which George Back called "Whirlpool Rapids." It's sometimes difficult to understand the appropriateness of a name, but here the clue lay in the high-water mark which was clearly evident on the rocks a good five metres above the present level.

One more obstacle remained -- Franklin Lake. Angled slightly to the west of north and 32 km long it would be a formidable paddle in any sort of a north wind, but once again Nature smiled and we paddled its length in under eight hours with no major opposition from wind or waves.

On 14 August we completed the final section of the river in a series of violent thunder-squalls. The Gods of the North seemed to be saying: "See, we could have been doing this to you all along!" We camped at the former site of the nursing station across from the mouth of the Hayes River to await pickup the next day. After 55 days, the original four had every reason to feel a sense of accomplishment and we all had the sense of having participated in a historic event which would be permanently visible on the map of the Northwest Territories. It was not until we got to Baker Lake that we found out that months of negotiation had been successful. Three days after our ceremony at the cairn, on 1 August, the NWT Government made it official by passing an order-in-council granting permission to name the Morse River.

news briefs

INSURANCE Due to an astronomical increase in premium (from $800 to $10,000), Canoe Ontario has discontinued their group insurance package. Consequently, our club's liability and individual watercraft coverage is no longer available.

WCA GUIDELINES After much discussion, the Outings Committee has revised the guidelines for WCA trips, trip ratings, and safety rules. The revisions were approved at the 1985 AGM and the new guidelines are presented in this issue of Nastawgan. A few minor changes reflecting current practice have been made to the trip guidelines and safety rules. In addition, a description of whitewater skills has been introduced which corresponds to the river ratings listed. This should be useful to members when looking for a WCA trip suited to their interests and abilities. Any comments on the revised guidelines will be welcomed by the Outings Committee.

CANCELLED DAMS The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources has decided that the proposed construction and reconstruction of the Obabika Lake and Matagamasi Lake Dams will not proceed. As well, the Ministry will not proceed further with the class environmental assessment for the project.

SPORTSMEN'S SHOW BOOTH MATERIALS For the past few years our booth supplies and materials have been stored by Ted Steeves at Karen Bulow Ltd. We are most grateful for the use of this space and may continue to use it. However, we would like to acquire space which would allow for more than basic storage. Our needs are as follows: 1) storage space for the 'flat' items we are presently storing at Bulow's; 2) storage space for 'irregular' items like chairs and the constructed sections that we have previously discarded after the show; 3) space to paint or construct portions of the booth; 4) space to erect the booth a week or two before the show so that we know everything works. If any member has or knows of such space, please contact Bill Ness at 416-499-6389, or Gerry Lannan at 416-629-3149.

WCA MEMBERSHIP LIST Membership lists are available to any members who wish one for personal, non-commercial use. Send a $1.00 bill (no cheques, please!) to Cash Belden, 77 Huntley Street, Apt. 1116, Toronto, M4Y 2P3.

WCA CRESTS AND DECALS Attractive crests and decals, showing the WCA logo in two shades of blue and white, are available to members. The crests measure 51 x 102 mm and cost $3.00 each. The decals are 76 x 152 mm and sell for $1.00 each. Both crests and decals are on sale at WCA meetings and events. Members wishing to order by mail should send a cheque or money order payable to the Wilderness Canoe Association to: Bill King, Hi Mount Dr., Willowdale, Ontario, M2K 1X3. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope, or ad 35¢ for postage.

1986 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING On 22 February the Wilderness Canoe Association held its Annual General Meeting at the St. James Bond Church in Toronto. Forty-one voting members, together with some family and friends, were present at the business meeting which concluded with the election of three new boardmembers: Paul Barsevskis, Bill King, and Stewart McIlwraith. After the adjournment of the business meeting, a lively discussion pertaining to safety aspects of our outings program was held, led by Marcia Farquhar, Tony Bird, and Bill Ness. We were asked to address ourselves to fictitious reports of outings and evaluate the actions of the outings organizers and participants with a view to becomming more aware of our responsibilities with respect to safety. The evening program featured an illustrated talk by Michael Peake on The Morse River Expedition 1985. About 120 individuals, including the guests of honor Pamela and Eric Morse, enjoyed the excellent slides.
Next year's AGM will take place at the Frost Centre near Dorset during the weekend of 28 February and 1 March 1987. Be there!

Ria Harting

LABRADOR/QUÉBEC DAY On 1 March 1986 about thirty people gathered at George and Linda Luste's home in Toronto for a "get together and slide fest" on summer and winter trips in Labrador and the eastern part of Québec. Some thirteen slide shows and several 8 mm films were shown by the people who had made the trips, and all those present immensely enjoyed the presentations which lasted all day and evening. Thanks, Linda and George, for this great day. Perhaps something similar--say northern Ontario,or the Barrens--might be organized on a larger scale next year in co-operation with the WCA and presented in a location where even more people could be present.

T.H.

NEWSLETTER MATERIAL AND DEADLINE Articles, trip reports, book reviews, photographs, sketches, technical tips, or anything else that you think would be of interest to other members, are needed for future issues. The material should be clearly legible, preferably typewritten, and should be presented double spaced with large borders and margins, otherwise it runs the risk of being returned for a rewrite, if time permits. In principle, no material received after the deadline date will be considered for that issue, but will be held for use in a later issue, if appropriate. In some very rare cases, such as time-related news briefs, can acceptance beyond the deadline date be discussed with the editor. The deadline dates for the next three issues are:

issue	deadline date
Summer 1986	4 May 1986
Autumn 1986	17 August 1986
Winter 1986	16 November 1986

PADDLERS AND INFORMATION WANTED

CHILDREN'S CAMP Would you like to spend a vacation helping children ages 7 to 12 improve their canoeing skills? Our small church-sponsored camp runs the first two weeks of August on a quiet lake in Haliburton County. Canoeing is a major part of what we like to offer, giving the kids a chance to do trips on some of the nice rivers nearby. Kayaks were also introduced on the lake last summer and they were very popular. We are looking for a single person, or maybe a married couple with or without children, with the other party on hand as trip leader/shuttler, nature study resource,or kitchen staffer. For further information, please call Phil Nusbaum in Toronto at 416-221-5345.

STIKINE RIVER We need one more canoeist (intermediate or better) for our 2-canoe trip down this wild river in northern British Columbia. Anyone in good physical shape who is interested in participating in this 2-week August trip,please contact Ross Sutherland, 293 Delaware Ave., Toronto, M6H 2T9, phone 416-533-7297(h), or 416-441-3663 (b).

KINGURUTIK RIVER If you are interested in paddling this wild river in northern Labrador during a period of five weeks starting anywhere between 15 and 25 July, please contact Pat Lewtas in Toronto at 416-961-6575.

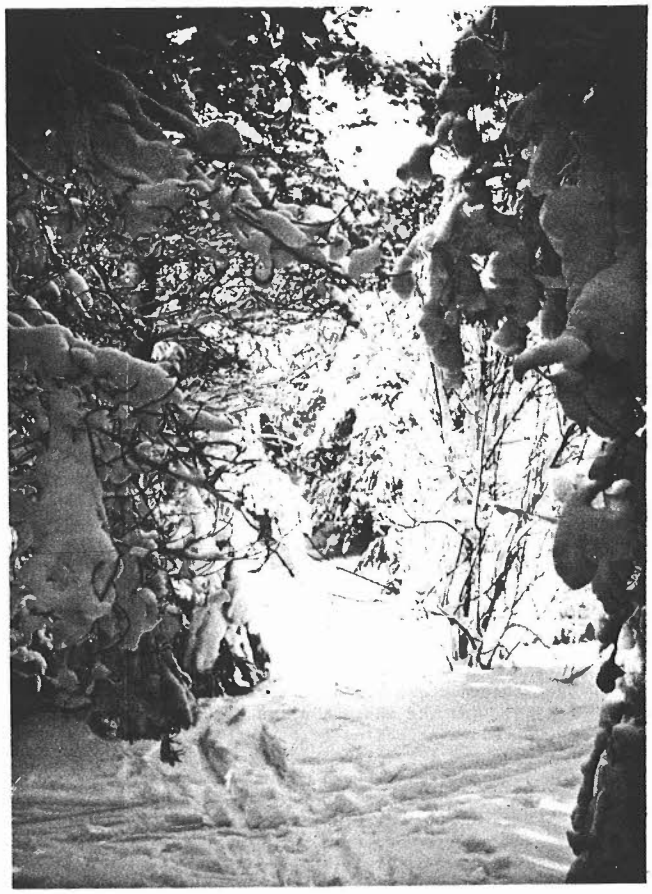
UPPER MISSINAIBI RIVER A 300-km trip is being planned to take place from 20 July through 3 August. The intention is to drive to Hearst and take the train from there to either Wabatongushi Lake or the bridge over the Michipicoten River and start the trip from there. If you'd like to participate, please call Peter Verbeek in Toronto before 30 April at 416-757-3814 (h) or 416-784-8332 (b).

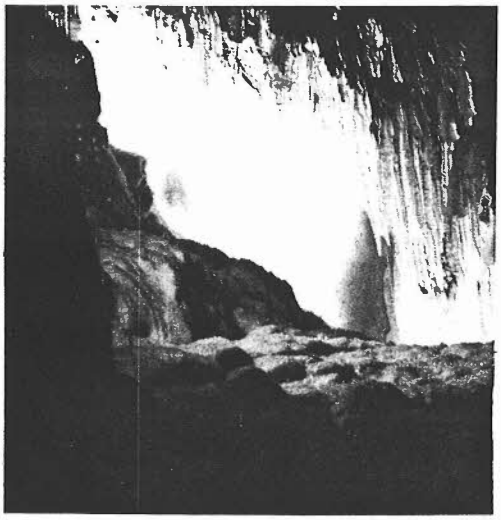
AUX SABLES RIVER OR LOOP IN GOGAMA AREA Anyone interested in joining me on a canoe trip from 12 to 17 May, please call Phil Nusbaum in Toronto at 416-221-5345. I want to do either the Aux Sables River that finishes north of Massey, Ontario, or a loop trip in the Gogoma area.

SEAL RIVER Relevant information is sought on this river in northern Manitoba in preparation for a canoe trip. If you have trip reports as well as information on logistics and natural history (such as geological features, native habitation, pictograph sites, wildlife, flora), I would be most grateful if you'd contact John Wilson, 37 Fairglen Ave., Brampton, Ontario, L6X 1K5. Reproduction and mailing costs will be reimbursed.

MOUNTAIN RIVER Anyone having information or trip notes on the Mountain River in the NWT,please contact Bill Hoyt, 70 North Pearl Street, Buffalo, New York 14202, USA. (phone, days: 716-847-3100.)

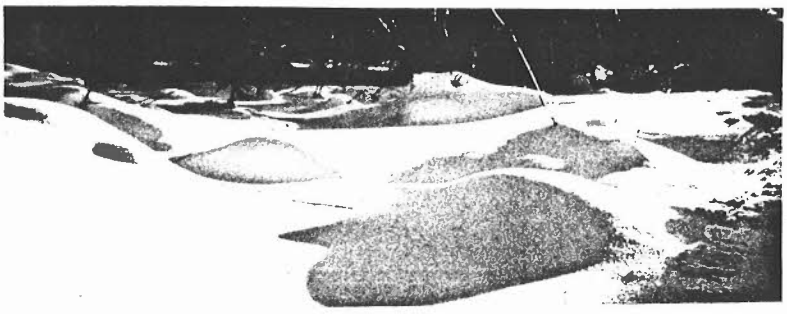
Winter is the time of year toward
before seems but a preparation.





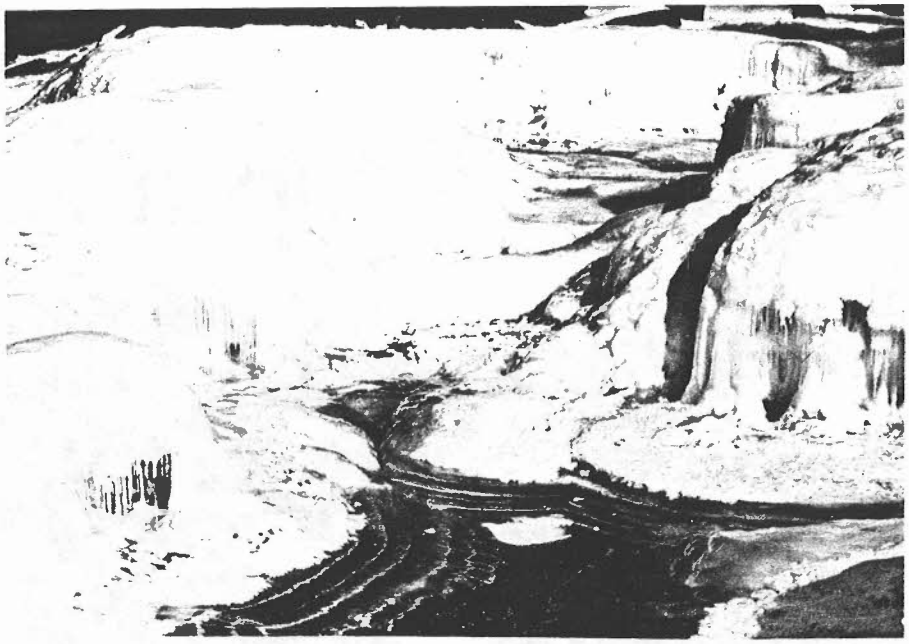
But Winter had yet brighter scenes - he boasts
Splendors beyond what gorgeous Summer knows;
Or Autumn with his many fruits, and woods
All flushed with many hues.

William Cullen Bryant
from "A Winter Piece"



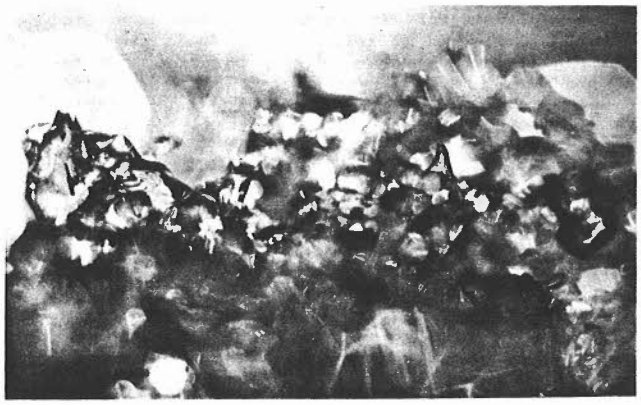
which all that has gone

Sigurd Olson
from Wilderness Days



winter

Photos by Sandy Richardson

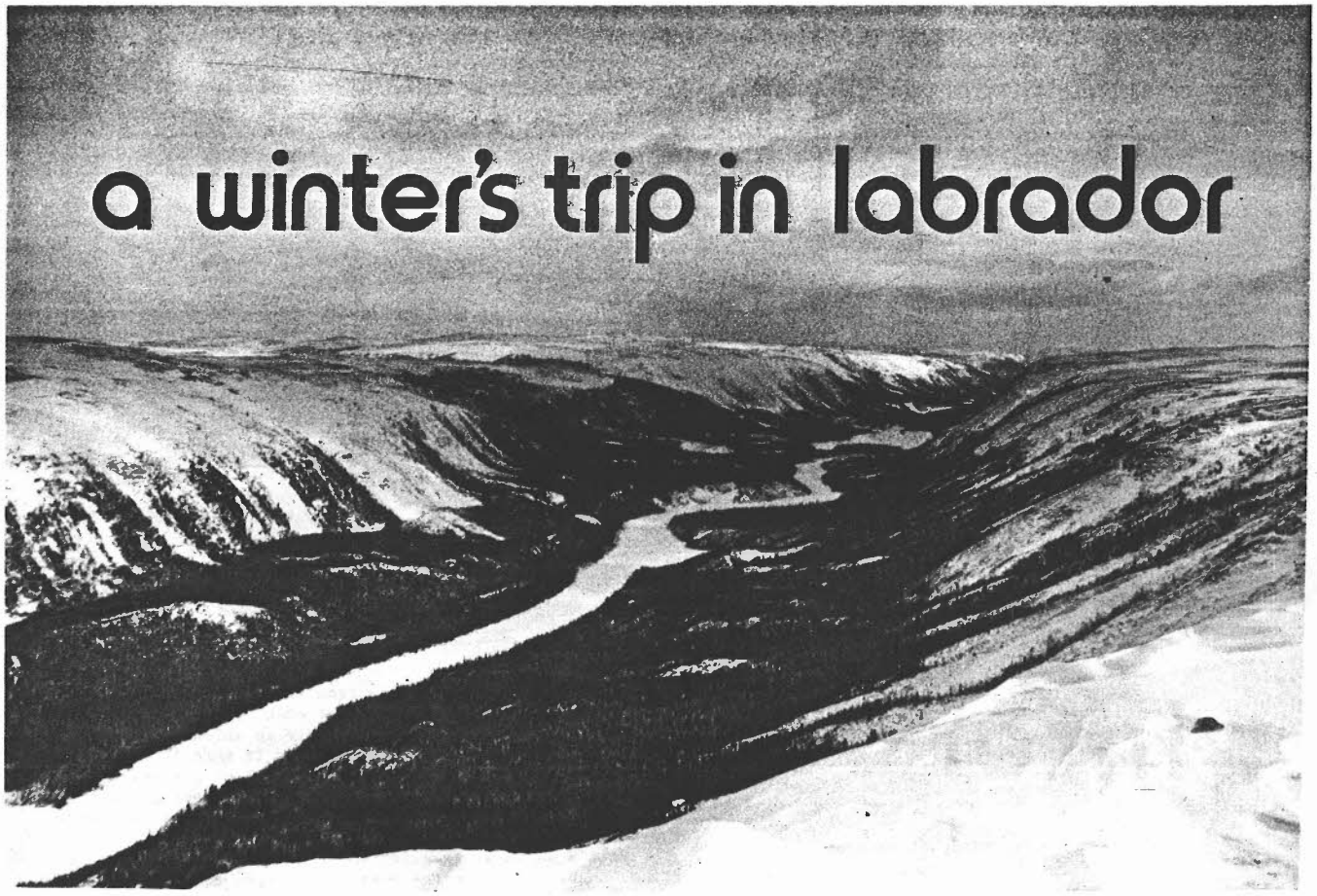


The thin snow now driving from the north and lodging on my coat consists of those beautiful star crystals,... How full of the creative genius is the air in which these are generated! I should hardly have admired it more if real stars fell and lodged on my coat. Nature is full of genius, full of the divinity, so that not a snow-flake escapes it fashioning hand....The same law that shapes the earth-star shapes the snow-star.

What a world we live in! where myriads of these little disks, so beautiful to the most prying eye, are whirled down on every traveller's coat, the observant and the unobservant, and on the restless squirrel's fur, and on the far-stretching fields and forests, the wooded dells, and the mountain tops. Far, far away from the haunts of man, they roll down some little slope, fall over and come to their bearings, and melt or lose their beauty in the mass, ready anon to swell some little rill with their contribution, and so, at last, the universal ocean from which they came. There they lie, like the wreck of chariot wheels after a battle in the skies. Meanwhile the meadow mouse shoves them aside in his gallery, the schoolboy casts them in his snowball, or the woodman's sled glides smoothly over them, these glorious spangles, the sweepings of heaven's floor. And they all sing, melting as they sing of the mysteries of the number six-six,six,six. He takes up the waters of the sea in his hand, leaving the salt; He disperses it in mist through the skies; He recollects and sprinkles it like grain in six-rayed snowy stars over the earth, there to lie till He dissolves its bond again.

Henry David Thoreau
from his Journal

a winter's trip in labrador



(part 2 of 2)

Article: Pat Lewtas
Photos: George Luste and Pat Lewtas

We spent most of the rest of the day getting to the valley floor. This involved work of a very different sort from what we were used to. At first we had to wallow downhill through waist-deep powder, working our toboggans from behind to keep them from gaining momentum. By this time the forest had become thick, even luxuriant. The entire descent was like a journey southwards of many hundreds of kilometres. The evening before we had come off the barrens and down a slope decorated with stunted, gnarled trees. We had camped just below it in a grove of tall, well-formed spruce. Now the forest contained birch, poplar, towering white spruce, and enough bushy undergrowth to evoke the occasional epithet. Once onto the valley floor we even had to push through a tangle of fir. But at last we left fallen trees and alders behind and walked out onto the river ice. We could again move freely and see far.

We were not, in fact, on the Kogaluk at all, but rather on the Mistastin, a tributary which enters the Kogaluk from the south. We quickly headed over towards the east bank to catch the last golden rays of the late afternoon sun. There we ate a hasty snack and wet our dry mouths with a much appreciated swig of water. George adjusted his toboggan's load, which hung out rather inelegantly after having withstood extreme forces earlier in the day. Then we set out to march hurriedly towards the confluence, where we planned to camp.

The lower reaches of the Mistastin make up one of those places in north where nature seems to have painted with a gentler brush. The canyon walls block out the wind, but not the sun. The river lazily meanders between low banks thickly wooded with tall and various trees. We walked past a profusion of animal tracks and heard singing birds for the first time in days. George remarked that a very pleasant winter could be spent there.

We camped that night on the Kogaluk in a welcome stand of black spruce just past the confluence. Setting up camp was a delight even though it was almost dark when we pulled over. The woods shielded us from all wind, doing away with the customary race against chill. And the site was both level and blanketed with soft snow. It was the only one of the trip where preparing a tent platform was easy.

And it was cold. This was to be our last night of refreshingly cool weather. We had by now grown accustomed to low temperatures, even to relish them. Again and again we were astounded by the body's ability to adapt. On the tundra we had once had a few magnificent hours without wind. Both of us had stripped off mitts, hat, and extra shirts. We were soon wearing nothing above the waist but polypropylene underwear and one wool shirt. You can imagine our surprise when we checked the thermometer and learned that it was minus 20°C. Later in the trip, on a sunny, calm day at minus 1°C, we were hauling bare-chested and still pouring out sweat. We felt drained and lethargic, as one does on a hot, humid summer day, and marvelled at our ability to survive canoe trips. But the body's adaptability has a less fortunate aspect too. We had a last cold snap towards the end of the trip after about a week of very mild weather. The colder temperatures made us uncomfortable, even though they would have felt warm a week and a half earlier. What is acquired easily is just as easily lost.

The Kogaluk valley was a more or less spectacular place. Cliffs and hills rose up some five hundred metres above us. Without doubt our pictures of this part of the trip are our most breathtaking. Yet both of us found travel on the plateau much more interesting. The Kogaluk runs straight for close to eighty kilometres and the view, while beautiful, never really changed. The great rock walls very quickly became ordinary and then lost their grandeur. After that they seemed merely to hem us in. As the cliffs lead up to a plateau, they lack the irregularity and broken definition that make mountains so enthralling. We never felt that we were looking up at something that reached towards the sky. We instead had the sense that we were in a long pit, and that our low mountains made up a well-disguised cage.

Some of the blame for these impressions lies with us. George and I were in a very businesslike frame of mind when we began our first full day of travel on the river. We were a little behind. We were also concerned that a heavy snowfall in the comparatively windless valley might slow us down. In our minds, then, our beautiful canyon became a trap waiting to spring shut. So we thought mainly of covering distance and put in three very long days of travel.

That third evening we camped at the Grand Falls of the Kogaluk, a series of three drops totalling close to thirty metres, some ten kilometres inland from the sea. Unfortunately we arrived there in a rather sorry state. We had snowshoed too hard to get there, and both of us had very sore feet to show for it. We limped and groaned as we set up camp. Anyone who might have chanced upon us then would have seen a ludicrous caricature of the stereotypically brawny outdoorsman.

We talked that night a little about heading out onto the sea the next day. But our feet had more sense than we did. When morning came they convinced us with pursuasive eloquence to take the day off. George, I confess, spent the morning rather productively. Grimacing, he donned his snowshoes and trundled about seeing the land and taking pictures. I just slept.

That afternoon we tested our gun. Polar bears are rare but present along Labrador's coast, and before the trip we had given considerable thought to what to do about them. Neither of us is a hunter, and both of us have a distrust of guns. Four times we decided to leave the gun behind, five times to bring it. We decided in the end that we would feel silly standing there with a spatula in one hand and a can opener in the other trying not to smell afraid.

So we loaded our borrowed rifle and spent some time puzzling over how to work it. Finally George shouldered it and bravely killed a dead tree, while I stood nearby with my hands over my ears. Satisfied that we could storm Nain by force if necessary, we put the rifle back into its case and never looked at it again.

The weather had warmed as we marched down the Kogaluk. Now it hovered near freezing, and the magnificently clear skies which had favored us the last several days began to give way to an uncertain overcast. By midafternoon we were expecting bad weather. We had few doubts when it remained warm throughout the night.

In the morning we saw that the open water below the falls had grown in just one mild day, even devouring a track of snowshoe prints. We crossed the river as quickly and gingerly as we could, then pushed on down its last widening kilometres.

It started to snow as we approached the sea. Fat flakes tumbled down, melting when they landed on us. Soon the wind joined in. It broke the falling snow into little daggers and hurled them against us. We bundled our faces as best we could, but were helpless to keep ourselves dry. It hardly mattered when the snow turned to rain late in the afternoon.

The wind obscured the rugged coastal hills in a curtain of driving snow and drizzle. This was supposed to be the most spectacular country along our route, and yet we could see nothing but the occasional darker outline of a small forest hugging the base of a cliff. At times we were forced to navigate by compass.

We plodded on, hating every minute of it until the day ended. We had put in our hours and could turn off into the shelter of the woods and make camp. Dry wood was scarce, for the coastal forest is moist, but soon enough we had the tent up and the stove going. We stripped off our sodden clothes and hung them up to grow less wet. Both of us remarked that this was just like a canoe trip.

We had three full days of this. Sometimes we could see some of the nearer hills, but never could we view the magnificence of the land. Everything was blanched and lost in a dull, grey wash. Each day we would struggle on, always into the wind, soaked to the skin, until the day's end let us camp. It was warm enough that exposure was never a great risk. But the foulness and wickedness of the weather angered us and sapped our strength and enthusiasm. Two of the great comforts of winter travel are freedom from rain and flies. You can imagine our disgust when we found a moth on the tent wall one night.

By this time in the trip our appetites were enormous. We had worked hard in cold weather for over two weeks, and now on top of that our bodies had to battle to keep warm in the rain. When planning the trip George and I had argued about how much food to bring. I was worried about impossibly heavy toboggans, while George's concern was hunger and weakness. In the end we worked out a compromise of sorts, but I suspect that George cheated and brought along everything he had argued for in the first place. I can only be thankful that he did. By the end of the trip I was not satiated even by the huge meals we were eating. And we must have been putting in an amazing number of calories. Our afternoon snacks, for instance, consisted of peanut butter, honey, and margarine sandwiches as thick as hamburgers, and our other meals were similarly lavish. And yet by midmorning I would feel empty and feeble. I shudder at the thought that we might have had to make do with less food. A winter trip on tight rations would be a miserable trial.

The Labrador coast is one of those places where land merges into sea. Fiords and bays become ocean as the mainland breaks apart into outlying headlands and scattered islands. We cautiously threaded a route as close to the mainland as possible, and so never had the impression that we were doing more than crossing large and interconnected lakes. We certainly never saw anything like the landless immensity one pictures when the open sea comes to mind. And yet it was clear we were not on inland waters. A series of parallel cracks traced every shoreline some thirty metres out. These would open and close like the body of an accordion as the tides played with the huge plates of ice that covered the sea. And in places we came across wastelands of chaotically jumbled ice chunks. These were not pressure ridges--the ice this far inland is securely land-fast--but the remains of premature plates which had broken apart before the fall freeze-up was complete. Strong winds can herd these little bergs together against a shoreline, where they are readily trapped by the growing ice cover.

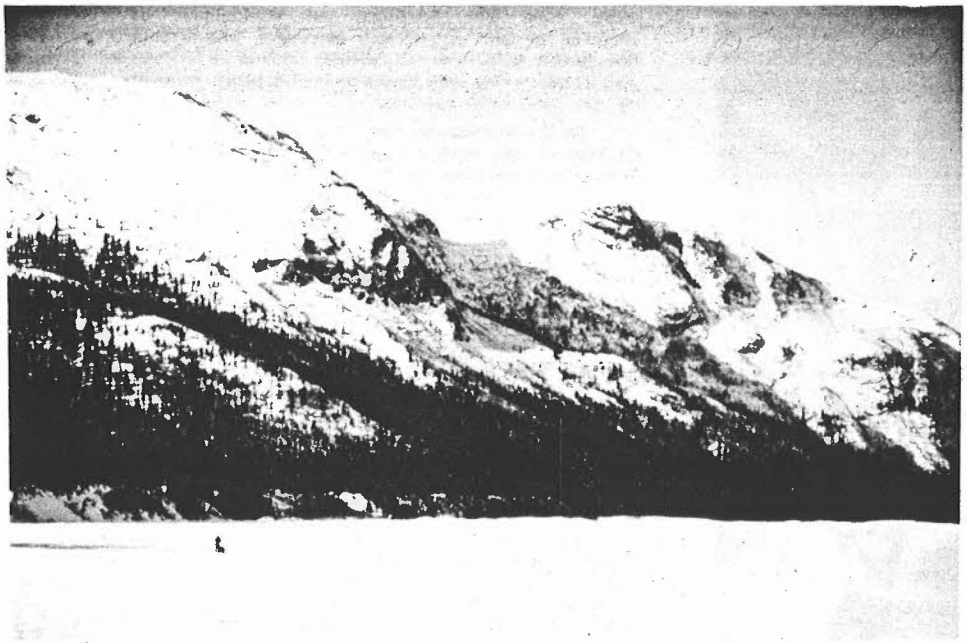
By the end of the third warm day our snowshoes had begun to give. The rawhide had softened, stretched, and begun to tear. Deep depressions had formed where our feet came down on the webbing. Tough little ice balls accumulated there, adding to the damage and hurting our feet. Even the leather harnesses were beginning to rip.

But most troublesome of all was the weight. Each shoe had soaked up kilograms of water and could be trudged forward only with rhythm-destroying effort. Our thighs ached as we walked the last kilometre that afternoon.

And so it was a great relief to stop and make camp. But there was a sadness, too. This was our last night out. We were a mere ten kilometres from Nain. As with any trip that has turned out well, the penultimate moments were clouded with a strange and confused mixture of longings and wistful regrets. And that evening it finally cooled, almost as if to remind us one more time of the moods and sensations winter can evoke.

It is hard to imagine anything as free from complexity as the snowy north. In winter, gradations and variety of sensations experienced in summer collapse into a very few contrasts: warmth/cold, inside/outside, calm/windy, liquid/solid, numb/sensitive, black/white, dark/light. There are few middle grounds, many absolutes. In summer, each forest, each meadow has its own special scent. But in winter every place smells the same, or at least differences depend upon weather and not anything organic. In fact the entire living world is pushed towards insignificance and assimilated into the inamimate. The northern conifers lose their brilliant, verdant green and assume a much duller, darker color. Vegetation and exposed rock thus appear much the same. And yet, as if to make up for this, the inamimate world becomes so very much alive. The land, with its mirror of snow, responds completely to any change in the sky above, however subtle. On a sunny midday, everything is a study in blue. Towards morning or evening warmer colors bring out the green in the trees and shadows dance. But when it is overcast, everything sinks into an indistinct grey, for there is nothing but the sky and the sun to impart color.

And then there is snow. What an amazing and versatile substance! It gives the winter its life, for it captures the mood of the sky and mimes the shapes etched on the wind. It provides the surface which allows travel. It helps insulate from the cold ground. It can be piled, cut into blocks, and tunnelled through. And it can be melted into drinking water. How many substances combine animation, usefulness, and beauty as completely as this? What else can boast such a total and appealling blend of simplicity and variety?



And so it was appropriate that we awoke on our last day to a morning that trembled with magnifinence. Blowing snow shimmered over the low rocky islands beneath our camp. Out to the east stood the massive crags that blocked the way to the open sea. And down from the clouds slashed three great shafts of sunlight, each a broad swath of warmth and intensity in a powerful, blustery, and disorganized landscape.

We pulled out of the forest and onto the ice, then curved around out of the lee. To our delight we discovered that the ice would support us and that we could remove our snowshoes, which were frozen and heavy. For a brief but exhilarating hour I thought that this was a trip that knew how to end. George and I marched purposefully over the ice, exactly abreast of one another. Our toboggans pulled easily on the frozen surface. And we watched the play of sunlight streaming down through the clouds. Now this, now that hill was lit with fiery gold.

But alas, the trip was not to end so grandly. Once on more sheltered ice we broke through the crust too often to walk without snowshoes. But ours were so heavy that we instead chose to walk on a snowmobile trail we had spotted shortly after leaving camp. And the glorious shafts of light that had kept us spellbound retreated behind a thickening slab of overcast.

We saw our first people as we approached the final turn into Nain. A convoy of eleven snowmobiles dragging sledges laden with meat was heading towards the outer islands. They were driven by Inuit hunters from Cartwright, a town several hundred kilometres to the south, who had come north to catch the spring caribou migration. And then we turned the last point, and it was hustle and bustle and a lot of traffic all the way into town.

We arrived with that feeling of anticipation and uncertainly that an unannounced and uninvited outsider has when about to impose himself on a small community. We were also hopeful that we might find some interesting and inexpensive place to stay. But it soon became clear, much to our disappointment, that we would probably have to settle for the town's hotel. We were heading over to it when we learned about the second favor Jerry Kobalenko had done us. A man walked over, introduced himself, explained that Jerry had told him of our plans, and announced that two beds were waiting for us at his home and that lunch was just about to be served.

His name was Herb Brown, and his wife, Dori, and he hosted us for the half week we were in Nain. There could not have been a more pleasant way to end the trip. The Browns had that ability to do everything for you and make you feel completely at home without ever giving the impression that your presence made any difference to their daily routine. George and I had mused, during the trip, about an expensive and sumptuous meal in Québec or Montreal. These thoughts disappeared as soon as we sat down to that first lunch. Every meal we ate there was a masterpiece of tastiness and imagination. Two very contented travellers left Nain.

The Browns are teachers who came to Labrador some years back and grew to love the country. We spent too few evenings with them talking about the north, learning more about Labrador, and even arguing about what we heard on the news. They also showed us a videotape of another winter trip, a journey by dogsled of four Québecers and Frenchmen from Schefferville to Nain, up the coast, then through the Torngat Mountains to George River on Ungava Bay. Dogs certainly make for elegant travel!

Both George and I regretted that our commitments prevented us from staying longer in Nain. But we did have to return home, and so we were glad when at last there was room on a flight south. We were taken out to the airport and managed to squeeze into a crowded Twin Otter. Soon Nain was lost to view behind us.

Shortly after takeoff we passed directly over our last campsite, but were too high to discern the disturbed snow where we had pitched the tent. Before long we could see our entire route over the ice, all the way from the river's mouth. Then that, too, slipped away. For a while we watched the scenery below, the rocky coast and inland forests to our right, the islands, ice, and blue water to our left. But in the end we settled into the seats of the plane and dozed.

We had left the north and begun the trip south.

As a postscript, it is a pleasure to acknowledge Craig Macdonald's assistance in the preparation for this marvellous winter experience. George Luste spent most of a whole day receiving much valuable advice as well as acquiring a great polyethylene toboggan from him. Thanks, Craig.

Pat Lewtas is an articling law student, living in Toronto. He is an avid wilderness canoeist and has recently acquired a taste for winter camping.

George Luste has been canoeing in Canada's north country for the last 24 years. This was his first (but not last) extended winter trip. He is a professor of physics at the University of Toronto, an associate chairman in the department, and a researcher of the quark and gluon substructure of matter.

POWER FROM THE NORTH

Author: Robert Bourassa
Publisher: Prentice Hall, 1985 ($17.95)
Reviewed by: Bill Ness

> Québec is a vast hydroelectric plant in-the-bud, and every day millions of potential kilowatt hours flow downhill and out to sea. What a waste! (From the book's introduction.)

Canada is the beneficiary of 27% of the world's reserves of fresh usable water, and its rivers account for almost 10% of the flow of the globe's waterways. The province of Québec alone has 30% of this flow, most of it in rivers eminently suited to the production of hydroelectric power. However, at present only about 10,000 out of an enormous potential of 30,000 megawatts are being generated.

In this book Robert Bourassa presents his proposal for what he would term the "rational" development of these resources.

By way of background, and to emphasize Québec's record of success in hydro mega-projects, the early chapters are devoted to a history of Phase I of the James Bay project and the province's involvement with the development of Churchill Falls in Labrador.

While this section of the book provides a convenient and very readable historical overview, it is hardly an impartial appraisal. Not surprisingly, the author emerges as a staunch supporter of hydro development from the beginning, while the Parti Québecois is portrayed as the bad guy who wanted the province to jump on the nuclear bandwagon.

Also, needless to say, the very serious environmental issues that were raised concerning the James Bay project by both the native peoples affected and environmental groups are greatly glossed over.

A 2½ page section entitled "The Native People" largely presents the people who were to be uprooted and have their livelihood taken away as impediments to the march of progress, the people who tried by their legal shenanigans to thwart the powers that be, in spite of the government's generous offers of compensation.

As for the environmentalists, their arguments are summarily disposed of with Bourassa's simple logic:

> It is well known today that with regard to the environment the development of water resources is much better than the development of nuclear power or of fossil-fueled power. In fact, the positive impact of the James Bay project has been far greater than any negative impact.

In spite of the author's assurances that the James Bay Energy Corporation is committed above all to protecting the environment and that its decisions are subject to review by various environmental advisory bodies, its response to the drowning of some 10,000 caribou on the Caniapiscau River in September 1984 has raised a stench that continues to haunt it.

But, the writer of this book is a man of vision, and it is unlikely that he would allow such minor unsavory episodes to mar his grand design. Bourassa wants to capitalize on the current popularity and success of Phase I of the James Bay project to bring all phases of the development to completion without delay, and to begin the harnessing of the rivers on the North Shore. His ultimate goal is the conversion of the rivers of Northern Québec into one enormous integrated hydro generating complex.

The purpose is not to satisfy local needs but to export to power-hungry New England, and to this end no effort is spared in persuading Americans that they should buy cheap, reliable, politically secure power from Québec. New Englanders worried about acid rain, Three Mile Island, and the whims of Middle Eastern despots may well be inclined to agree with his argument.

To complete the rational utilization of Québec's water resources, the author is also proposing the adoption of the GRAND (Great Recycling and Northern Development) Canal plan created by Montreal engineer Thomas W. Kierans in the 1930s which would in eight years convert James Bay into a dyke-enclosed fresh water lake at a current projected cost of five billion dollars. This water would be routed south to flush out the polluted Great Lakes and provide water to the American Northeast and Midwest where it is even now in critically short supply.

> From sea level, the water would be pumped to a height of 285 metres via stepped reservoirs or aquaducts, for a total of about 275 kilometres within the Harricana River Valley. From the height of land near Amos, Québec, it could be transferred across a short canal to the Upper Ottawa River near Val D'Or. It would then flow southward and be transferred to Lake Nipissing and then, via the French River, into Lake Huron.

It is tempting to dismiss such ideas as fantasy, yet already the first phase of Bourassa's Power from the North project has become reality. We can be certain that, if he has any say in the matter, the full development of the hydroelectric potential of Northern Québec will continue apace, and for many of the great wilderness rivers of the region canoeists will sing the sad refrain: "So long, it's been good to know ya."

CANOE magazine

Publisher: Canoe America Associates; Kirkland, WA.
Reviewed by:: John Winters

No one said the magazine business was easy. Particularly for special-interest types that wax and wane with the moods and fashions of the day. Some survive, not because they are particularly good, but because the topic has staying power and attracts new readers who have a use for what would be stale information to the "old-timer" in the audience. Such a magazine is CANOE.

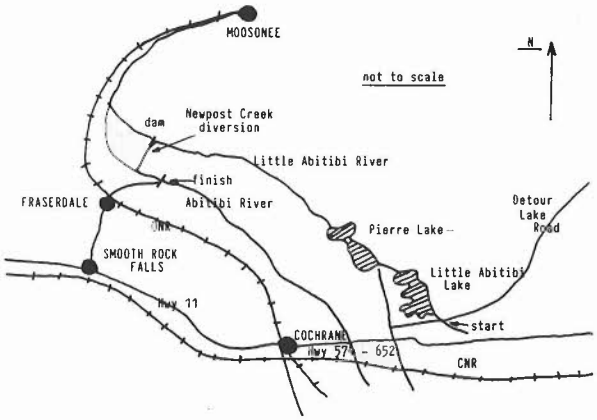
Its slick, glossy pages can't cover up the feeling of 'déjà vu' that the two-year subscriber gets toward the end of his second year. Indeed, you have heard it before. The dead giveaway is the use of jargon and "in" words to camouflage old ideas and topics. The magazine editors' war cry is, "When you have nothing new to say, say it in a new way." Nowhere is this more obvious than in the so-called "technical" features where subjective comment is laced with a few buzz words and high-sounding but erroneous facts. Naval architects have gotten quite a chuckle out of a number of articles that professed to be "technically" oriented.

Is such writing simply the product of ignorance or do the editors know something about canoeing that they are reluctant to divulge? Perhaps there isn't anything new to say, and while they try to retain old subscribers through verbal subterfuge, they are directing their appeal to the novice who thinks the tenth article on canoe strokes is something new and exciting, or that KEVLAR and ABS really are the cutting edge of technology, or that modern canoes really are a breakthrough in design. We know or should know better.

So, is CANOE a good or bad magazine? Well, it's neither and both. It depends on your experience and gullibility. I am certain that it has a place in the canoeing world, but NASTAWGAN is a far more useful publication, even without the slang and full color.

bird atlassing on the **little abitibi**

George Fairfield



This was the final year for work on the Breeding Bird Atlas of Ontario. Once again birders with canoeing skills were recruited by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the Long Point Bird Observatory to gather information on the breeding ranges of species inhabiting the less accessible regions of northern Ontario. Our group (Ted Warren, Jim Martin, Jim and Pat Woodford, George and Jean Fairfield) volunteered to survey an area along the Little Abitibi River north of Cochrane.

For canoeists who wish to follow our route, here are the directions. Drive east from Cochrane on Hwy 574 and 652. Branch off to the north on Detour Lake Mine Road and follow it until it crosses the Little Abitibi River. On the east side of the bridge is a small Provincial Park where you can camp while the car shuttle is carried out.

Drive the cars back through Cochrane and along Hwy 11 to Smooth Rock Falls. Go north on Hwy 634 to Fraserdale which is just a lumber company depot. Drive northeast about five kilometres to Abitibi Canyon Generating Station. On many days there is no staff at the station, but you are free to drive across the top of the dam. A rough access road east of the dam leads down the hill to a landing below the dam. That is the take-out point and you can leave vehicles there.

We returned to the put-in point and started down the Little Abitibi on the afternoon of 30 June 1985. For the first few kilometres the river was sluggish and meandering. It was a very hot windless day and it seemed to take forever to get out to Little Abitibi Lake. However, once there we were glad the weather was calm. The lake is large -- ten by five kilometres -- and could cause problems on a windy day.

There were many potential campsites and we picked a sandy beach on the east shore opposite the point where you re-enter the river. After a swim and one of Pat Woodford's superlative campfire dinners we turned in early.

The next day we faced the first challenging rapids of the trip. We found the water levels on the river to be high for that time of year so there was plenty of water to run the rapids.

There are five sets of rapids between Little Abitibi Lake and Williston Lake, and on the third one we got into the only real difficulty of the trip. At the beginning there is a steep drop with two sets of rocks to be manoeuvred around. The river then runs up against a rock face and disappears around a sharp bend to the right. We could not find a portage and lining was impossible due to large fallen trees that projected out into the river. The only way was to run it.

Jim and Ted ran through with only a few bumps and the shipping of a few litres of water. Jean and I followed ungracefully, bumping the second set of rocks and the rock face on the way by. We waited at the foot of the rapids for the last canoe. After a few minutes equipment began floating by.

We fought our way back up the river on opposite banks, through a maze of windfalls, and found Jim and Pat on the second set of rocks with their canoe tightly pinned.

I threw them a rope from the left bank and they pulled me out to the rocks. Ted floated poles down to us from the top of the rapids and after we had managed to retrieve three poles, jumped in himself. We almost missed him as he went by. After considerable difficulty we suceeded in prying one end of the canoe up far enough to drain the water. Two of us then ran the remainder of the rapid in the badly leaking canoe while the others swam through. It took all of our fibreglass patching material and duct tape to mend the canoe and most of our adhesive tape to patch our own cuts and abrasions.

Our sense of passing through pristine wilderness was somewhat marred by the presence of fly-in fishermen in motorboats. It disappeared completely when we stopped for lunch and were confronted with piles of cans and bottles, the remains of decomposing fish, and tattered plastic sheets that had been set up as windbreaks. However, once we reached Harris Lake the last signs of civilization were behind us and we saw no one for the remainder of the trip. Once you leave Harris Lake you have 75 km of river with many rapids and poorly maintained portages until you reach the diversion dam.

There are few good campsites, the best one being at Campsite Rapids about 22 km below Harris Lake. Plan to have some extra time at this site. There are several good tent sites, plenty of gently sloping rock for cooking, dining, and sun bathing, and a tricky rapids with large standing waves to practice your whitewater manoeuvres. The canoes can easily be lifted back over the rock for extra runs. To cap it off, there is an active osprey nest at the foot of the rapids. The nest consists of a large platform of branches and twigs on the top of a broken-off spruce. Every little while one of the parents would arrive with a fish for the chicks.

We hiked back into the black spruce swamps east of the river and were delighted to find a rare Connecticut Warbler singing loudly and defending his nesting territory. We searched for over an hour but could not find the nest. There is still no substantiated nest record for this species in Ontario.

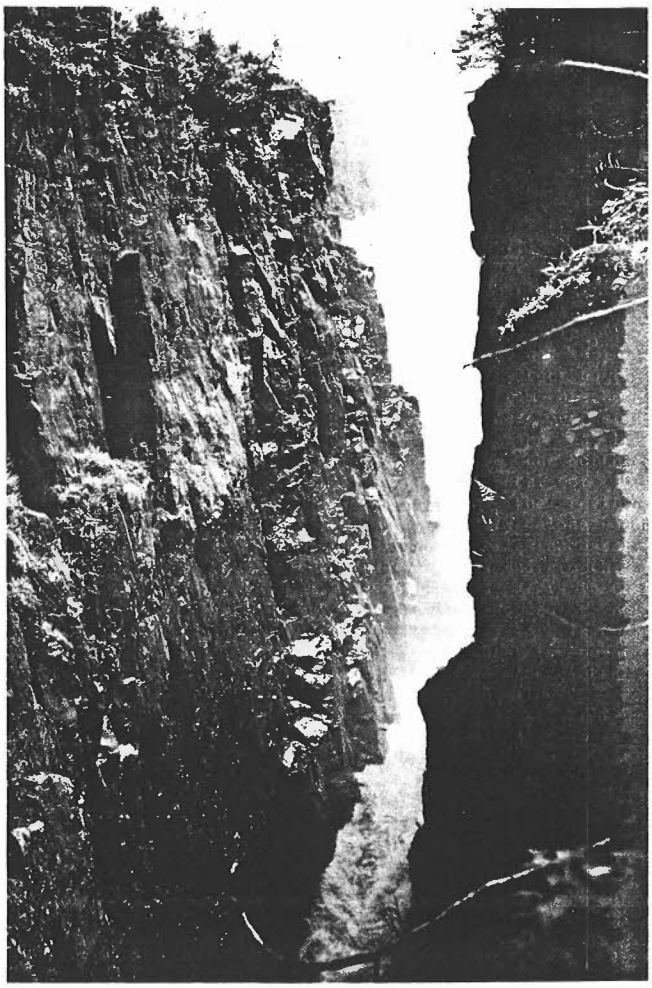
Because our trip was made in early July we continually encountered families of ducks as we paddled along; adult females with various numbers of small young. Mallards, black ducks, common mergansers, and goldeneyes were the common species. It was interesting to observe the different escape methods the ducks would use to avoid our approaching canoes. The mother would feign injury and attempt to lead us away from their broods. When this did no succeed, the mother mallards and black ducks would lead their young ones ashore and hide them in the dense riverside foliage. The young mergansers and goldeneyes, both great diving species, would dive and stay down until our canoes had safely passed.

Moose were the only large animals we saw. As usual they were feeding on aquatic plants along the river's edge. As long as we made no noise we could drift quite close to them before they trotted off into the bush.

About 30 years ago Ontario Hydro built a rock-filled crib dam across the Little Abitibi and cut a channel west from the river to Newpost Creek. They were then able to divert the Little Abitibi water through Newpost Creek to the Abitibi River and provide additional flow for the generating station at Otter Rapids.

It also provided one of Canada's better known folk songs, "The Black Fly Song" by Wade Hemsworth. It is based upon the experiences of the survey crew who did preliminary survey for the project.

The Newpost Creek Diversion provides 30 km of fast water as the water level drops 90 m from the Little Abitibi to the Abitibi. About 55 m of this drop comes at the western end, just before Newpost Creek enters the Abitibi, and forms one of the most spectacular waterfalls in northern Ontario. After a short steep rapid the river drops vertically into a deep narrow canyon, then races 300 m through the canyon to a quiet pool before entering the Abitibi. From this confluence it is an easy 12 km paddle up the Abitibi to Abitibi Canyon Generating Station.



What with our bird survey and some loafing we spent two weeks completing this trip. It would take most WCA groups a week at the most.

This same trip is completed annually by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists as one of their canoe outings. We are indebted to one of their outing leaders, Mr. David Sutton, who gave us a most detailed account of the route and much sound advice on dealing with the more treacherous stretches of fast water.

Other than the FON groups I doubt if many canoeists attempt this trip. The portages, where they could be found, showed little evidence of recent use. In fact, a good clean-out of fallen trees would improve the route greatly. Nonetheless, I would recommend this trip highly for canoeists with intermediate or better whitewater skills.

some like it hot

July is Algonquin's most summery month and many Park visitors like nothing better than to stretch out and soak up the sunshine. This just has to be one of life's most enjoyable luxuries.

The surprising thing is that we humans aren't the only creatures that like to indulge in serious basking. Many others, from turtles to butterflies, also like to sun-bathe and, at first glance, this is rather curious.

After all, we humans are on vacation but animals aren't so lucky. They have to work hard to survive and can't afford any wasted moments. To take the example of turtles, for instance, they have only the period May through September in which they can be active. In these five months they must do a year's worth of finding food, eating, and growing, not to mention mating and laying eggs, and then storing up enough fat reserves to get them through the following seven months of winter.

Under these circumstances it seems odd that turtles spend long periods basking. Stranger still is the fact that some Algonquin turtles spend far more time basking than the same species do in the southern U.S. -- even though Algonquin turtles have a much shorter summer and seemingly that much less time to waste on "idle pleasures."

The answer to the paradox is that turtles are said to be "cold-blooded," which means that, by themselves, they can't generate a constant, high body temperature the way we humans do. Instead, they can only get warm by absorbing heat from their surroundings. As a consequence, when the weather is cold turtles become colder and more numb, less and less able to move or carry on their body processes. There is one way, however, that turtles can extract a little more heat from their surroundings and that is through basking,

By crawling out of the water, stretching out its legs, and spreading out its toes, a turtle presents a maximum surface area to the sun, and in fact, can often achieve an internal body temperature which is four to five degrees warmer than the surrounding air. Because a basking, extra-warm turtle has its body chemistry speeded up, it can, for example, digest its food much more quickly than if it hadn't taken the time to bask. Furthermore, when it does go back into the water, it probably can hunt more vigorously and effectively -- at least until it cools off again.

Another benefit of basking has to do with egg production. Female turtles are especially fond of sunning themselves in May and June and it may well be that they do so to speed up the development of their eggs so they can be laid earlier and given a head start in life.

Seen in this light, basking may be of crucial importance to turtles which have to contend with the short Algonquin summer. It has been suggested, for example, that snapping turtles -- which aren't found much farther north than the Park -- might not be able to survive here if they didn't spend so much time warming themselves in the sun.

For other animals, basking may be important not so much for long-term survival as it is for day-to-day existence. You don't have far to look for such animals because butterflies, so conspicuous at this time of year, are prime examples.

Now, it is quite apparent that butterflies, if they are to be successful in life, must fly around, find food, avoid predators, and find mates. The catch is that butterflies can't generate enough muscular power to get airborne unless their body temperatures is at least 27°C -- and more typically around 35°C. And, as everyone will realize, butterflies in Algonquin might have to wait a long time indeed for temperatures that warm. Even on our rare, really hot days, it would be unusual for the temperature to get as high as 25°C or 30°C before late morning. The fact that butterflies are on the wing in much cooler conditions means they must have some trick to raise their temperature.

Some butterflies, especially those that fly early in the year, have the ability to create their own internal heat by rapid contractions of their wing muscles (a sort of shivering) until they are hot enough to take off. Such a procedure is energetically very expensive, however, and many more butterflies rely on basking.

By spreading its wings and orienting its body to catch the sun, a butterfly can often raise its body temperature as much as 17°C above air temperature in a relatively few minutes. For a while people thought that such impressive increases were achieved by the butterfly's blood being warmed as it circulated through the veins in the wings (along the idea of solar heating panels). Recently, however, it has been found that a dead butterfly's body warms up just as fast as a live one under the same conditions. The heating effect, therefore, must be caused simply by the physical presence of the wings close to the body. Further research has shown that it is the scaly or hairy (and often dark-colored) bases of the wings that quickly absorb the sun's energy and then warm up the adjacent body where the wing muscles are. The wings also trap warm air between the butterfly and the basking surface and create the effect well known to any camper who has left his tent for the day in direct sunlight.

These physical properties of the wings allow basking butterflies to warm up and to get going far earlier in the morning than would otherwise be true. And, because a flying butterfly actually cools down (by moving through cooler air and, in effect, fanning itself with its wings), short basking sessions between flights permit a butterfly to quickly get its termperature back up into operating range and resume activity. Such ability obviously makes the difference between being able to operate in the Algonquin environment and being able to live there at all.

Turtles and butterflies are just two examples of the many groups of animals for which basking is almost a way of life. Personally. we find it fascinating that "catching a few rays" -- an idle luxury for us humans -- is a crucial survival strategy for other animals. It's something to contemplate the next time you see a turtle or a butterfly soaking up the sunshine.... We all like it hot but some actually need it that way.

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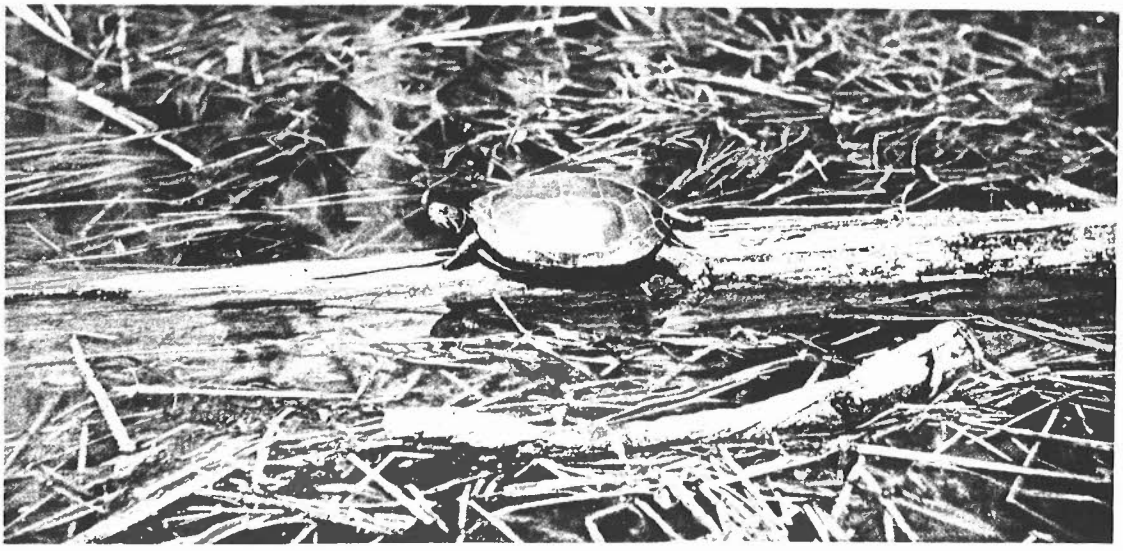


Photo: Sandy Richardson

22 March OAKVILLE CREEK
Organizer: Paul Barsevskis 416-239-2830
Book before 22 March.
This river offers fast water, turbulence, a few ledge rappids, and the possibility of obstructed channels. Limited to experienced whitewater paddlers in five canoes.

23 March BRONTE CREEK
Organizer: Herb Pohl 416-637-7632
Book before 20 March.
At high water levels, Bronte Creek can be tricky because of the possibility of obstructed channels as well as substantial turbulence. Consequently only experienced paddlers should consider it. Limit five canoes.

23 March CREDIT AND HUMBER RIVERS
Organizer: Duncan Taylor 416-368-9748
Book after 15 March.
Constant rapids from Streetsville on down; the lower Credit provides an exciting early whitewater run. This will be followed, conditions permitting, by a trip on the scenic Humber from Hwy 401 to Dundas Street, which may include some challenging stretches if the water is high. Suitable for intermediates and novices with some experience. Limit five canoes.

28 March UPPER CREDIT RIVER
Organizer: Gary Walters 416-743-4628
Book before 25 March.
At this time of year the upper Credit River offers fast currents, tight bends, riffles, small waves, and cold water. Suitable for teams where at least one partner has intermediate whitewater skills, and for those who have taken a basic whitewater training course. Limit six canoes.

29 March BRONTE CREEK
Organizer: Norm Coombe 416-293-8036 (H)
416-751-2812 (B)
Book before 14 March.
A smaller, very fast-moving river that can provide a challenging run if water levels are right. Suitable for intermediates and novices who have taken whitewater training. Limit six canoes; solos and kayaks welcome.

5-6 April CREDIT RIVER
Organizer: Jim Morris 416-793-2088
Book before 28 March.
Saturday: upper Credit River. A leisurely trip on fast water will give us a chance to review and practise our basic whitewater techniques before taking our chances on bigger water. Some coaching will be given but, because of cold temperatures, this trip is not really suitable for absolute beginners.
Sunday: lower Credit River. If your appetite is whetted by Saturday's excursion or if you're ready for bigger water, leave your canoes on the car overnight and, with newly discovered confidence, run the much more challenging lower Credit from Streetsville. Sunday's trip is suitable for intermediates and whitewater-trained novices, preferably with intermediate partners. Not a beginner's trip! Limit six canoes.

6 April UPPER CREDIT RIVER
Organizer: Mike Graham-Smith 416-877-7829
Book before 3 April.
The upper Credit with its many swifts, gentle rapids, and rocks is a pleasant challenging spring run. Location will depend on conditions. Suitable for novice whitewater paddlers with some whitewater experience. Limit six canoes.

12 April UPPER MOIRA RIVER
Organizer: Del Dako 416-421-2108
Book before 6 April.
The Moira River south from Bannockburn makes a challenging whitewater run for those who enjoy testing their precision paddling skills on a narrow, swift, rocky river. As this is an early spring, high-water trip, and the route is exploratory for the organizer, it is suitable for advanced paddlers only. Limit five canoes.

12-13 April SALMON AND MOIRA RIVERS
Organizer: Glenn Spence 416-355-3506
Book between 1-5 April.
Once again Glenn invites intermediate paddlers to the Belleville-Marysville area for good scenery, good paddling, and short portages. The Salmon in high water offers a consistent gradient and numerous limestone rapids with strong current and large standing waves. The Moira has many flat sections interspersed with steep drops that require precise manoeuvring. Participants may camp in the organizer's backyard or, depending on numbers, sleep in the house. Limit five canoes.

12-13 April BEAVER - BIG HEAD RIVERS
Organizer: Bob Knapp 519-371-1255
Book before 25 March.
Canoe the Beaver and Big Head Rivers during the day and warm up Saturday night. In the spring there is some fast water and hopefully it will be high enough to cover many of the rocks. Each river has about 3 to 4 km of fast water as it drops to Georgian Bay. Saturday night, participants are invited to stay at my house. Please bring slides to view and stories to swap, along with sleeping bags. Meet in Thornbury, Saturday at 10 a.m. Suitable for intermediates and good novices. Limit six canoes or twelve kayaks.

13 April GRAND RIVER
Organizer: Dave Sharp 519-621-5599
Book before 8 April.
We will start at Cambridge and, depending on the water level, will take out either at Paris or Brantford. This is a flatwater trip with fast current and a few riffles. It is an ideal river trip for novice moving-water paddlers. Limit six canoes.

13 April BLACK RIVER
Organizer: Gary Walters 416-743-4628
Book before 9 April.
The Black River near Washago offers a relaxing river trip. There are a few easy rapids with good portages and, if water levels are high, there could be some moderate waves. Suitable for novice moving-water paddlesr. Limit six canoes.

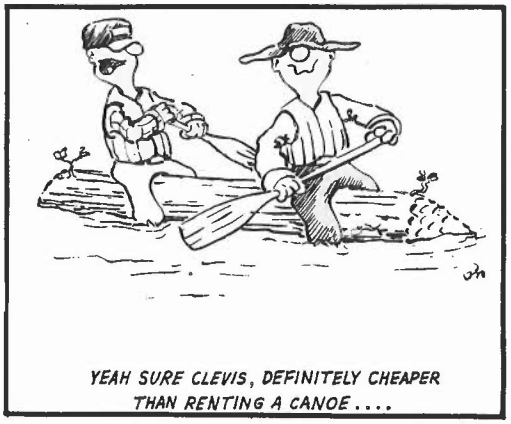
19-20 April LOWER BLACK RIVER - BEAVER CREEK
Organizer: Graham Barnett 416-654-9805
Book before 12 April.
On Saturday we will run the lower Black riverfrom Queensborough to Hwy 7. This section of the Black River offers an exciting whitewater run during spring run-off. There are many steep, narrow drops which require precise manoeuvring. On Sunday we will paddle the Beaver Creek from just below Shanick to the bridge before Fidlar Rapids. This is a very enjoyable section of whitewater. Suitable for intermediate paddlers. Limit six canoes.

20 April NAPANEE RIVER
Organizer: Bill Ness 416-499-6389
Book between 30 March and 13 April.
This will be an exploratory trip for the organizer on which we will follow the Napanee 18 km from Colebrook to Strathcona. The river drops with a steady gradient of 2.3 m/km (12 ft/mile), and there are numerous marked rapids on the topographical map.It should make an interesting run for good intermediates who don't object to some possible surprises. Limit six canoes.

26 April ANSTRUTHER LAKE LOOP
Organizer: Rob Butler 416-487-2282
Book before 19 April.
This 28 km one-day loop imvolves traversing nine scenic lakes north of Peterborough. Suitable for canoeists in good physical shape. Limit four canoes.

26 April BLACK AND HEAD RIVERS
Organizer: Gerry Lannan 416-629-3149
Book between 6 and 20 April.
This will be a leisurely day trip starting on the Head River, northeast of Sebright. From the Head's confluence with the Black, we will continue downstream to just east of Washago. These rivers feature some good, short rapids with moderate waves, separated by enough flat water to give you time to relax and enjoy the scenery. Suitable for novices. Limit six canoes.

canoetoon



by paul mason

26 April MOIRA RIVER
Organizer: Karl Schimek 416-222-3720
Book before 18 April.
This will be the usual run from Lost Channel to the village of Latta. If time permits, we will do the lower part to Hwy 401. At lower water levels this trip will be suitable for intermediate paddlers. Limit five canoes.

26-27 April LOWER MADAWASKA RIVER
Organizer: Paul Barsevskis 416-239-2830
Book between 7 and 20 April.
High water, no bugs, and little portaging will be on tap as we paddle from Palmer Rapids to Griffith, camping out in the beautiful Snake Rapids section of the Madawaska River. Suitable for good intermediate whitewater paddlers. Limit four canoes.

4 May MISSISSAGUA RIVER
Organizer: Bill Ness 416-499-6389
Book between 13 and 27 April.
The Mississagua, north of Peterborough, tumbles from its source in Mississagua Lake to Buckhorn Lake in a series of scenic falls and short rapids separated by sections of quiet water. For intermediates with good whitewater skills it makes a challenging, strenuous six-hour trip. Limit six canoes.

10 May BLACK RIVER
Organizer: Bill Ness 416-499-6389
Book between 20 April and 4 May.
Unlike its placid namesake farther west, the Black River north of Madoc is a fast-moving, rocky little stream with many tricky rapids that demand careful scouting and precise manoeuvring. This 24-km day trip south down to Queensborough should make an exciting run for top-notch intermediates. Limit six canoes.

10-11 May OPEONGO AND UPPER MADAWASKA RIVERS
Organizer: Paul Barsevskis 416-239-2830
Book between 21 April and 4 May.
On Saturday we will paddle the Opeongo which, at high water level, offers long, runnable sets of rapids. The more technically challenging upper Madawaska on Sunday will complete an exciting whitewater weekend. Restricted to good intermediate paddlers or better. Limit five canoes.

17-19 May MADAWASKA RIVER
Organizer: George Luste 416-534-9313
Book before 5 May.
We will take a leisurely three days to cover this classic trip from Palmer Rapids to Griffith. Our relaxed pace is intended to provide ample opportunity for participants to play and improve their wwhitewater skills in the many safe rapids along the route. Suitable for intermediates or novices with an experienced partner. Limit six canoes.

17-19 May LOWER MAGNETAWAN RIVER
Organizer: Duncan Taylor 416-368-9748
Book between 15 April and 10 May.
We will start at Harris Lake, paddling up the South Magnetawan, then down the North Magnetawan through Mountain Chute and Thirty Dollar Rapids. Suitable for intermediates or better. Limit four canoes.

18 May ELORA GORGE
Organizer: Bill Ness 416-499-6389
Book between 27 April and 11 May.
The Elora Gorge on the Grand River at low water level provides an excellent location for budding whitewater enthusiasts to practice their manoeuvres. We will work our way downriver slowly, playing in the many chutes and eddies. This outing is ideal for those who have had basic whitewater training and need more practical experience. Limit seven canoes.

24-25 May UPPER MAGNETAWAN RIVER
Organizer: Tony Bird 416-466-0172
Book before 16 May.
A scenic trip on the Magnetawan River between Ahmic Lake and Wawashkesh Lake. This section of the Magnetawan has a umber of relatively short sets of rapids which at this time of year will be suitable for intermediate paddlers. Less experienced whitewater paddlers who are willing to portage are welcome. Limit four canoes.

31 May BASIC WHITEWATER CANOEING
Organizers: Howard Sagermann 416-282-9570
Rob Cepella, Jim Greenacre, Bill Ness
Book before 15 April.
First run in 1984, this program has been well received, and we are pleased to be able to offer it once again this year. The course is progressively structured to build the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to run moderate whitewater for canoeists who already possess basic paddling skills. It begins with an evening of introductory classroom instruction and a one-day flatwater workout. This is followed by a day trip on an easy river, and finally a whitewater weekend on a major river in central Ontario. Participants must have suitable canoes, PFDs, and paddles for whitewater,and must sign up for the entire course. Registration is limited to 20 persons to permit individualized instruction. Members only, please. To register, contact Howard Sagermann.

31 May-1 June WILDLIFE WEEKEND
Organizers: Ron Jasiuk 416-239-1380
Ann Moun
Book before 16 May.
The habitats of Rondeau Provincial Park on the north shore of Lake Erie range from wind-swept sand dunes to Carolinian forest to a luxuriant marsh. We intend to spend Saturday canoeing through the marsh and exploring the isolated south beach. We should be able to view and possibly photograph Bald Eagles,White-tailed Deer, and nesting turtles. Sunday's activities will be determined by the participants. We will camp in the Park. Suitable for anyone willing to "explore" (paddle/hike/muck about) all day long. Limited to ten persons.

7-8 June OPEONGO AND UPPER MADAWASKA RIVERS
Organizer: Karl Schimek 416-222-3720
Book before 30 May.
At this time of year both rivers should be at low water levels with rocks showing. Precise manoeuvring will be required with the possibility of some wading. Intermediate paddlers only. Limit five canoes.

8 June MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE
Organizer: Tony Bird 416-466-0172
Book before 3 June.
A day of paddling on the man-made whitewater course on the Gull River. The full course is technically challenging; suitable for skilled intermediates. The lower part of the course can be used by less experienced whitewater paddlers for practicing eddy turns, ferries, and paddling in bigger waves.

14-15 June CANOEING AND BACKPACKING ALONG THE SHORE OF GEORGIAN BAY
Organizer: Bob Knapp 519-371-1255
Book before 1 June.
We will meet in Wiarton at 8 a.m. on Saturday morning. Participants who would like to sleep over on Friday night at my house in Owen Sound are welcome. We will begin hiking and canoeing at Halfway Dump, 16 km south of Tobermory. One half of the group will canoe while the other half will hike the Bruce Trail along the shore. We will hike and canoe a total of approximately 13 km and then camp together. For the return trip we will switch canoeists and hikers. Georgian Bay is very cold in June and canoeists will have to stay very close to shore, but the scenery will be magnificent. This trip is especially intended for members who are considering the Pukaskwa trip in August (see below), but others are also welcome.Limit four canoes and eight hikers; total 16 participants.

14-15 June WHITEWATER WEEKEND AT PALMER RAPIDS
Organizer: Jim Morris 416-793-2088
Book before 1 June.
We will have a preliminary session to meet each other and to review basic paddling strokes. At Palmer Rapids on the Madawaska River we will learn whitewater techniques with emphasis on backpaddling, upstream and downstream ferries, eddy turns, reading the rapids, and canoe safety. Open to beginning and intermediate whitewater paddlers. Limit eight canoes.

28 June-1 July WHITEWATER WORKSHOP ON THE FRENCH RIVER
Organizer: Jim Morris 416-793-2088
Book before 13 June.
This will be a static camp around Commanda Island from where a variety of rapids can be reached and run repeatedly. An excellent opportunity to practice whitewater canoeing in more challenging rapids. Upstream techniques of lining and poling will also be demonstrated. Limit eight canoes.

July; weekend to be determined SOLO WHITEWATER CLINIC
Organizer: Howard Sagermann 416-282-9570
Book before 20 June.
This weekend clinic for solo paddlers only will be spent on the French River rapids. This clinic is intended for the intermediate tandem paddler who wants to give solo paddling a try. The paddling pace will be slow, with the majority of time spent playing the rapids. Limit ten canoes.

8 or 9 to 22 August PUKASKWA PARK - CANOEING AND HIKING
Organizer: Bob Knapp 519-371-1255
Book before 1 June (or attend practice trip 14-15 June).
This is a combination backpacking and canoeing trip along the coast of Pukaskwa. If we had two or three canoes that would follow the shore while the other half of the group backpacked along the shore trail, then on the return trip the canoeists could change places with the backpackers. Also, food for the return backpacking trip might be carried in the canoes to cut down on the load carried. Distance covered will be approximately 16 km per day, depending upon the weather and conditions. Canoeing could only be done when the conditions are suitable. Interested participants need to make an early commitment and should also plan on taking part in the above-mentioned "practice" trip on 14-15 June; see: Canoeing and backpacking along the shore of Georgian Bay.

guidelines for wca trips

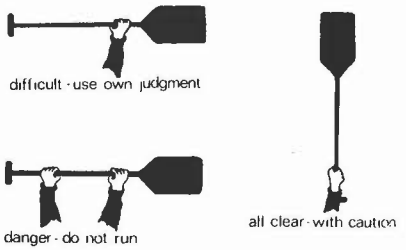
1. It is the function of the Outings Committee to arrange and publish in Nastawgan a schedule of trips and related events, organized by members of the WCA.
2. All trips should have a minimum impact on the environment.
   Trip organizers may:
   a. limit the number of canoes (or participants) permitted on a trip,
   b. advise on the type of equipment and camping techniques used.
3. Participants should:
   a. follow the booking dates established by the organizer,
   b. inform the organizer promptly if they cannot make the trip.
4. Food, transportation, canoes, camping equipment, partners, etc., are the responsibility of each participant. Organizers may assist in these areas, particularly in the pairing of partners.
5. Participants are responsible for their own safety at all times, and must sign a waiver form. Organizers should return completed waiver forms to the Outings Committee.
6. Organizers receive the right to:
   a. exclude participants who do not have sufficient experience for the trip,
   b. exclude any canoe deemed unsafe,
   c. make any arrangements necessary to ensure safety of the group.
7. In the event that on a trip organized by the WCA an accident occurs, or any potentially dangerous situation arises, the Outings Committee must be informed.
8. Solo canoeists and/or kayakers are permitted on trips at the discretion of the organizer.
9. Non-members are permitted to participate in no more than two trips. Educational trips are for members only.
10. Organizers should give a brief description of the trip to the Outings Committee and, where possible, write a short article on the trip (or arrange to have it done) for publication in Nastawgan.

canoe safety rules

The need for these safety rules will vary with the time of year and the type of trip. They are to be applied at the discretion of the trip organizer.

1. Paddlers will not be allowed on a trip without:
   a. a flotation jacket that can be worn while paddling,
   b. a canoe suitable for the trip.
2. Paddlers should bring:
   a. spare clothing, well waterproofed,
   b. extra food,
   c. matches in a waterproof container,
   d. spare paddles, bailer, and a whistle,
   e. material to repair the canoe.
3. On trips when the air and water temperatures are cold, a wetsuit is recommended.
4. The signals on WCA river trips should be known by all participants.
5. When running a section of river with rapids:
   a. canoes may be asked to maintain a definite order,
   b. each canoe is responsible for the canoe behind,
   c. signals should be given after finishing a rapid (when appropriate), and canoes positioned below the rapid to assist in case of trouble.
   d. canoes should keep well spaced,
   e. each canoe should be equipped with ropes which can be used for lining and rescue.
6. The organizers' decisions on all trips are final.

SIGNALS



trip ratings

The trip ratings presented below are intended as a general guide.
For a detailed description of a WCA trip, the trip organizer should be contacted.

WHITEWATER TRIPS

The rating of whitewater trips will be determined generally by the difficulty of the rapids; however, water temperature, time of year, length and remoteness of the trip could also influence the overall rating.

SKILL LEVEL	RIVER CLASS	RIVER CHARACTERISTICS
Beginner Feels comfortable in canoe and is proficient in forward and steering strokes.	0 (Very Easy)	Moving water with no rapids. Some small riffles. Wide passages.
Novice Can perform draw, pry, and sweep strokes; and is able to sideslip and to backpaddle in a straight line. Can enter and exit from a mild current. Recognizes basic river features and hazards.	I (Easy)	Some small rapids with small waves and few obstacles. Course easy to recognize. River speed is less than backpaddling speed.
Intermediate Is proficient at all basic whitewater strokes. Can execute front and back ferries and eddy turns in a moderate current. Understands leaning and bracing techniques. Is able to select and follow a route in Class II water. Knowledgeable of river hazards, safety, and rescue procedures.	II (Medium)	Generally unobstructed rapids with moderate eddies and bends. Course usually easy to recognize, but scouting from shore may be necessary. River speed occasionally exceeds hard backpaddling speed. Waves up to 60 cm high. Some manoeuvring necessary.
Advanced Is able to ferry and eddy turn in strong currents, and has effective bracing strokes. Can select and negotiate a course through continuous rapids. Can paddle solo or tandem. Is able to self-rescue, aid in rescuing others, and knows safety procedures thoroughly.	III (Difficult)	Numerous rapids with high, irregular waves often capable of swamping an open canoe. Route often requires complex manoeuvring. Current usually less than fast forward paddling speed. Course might not be easily recognizable. Scouting required.
Expert Has complete mastery of all strokes and manoeuvres, and can apply them with power and precision in turbulent water. Recovers quickly in unexpected and dangerous situations. Can read complex water patterns and knows how they will affect his/her boat. Exhibits good judgment and has full competency in safety and rescue techniques.	IV (Very Difficult)	Long, difficult rapids that often require precise manoeuvring. Turbulent crosscurrents, powerful eddies, and abrupt bends. High, irregular waves with boulders directly in current. Course difficult to recognize. Scouting mandatory. Rescue difficult. Generally not possible for open canoes.

FLATWATER TRIPS

Flatwater trip ratings will be determined by remoteness, length, and pace of trip; and the length, number, and ruggedness of portages. It is important to remember that cold water and strong winds on large lakes can create conditions dangerous for any canoeist, no matter how skilled or experienced.

products and services

MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT CO-OP is now carrying Sawyer canoes in addition to Blue Hole and Old Town. As well, we are offering our own line of paddles by Ray Kettlewell. We also have complete accessory lines of PFDs, float bags, Helly Hansen, polypropylene underwear, etc. We are offering canoe clinics in which we give free test paddling of solo and tandem Sawyer canoes. Dates are every other Tuesday night beginning 15 April, at Humber Bay Park in Mimico. For more information please contact the Co-op in Toronto, 416-964-7909.

CANOE RENTALS. Do yourself a favor this year and try one of the wide variety of rental canoes from Rockwood Outfitters -- everything from the 17' royalex Intrepid to ultra-lightweight kevlar canoes like the Saugeen and Jensen S2 and Tripper. For the solo paddlers we have slalom and touring kayaks and the Jensen Solitude. Contact: Rockwood Outfitters, 699 Speedvale Ave. W., Guelph, Ontario, N1K 1E6, phone 519-824-1415.

BLUEWATER AND JENSEN CANOES. A wide variety of traditional and modern designs in sophisticated layups. Take a look at our new airex composites, lighter and stronger and available in the S-glass-kevlar and nylon-kevlar layups. All the models are available for try-out and rental. Contact: Rockwood Outfitters, 699 Speedvale Ave. W., Guelph, Ontario, N1K 1E6, phone 519-824-1415.

CAMERA FOR SALE. Brand-new, unused Olympus OM.1 camera body for sale from canoeist who already has a camera but got this one as a gift. Price is negotiable. Contact Pat Lewtas in Toronto at 416-961-6575, before 20 March or after 21 April.

DISCOUNTS ON CAMPING SUPPLIES. WCA members who present a membership card will receive a 10 percent discount on many non-sale items at:

A.B.C. Sports, 552 Yonge Street, Toronto,
Rockwood Outfitters, 699 Speedvale Ave. West, Guelph, Ontario,
The Sportsman's Shop, 2476 Yonge Street, Toronto.

Members should check at each store to find out what items are discounted.

SPECIAL SALE. Black's Camping, 16 Carlton Street, Toronto, is pleased to announce a WCA club night on Tuesday, 15 April, from 6 to 9. We will be offering to WCA members a 15% discount on all regular priced merchandise. Canoes and kayaks will be 10% off. We will have additional items up to 50% off.

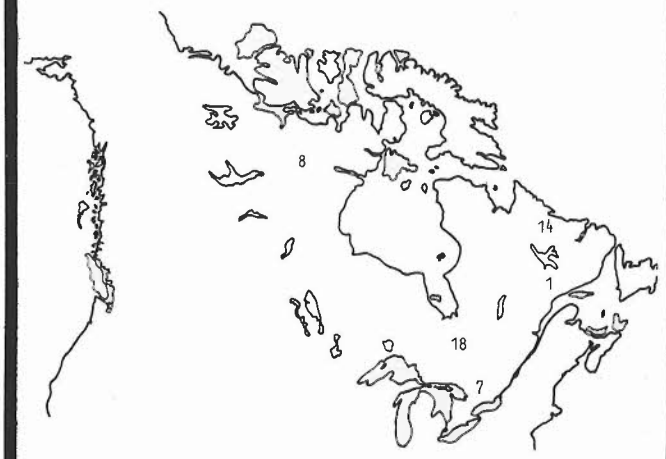
REPAIRS?: I don't know about you, but every time I come back from a major trip, some of my gear needs repair. One time a friend put his knife through my tent floor - yes, he's still my friend. I seem to go through zippers on my tents faster than anything else. And another time I decided a new tent, back from its first test in the field, needed a new door for extra ventilation.

All these tasks, and more, were performed by a lady - at very reasonable expense - who manages whatever miracle I request of her. She specializes in sewing repairs of sports gear and clothing made of nylon. So, if you're readying your gear for something like a barrens canoe trip, I can recommend Bev Varcoe's Sport Sewing service very highly. For information or an appointment, call 486-9666 in Toronto.

David Pelly

CANOETOONS. Paul Mason's "Canoetoons," the canoeing cartoons that you have seen in Nastawgan, are available as greeting cards from Trail Head, at both their Ottawa and Toronto stores.

where it is



The approximate location of some of the places mentioned in this issue are shown by page number:

1 Magpie River West
7 Algonquin Park
8 Journey Across the Barrens
14 A Winter's Trip in Labrador
18 Little Abitibi River

wca contacts

W.C.A. POSTAL ADDRESS
P.O. Box 496
Postal Station K
Toronto, Ont.
M4P 2G9

SECRETARY
Ria Harting
7 Walmer Road, Apt. 902
Toronto, Ont.
M5R 2W8
416-964-2495

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Toni Harting
7 Walmer Road, Apt. 902
Toronto, Ont.
M5R 2W8
416-964-2495

OUTINGS
Tony Bird
199 Glebe Holme Blvd.
Toronto, Ont.
M4J 1S8
416-466-0172

COMPUTER
Cash Belden
77 Huntley Str., Apt. 1116
Toronto, Ont.
M4Y 2P3
416- 925-3591

CONSERVATION
Bill Ness
1 Chester Le Blvd.
Unit 6
Scarborough, Ont.
M1W 2M7
416-499-6389

TREASURER
Rob Butler
47 Colin Ave.
Toronto, Ont.
M5P 2B8
416-487-2282

TRIP HOT-LINE
Marcia Farquhar
187 Mill Str.
Richmond Hill, Ont.
L4C 4B1
416-884-0208

MEMBERSHIP
Paula Schimek
139 Goulding Ave.
Willowdale, Ont.
M2M 1L5
416-222-3720

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bill King (Chairman)
45 Hi Mount Dr.
Willowdale, Ont.
M2K 1X3
416-223-4646

Bill Ness
1 Chester Le Blvd.
Unit 6
Scarborough, Ont.
M1W 2M7
416-499-6389

Marcia Farquhar
187 Mill Str.
Richmond Hill, Ont.
L4C 4B1
416-884-0208

Herb Pohl
480 Maple Ave., Apt. 113
Burlington, Ont.
L7S 1M4
416-637-7632

Paul Barsevskis
21 Avonhurst Rd.
Islington, Ont.
M9A 2G7
416-239-2830

Stewart McIlwraith
38 Rhydwen Ave.
Scarborough, Ont.
M1N 2E1
416-698-1519

WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I enclose a cheque for $15 __ student under 18
$25 __ adult
$35 __ family
for membership in the *Wilderness Canoe Association*.

I understand that this entitles me/us to receive Nastawgan, to vote at meetings of the Association, and gives me/us the opportunity to participate in W.C.A. outings and activities.

NAME_____ ADDRESS_____

_____

_____ phone_____

Please check one of the following: [ ] new membership application
[ ] renewal for 1986.

Notes: -This membership will expire January 31,1987.
-Please send completed form and cheque (payable to the Wilderness Canoe Association) to the membership committee chairman.