

## algonquin solo



James Garratt

A loon surfaced nearby; its smooth shape popped up suddenly from the depths. All of the loon's attention immediately focussed on me as I drifted close in the canoe. Its red eyes held mine in an unwavering stare until, with fluid grace, the loon arched up, stretched almost full-length above the surface, and flapped its dark wings. Then, as smoothly as it had appeared, the loon slipped away beneath the water.

I had paddled northward for at least two hours since leaving Opeongo station that morning. But only now did I begin to awaken to this place, Algonquin Provincial park, and realize that my canoe trip was indeed underway. The city began to fade. I looked across the expanse of Opeongo Lake--Algonquin Park's largest lake. The waters spread north and east into the far distance where forested hills rose against the mild blue sky. Tiny islands adorned with white pines dotted the lake nearby. I paddled among them, urged on by a south breeze, and soon entered Opeongo's North Arm. In the far northeast I could see a change in contour of the hills, which marked the inlet where the trip's first portage would begin.

There, too, a change in the forest was apparent. Instead of the tiered plumes of white pines which robed most of the Opeongo hills, an extensive stand of hardwoods came down to the water's edge. They were smaller, young trees. I consulted my map and learned that this area had been burnt over in 1953, and now supported a pure poplar regeneration. Drifting closer, I thought I detected a subtle hint of autumn in the hardwoods; a general wash of lightest yellow.

I could not be certain, so subtle was the suspected hue. After all, it was only 31 August. But perhaps I had been prepared to find such first signs.

After the lake's openness the hills seemed to close around me as I paddled into the inlet. The fragrance of pine was stronger. With some dismay I saw a small motor boat, with a pair of wheels riding incongruously on top, making its way toward the portage. And ahead on the shore a mass of people were clustered, busily going to or from the portage. For a moment I thought of turning in another direction. But my plans were made, and soon my canoe bumped to rest on the shore. Several men were engaged in reloading canoes after the portage, while a dozen children did whatever they could to help or hinder. Before me, a man and a woman wrestled the motor boat onto its set of wheels, preparatory to the 1.3-km

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Camp on Proulx Lake, early morning.

"carry." No one noticed me as I hauled my own packs up from the beach to a clear area beside the portage trail. Then, upon my return for the canoe, one of the men came over and asked, "Have you heard tomorrow's weather report?"

"Sunny," I said.

"I mean the winds. What about the winds?" His upper body was tanned and bare--a luxury peculiar to bug-free, late-season canoeing.

"They didn't say," I answered. He was about to turn away, when he saw my map lying in the canoe. He asked what route I'd planned. It was the Poulx Lake, Big Crow Lake, Crow River, Lake Lavieille, and Dickson Lake loop, which features a five-kilometre portage from Dickson back toward the East Arm of Opeongo.

"Oh yes," he said. "We were up on Big Crow Lake. Went to see the pines near there...."

"That's what I'm going to see too," I said at his mention of the pines. These trees were described on the map as being "one of the finest virgin white pine stands in North America." Purely by chance they had survived the "square timber" logging era which ended in Algonquin about one hundred years previous (1).

"They're quite a ways up the trail from Crow River," he continued. "You walk up, down, and it seems you'll never get there. They're big." He savored the memories as he spoke. But now his youthful charges were calling him, and one of the canoes in his party had already disembarked. "You alone?" he asked, perhaps wistfully.

"Yes. Is this a Scout group you're with?"

"No. Fathers and sons." He turned away. "Have a good trip," he called.

I "threw" my canoe up onto my shoulders and started along the portage. My sense of balance and my muscles were not yet adjusted to the canoe's weight. I stopped to rest after several hundred metres. Suddenly, the man and woman with the wheeled boat appeared. They lurched past me, and the man said, "You should get wheels." But I watched as they stumbled and slid on a rocky section of the trail ahead. The boat bounced and threatened to fall off the wheels at every step. Solo canoeing, though, has its own disadvantages, as I was finding; one of which is that the transportation of every piece of equipment on the portage is solely the task of oneself. Loads cannot be compromised or varied. And I knew that each portage would require three back-and-forth trips to complete.

Shouldering the canoe, I resumed the portage. It seemed interminable. Sweat ran from my face, and the upper vertebrae in my neck seemed about to develop the canoeist's rare affliction known as "moose hump." I doubted, then, that it would be wise to try to complete the trip as planned. Better to travel only as far as Big Crow Lake, see the pines, take it easy, and return this way. Forget the Crow River with its numerous portages, and especially the five-kilometre one from Dickson Lake. But just when my body refused to carry the canoe any further, a space of blue appeared among the trees ahead. The first phase of the portage was finished. I dropped the canoe and walked down to the shore of Proulx Lake.

From the sandy shore the water lay calm in the evening's lengthening light. Still waters stretched eastward

into the far distance, to be lost among hills lit by the level sunlight. It seemed an "open horizon" of land and water, perhaps unexplored--so great was the impression of Algonquin's size. I turned and started quickly back along the portage to fetch my next load.

About halfway along I encountered again the couple with the wheeled boat. They were having a break after crossing a very wet section of the trail. As I approached, the man poured and then held out a mug of cold pop for me. I stopped, and drank it gratefully.

"You alone?" asked the man.

"Yes," I answered. The air had grown cool in the forest; fragrances of marshland and cedar had arisen.

"Moose like this place," said the man, his face weather-beaten. He pointed to the marshy section, where fresh moose tracks were sunk into the black earth. "You know, a few years ago when I last came through here, a moose was feeding not seven metres away. Tell you, I got some good pictures then!" He related other adventures that he'd had in Algonquin; and now, since he'd been married, he had come to do "a little fishing."

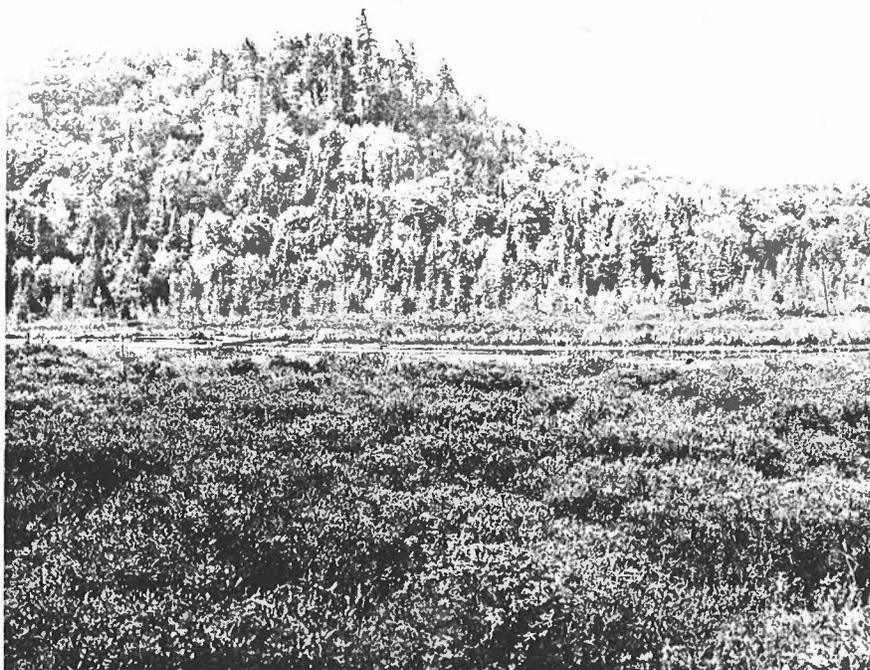
Minutes of rest from the portage went by as he spoke amid the quiet ease of the forest, until the cooling air reminded us of dusk's imminence. Without a parting word, we continued in our different directions on the trail.

Two hours later, it was good to be afloat again with the portage completed. The canoe moved effortlessly on Proulx's smooth surface. But I steered for a nearby point on the lake's north shore, where my map indicated a campsite. Soon I landed there and hauled the canoe up beneath tall hemlocks and spruce. The site was clean, well-used. Someone had left a bundle of kindling beside the fireplace--a thoughtful tradition among true Algonquin canoeists. After I had put up the tent and was preparing dinner, a chipmunk came to visit. The bright-eyed creature scampered out from the spruce thickets, and watched me from three metres away. I tossed it a bit of cheese. Immediately the chipmunk was beside me, where I sat next to the fire. It kept busy hoarding crumbs while I ate. Its cheek pouches would fill to bursting before it would scurry away to stock its larder. Suddenly the chipmunk paused and looked skyward. I followed its glance, but some time passed before I heard a soft rush of wings. A raven flew low overhead. Its jet-black form receded westward, now almost at eye level above the lake, and finally blended with the shadowed hills.

Night came quickly; the chipmunk disappeared, probably to enjoy a well-earned repast. I crawled into my own shelter.

The night air had such a refreshing edge that sleep seemed almost unnecessary. I lay awake instead to feel every nuance of the darkness. A taut expectancy filled the night; every whisper or rustle seemed freighted with significance. What signs would the land give of its teeming nightlife? A leaf brushed the tent, a mouse scurried nearby.... And some of my earliest memories surfaced; memories of experiences with bears in Algonquin. And now as I lay alone I listened involuntarily for the heavy approach of a bear in the bush, until, after awhile, a real sound did come, but distantly from far above: the repeated, continuous, softly whistled songs of warblers migrating south by night.

Looking west across the bog and Crow River to the Algonquin Highlands. Note the light shapes of tamaracks at the base of the hill, the darker conical shapes of spruce on the slope among billowing hardwoods, and windswept white pines on the crest of the hill.



Mists were drifting from the lake when I emerged from the tent at daybreak. The mists moved of their own accord into the motionless air. Dimensions of sunlight were revealed by tendrils of the sunlit vapors which, rising from the water, unveiled swaths of golden light. Through the mists three loons appeared together on the water. Were they "staging" before beginning their flight south?

The mists were gone by the time I'd eaten breakfast and began loading the canoe. Sweet gale perfumed the morning air along the shore where I worked. And whirligig beetles were clustered at the water's edge, ready to begin their dance on the surface. Some of them whirled away as I shoved off in the canoe. The canoe drifted out, and through the clear water I saw numerous freshwater clams protruding from the sandy bottom. They were quiescent now, but their nocturnal travels were revealed in graceful, sinuous trails in the sand.

As I paddled northeast toward the Crow River, a gentle breeze ruffled the water and combed the ribbony leaves of waterweed in the shallows. The sky remained fair and clear. Every campsite on the lake appeared vacant; I remembered the people at the beginning of the previous day's portage. They would have good weather for the last leg of their trip down Opeongo.

Soon I came to the first section of the Crow River, its mouth almost hidden by cattails in a cove. Beyond the cattails the narrow, meandering channel led into the midst of an extensive open bog which occupies the river's ancient floodplain to east and west. It was an environment immediately reminiscent of another northern region: the Hudson Bay Lowlands (2). To investigate further, I let the canoe find a niche in the edge of the channel and stepped out onto the quaking "land." Carefully I kept to hummocks of rushes in order to avoid plunging through the vegetative mat, until footing became firmer farther away from the open channel. Here were the same floral, among other, associations as near Hudson Bay; except that I noted the addition of British Soldier lichens, whose blood-red caps were splattered deep among the mosses, pitcher plants, rosemary. And to westward the bog met the Algonquin highlands; there, fringing the edge of the bog were the distinctive forms of tamaracks. They were already tinted gold. I followed a moose trail back to the canoe, and floated out again on the open channel.

The good weather held, and I was able to reach the east shore of Big Crow Lake in late afternoon. I set up camp beneath young pines adjacent to the "second" mouth of the Crow River, where it exits Big Crow and begins its eastward course across the heart of Algonquin. With the tent up, but not pausing for dinner, I embarked in the empty canoe to pay an initial visit to the great white pines.

I entered the river and paddled down to an old logjam which blocked the way. These logs were large, and weathered a silvery hue. It appeared as if they had once been rafted together, probably to await a spring freshet which would have carried them down the Crow and eventually to a saw mill. Perhaps they'd been waiting here since the early years of this century, when the last of such river drives occurred in the Park. In the bed of the river were remnants of a timber chute, now almost lost in the brown sands. I cat-

walked across on one of the big logs to the river's south side, where a trail to the pines began.

It was a rough trail, rising very steeply before levelling out and heading southward through a hemlock forest. These conifers were themselves exceptionally large; I sometimes mistook them in the distance for the white pines, such was my anticipation. Or was I imagining this forest as it had been in pre-settlement times?

Besides being rough, the trail was deceptively long. And as the afternoon verged toward evening, mellow sunlight reached into spaces among the trees where once the original pines had likely stood. Quietly the pines had grown here in the prehistoric centuries, becoming part of a similar forest which covered much of eastern North America. But by the 1830s, loggers had arrived in the Algonquin area. Within fifty years virtually all the great pines were felled. Their timbers were hewn square, with fifty percent wastage, to fit comfortably in the holds of ships bound for Europe, where they were sold into the service of war (3).

I walked farther into the forest. Gradually its composition changed to include yellow birch, maple, and beech. Their tall stems lifted up into leaves filled with a deepening green light. Below, the trail was shadowed and grew fainter. Soon it was only a slight impression in the duff.

Yet probably this route--similar to many Algonquin trails--had been used by Homo Sapiens for thousands of years. Long before the river drives or the square timber era, people of the Laurentian Archaic culture had roamed this land. Living in small, semi-nomadic groups, they knew and relied upon the forest's bounty for virtually all their needs. Their faith in the forest had been well-founded, for although their occupancy extended over more than three thousand years--a period greater than all of Western civilization--little trace was left of their tenancy; no archaeological artifacts of dwellings or shelters. The forest, though, remained (4).

Didn't something else continue too? For although science had projected itself onto those people by categorizing them under the term "archaic," they seemed more truly a youthful culture. Theirs was the long interlude of humanity's youth, when the original relation with nature began to unfold. Life was free to be lived as it should be. When I came within sight of the first white pine, I realized how modern man had aged the Earth...here stood proof of the "virgin" forest; it had not been a myth.

The pines curved up among the hardwoods, through a leafy canopy and into the darkening blue sky where their massive limbs remembered pathways of energy. The green needles glistened, blending delicately with the air and light. Lower down, sunflecks moved on the great columns of the pines.

Only about twenty of these pines remain in the area--their reddish-brown stems looming large in the sylvan shadows--to testify to the ripe wealth of the primordial North American forest. Soon I reached the southern limit of the pines, and turned to start back. But I lingered awhile longer in their presence, and felt an impulse to camp there beneath them. Would enough time remain to know and to share this calm success of life--the Earth's native greatness--



Moose and calf on the north side of the Crow River.

before society, fuelled with fear, completely refashioned it into an image of society itself: an image that even as the finishing touches were added, dissolved steadily into the sterile visage of a computer?

In any event, it was time for me to leave, as my stomach suggested that enough time remain for dinner. I followed the trail back to my canoe at the Crow River. Evening's coolness lay over the river as I paddled out onto the silky, black water. A fish jumped, crickets chirped. At the campsite, I was able to conserve the scarce firewood by preparing a freeze-dried "Wild Rice Pilaf With Almonds" on my one-burner stove. I then sat back to write in my journal.

A sound intruded...a kind of music. Immediately I thought someone had brought a "ghetto blaster" to the lake. But that assumption was quickly dispelled. This was a different kind of music played softly, fleetingly on a harmonica. Now I saw a canoe with the musician silhouetted therein, drifting far out on the lake. Perhaps he was serenading the setting sun which appeared to rest momentarily atop the distant hills. Ruddy light spilled in a path across the lake, forming a "sunset trail" which, before it went into the west, brought to mind some words of Izaak Walton:

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,  
The bridal of the earth and skie,  
Sweet dews shall weep thy fall to night,  
for thou must die. (5)

Next morning dawned grey and breezy. I awoke to indecision; not sure whether to continue along the Crow River and into the other lakes, or stay here for a few days before returning the way I'd come. After breakfast, I decided to decide later what to do. Then I set out to visit the white pines again.

The trail did not seem as long this time. After awhile I left the trail and walked east into the forest until, upon emerging from a thicket of moose maple, I found myself at the base of one of the pines. A tree-sized bough had broken off and fallen recently from the pine, and lay on the ground. The bough was encrusted with lichens and moss, constituting what had been a whole aerial ecosystem. Looking closer I saw that pine-cones were clustered on the tips of twigs among the bough's still fresh needles. These original pines, then, were currently fertile! All around on the earth lay more of the cones. Most were open, their seeds dispersed now beneath the ferns and wild sasarilla on the forest floor. Here they lay ready to restore the life of the past to the present. Reaching down, I probed the rich sandy loam with my fingers, and seemed to find there a youthfulness which is never "past" in any life.

A gentle rain was falling when I came back to the main trail. Raindrops fell through the soft grey light among the pines. The rain gave an autumnal edge to the air, and I started back toward camp.

The rain diminished after I reached the campsite. The lake had turned a steel-grey. The moist, freshly-scented breeze came from across the water; I listened to it whispering in the young pines around the camp. I thought of all the other young white pines now reclaiming this eastern half of Algonquin--how they were present in every stage of regeneration, from seeds to seedlings to saplings. Perhaps they were direct progeny of the original pines, whose continued "fidelity to generations yet unborn" could be honored by reserving, within this Provincial Park, a place for those young pines to attain their fullest maturity (6).

I awoke very early next morning, having decided to continue the trip down the Crow and through the eastern lakes. Time would be of the essence though, as I had arranged to be back at "work" on the afternoon of 5 September.

Evening had arrived by the time I completed the river's last portage. Here the river widens into an estuary which leads south into Crow Bay; actually an arm of Lake Lavielle. Three otters accompanied me part-way down the estuary. They dove and surfaced near the canoe and craned their necks for a better view. They called in guttural snorts and, when I replied in kind, they swam closer and wanted to continue their play. But I paddled on into Crow Bay, leaving the river behind.

Lake Lavielle opened before me. Dusk had gathered over the water and the weather was changing; a wind blew from the southeast. I drifted there awhile on Lavielle's rolling surface and looked into the distant northeast where nightfall lent an alluring aura to the hills. I contemplated turning in that direction, continuing on... The city, though, was pulling me away.

Rock, pine needles, beds of blueberries, hot food and drink on an island's smooth, curving carapace of granite which met the wind-roughened water that night. Above, the sky was starlit. The Milky Way shone to westward, while Pegasus announced the autumn stars rising in the east.

Wind buffeting the tent woke me at dawn; it had strengthened from southward, becoming a strong headwind. Rather than battling such winds on these big lakes, the best strategy would be to stay in camp and lie low. However, although I had suggested to my contact in the city the possibility of my being windbound and hence delayed, I still didn't want anyone back at "work" to be required to put in overtime on my behalf. I paddled out onto the choppy water.

By staying to leeward of islands and taking advantage of sheltered nooks along the shore, I struggled southward. In one sheltered inlet where the air and water were calm, I landed to rest. From the beach I collected leaves of a distinctive plant--one which had been noticeable all along the Crow River. This was the royal fern (*Osmunda Regalis*), whose peculiarly veined leaves revealed its prehistoric coniferous heritage. A first touch of frost had dyed the fern leaves a rich tan color.

Sounds of the surf and of wind in the pines sang together as I left the inlet. Soft, grey clouds moved over the lake; a pair of loons flew past the canoe. At the south end of Lavielle, I made the short carry into Dickson Lake. Wind and waves were stronger here, having gained power across the length of Dickson. I hugged the west shore all the way down the lake to the end of a small bay where the long portage begins.

It was late afternoon and I was unsure whether to begin the portage now, or make camp and wait for morning. It seemed best to call it a day; after all it would be good to rest here beneath the tall trees. But thoughts of my ties to the city came again, and I felt anxious about completing the trip on time. A compromise suggested itself: I would portage the canoe part-way across, then return to camp here for the night.

Yet within such clean, vigorous surroundings with energy available directly from the elements, the body will remember and rise to the occasion; thanks also to "tip-ups"--those simple pieces of wood nailed between trees, or an obliging tree branch, which allow one to rest from carrying the canoe without having to lift it again from the ground--I reached the trail's end at the shore of Bonfield Lake in two and a half hours. It was dark. Now only two small lakes--Bonfield and Wright--separated me from Opeongo's East Arm. I could easily reach Opeongo station tomorrow, only half a day late for work.

A storm gathered in the night, and the wind increased as I rested there on the shore of Bonfield Lake. Then heavy rain began as I started back along the portage. Upon reaching the Dickson lakeshore, I erected the tent in the downpour. Once inside the tent, with most of my equipment still dry because of careful packing, I had everything I wanted.

Sometime in the night the storm ended. Quiet stillness reigned in the morning. I listened to the stillness before

crawling from the tent and brewing a cup of tea. I wandered down to the lakeshore. It was a breath-giving sight.

Eastward across the reflecting surface of Dickson, a warm peachy light swelled into the morning mists, as if to illuminate another reason for patiently living, growing here. The hills beyond appeared softly in the mist, though the trees were distinctly gilded by the first direct rays. Had this morning come fresh from the dawn of creation itself? It seemed wise to consider the infinity of the present moment.

Back up at the camp I quickly disassembled the tent and started along the portage. I did the portage in stages, carrying one pack for several hundred metres, dropping it, then returning for the other. The air was cool yet humid from the night's rain. I stopped to drink from a brook which ran dark and foam-flecked through the woodland shadows. Strewn on its surface were scarlet maple leaves; bright leaves floating on dark water, turning, drifting, finding eddies among the rocks. Red leaves lay scattered on the trail too. Some were curled, cupping water; others were flexible, already pliant with the Earth.

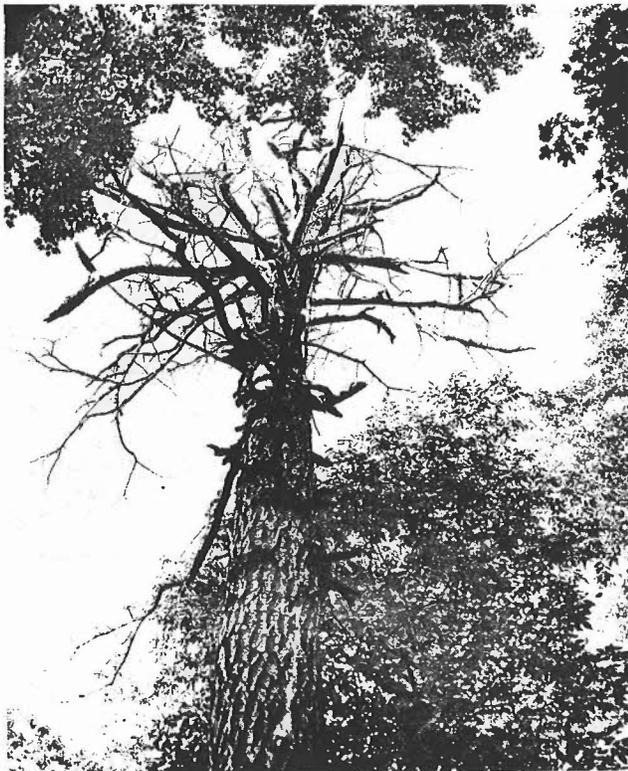
As the morning advanced toward noon, a breeze developed. When I arrived in the afternoon on the shore of Bonfield Lake where my canoe waited, the breeze had become a strong west wind. Pausing only for lunch, I covered the remaining distance to the shore of Opeongo by mid-afternoon.

One-metre high breakers washed the Opeongo beach, driven by the west wind which blew the length of this East Arm. I tried to paddle against it and made about a hundred metres before letting the wind and water carry me back to the beach. It was no contest. The wilderness wanted me here, and I looked forward to staying at least another night.

Then I saw a metallic flash far across the rough water. It was a power boat bouncing over the whitecaps. Gradually it grew larger, coming in my direction. Soon the boat was recognizable as a Ministry of Natural Resources vessel with two officers aboard. They heave-to off the beach and called my name, questioning. I waded out to greet them. Apparently my contact in the city had become worried about my short delay, and had "sounded the alarm."

"We'll give you a lift down the lake," they said. I couldn't refuse, considering how far they'd come in this rough weather. Actually I felt initially grateful, as now I wouldn't miss work next day.

After my canoe was hauled up and tied across the boat's bow and my other gear stowed below, we started slogging down the lake. We crept slowly along and although the pilot manoeuvred skillfully through the surf, we were soon partially soaked by spray. Then, as we entered the main body of Opeongo where the wind's fetch was less, the motor suddenly sputtered and died. The hissing of wind and water were the only sounds as the boat wallowed in the swells. The two Ministry people worked quickly to try to restart the boat's motor. I glanced at my canoe posed across the bow.



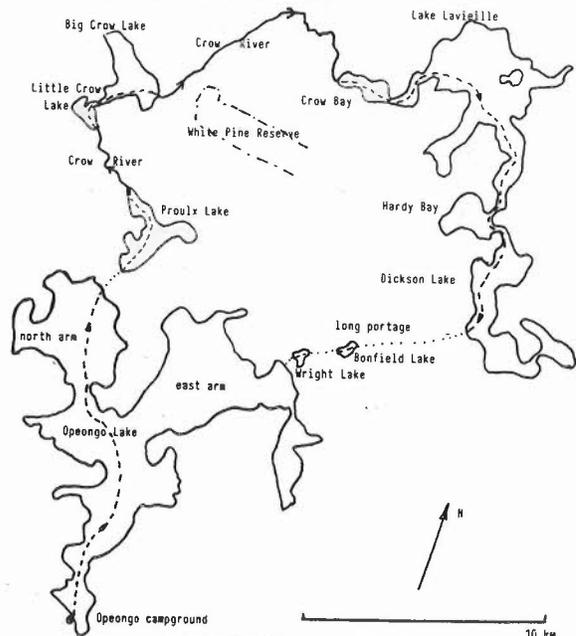
Dead Crow River white pine. Bark and branches fall away while innumerable lifeforms make use of the stem.

**NOTES**

1. These pines survived the early logging era fortuitously. But it was Frank MacDougall, Algonquin's superintendent (1931 to 1941), who recommended through the Public Lands Act that the "Crow River pines" be specifically preserved.
2. See: Garratt, James. ("Journal of the Cheepay and Albany Rivers," Northward Journal 37, 1986).
3. For more information on the logging eras of Algonquin see: A Pictorial History of Algonquin Provincial Park (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 1977). MacKay, Donald. The Lumberjacks. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978).
4. Wright, J.V. Ontario Prehistory. (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1972) pp. 27-36.
5. Walton, Izaak, The Compleat Angler. (Oxford University Press: London, 1982 edition) p. 111.
6. Quotation is from Johnson, Pauline, "The Siwash Rock" in Legends of Vancouver. (McClelland & Stewart: Toronto, 1983 edition), p. 36. Given current forestry policy, it would be difficult to implement the idea of reserving areas within Algonquin where white pine could again grow to maximum age. According to the Algonquin Provincial Park Master Plan, (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 1974), the Algonquin Forestry Authority, a Crown Corporation, controls all logging in the park. Referring to white pine, the Plan says that the Authority will follow the Ministry of Natural Resources' silvicultural guide for this species (p. 65). This guide is entitled, A Silvicultural Guide to the White Pine Working Group (OMNR: 1983 edition). Under "Management Objectives" (p. 2) it reads:

The white pine working group should be managed to produce high-quality products in the form of sawlogs and veneer in the shortest possible time. ... To achieve these objectives, a rotation age of 100 years on site class 1, 120 years on site class 2, and 140 years on site class 3 is required.

This means that pine on the best sites will be cut in theory every 100 years. Yet the white pine can live beyond 300 years. In forestry parlance, such pines are "over-mature" and "decadent," which simply means that possible gains in lumber volume by further growth are theoretically outweighed by the risk of decay and other factors (actually the completion of the tree's natural life-cycle). However, Algonquin's Master Plan is due for review. Perhaps then the example of Frank MacDougall will be followed, and a sufficient area reserved under the Public Lands Act to secure the future of Ontario's "Old Pines."



James Garratt graduated in 1975 from Sir Sandford Fleming College as a forestry technician. He has published stories and reviews in a variety of magazines, and is very active in environmental groups, especially "Save the Rouge Valley System."

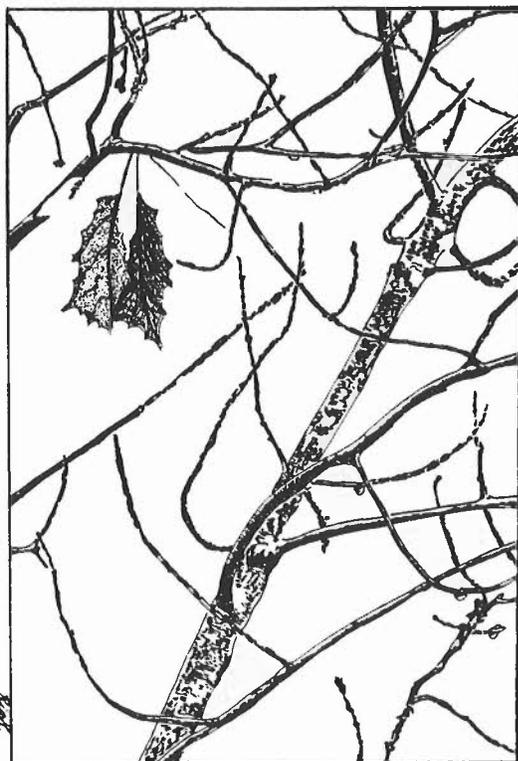
## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

In the last issue of Nastawgan, Raymond Chipeniuk's rather critical analysis of the "tour operator" leads me to believe that his perception is based on his own unfruitful attempts at the business himself. He also fails to clearly distinguish or categorize tour operators in their rightful perspective. Certainly there are the "get-rich-quick" operators who invade wilderness regions with little regard for environmental or aboriginal concerns, specifically those involved in extractive forms of tourism, i.e. trophy hunting by aircraft. As a tour operator and canoe trip outfitter I deeply resent being tossed in a basket of rotten apples.

Mr. Chipeniuk also failed to illustrate the damages done to wilderness areas by logging and mining developments, instead renders all tour operators (including the good ones) as despoilers of pristine northland. In many cases if it were not for concerned outfitters/operators making use of the many Canadian waterways, mountains, and valleys, governments would perceive the "wilderness" as having no value except as exportable commodities -- wood and minerals. In my travels across this country I have witnessed the decimation of many wilderness areas, all by man's incessant hunger for resources: road building, pipelines, the extraction of forests and minerals. But I have yet to observe the annihilation of wilderness areas solely by the tour operator.

There are always good and bad in all assemblages but to unfairly chastise tour operators just because Mr. Chipeniuk wants the wilderness for himself is an unacceptable attitude -- in my opinion. Since Mr. Chipeniuk failed as a tour operator and, through choice, alienates himself from tour operations and/or areas travelled by them, he is in fact a very poor authority on the benefits reaped by those who participate in guided expeditions. Not everyone wants to be a leader.



BARRENLAND CARIBOU - Gail Vickars

One of the most important facets of wilderness participation on a guided expedition is environmental awareness. The more people who experience wilderness well know the importance in the preservation of such pristine regions -- henceforth the widespread Canadian environmental movement today.

We do have to ask ourselves the question, is it wiser to exploit the wilderness through resource extraction and development or possibly through an influx of neophyte adventurers? Which is the more detrimental? It has been my observation that those who want everything for themselves are the least likely to spend the time or money to try and save it (wilderness). The independent "self-propelled" adventurer need only travel in the off-season, even within Algonquin Park, to be alone for days and see no one. There are quiet and unbeaten paths close to home or afar, albeit fewer than a decade ago. Because through the growing awareness, socially, morally, environmentally, and economically, the venture tourist industry is a "non-consumptive" alternative to the mining of our natural resources.

It is good to see that Mr. Chipeniuk's lobbying against tour operators has had no effect on the industry (the article is a reprint from 1986) although I am surprised that the W.C.A. would publish such a negative article at the time when many tour operators are leading the fight in many locales to protect wilderness areas from extinction. I would prefer to see macho canoeists endorsing cigarette ads.

Hap Wilson  
Smoothwater Outfitters & Tours Ltd.  
Temagami, Ontario

It is Nastawgan's policy to let opinions on both sides of an issue be heard, so that a meaningful discussion may ensue.

Editor

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news brief

WILDERNESS PHOTO EXHIBITS

WCA member Sandy Richardson will be having two showings of wilderness photographs in the Toronto area. One will be at the new art gallery associated with the Bluffers Park Yacht Club in Scarborough, throughout the fall and winter. The other showing will be at Positive Images on Danforth Avenue, during November. For more information, contact Sandy in Toronto at 416-429-3944.

# news briefs

**NASTAWGAN MATERIAL AND DEADLINE** Articles, trip reports, book reviews, photographs, sketches, technical tips, and anything else that you think might be of interest to other members, are needed for future issues. Contributor's Guidelines are available upon request. The deadline dates for the next two issues are:

issues	winter 1988	deadline date	13 November '88
	spring 1989		5 February '89

**WCA MEMBERSHIP LIST** Membership lists are available to any members who wish one for personal, non-commercial use. Send a \$2.00 bill (no cheques, please!) to Cash Belden, 77 Huntley Street, Apt. 1116, Toronto, M4Y 2P3.

**SYMPOSIUM IN OCTOBER** The Minnesota Canoe Association is sponsoring an event entitled "Canoeing the Far North" Symposium. The dates are 21 (evening) and 22 (all day) October 1988, and the place is Wilder Forest, Marine on St. Croix, MN (50 km NE of St. Paul). The program will consist of slide presentations by both men and women of Arctic canoe adventures. If you are interested in attending or presenting, contact: Bill Simpson, MN Canoe Association, Box 72, Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047, phone 612-433-3451.

**SLIDES FOR THE WCA FALL PARTY** At the Fall Party, announced elsewhere in this issue, the introductory slide show will again consist of a special presentation of slides made by WCA members on their trips, such as the organized outings. We're looking for all kinds of photographs, so lend us your slides, be part of this very successful show! Contact Ron Jasiuk (416-239-1380) or Toni Harting (416-964-2495).

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1989** Next year's A.G.M. will take place on 11 February at the Frost Centre south of Dorset.

**SYMPOSIUM IN JANUARY** The third WCA canoe and wilderness symposium will be held in Toronto on 27 (evening) and 28 (all day) January 1989. The aim will be to again provide a diverse group of people on a broad spectrum of topics, but with the common and unifying theme of canoeing and/or the wilderness of Northern Ontario. At press time the efforts to organize the event are just starting and any constructive suggestions would be welcome. We will probably rent a larger hall than the 300-seat-capacity one used last year. In due course we could use some volunteers for the work of staging the event. Please contact George Luste in Toronto at 416-534-9313 (evenings or weekends). In the near future there will be a special mailing with details to WCA members.

**1989 CANDIDATES FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS** Three positions on the Board of Directors will become available coming spring, with elections for a two-year term to be held at the A.G.M. The office is open to all paid-up members who have reached the age of majority, or will do so within ten days of election. Candidates should notify Rob Cepella (416-925-8243) of their intention to run. Although nominations may be made up to the time of the elections, candidates are requested to declare themselves prior to the deadline of the winter issue of Nastawgan, so that they can publish a brief platform.

**WCA TREASURER AWARDED OMER STRINGER TROPHY** In the recently held Algonquin Park Two-day Marathon Canoe Race, Rob Butler and his paddling partner son Michael were awarded the Omer Stringer Trophy for the best performance in the 16-foot or under canoe class. They finished fourth over-all, beating many marathon teams using specialized racing canoes. The two-day event covered some 142 kilometres and included 33 portages. Their total time was 22 hours and 20 minutes.

**ORCA ANNUAL MEETING** The Annual Meeting of the Ontario Recreational Canoeing Association will take place in conjunction with the Canoe Ontario Annual Meeting on 5 and 6 November in Toronto. Call Canoe Ontario at 416-495-4180 for details.

## WCA mailbox

### ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE ONTARIO MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Previous decisions to allow non-conforming uses in parks have been reversed. No logging, hunting, trapping, mineral exploration, mining, or hydroelectric development will be permitted in any wilderness or nature reserve class parks or zones. Logging will only be permitted to continue in Algonquin and Lake Superior Parks under the most stringent operating rules. Hunting and commercial tourism will be allowed in waterway, historical, natural environment and recreation class parks on an individual basis following extensive consultation.

The Ministry, through its "Crown Land As a Development Tool" (CLADT) initiative, will be making Crown Land in Northern Ontario more available for a variety of economic development purposes. Pilot projects in selected areas will be the focus of intensified investment for such uses as peat, aquaculture, hydro-electric development, cottage development, tourism, and water-based recreation. The WCA has been invited to provide commentary, particularly on the latter issue, to John Fauquier, senior consultant, Woods Gordon, 884-1212.

The Ministry has accepted the Environmental Assessment of the Red Squirrel Road Extension which means that construction of the road is to proceed. The Ministry decided not to hold public hearings on the matter since this would have delayed construction until the summer of 1990, resulting in delayed access to the timber stands.

### THE TEMAGAMI WILDERNESS SOCIETY REQUEST FOR DONATIONS

The group is taking the Ontario Government to court to overturn the decision to approve the Red Squirrel Road Environmental Assessment. The suit, against the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of the Environment, and the Attorney General, challenges the denial of a public hearing and the legality of the Environmental Assessment that was conducted. The Temagami Wilderness Society is requesting that donations (tax-deductible) for their legal fund be sent to "The Environment Fund," 62 Lesgey Crescent, Willowdale, Ont. M2J 2J1.

### THE ONTARIO HERPETOFAUNAL SUMMARY

A volunteer project to collect data on the distribution, abundance, and ecology of the amphibians and reptiles in the province, the Summary is comparable to the Ontario Bird Breeding Atlas project. To take part in the data-gathering process or to receive a copy of the most recent report, contact Michael Oldham, The Ontario Herpetofaunal Summary, c/o Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 5463, London, Ont. N6A 4L6.

### MEETINGS

An International Forum for the Future of the St. Lawrence Beluga will be held September 28 - October 2, 1988, in Tadoussac, Québec (where the Saguenay flows into the St. Lawrence). For information contact: the International Forum for the Future of the Beluga, 833 Avenue Marguerite-Bourgeois, Suite 101, Quebec City G1S 3W7; 418-681-2443.

### INFORMATION AVAILABLE

A Fact Sheet on "The Greenhouse Gases" is available from Environment Canada, Atmospheric Environment Service, Canadian Climate Centre, 4905 Dufferin Street, Downsview, Ont. M3H 5T4; 416-667-4525; Catalogue No. En57-24/12-1986E.

The Ontario Public Interest Research Group has a series of pamphlets on waste management issues; Room 201, 455 Spadina Ave., Toronto, M5S 2G8, 416-598-2199.

### PERIODICALS RECEIVED:

Almanac of The Canadian Nature Federation

Bruce Trail News

Canada Life, a publication of the World Wildlife Fund and Canadian Nature Federation, particularly suitable for youth

Iroquois Canoe and Outing Club - Newsletter

Nature Canada

Probe Post, the quarterly journal of The Pollution Probe Foundation

NOTE: Contact Marcia Farquhar to borrow any of the material listed above.

# the joys of wilderness canoeing

Toni Harting

## photography

To this day I vividly remember the remark made by that excited canoeist. He was in a group of six trippers we met when they portaged around Beaver Rapids on the Missinaibi River where we were camped. A short distance upstream they had seen a magnificent, large-antlered moose quietly looking at them from the shore, only a few metres away. The young man was still so moved by his first encounter with the monarch of the north woods that he couldn't stop talking about it. Then, in the jumble of words that came pouring out of his mouth, he said one sentence that hit me right between my photographer's eyes: "I would love to have made a photograph of that moose, but I really don't know how to do that from a canoe and besides, we didn't have enough time ...!"

I was speechless. Here he was, for the first and maybe only time in the middle of Canada's unique and priceless canoe country, close to an animal most people only know from pictures. He would have been the happiest man in the world with just a few photographs to show to his admiring friends back home. But to his great regret he did not get to make his precious photographs simply because in the excitement of this extraordinary moment he could not properly use his camera. And furthermore, there wasn't even enough time for taking pictures because he and his friends were in a big hurry to get to the next campsite. That was one very disappointed paddler.

This anecdote illustrates something I have unfortunately seen numerous times on my canoe trips: so many people moving as fast as possible to cover great distances, leaving little or no time for observation of the beauty around them, even neglecting to make some treasured photographs of the events and objects they encountered. And I knew that many of these hurried trippers would be very sorry once they reached home because they didn't have a personal photographic record of their adventure. Of course, not everybody going into the wilderness wants to take pictures. Many canoeists find great fulfillment in just paddling flatwater and whitewater and don't really care too much about taking time out for the camera, if they have one. And that's quite all right, for them. But even they always love to look at the few photographs their friends made on the trip, reliving the great times they had and the marvelous adventure they all shared.

However, for the majority of people, and certainly for those who do not trip frequently, photography always is the most efficient and satisfactory method of recording the significant happenings and sights of their trip. And, together with a simple written diary, these photographs will make up an excellent personal souvenir they will cherish for the rest of their lives. Most paddlers are only occasional trippers for whom good pictorial records of their adventures may be very important indeed. There are of course many other ways to make good use of successful trip photographs: family albums, gifts, slide shows, enlargements for home or office, post cards, calendars,

maybe even a publication in a magazine or book. Your pictures will generate pleasant feelings each time you look at them again, helping you remember those happy days. Man is indeed a visual animal: everybody loves pictures.

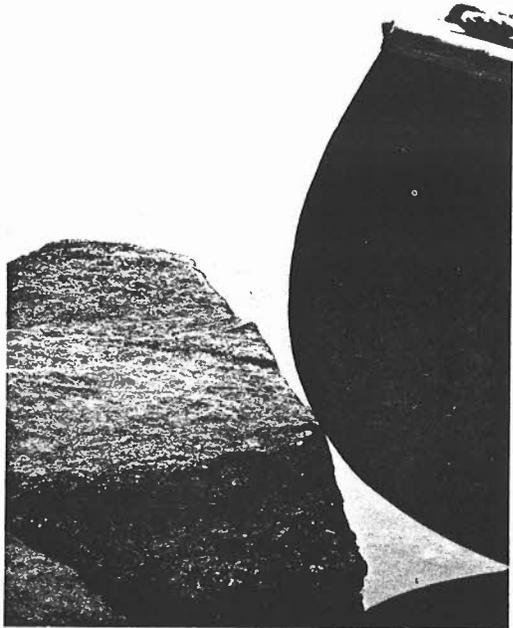
Because of the special nature of canoe tripping characterized by canoes, campsites, water, rocks, bush, forest, swamps, bugs, inclement weather, etc. wilderness canoeing photography requires a special approach in order to find acceptable solutions for the many problems involved. Once a certain mastery of technique and level of understanding of the canoeing environment has been reached, this form of nature photography can give the tripper immense satisfaction by producing a wealth of priceless images the maker will always love dearly.

Wilderness canoeing photography can be just as simple or complicated as one wishes it to be. Making good tripping pictures is really not all that difficult and the amount of technique one has to learn doesn't have to be great. Whether one uses a simple, automatic snapshot camera with print film or the latest in sophisticated pro hardware and slide film, it is first and foremost the person behind the camera who makes the picture, who decides what to shoot, when and where. The main objective in learning wilderness canoeing photography (in fact, any kind of photography) must therefore always be to learn to see, to improve visual awareness, to consciously observe the world around oneself, thus getting closer to the natural environment and moving towards more appreciation and understanding of the world we travel in.

And the sooner the training to improve seeing ability is started, the better. Parents and educators, such as leaders of children's camps, should pay close attention to the power of photography as an invaluable tool for the improvement of the young person's perception and his or her understanding of our environment. Teach them to see and they will find themselves.

The best and only really effective way to improve your photographic skills is to go out yourself and make photographs of all kinds of subjects and in all kinds of situations. Study what you're doing right and wrong; learn from your mistakes as well as your successes; make notes of the appropriate technical and other information you're using; read informative books and magazines; take courses if you can. But above all: make photographs. And do try to learn as much as possible from experienced photographers who know what they're doing. Ask questions, always ask questions. Even if you want to restrict your picture taking to the occasional snapshot on the campsite, only a conscious effort can help you to become comfortable with your camera and to make consistently good, or at least acceptable, pictures. Far too many photographs turn out terrible because people keep on making the same mistakes, mistakes that can easily be avoided once they're recognized. Turn your picture taking into an exciting and





rewarding adventure by learning to understand what you're doing as a photographer. You'll be most pleasantly surprised by the marked improvement in quality once you start paying some real attention to the fine art of button pushing.

As mentioned above, the central issue in all photography is the ability to see, to be aware of the incredible wealth of images around us, to observe the world with an ever-curious and perceptive mind. And that is of course also of prime importance in wilderness canoeing photography which includes much more than the subjects normally encountered on nature trips: scenics, wildlife, flowers, close ups, sunsets, etc. It also includes the people involved and their tripping activities such as paddling, portaging, running rapids, camping, relaxing. The opportunities to make excellent photographs on canoe trips are everywhere in endless numbers and variety.

Therefore plan your next trip to be a relatively slow one. Don't do too many kilometres each day, give yourself the time and peace of mind to look around and do some photography. Learn to recognize the most interesting subject matter and how best to put it on film. We, wilderness canoe trippers, truly are a lucky lot having so much environmental beauty coming our way just by paddling out in our canoes. Take a camera and use it well; you'll discover the many wonderful joys of wilderness canoeing photography. It will greatly enrich your life.

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This article has also appeared in the July 1988 issue of *Canews*, the newsmagazine of the Ontario Recreational Canoeing Association.

#### IMPROVED RIVER RATING FOR SAFETY

David B. Brooks

We have learned a lot about running tough rivers in canoes and kayaks over the past decade or so, and we are paddling better boats made of stronger materials. This knowledge and the new equipment are leading us to run more difficult and more challenging rivers. At the same time, rivers are ever busier as whitewater boating becomes more popular with people at all skill levels.

The result of these trends is that many boaters, both expert and novice, are finding themselves in dangerous situations. And some of those situations end up in accidents, sometimes deaths, which are by no means restricted, as used to be the case, to the inexperienced or unprepared.

No one thing can alter this general situation, but it seems to me that a start could be made with a modest change to the existing system of rating rivers. Right now we use a single scale (I to VI) to measure something that is a compound of two variables: difficulty and danger.

However, those two variables are at least partially independent. Certainly they do not vary together in any systematic way. We all know of rapids that are fairly difficult but that one can easily swim through after a dump. Some of those on the Madawaska are good examples, as is "the mixmaster" at the bottom of the section below the Canyon on the Rouge River in Québec.

On the other hand, we also know of rapids that may not be terribly difficult but that, because of a strategically located hole or some deadfall just downstream, must be completed upright if a dangerous situation is to be avoided. The most famous examples are the "drowning machines" (e.g., just upstream of Washington, D.C., on the Potomac) where a low dam creates a strong hydraulic. However, there are examples among our favorite rivers: Rollway Rapids on the Petawawa is a good example, as is the drop at the entrance to the Rouge Canyon. I can think of a number of perfectly runnable Class IIs that I walked around because of a waterfall 25 or 50 metres below the runoff.

In my opinion, there is no way to put these two aspects, difficulty and danger, on a single axis. This implies the need to redesign our existing river rating system -- yet that system has a long history and wide acceptance, two characteristics that are worth a great deal in themselves. Therefore, any redesign of the system should be modest, a variation on the theme rather than a wholesale change.

My proposal is that we use the existing rating system from I to VI to reflect as precisely as possible the difficulty of running a rapid successfully. However, each rapid would also have a letter coupled to that number to reflect the danger to the boater in the event of a spill. The important distinction is that the letter code would

begin from the assumption that something has gone wrong and that the boater is in the water or the boat out of control; it indicates the risk of serious injury or even death.

The letter system indicating danger might well be restricted to just three letters -- A, B, and C -- to keep things simple and to avoid indicating precision about something that varies with water level, temperature, and one's own abilities and physical condition. The "A" would indicate that the "average" person (boating at moderate water levels, and moderate water and air temperatures), could swim through the rapid even if a dump occurred near the top. At the other end, "C" would indicate that, even with all safety precautions, a significant risk of serious injury or loss of life would remain in the event of a dump. Letter "B" obviously reflects intermediate situations.

Alternatively, it might be wise to follow the sage advice of a professional colleague. He notes that, in any system with three choices, the tendency is strong to opt for the middle choice. In the case of river rating, we risk finding the letter "B" after 90% of the rapids. This reasoning suggests that it would be better to classify danger by a two- or a four-letter system.

Changing our river rating system as suggested above would not add much to the complexity, nor would it require any greater knowledge of the rapids than now exists among those who do the rating. However, it would add a lot to the usefulness of the system. While some people may be attracted by danger, most of us are searching for rapids that challenge our skills, not threaten our lives.



MOUNTAIN CHUTE - Paul Barsevskis



Mount Wilson reflected in the Moose Ponds

## the nahanni portfolio

Pat and Rosemarie Keough

Majestic Mount Christie stands in the remote Selwyn Mountains, 63 degrees north of the Equator on the boundary between Canada's Yukon and Northwest Territories. Its eastern flank is notched by several glacier-carved valleys that have small, crystal-clear streams flowing out of them to the southeast.

We pause now, after ascending one of these valleys from our campsite below. Although it is early summer, the weathered, lichen-covered rock upon which we rest is etched in a glistening white tracery of new snow from yesterday's storm. We feel a deep sense of well-being. Here, in the shadow of Mount Christie, we are far from civilization and all its trappings. When we speak we do so quietly, almost reverently. We do not wish to intrude where the only sounds are the soothing murmur of running water and the hushed, gentle sigh of the wind.

The air is fresh. The sky a deep, dark blue. There is no filtering haze, no dulling pollution. The clarity and intensity of the light confuses one's sense of scale, making distant peaks stand out, sharply defined. They seem almost close enough to touch.

Not far above us, in a saddle near the upper end of the valley, are the remains of a once magnificent snow cornice. It hangs out over a dark, fractured rock face like a great, curved scimitar, the broad point arching gracefully downward. The cornice had started to form with the onset of winter's first, slashing blizzards. Winds screaming over lofty crags continued to sculpt it throughout the long, crackling, cold, subarctic nights when temperatures sometimes fell to 50 and 60 degrees below zero. Hard-packed and burnished to the consistency of polished concrete, its chalk-white surface periodically reflected the cool, pale light of the rising moon and the splendour of star-filled heavens ablaze with a dancing kaleidoscope of Northern Lights.

Now, caressed by freshening breezes and warming summer sunlight, the cornice is slowly melting away. The cliff below shines with slender, serpentine slivers where water plaits downward; the dull rock is enlivened by the silver sparkle. On the outermost curled lip of snow, jewel-like droplets of water form, to hang momentarily suspended like delicate, crystalline pendants. We watch as they fall, shimmering, drop by icy drop to the talus below.

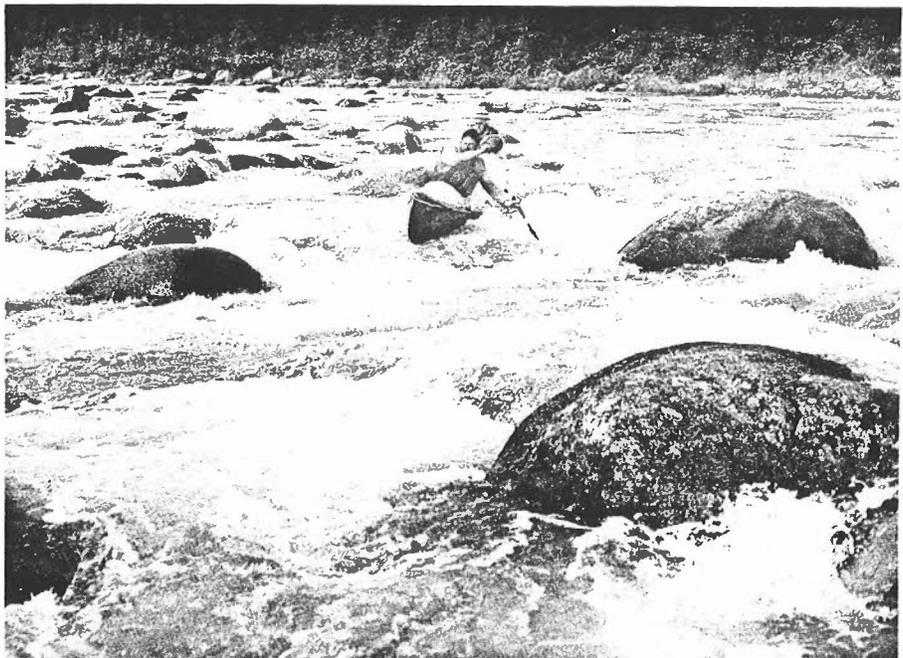
In small rivulets they work their way through the rocks, gurgling along down the slope. Soon the rivulets join together, forming the small, tumbling stream, barely a hand wide, that passes at our feet. Alternately disappearing and reappearing almost playfully, the stream bounces among the boulders in apparent haste to get down the valley.

We marvel that this insignificant little stream, flowing from an unnamed notch in the Selwyn Mountains, is the very beginning, the headwaters of one of the world's fabulous wild rivers: the legendary South Nahanni.

Our stream is soon joined by others. Quickly building in volume and velocity, it hisses over gravel bars between banks that are adorned with the first purple blooms of the delicate Arctic Lupin. Within a few miles, twisting and turning through a series of short, tight meanders, it enters a broad, swampy, alpine valley. In spring and early summer the surrounding heights echo the thundering roar of great snow avalanches, which cascade down the precipitous north face of Mount Wilson, an imposing and truly magnificent peak that towers above this valley. Here, the marshy ground and small, shallow lakes that are dotted with mats of floating sedge act like a sponge to collect meltwater and rain. This is excellent summer habitat for moose and nesting birds and is aptly known by canoeists and other modern day adventurers as the Moose Ponds. These ponds are the starting point for many an unforgettable canoe trip.

Leaving Mount Wilson and the Moose Ponds, the South Nahanni River flows southeast to drain a watershed of over 14,300 square miles. Dropping more than 3,250 feet in 340 miles, the river passes through a land long-shrouded in myth and mystery before it joins with the Liard, a major tributary of the mighty Mackenzie.

Long before the first white people came to the Nahanni Country, the land held a mystique all its own. A band of Indians known locally as the Nah'ga were said to live in that rugged mountain region. The natives of the lowlands to the south and east considered these mountain Indians to be "the people over there far away ... the enemy ... in the land of the setting sun." The Nah'ga were regarded with fear and superstition. Stories of giants, evil spirits, and wild mountain men were part of the native lore.



The Rock Gardens, South Nahanni River

Alexander R. McLeod made the earliest recorded expedition into the land of the elusive and mysterious Nah'ga people in 1823. He was the Chief Trader of Fort of the Forks, a Hudson's Bay post soon to be renamed Fort Simpson. McLeod's objective was to establish communications and expand the fur trade into regions "hitherto unexplored." Through the years, other white men seeking furs and gold followed him into the Nahanni Country. As one after another macabre incident occurred, certain aspects of the traditional native lore were assimilated and interwoven into the white consciousness and stories. The legends of the Nahanni grew as fast as the river rising in full flood.

Rumour had it that in this remote corner of Canada's subarctic wilderness there was a hidden, but cursed, tropical Shangri-La. Beyond the reach of winter's icy hand, one could find warm, lush valleys with giant ferns and palm trees and, for those foolish enough to venture near, sudden death.

In 1908, the headless skeletons of brothers Willie and Frank McLeod were found along the Nahanni River in what is now called Deadmen Valley. A few years later, the skeleton of Martin Jorgensen was found by the ruins of his burned-out cabin on the Float River, where he was prospecting for gold. The bones of "Yukon" Fisher were discovered along Bennett Creek, and John O'Brien froze

solid as a rock while kneeling beside his camp-fire on the Twisted Mountain. These happenings plus the disappearance of several other people under questionable circumstances all added fuel to the fire.

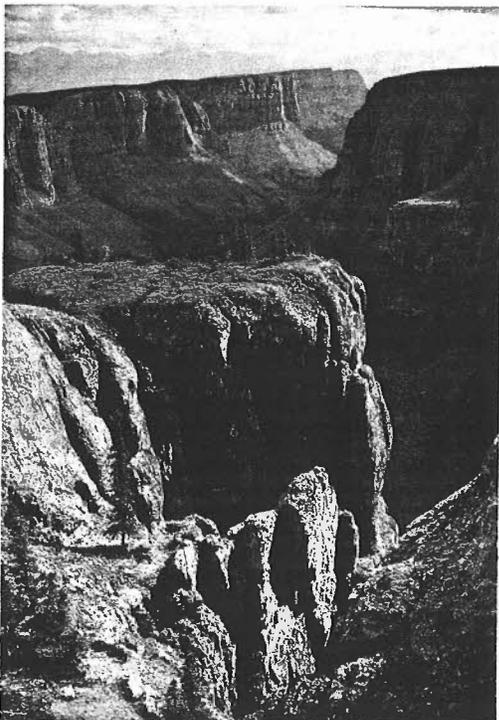
The Nahanni became fertile ground for storytellers and imaginative journalists alike. Lurid tales were told of lost mines and the bleached bones of headless prospectors in remote, mist-shrouded valleys, of hordes of glittering deadmen's gold guarded by a white chieftess and her savage tribe of mountain men. The Nahanni Country became a place of dread, where even brave men feared to go.

For centuries the native people hunted and fished in this land and made it their home. However, not until the late 1920s was the myth of the Nahanni partly dispelled, when adventurer R.M. Patterson and prospector Albert Faillie did venture up the South Nahanni River and lived to tell of it. Faillie once said, "I didn't find any gold and for sure there's no tropical valley in there."

In spite of this reality, the legends persist -- and why not! For they are indeed great yarns to be told and retold by the flickering light of campfires. To this day they are perpetuated in the numerous names that have been applied to features of the Nahanni landscape: Broken Skull River, Deadmen Valley, Sunblood Mountain, Hell Roaring Creek, the Funeral Range, the Headless Range, Death Lake, the Vampire Peaks....

For those of us who journey to the Nahanni Country today, who follow the small, meandering stream out of the Selwyn Mountains, the reward is not gold but the land itself. It is a place where one can find revitalizing escape in the unforgettable experience of wilderness, of sights, sounds, and smells -- a world apart from our modern, congested, frenetic environment. Here is staggering, natural beauty on a grand scale -- a marvelous diversity of flora, fauna, and scenery, including landforms unique to the earth. Here are karst labyrinths and poljes, boiling whitewater rivers, azure alpine lakes surrounded by razor-sharp peaks, thundering waterfalls, broad wind-swept tundra plateaus, sheer canyon walls reaching thousands of feet towards the sky, caves and sinkholes, rock bridges and muskeg, hot springs and glaciers .... This is home to Moose, Mountain goats, Dall sheep, Woodland caribou, Grizzly bears, Bald Eagles, and to rare and endangered species that include Wood bison and nesting Trumpeter Swans. This is a wild land, uninhabited and untamed, where Nature reigns supreme and man travels on Her terms. But, for all of that, this is a fragile land, as is so much of our natural heritage that we humans have so callously abused and destroyed.

To this day the very nature of the country, the unproductivity of the land, the rugged, steep terrain, the turbulent, dangerous rivers, and the highly unstable and unpredictable weather have helped to keep the area relatively unscarred by the heavy tread of man. For the most part, the Nahanni Country remains a pristine wilderness. In a vanishing natural world, it survives in its primeval state, a legacy from that time before civilization.



The Ram Plateau

This is the Preface from Pat and Rosemarie Keough's new, illustrated coffee-table book The Nahanni Portfolio.

# north of the magnetawan

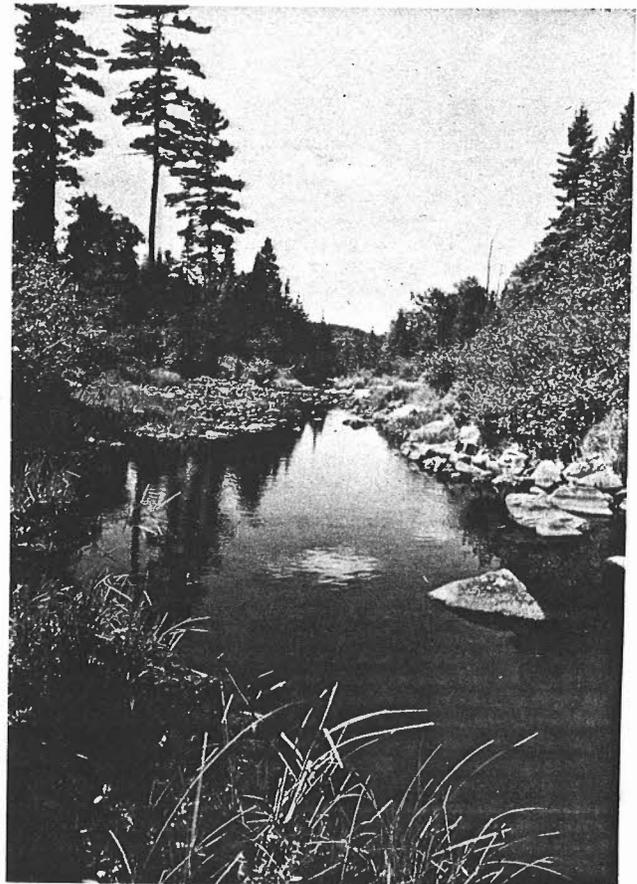
John Winters

In the fall of last year, a small group of us (only three) paddled into the region north of Ontario's Magnetawan River to look for potential loop routes that would be a change from the usual published and well-known routes. What we found were three possibilities, but the lack of time prevented pursuing any to its conclusion which job was left for this spring when the organizer, now infamous for his coarse language and even coarser treatment of the troops, was left to do the job on his own there being no volunteers to participate.

Since I already knew the route up Farm Creek to Wolf Lake, I chose to reverse the track and travel downstream on the Magnetawan and thence up an unnamed stream emptying into the Magnetawan north of a cluster of islands in Trout Lake. The eventual goal was to reach Wolf Lake and establish the existence of a weekend loop. Not knowing what to expect, I planned a 6:00 a.m. departure and so was well on my way by 8:00. The long portage around Canal Rapids had me looking forward to a pleasant paddle up to the unnamed creek north of Trout Lake. Interesting how those thin blue lines can fool you. The stream got smaller and smaller until it was finally choked to death by deadfalls. An attempt at climbing the nearly vertical canyon walls convinced me that a portage was not in order so I waded, dragged, and cursed past the fallen timber and rapids to a quiet section which lasted all of a thousand metres or so before being choked again with even more deadfalls and steeper, rockier rapids. Wading was out of the question and the canyon was now so narrow that the only portage possible would be at the top. Fortunately, a cleft in the rock face lay to the north which enabled me to bushwhack to the top without injury. The steep descent at the end reinforced my opinions on the fallibility of humanity, for one of my reliable sources of information had assured me that a portage existed along this stretch. Granted, I did find some rock cairns indicating that someone at some time had been this way but the trail they were attached to defied following. This experience soon became routine.

A short lift over rocks brought me to Duck Lake, the beauty of which was marred by some very attractive campsites that had been "improved" by amateur pioneers. Maybe they got in using the portage I couldn't find. The bones of an old wooden powerboat certainly indicate that one must exist somewhere. Duck Lake is typical of the type in the area having clear water, and pine-clad rocky shores.

Up the shallowest and narrowest creek it has ever been my good fortune to paddle was a gorgeous three-metre fall that sounded like Niagara. Where all that water went is a puzzle as it certainly didn't go down the stream I came up. I bushwhacked around the fall and there were no problems passing through the two ponds and then up a narrow and pretty gorge until the thin blue line suddenly turned wider but shallower. Perhaps the size of line indicates the volume of water and not its horizontal dispersal. Fortunately, the slime that made up the bottom was almost as fluid as water and I was able to paddle to an impassable rapid with the obligatory deadfalls. Once again there was no trail. The left side was a sheer 10-metre wall and the right unimproved bush. Another bushwhack and I was in an unnamed lake southwest of Wolf Lake. Success stared me in the eye. This little lake deserves a name. It winds, twists, and cavorts all over the place and every bend makes a good photograph (if you are a photographer which I am not).



The small creek at the northeast end is impassable but a well-used portage marked by the ubiquitous aluminum fishing boat is just north of the creek. Even Eden had a snake and the fishing boats are this region's snakes. How pretty it would be without them. The only consolation is that, in two trips, I have yet to see them used. Wolf Lake is much like the others (Ho Hum). At the McKensie/Burton Township line on a point with tent space for a Roman legion is a surveyor's cairn with a carved post declaring to one and all that this is the Township Line, a fact of estimable importance to one and all. The portage at the extreme east end of the lake is where we came in last fall, and the trip down Farm creek and back to Wahwashkesh takes no more than an afternoon's easy work in spite of the washout of a major beaver dam that caused shallow but navigable conditions for part of the river. I left a formal note for the beaver responsible and no doubt it will be repaired shortly.

A brief sociological note:

On the south shore of Island Lake is a fishing and (presumably) hunting lodge. I took time to study the middens behind the lodge and discovered a pile of empty liquor bottles measuring some 120 cubic metres. The beer bottles have apparently been returned for the deposit, which tells us that some people will not carry out their garbage unless paid to do it. The liquor bottles were neatly stacked indicating some intelligence or possible purpose on the part of the inhabitants. In the meantime, future travellers are asked not to disturb the site until it can be properly analyzed by archaeologists.

For those interested in this route, I should explain that the term "bushwhack" is used loosely. In most cases the undergrowth is thin and getting through it relatively easy. There are some to whom bushwhacking implies cutting through with a machete. At the other extreme there are those who begin to sweat if there is no portage sign and room for two canoes abreast. The "bushwhacks" on this route lie somewhere between the two extremes but closer to the latter than the former. Nevertheless, the trip is an easy weekend best done clockwise to take advantage of downstream travel on both the Magnetawan River and Farm Creek. The shallowness of some parts could be a problem in the summer although such is not the case on Farm creek which is well maintained by the beavers (usually).



# the littlest calorie counter

We North Americans count among our many blessings an abundance of high-energy food. Getting enough to eat is just not a problem for us and so we often assume that the same prosperity holds for birds and animals as well. But in fact, even during the bountiful days of summer, finding enough food is a major preoccupation of most creatures and its influence on their lives goes much farther than you might think.

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is a good example of what we mean. Sooner or later, most Park visitors come across a hummer foraging in a sunlit patch of flowers. Or, if you have any red in your clothing, one may briefly inspect you, having been fooled by your wearing the color of its favorite flowers. Everyone marvels at how skillfully these tiny birds, weighing only five grams, manoeuvre in the air on wings beating so fast (60 times a second) that they disappear in a blur. In and out they dart, hovering to probe in each blossom, and, every so often, when they catch the sun just right, giving a dazzling reflection from the metallic-green back or brilliant ruby throat.

It is obvious that hummingbirds are beautifully adapted to feeding on flower nectar but less apparent that they must pay a price. Flower nectar is the only natural food that can meet the incredibly high energy demands of the Ruby-throat's flight muscles. So, to keep airborne, hummingbirds must have steady access to good nectar-producing flowers. The trouble is that such flowers--especially in a forested environment like Algonquin--are rather scarce and patchily distributed.

The enormous impact this has on all aspects of a hummingbird's life is probably best appreciated by imagining yourself as a hummingbird. What would you do if you were the proud possessor of a flower patch and some miserable peasant tried to poach on your territory. One obvious response would be to beat the living bejeezus out of any such rival, and hummingbirds can indeed be ferocious defenders of their flowers. The problem here is that all-out attacks require a prodigious amount of energy and the flowers may not really be worth it. It would make a lot more sense to ensure that any potential trespasser was well aware of your presence and decamped before you were forced to use violence. In fact, hummingbirds do exactly that. When a territory-owner spots an intruder, it squeaks angrily and then vigorously tosses its head from side to side. This has the effect of sending brilliant, ruby flashes to the newcomer, and their message is very clear -- \*#XX\*#! and stay out! It usually works.

There are times, however, when even a threat may be inappropriate. Suppose you had just drunk from your flowers and drained them all when a stranger showed up. Would it not make more sense to let the intruder see for himself that the flowers were "worthless" and then let him go on his way? You wouldn't lose any nectar that way and, by not defending the flowers, you would avoid tipping off the interloper that the lack of nectar was only temporary. Sure enough, territory-holding hummers defend only weakly, or not at all, flowers which they have just drained. By the same token, they will often take advantage of such nectarless periods to make forays into the surrounding neighborhood. By so doing, they may filch a little nectar from a neighbor or even find a



Reprinted from *The Raven*,  
courtesy of Ministry of  
Natural Resources.

new, superior territory but, even if they don't, they will have risked little in leaving their original flower patch undefended.

Nectar production in any flower is quite variable and of course it won't go on forever. The time must eventually come when further defence is useless but how to decide? The fact a flower has no nectar may mean it is truly finished or that a bee or another hummer has just drained it. There is no easy answer to this but it would seem sensible to hang around longer at a flower that had been a consistently good producer in the past and to be less faithful to one that had not. Once again, hummingbirds, although they are acting from instinct, not conscious reason, do indeed behave in the appropriate way. Experiments have shown that a hummingbird which "owns" a sugar-water feeder for only one day will continue to defend it for just an hour after the sugar solution has been replaced by water. But hummers which have owned feeders for longer periods will defend them for longer times (up to two days) after the switch is made from sugar to water. In other words, hummingbirds react to more than the current status of feeders--or presumably flowers--and can actually rate the past performance of their energy sources!

The consequences of hummingbird dependence on scarce nectar supplies can be even more subtle. We saw earlier how important the throat patch is to the economical defence of flower patches, but only adult males have this feature. It is fairly obvious why females don't have ruby throats (it would risk attracting predators to the nest), but why not young males? The reason probably stems from the fact that the inexperienced young birds have no hope of holding a territory against an adult male. The young are therefore relegated to lives of sneaking into flower patches owned by adults and trying to steal some nectar before being detected. Successful thieves do not advertise themselves and the forces of evolution apparently decided long ago in favor of young males which acquire ruby throats only at maturity.

It is surely nothing short of amazing how not only the hummingbird's anatomy but even the details of its behavior and plumage are so finely adjusted to its imperative need to find, monitor, and protect patches of flowers. Something to think about the next time you wear red and get buzzed by a hummer. Don't be too flattered. You are being prospected as a possible energy source and nothing more. And, before you know it, the little jewel will be on its way, wings ablur, looking for its next tiny tankful of nectar.

## OPERATION RALEIGH CANADA

Return of the 32-member Operation Raleigh Canadian Arctic Expedition to Toronto has been highlighted by excitement over significant archaeological finds related to the scientific portion of the seven-week canoe expedition.

Among the most important discoveries by the international group, which included participants from 11 nations, was confirmation for the first time of early habitation along certain segments of the Kazan River, in the Northwest Territories, as long as 3,000 years ago.

That the land and its resources, such as rocks and animals, was used that long ago had been speculated by the scientific community but never confirmed until this summer when the expedition examined more than 200 archaeological sites including 600 former tent rings and remnants of meat caches, hunting blinds, and kayak stands. Equally exciting were various artifacts found at the sites, including a handcarved soapstone pipe, ancient stone tools, wooden artifacts such as snow goggles, ceremonial drum beaters, snow beaters, and tools for braiding hair, plus metal harpoon blades.

The discoveries indicate that the land was used over the centuries by three different peoples: Inuit, Chippewyan, and Paleo Eskimo, the latter group being the oldest with habitation dating back between 2,000 and 4,000 years.

More recent artifacts clearly show the influence of European explorers and traders who came to the area in the early 1900s. By examining pieces found at the same level (and thus the same time period) in various sites, however, expedition members confirmed for the first time that traditional stone technology continued in use despite the availability of more modern methods.

In another unexpected discovery the group was surprised to find pieces of birch bark, though the Kazan River is nearly 1,600 km north of any birch trees. It is thought that the pieces were brought to the area and dropped there by the Chippewyan. Since the bark was found on an Inuit site, indications are that the Chippewyan may have been on friendly trading and/or hunting terms with the Inuit, a novel theory contrary to popular belief that there was warring between the two peoples.

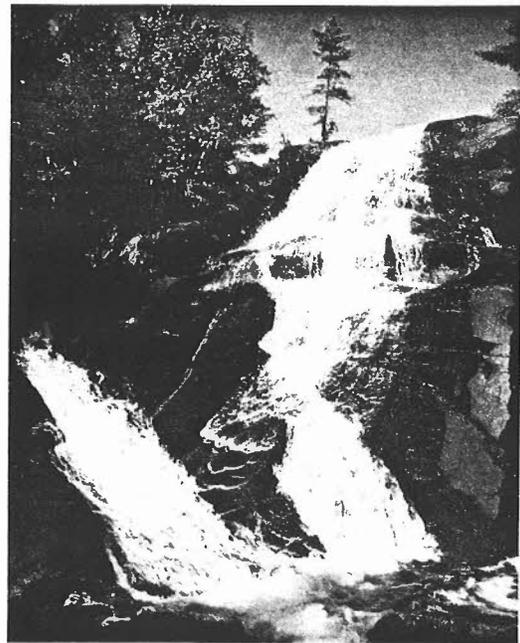
Expedition leader David Pelly says he hopes that the findings of Operation Raleigh have helped to identify the Kazan as a valuable Canadian river, and that discoveries by the expedition will encourage the government of the Northwest Territories to nominate it as a National Heritage River. "There is no other river in the land of the Inuit that has that depth of historic and cultural wealth," he adds.

# waterfalls

Toni Harting



Brigham Chute, Barron River



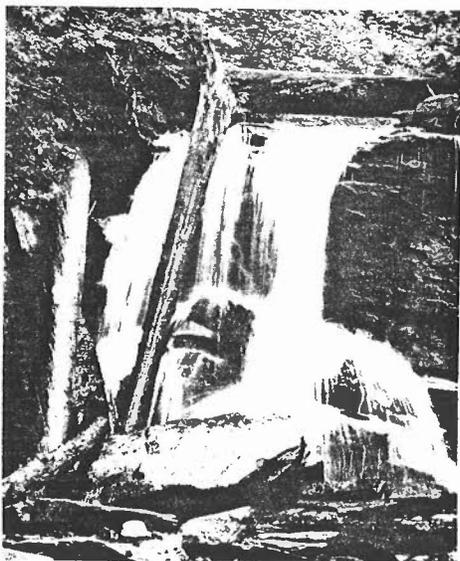
High Falls, Barron River



Moon River



Paresseux Falls, Mattawa River



Veil Falls, Barron River



Devil Cap Falls, Missinaibi River



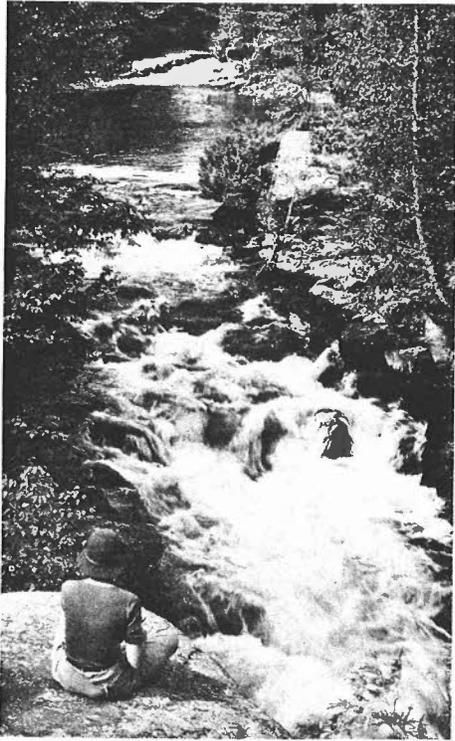
Eight-Foot Gap, Thunderhouse Falls, Missisquoi River



Carcajou Creek



Missisquoi River



Missisquoi River



Centre Falls, Lady Evelyn River, North Channel



Crystal Veil Falls, Lady Evelyn River, South Channel



Crooked Chute, Petawawa River

# dogsledding

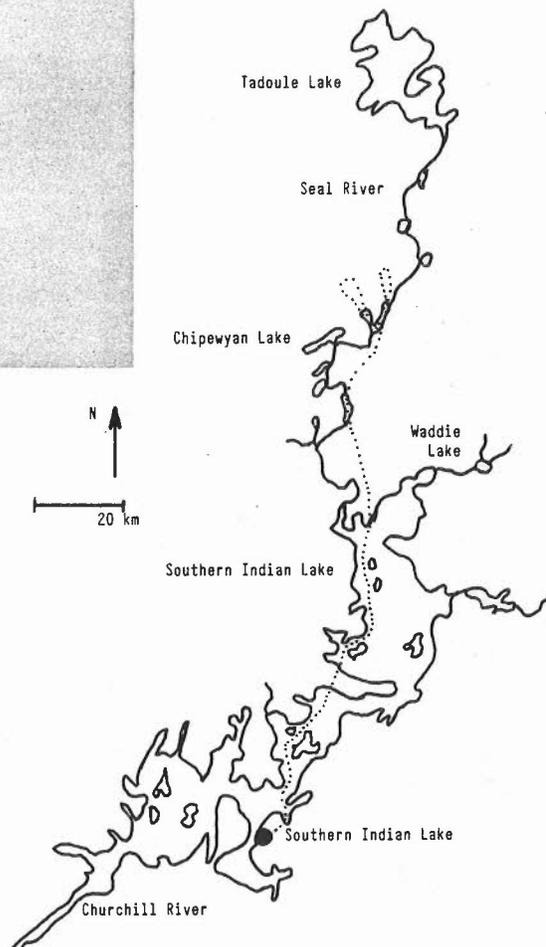
in the land of the little sticks



Bob Henderson

## Day 8 CHIPEWYAN LAKE ON SEAL RIVER

In the poem, "The Train Dogs," by Pauline Johnson, the North is described as "a voiceless land that sleeps in the Arctic zone." I have never really felt this until now. Laying in our wall tent after a day of sledding, I feel close to the land of Samuel Hearne and Mantonabee, Thierry Mallet, P.G. Downes, Eskimo Charlie, and Ragnar Jonsson. But these characters and their travels are associated with the Barrens and the transition zones to the north of us. Normally I can always find a tale to tell of the past but here I'm lost for characters and events. This boreal forest, the Land of the Little Sticks in Northern Manitoba, captures my imagination precisely because it is voiceless. It is sparse of recorded history and the land itself is sparse in contrasts. The one esker that parallels a portion of our route shines like a beacon of white frost on a background of green spruce and grey skies. All else is large white lakes, the upcoming ones hopefully to be dotted with caribou and our three dog teams. After four days in caribou country north of Southern Indian Lake on the Churchill River system, we still haven't seen a single animal despite countless signs. I am now convinced I am jinxed.



From 5 to 20 December, I joined a friend, Liz McEachren, and a commercial operator, Jim Churchill of Churchill Sledding Expeditions, for a two-week pilot trip into caribou country from Southern Indian Lake townsite north into the upper reaches of the Seal River. It was an up-and-back route following the yet-to-be-maintained Southern Indian-Tadoule winter road and a variety of trappers' snow-machine trails. It was Jim's first time guiding a trip in this area. Statistics don't usually impress me much but now I was impressed; over 480 kilometres in 12 days of travelling, averaging 40 to 50 kilometres per day, 70 on a good day, 10 to 16 kilometres per hour, carrying 270 kg of dog feed (total at start), pulling 230 kg per toboggan load. Now I'm not talking human propulsion. The sleds were really sturdy toboggans made of 12-mm oak planks with steel foot brakes and an upright backboard. They weighed 45 kg each, and with full winter gear consisting of heavy felt-lined boots, parka, and more underclothing than I'd ever thought conceivable, we each weighed close to 90 kg. So the general emphasis of these statistics is "heavy



but distance," which statistics of course are not often linked with winter travel.

Jim runs a routine hut-to-hut operation on trail systems on the Churchill River near his home base of Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan. When I asked him why the early season focus north of Southern Indian Lake, he responded with one word, "caribou." The Kaminuriak herd migrates into these forests from breeding grounds in the Barrens south of Baker Lake. The most southern extension of their winter range is the northern edge of Southern Indian Lake, about a 190-km trip from the Southern Indian Lake community. The western winter limit of the herd is usually around Phelps and Snowbird lakes area, well out of range of Jim's Pelican Narrows home base. This migration information is also very tentative. The caribou may follow another course altogether or, as we luckily learned from area trappers to be the case this year, the caribou can, on rare occasion, travel on Southern Indian Lake itself.

Spirits were high at the outset. It seemed a certainty I would finally observe lots of caribou. While the animals do not gather into extensive roaming herds till the summer months, they tend to travel in groupings of ten to thirty animals, preferring the open lakes to the forest and deeper snow inland. I envisioned lakes peppered with caribou groupings as did Jim, who even surpassed me with his excitement for caribou. Though I think this has a lot to do with my concentration and fumbblings with dog harnesses and freeing tangles, which is second nature to him.

Our plan was simply to explore caribou country following trappers'/hunters' trails. Jim's racing dogs turned bush travel dogs need a trail to follow. Gee and Haw (left and right commands) work only on occasion with little rhyme or reason. So "explore" is the proper word for any dogsled travel in new country unless you are prepared to break trail for the dogs all day, drastically reducing travel distances. In a land of no trails, there are few options. In our setting there were options with often no certain route destination. As it was, ridiculously unseasonably warm weather (+50C) early on forced us to both grunt it out and wait it out. We did some trail-breaking which in Jim's words "screws up the dogs heads," and also waited patiently for area trappers to zoom by providing a narrow ribbon of hard-packed trail.

To be in this situation was abnormal. It was brought on by the warm weather and unusually large lake. Dogs can normally still feel out the trail following moderate snow falls (also unusual here), so we cursed our strange predicament. But with the upcoming fur auction in Thompson, Manitoba, area trappers were in transit. There is a clear historical lesson here. It was easy to understand why, despite the "heavy but distance" rule, dog teams were not totally relied on for winter travel, particularly in more southern latitudes where thaws and heavy snowfalls are more frequent. I'd often wondered why the winter packet (the early mail-delivery service between trading posts) was most often laboriously self-propelled. Now I was learning why and gave thanks to the increased population in the region these days. When relying on established trail systems, you explore

new country with a "well, lets follow this one" attitude at times. Guessing where exactly we were going and via what route from a relatively speaking featureless 1:250,000 map was always exciting. At one point we had a decision to make whether to head east in the Waddie Lake, North Knife River headwaters, or due north along the winter trail to the Chipewyan community of Tadoule on the Seal River. I am used to making such major decisions long before I'm on the trail, though I think I prefer this luxury of the spontaneous or in native terms, the simply "going out on the land." The lack of destination, yet the great distances covered, seemed a strange and wonderful novelty. In the end, the Tadoule route was chosen which meant less wrestling with sleds on narrow, winding portage trails. "Something to do with more experience," I thought.

Beyond the excitement of seeing caribou in winter (it finally did happen), I was living out two strong desires. Firstly, to do a dogsledding trip of a distance equal to major canoe trips has been one of those hard-to-fulfill dreams, given I live in southern Ontario without both dogs and snow. Secondly, another visit to the Land of the Little Sticks which, as mentioned, is an island of voicelessness for me in the historically rich and beautiful Canadian North, has a strange fascination. I am attracted by its remoteness, not from road-head but from attention. Of course, for the people who live in the area this would all seem senseless. But I first felt this paddling the Thlewiaza river in 1983 and the attraction for the North Knife, Caribou, Wolverine, and Seal rivers has only amplified it.

Now, in retrospect, it was dogs, plain and simple, that made the trip the ultimate, and Jim's version of communicating with his pets stands out as a special highlight. Jim would always be quick to reinforce: "these aren't pets." The overall comedy of being with 21 dog companions was the pleasant surprise of this trip.

By trip's end I could hear a bark from inside our wall tent and likely know which dog's name to shout to seek quiet. I could identify all dogs from the front and back. This stern-view recognition is particularly important when their tails lift and their legs spread a bit while running.... More of this later. I knew which dogs I could play fight with, who was a slacker, and who loved to pull. Fred was the movie star, complacent with humans but sporting many a battle scar from fights with other dogs. Alvin was the most gregarious one, always keen for wrestling matches. Sinner was a growler and subsequently got yelled at a lot. Lyle was older, distinguished, and deserved respect. Healer avoided all human contact. He had to be dragged onto the ganglines everyday but he was a good puller. Tellie was wildly enthusiastic, a real screamer with a deafening high pitch, and always getting in ridiculously frustrating tangles on the line. Molly, his sister, was equally loud and high-pitched. No, she was worse. Dougie was a no-nonsense, reliable lead dog. Best call for humor was Buster (every trip has a Buster), who on two occasions reached over and grabbed with his teeth a snack of caribou meat or bone just off the trail, once with Cree hunters watching in shock. Buster was no dummy, he nipped a tenderloin cut. In a group of 21



humans you're bound to enjoy the company of many, not care for a few, and not really get to know others. I found it just the same with 21 dogs.

Jim's dogs are former racing breed dogs that "don't have the top end." This means they are less speedsters and more slow-paced endurance animals. In Jim's words, "They are great working dogs but as racing dogs they lose the spirit quickly." Jim has been in and out of dog racing for ten years, so he knows what he wants in a dog. Starting a commercial business was inspired following his support of Will Stegar's Minnesota to Alaska dogsledding trip in 1985. Jim helped by guiding the La Pas to Pelican Narrows stretch of the trail.

I learned first-hand Jim's philosophy guiding his understanding of his 23 to 27-kg canine partners: "A good dog has two goals: one is to eat, the other is to work." Liz and I saw plenty of both. Arctic huskies average 36 kg and have heavier coats than Jim's troop of racing mutts. Those heavy, wooly dogs would fry in the balmy winter temperatures of the northern west. As it was, our temperature range was from an unseasonable +5°C to an appropriate -25°C. We were spared serious cold and wind. Jim enters long races. This last winter he placed second in the Fort Chipewyan race from Fort MacMurray to Fort Chip on the Athabasca River. It's 110 kilometres over four days. Jim's time was 19:38:34, twelve minutes behind the winner. Not bad for washed-up or neglected former race dogs. The dogs pulled our load but once we arrived at camp our work began and most of it evolved around dogs. Once the wall tent, stove, fire, dinner, etc. were in order, there was dog feed (chicken skin and fat) to heat up on an outside fire in a 20-gallon drum. Each dog eats 0.9 to 1.4 kg of feed per day. Dogs are served a broth with solid chunks that are chopped into pieces for individual serving bowls. One must be careful serving the daily feed, particularly with Big Al.... Getting the dogs to and from the camp's stack-out lines and running ganglines, in and out of harnesses, and loading and unloading, rounded off the work.

Most impressive was Jim's knowledge of his total team of 21. We were quick to learn all we could to follow Jim's example of a smoothly running team. Jim knows all the dogs by sound, by sight from any angle, by behavior, and literally by "shit." He can tell who's being a "lardball," who deserves a "good dog" and other more lavish endearments, who will fight with whom if beside each other on the line, who pulls sideways when on the right, and who tends to relieve himself (Jim only has one female who recently ate her litter of new-born) when and how during the day's run. Knowing all this is important for efficient travel. Understanding so-called "toilet patterns," which seemed a marvel to me, can prevent frustrating tangles. When your lead dog tries to stop "to go," you better be ready to encourage his "going" while on the run. For the dogs this is possible, but difficult, particularly for the wheel dogs (last on the train) who get dragged a bit in the process.

Overall, the ease with which we travelled, experiencing few major tangles, redirections, no stalling in slush (a possible disaster), and a general keenness of our individual

teams of seven bespeak Jim Churchill's abilities as teacher as well as trainer. That is of both Liz, myself, and the dogs.

For us novices there was a lot to learn in this unpredictable world of dog mushing. The lead dog was a bow dog and wheel dogs were stern dogs. I was hopeless. Harnesses took twice the time they should to loop around the fidgety legs of 23-kg hyper animals because I put on half or so of the harnesses inside out. It is much easier to put on a diaper and I thought I'd met my match with diapers. Also, each dog has a particular harness so there's lots of "where's Tramp, where's Tellie?"

As a rule, my slip knot wasn't. Once my knot didn't slip on a release line as we were the third and last team to depart in our train to commence our trip. I was left to contemplate trying to rip a tree from its roots, lose my fingers fidgeting with my knot, or watching dogs die of pent-up excitement. My team of seven longingly looked back at their confused novice between their outburst of frenzied protest. Clearly I had to act quickly. A careful fidget on the knot worked but not without major anxiety for me and my team. On these early days of travel I also enjoyed watching the other novice in the group dive for safety in a snowbank as her team sped around a bend, and watch her team leave her stranded on our first practice run. Liz also relieved my sense of incompetence when during one of many toboggan-wrestling runs on trapper's trails in search of caribou, I would turn to see how she had made out through a tough stretch, only to see her hat totally blocking her vision. She never told us if this was accidental or a purposeful move. "Better not to see," I thought. By the way, her slip knots always slipped too soon--another type of problem compared to my slip knot that wasn't.

The clearest proof of "rookieism" was on day four when I jumped off my toboggan to reprimand two fighting dogs (was that Digger? or Alvin? or Buster?). Anyway, booting them in the butt with my heavy Sorel boot tricked my trick knee. The dogs quit fighting, but I was left rolling in the snow in pain.

Now, Jim Churchill is by no means an incompetent leader. He knew that if we were going to drive our own teams for close to 480 kilometres into caribou country, north from South Indian, that we had to learn for ourselves and learn quickly. Jim believes in Experiential Education and while I can hardly claim to be a pro, I am now experienced enough to appreciate arctic explorer Knud Rasmussen's endearing sentiment for dog mushers: "Give me winter, give me dogs, and you can have the rest."

The question remains, did we see caribou? The answer is 'yes.' But a more intriguing question for us as we travelled north became: how would the dogs respond, would they charge the always frightful animals, would they bark, howl, or whimper (like Tellie, the big suck)? Actually, they judged caribou no differently than cows, horses, and other four-legged creatures they are trained to ignore. They simply ran on cool to the excitement we were experiencing. Caribou peppering the lakes was not a reality. We say fewer than ten animals and this only from a distance. Signs on the lakes



Photo by Liz McEachren

and in the bush did tease us in the extreme and we learned that, 1) caribou are elusive and so they should be and, 2) we'll just have to return. The bottom line of course is that the search is more important than the result. I am thankful I am not a hunter or wildlife biologist. Though if I was, undoubtedly I would eventually have more success.

I'm hooked and while I'm not a future Libby Riddles (Winner of the Iditarod), Will Steger, or Jim Churchill, my calls of "Diamond, you lardball; Healer, you are ugly," and the ever-present "Tellie, shut up" kept me warm throughout the winter.

Our host for two nights, Bill and Shirley Hicks from Leaf Rapids, had told us with a smile that dog mushers were "a breed apart." Now I have heard this a million times regarding everything from chess to football, but for the first time I think it is really true! The following journal entry from the closing moments of the trip captures my lingering sentiments:

Day 13 NEAR LONG POINT: SOUTHERN INDIAN LAKE

I sit up in my sleeping bag enjoying the first blasts of heat from the stocked-up wood stove watching the fire reflection on the walls of this make-do log shack used as a shelter by area trappers. Today will be my last day dogsledding for I don't know how long. After 12 consecutive days of running dogs through the Land of the Little Sticks, when I unhitch my team that will be it. It is a hard pill to swallow. My feelings are similar to those at the last stroke of the paddle for another season or the last ski glide on

wet, exhausted snow. But it's still December. The first snow-falls in my hometown in southern Ontario perhaps are still expected. I have all winter to think of the quiet, steady pull of the dogs and my wandering gaze into white, green, and grey of the seemingly endless lake and spruce country.

I knew that morning I would dogsled again in the North--the North where "heavy and distance" is such a joy. It seemed the only way: the most romantic and the most practical! The season for dogsled travel is not over. It is just starting.

Jim Churchill offers one- and two-week trips for the novice as well as the experienced dog musher. These hut-to-hut packages, which include lodgings, meals, guide, and equipment, have a fairly relaxed travel pace and operate out of his base in Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan. For trip schedule and rates, contact: Churchill Sledding Expeditions Ltd., General Delivery, The Pas, Manitoba, phone 204-623-7513. Additional information can be obtained from: Bob Henderson, 2 Helen Street, Dundas, Ontario, L9H 1N3, phone (h): 416-627-9772.

Bob Henderson teaches Outdoor Education at McMaster University in Hamilton. He heads north whenever he can with or without his wife Kathleen and his two-year-old daughter Ceilidh.



# wca photo contest

The WCA again offers its members the opportunity to participate in an exciting and rewarding competition. In contrast to previous years there will be no separate classes for novice and experienced photographers, but the four categories are the same as before.

So, have a good look at your photo collection, dig up the shots that you particularly like, and enter them in this unique contest, which is for all of us who try to express photographically something of our wilderness experiences. Each photograph you enter means a chance at getting published in a place of honor in Nastawgan.

## CATEGORIES

1. Flora: wild plants in their natural settings.
2. Fauna: wild animals in their natural settings.
3. Wilderness: scenery, landscapes, sunrises/sets, mood shots, close ups, etc., that interpret the "feeling" of the wilderness. There should be no evidence of man in the photographs.
4. Wilderness and Man: as in category 3, but with man in harmony with the natural environment.

## CONTEST RULES

1. Entries will be accepted from WCA members only.
2. Not eligible for entry are: photographs that received prizes or honorable mentions in previous WCA contests, photographs made by the panel of judges, and photographs by professional or semiprofessional photographers.
3. All photographs must have been taken by the competitor him/herself.
4. Any kind of photograph is acceptable: color as well as black and white, slides as well as prints (minimum print size 3½ x 5 in., maximum 11 x 14 in., border or no border, unmounted or mounted, but maximum 11 x 14 in., no mats or frames.)
5. A maximum of four photographs per category may be submitted; you may enter as many of the four categories as you want.

6. The WCA reserves the right to use any of the photographs entered in this competition for reproduction in Nastawgan, and to have duplicates made for the purpose of WCA promotion.

## HOW TO ENTER

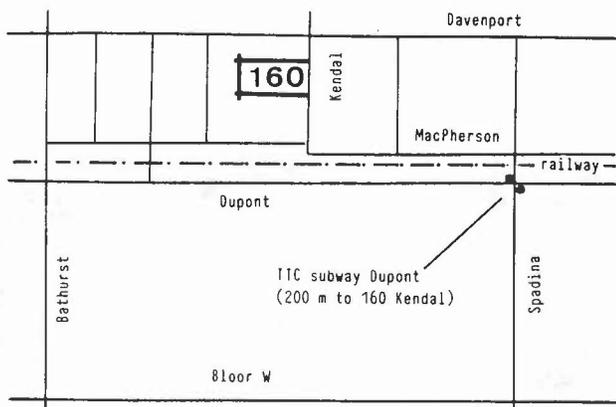
- a. Select a maximum of four photographs per category.
- b. Each photograph submitted should be numbered and clearly marked with the photographer's name. Include with your entry a sheet of paper stating your name/address/phone, and indicate by number for each photograph the category entered and the title of the photograph.
- c. Include with your entry the \$3.00 fee in bills (preferably) or by cheque made out to the contest organizer Dee Simpson, regardless of the number of photographs entered.
- d. Pack everything in a strong box or between two sheets of cardboard in a sturdy envelope marked "photographs," and send or deliver to: Toni Harting, 7 Walmer Road, Apt. 902, Toronto, M5R 2W8, phone 416-964-2495, to be received no later than Sunday, 22 January 1989.

JUDGING will be performed by a panel of experienced photographers who will look for content, spontaneity, originality, feeling of wilderness, and joy of photography. During the scoring the judges will not be aware of the title of the photograph or the name of its maker.

PRIZES: The winner of each category in each class will receive an 8 x 10 enlargement of the winning photograph, matted and/or framed. All placed photographers will receive a certificate in recognition of their achievement. Honorable mentions will also be given if deemed appropriate. All winning photographs and a selection from the other entries will be published in Nastawgan; these will also be exhibited at the WCA booth at the Sportsmen's Show in March 1989. Winners will be announced at the WCA Annual General Meeting in February 1989, where all entries will be shown and constructive comments will be given on many of the photographs.

RETURN OF PHOTOS: Entrants may pick up their photographs at the AGM. For those not present, photographs can be picked up at Toni Harting's home, or they will be returned by mail (please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope of appropriate size). Indicate with your entry how you would like to have your photographs returned.

## fall party



There are several parking lots in the area. Do not park on the streets.

Want to meet old canoeing friends? Want to hear some tall paddling stories and see interesting photographs? Want to find out what the WCA is all about, who its members are, and what inside information they can give you?

Then come to the WCA Fall Party (also called Slide Show Night or Wine-and-Cheese Party) on Friday evening, November 25, in the Staff Lounge of the Casa Loma Campus of George Brown College, 160 Kendal Avenue, Toronto. Non-WCA-members are also welcome.

Admission, to be paid at the door, is \$5.00 per person.

### Program

- 7:00-7:30 Registration and Welcome
- 7:30-7:45 Introductory show of slides made by members at WCA outings and on other trips.
- 7:45-8:30 Meet the people, enjoy the wine and cheese.
- 8:30-9:30 - Bob Haskett and John Winters: canoeing the Seal River.  
- Paul Barsevskis: canoeing the Notakwanon River.  
- Roger Harris and Sandy Miller: canoeing the Rio Grande River.
- 9:30-.... Coffee and gab.

For more information, contact Diane Wills in Scarborough at 416-493-1064.

# nottawasaga river



photos: Toni Harting

Joan Etheridge

In over 60 countries in the world the first of May is Labor Day or May Day and they celebrate it by having large parades. Some take the opportunity to show the rest of the world their latest and greatest weapons, tanks, armored vehicles, and missiles.

We, of the W.C.A., on the other hand, took the opportunity to enjoy a peaceful spring day paddling down the Nottawasaga River. It was warm enough to leave off wetsuits at last. The weather was perfect with a cloudless blue sky overhead and a gentle breeze in our faces.

The little town of Angus was our starting point. There were about ten canoes with just two solo paddlers. I was sharing my canoe with my 11-year old god-daughter, Tanya. This was her introduction to canoeing along a river and I was so relieved that it wasn't raining.

When we launched the canoes everyone took off at high speed, still operating in "city mode." In no time Tanya and I were in the rear. If the bow paddler is the "engine," my engine was in neutral! The trees still had no leaves and there were very few spring flowers in blossom. We had a chance to catch up when everyone stopped to watch a porcupine scratching itself, high in a tree. Hundreds of fiddleheads were pushing their way up through the dead vegetation. One of the group kept going ashore and I discreetly looked the other way, thinking he had plumbing problems, until I realized that he was gathering fiddleheads.

Our leisurely lunch was disturbed by members of an alien subculture driving 4-wheel drive, large, muddy vehicles with outsized tires to the river's edge. They then took out a bucket and started throwing water on one of the trucks in an attempt to wash it. Since there was no hope of them cleaning the truck this way and no logic to it (they must have had hoses and brushes at home), I concluded that it was a male initiation rite of the local natives.

After lunch the pace of the trip changed dramatically. Tanya and I found ourselves in the lead a lot of the time; not because her paddling skills had improved but because everyone else had relaxed into "country mode." We had to carry around three logjams. The banks were a bit steep but not very muddy, so there was no difficulty.

The river got wider and the current faster as we approached the end of the ride, at Edenvale Conservation Area. We were all rejuvenated for another week of working indoors. And Tanya wants to come on a weekend trip next time, to my delight.



# paddle blades

John Winters

The paddle blade seems a simple enough thing; nothing more than a board being drawn through the water and yet, the forces involved are extremely complex. This complexity coupled with the minimal financial rewards in the "poor man's yacht" business means that there is precious little research done in the field. We must then extrapolate from data that, while not specific to paddles, are sufficiently related to allow us to formulate our conclusions. The bulk of what we have comes from hydrodynamic testing modified and abetted by more recent aerodynamic research. Still, this kind of drag research is virgin territory and some lack of precision must be taken into account. Given that caveat we charge ahead.

The total driving force of the paddle is a combination of pressure on the front side (the front being the face acting directly against the water) and suction acting on the back. Frontal resistance is easily analyzed mathematically but the complex flow and turbulence behind is not, and we rely upon semi-empirical testing to develop a formula for total resistance. That formula is:

$$P = \frac{5.375 \sin \alpha}{0.639 + \sin \alpha} AV^2$$

where P = pressure acting on a flat plate

$\alpha$  = angle of flow to the plate

A = area of the plate

V = velocity

A seeming paradox exists as the paddle must resist motion to transmit thrust but must have motion in order to create it. Shifting mental gears to accept that increased resistance can produce greater speed when we are used to thinking of reduced resistance as being the route to this end can be difficult, as is exemplified in one paddle maker's ad boasting that his paddles moved more easily through the water and were, therefore, more efficient!

To propel a canoe at a given velocity, the thrust developed must equal the resistance. Fig. 1 shows the resistance curve of a "typical" canoe extrapolated from the Taylor Standard Series which, as the name implies, is the classic standard for hydrodynamic testing. The "hump" in the curve is not a mistake. At this speed/length ratio the waves developed by the hull's passage better fit the hull with a corresponding reduction in resistance. It is also the cruising speed for most canoes lying, as it does, just before a region of rapidly increasing wave-making resistance. The curves of other canoes will vary due to differences in shape but the hump will remain in the same general area.

Of course there is no such thing as a typical canoe. This one is probably better than most but not so good as a few. Its specifications are:

waterline length	4.88 metres
waterline beam	0.76 metres
prismatic coefficient	0.55
displacement/length ratio	51.0
wetted surface/displacement ratio	20.5

Referring to Fig. 1 we can see that 1.65 kg of continuous thrust is required to drive the canoe at 5 km/hr. Since the paddle isn't in the water all the time, we must either work harder or increase the number of paddlers to provide an average thrust of 1.65 kg. Throughout this article we will assume two paddlers for the sake of simplicity.

From the formula, it can be seen that there are three variables affecting power: paddle area, velocity, and angle to the water flow. Figs. 2A and 2B compare the effects of area and velocity. The effect of area, being linear, is less dramatic than that of velocity which is squared. For the most part, increasing velocity means increasing stroke cadence (strokes/min). If we assume that stroke speed is constant (admittedly a rash assumption but it makes things simpler) and the stroke length to be two metres, we would achieve 5 km/hr by paddling at a rate of 29 strokes/min [1.39 m/sec boat speed plus 0.56 m/sec paddle speed]. To increase speed to 6 km/hr the cadence must increase to 36 strokes/min, 43 strokes/min for 7 km/hr, and to achieve the 11 km/hr of marathon racers we would be sweating gallons at a rate of 80 strokes/min. Obviously there is a limit to how

fast one can paddle so, if we desire more speed we must increase paddle area. Most of us have a natural cadence maintainable over long periods of time without undue fatigue somewhere between 28 and 40 strokes/min with the more experienced paddlers at the high end. There seems to be a built-in resistance to changing this "natural" pace and so we see the occupants of the same canoe paddling at different rates and faster teams pulling far ahead and then stopping to wait for slower canoes. Some don't wait and are only seen at meal times.

The really large blades we occasionally see do have a place but, since the total power requirement for a given speed remains constant (all other factors remaining constant as well), there is little reason to increase area beyond what is needed to maintain cruising speed at normal stroke rates. Added power is easily obtained by simply paddling faster and one need not carry around the extra weight of a large blade. There is also no evidence that large paddles are more efficient for a given unit of area, and so they are not "more efficient" as is often claimed. If there is any variation in efficiency, it lies within the body's ability to function better at one speed than at another.

If we can't always make a good argument for larger blades, we can make one for changing its shape. Figs. 4A, B and C show differing sections of blade. Fig. 4A is typical of most solid wood blades. It is convex which permits faster flow of water across the face and a corresponding loss in thrust; 4B is a flat plate and typical of plastic and plywood blades; 4C is concave (similar to some kayak blades) and, depending on shape, can deliver as much as 20% more power per unit area. Why we don't see more of this section is a good question.

The effect of profile is somewhat less clear. At least one text shows a 1.5% increase in resistance when the length/width ratio is raised from 1:1 to 5:1, and a 9% increase when raised to 10:1. My attempts to duplicate this result were unsuccessful and it seems that such long skinny blades would need convex faces to be sufficiently strong, thus losing in section what might be gained in profile. Still, this could be a fruitful area for study since most racing paddles are very wide relative to length and a 9% increase in power without increasing area or cadence is not to be sneezed at.

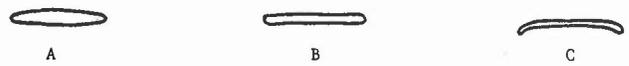
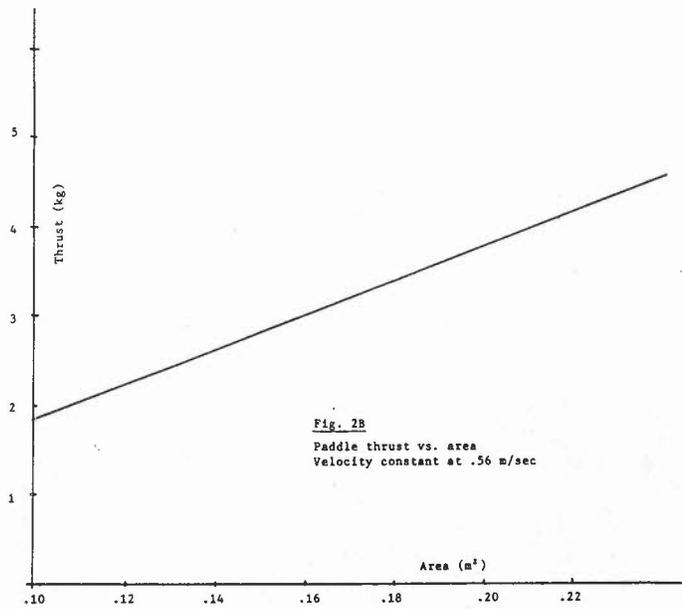
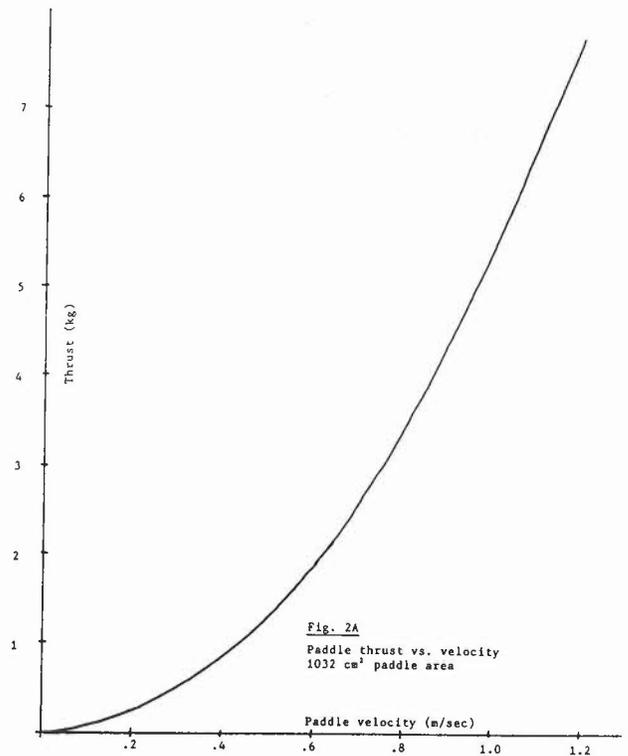
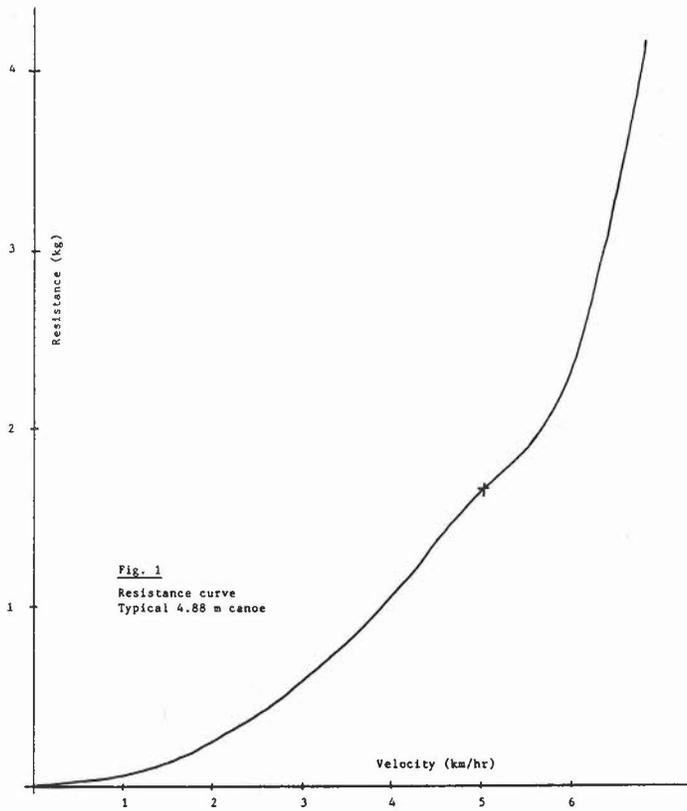
The remaining variable is the angle made by the blade with the water flow. Fig. 3 shows a comparison between straight- and bent-shaft paddles (the bend in this case is 15°). The stroke dynamics are my own and represent neither an ideal or a typical stroke. They are simply my own, familiar and handy to study. As would be expected, the bent shaft presents a more vertical face at the latter end of the stroke, and the straight shaft is more vertical at the front. If the stroke mechanics were constant, the bent-shaft paddle would only be 5% more efficient than the straight. If the stroke is shortened and most of the power is applied after the blade passes the body, then the increase in efficiency could be greater but never as much as the 10% claimed by some of the born-again bent-shafters. Simply maintaining an angle of 60° or more would improve the efficiency of any paddle which means a shorter stroke is desired. (I intend to set about shortening mine immediately.) Those who opt for the bent paddle must also increase the use of body rotation to offset the inefficient use of the arms their paddles impose.

So how does this apply to you and your paddle? First, your blade should be as flat as possible pending proof that the cupped blade is practical and better. Second, the profile can be pretty much what is pleasing to your eye or is suited to specific conditions (i.e. whitewater or shallow water). Third, the blade angle is mostly a function of style. If you aren't offended by the aesthetics of waving your paddle around in the air, paddling on flatwater or in the bow most of the time, then you might consider a bent-shaft paddle. Fourth, if you find you must stroke uncomfortably fast to keep up with your companions, try a larger blade (and vice versa).

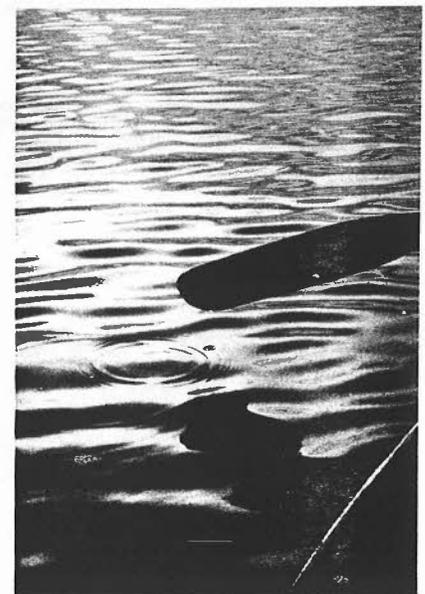
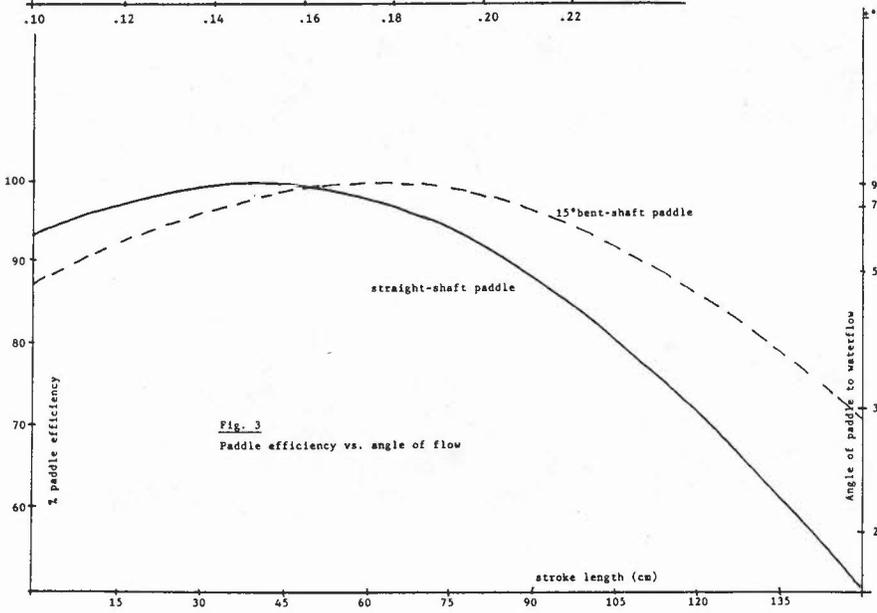
Will all this help you paddle faster? Probably not. The prime limitation to speed is the canoe. Once the speed/length ratio reaches 1.0 the power requirements become so great that the subtleties of blade design take a back seat to the demand for brute force. The benefits of proper blade size and shape are those of decreased effort at normal speeds which, for our aging population, should be reason enough to give the matter serious thought.

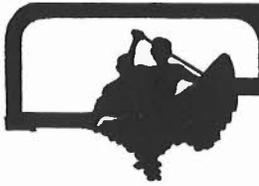
NOTE: The speed/length ratio is the result of dividing the speed in knots by the square foot of the waterline length. Naval architects are a stubborn lot and like to think their trade is more art than science. The traditional use of the English system is a hallowed thing.

John Winters is a retired naval architect and yacht builder who has rowed, sailed, and paddled since he was eight years old.



**Fig. 4**



THE NAHANNI PORTFOLIO

Authors: Pat and Rosemarie Keough  
Publisher: Stoddart Publishing Co., Toronto, 1988  
Reviewed by: Toni Harting

Once in a great while a book comes along that compels one to utter words like: marvellous, delightful, captivating, great, impressive, excellent. A book that truly is a joy to read, to study, to spend 'away-from-it-all' times with; a book that sends one's adventurous imagination on the beloved road to dreams of far-away places and marvels.

Such a rare book is the latest creation of Pat and Rosemarie Keough, the husband-and-wife team that in 1986 surprised the bookworld with their bestseller about the Ottawa valley. This time the Keough's enthusiasm, talent, and perseverance have given us the second volume of their portfolio series, a 180-page illustrated coffee-table book about the Nahanni region, including the famous South Nahanni River, in the southwest corner of the Northwest Territories. In 119 breathtaking, superbly printed color photographs, accompanied by informative captions, we are shown some unforgettable examples of the enchanting beauty of this vast, largely unspoiled region. Through the magic of the excellent writing and photography of the Keoughs we visit valleys, plateaus, rivers, creeks, lakes, ponds, canyons, caverns, sinkholes; we see the stunning beauty of this region unfold before our hungry eyes; we observe the animals, the flowers, the rocks, the water; we are there in all four seasons of the year, from spring to winter. And we know we've only seen a very small part of these far-away lands and waters.

A separate section tells of the history of this region, the original native inhabitants as well as the foreign explorers and settlers who, in the last few centuries, discovered the attraction and possibilities of the Nahanni region. Sixty fine and often very rare black-and-white photographs show us the faces of the land and its people of yesteryear.

The following poem, included in the book, reflects its spirit:

I want you to see the hills in native profile,  
along the shores of the midnight river.  
I want you to see the noon moon bask above  
the fields of the instant flatland.  
I want you to see the fury of the sunset  
caught between white pillars of the high Nahanni peaks.

I want you to hear the rush of wind,  
the whisper of legends and stories untold.  
I want you to hear old trees moan, young fires  
crackle, and ice tinkle in the spring.  
I want you to hear the night through canvas walls.

I want you to know the ancient one, this land,  
whose voice is likened to a thousand spirits chanting.

Bernadette Norwegian  
Artist and poet, 1955 -  
Fort Simpson, NWT

The Nahanni Portfolio is a genuine treasure, an outstanding creation of two of Canada's most talented and adventurous nature photographers.



Near the headwaters of the South Nahanni River

Author: Harriett Barker  
 Publisher: Contemporary Book, Inc.  
 Reviewed by: Daniel M. Jenny

I'm always open to new ideas when travelling in the bush, so when I'm in any bookstore, I usually check out the canoe/backpackers section. I like the cookbooks. When canoeing or backpacking, I follow the same principal: keep it light, simple, nutritious, and cheap. The Supermarket Backpacker, though not a recent publication (copyright 1977), is probably the best book I've found for lightweight, tasty meals. Most cookbooks assume that you have the Rockefellers financing your expeditions and make use of expensive, commercial, freeze-dried meals. These other books simply give suggestions on how to smother the bland freeze-dried products. Supermarket Backpacker makes use of common, inexpensive products found in most grocery stores. There are good suggestions on everything from snacks to suppers, from breakfasts to breads. There are sections on how to dehydrate your own fruits, vegetables, meats, and even cottage cheese. One section explains how to make your own soup leathers which can be used to make all kinds of delicious soups. This book is definitely worth consulting before your next 'great escape.'

THE WOOD AND CANVAS CANOE

A complete Guide to its History, Construction, Restoration, and Maintenance

Authors: Jerry Stelmok and Rolin Thurlow  
 Publisher: Old Bridge Press, Camden East, Ontario, 1987  
 Reviewed by: Toni Harting

Anybody who has ever fallen under the spell of the sensual lines and feel of the traditional wood-and-canvas canoe will want to study this book. But also those of us who only move around in canoes made from modern materials such as aluminum, fibreglass, and kevlar will discover in it much fascinating information about these beautiful craft that were used extensively before the modern designs and materials and construction methods took over the scene.

The 181-page softcover book contains no less than 158 well-made black-and-white photographs and dozens of line drawings. The list of contents gives an indication of the material covered: 1. Birchbark origins, 2. A brief history of the wood and canvas canoe, 3. Canoe materials, 4. Shapes and lines, 5. Building forms, 6. Jerry's construction journal, 7. Canoe repair and restoration, 8. Canoe maintenance.

(Another book that should be in any wooden canoe lover's library is Canoeecraft by Ted Moores and Marilyn Mohr, published in 1983 by Camden House Publishing Ltd., Camden East, Ontario.)

ENCHANTED RIVER

In the summer of 1987, James Raffan and three companions made a canoe trip down the Clearwater River from Clearwater Lake to Richmond Gulf in northern Québec. His account of that trip, illustrated with photographs by Richard Alexander Cooke III, is presented as a chapter in the book America's Hidden Wilderness, published by the Special Publications Division, National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

ARCANA POLI

A Journal of Commentary and Opinion

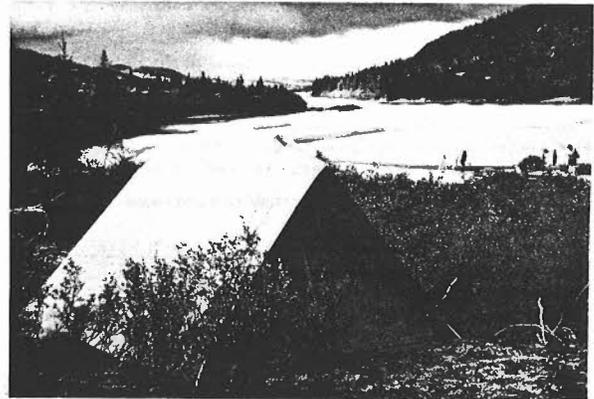
In July 1988, the first issue of this new journal was published by Hochelaga Research Institute in Montreal (director Alan Cooke). Arcana Poli offers articles, commentary, letters, book reviews, and other miscellany relating to things polar. This first issue contains articles such as "Political and Economic Realities in the Northwest Territories" by The Hon. Dennis Patterson, "Native and Academic Natural Science" by Prof. C. B. Crampton, "Stefansson Remembered" by Alan Cooke, and also several book reviews. Initial subscriptions are offered for two issues in 1988 at \$10 Cdn in Canada, and \$10 US outside Canada. Subscriptions or inquiries should be sent to: Arcana Poli, Hochelaga Research Institute, 1200 Atwater Avenue, Montreal, Québec, Canada, H3Z 1X4, phone 514-937-8074.

The Canoe in Canadian Culture

In the fall of 1987, a conference was held at Queen's University Faculty of Education. This book represents the assembled perspectives and wisdoms of all those paddlers, educators, and philosophers who addressed that unique gathering. A variety of subjects, all relating to canoes and canoeing, is presented in the book:

- Symbols and Myths: Images of Canoe and North (Shelagh Grant)
- Canoeing and Gender Roles (William C. James)
- Canoe Irony: Symbol and Harbinger (Bruce Hodgins)
- Canoe sport in Canada: Anglo-American Hybrid? (C. Fred Johnston)
- The Northwest Coast Canoe in Canadian Culture (E. Y. Arima)
- Reflections of a Bannock Baker (Bob Henderson)
- Motives for Mr. Canoehead (Philip Chester)
- Lilly Dipping it Ain't (Kenneth G. Roberts)
- Canoe Trips: Doors to the Primitive (Bert Horwood)
- Hubbard and Wallace: the Rivals (Gwyneth Hoyle)
- Solitude and Kinship in Canoeing (George J. Luste)
- Of Canoes and Constitutions (Roderick A. MacDonald)
- Probing Canoe Trips for Persistent Meaning (James Raffan)
- Canoeing: Towards a Landscape of the Imagination (C. E. S. Franks)

(A review will be published in the coming winter issue.)



HOME - Paul Barsevskis

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# PHILLIP EDWARD ISLAND CIRCUMNAVIGATION

John Winters

At the last minute we planned a long-weekend trip into Killarney Park and, like most last-minute plans, it fell apart at the seams. When we arrived at the park gate expecting to be greeted with smiles, if not open arms, we were told there was no room at the inn. Fortunately, there is plenty of free canoeing outside the park boundaries so we left our position in the line of happy campers with reservations and drove to the Chikanishing Creek boat launch where we launched amid power boats, children, cases of beer, and gear without upsetting many people.

The logical route for a long weekend is a circumnavigation of Phillip Edward Island with the first two days spent meandering through the islands "outside" and the final day on the protected waters of Collins Inlet. The logical route became less logical when a heavy fog drifted in allowing only 50-100 metres of visibility. Years of sailing experience, a good compass, and plain old luck were enough to keep us reasonably confident of our position. The method I used was to paddle a course roughly parallel to the body of the island shoreline and far enough outside to establish the outer limits of the islands aurally from the sound of breakers. Staying offshore was important to avoid being sidetracked by one of the deep bays along the island shore, yet we did not want to get caught too far out should Georgian Bay's unpredictable weather take a turn for the worse.

After only a short while the low-lying rock islands began to take on an eerie similarity that had me questioning my navigation and the accuracy of the compass. (I searched the canoe for steel that might be affecting it but found none.) At the point of admitting I was lost (something no trip organizer relishes), an island with distinctive features would appear and allow me to save face by claiming to know precisely where we were. We camped on a float rock island that, had it been covered with green

felt, could have passed for a billiard table.

The weather remained stable and fog continued to shroud us in the morning. My navigation luck held as we reached the turn north into Beaverstone Bay where the fog suddenly lifted to reveal that we were exactly where I said we were -- as much to my surprise as to everyone else's. The turn up the bay made, we paddled up Collins Inlet, stopped briefly to examine the remains of the docks and sawmills at the extinct town of Collins Inlet, and turned south into Mill Bay for our evening camp. The only decent campsite was on an island two-thirds up the bay where the resident whippoorwill serenaded us ad nauseam to sleep. I have fond recollections of whippoorwills from my childhood in Virginia and am ecstatic at the first call, nostalgic for the first minute, completely satisfied after a quarter of an hour and homicidal after half an hour. He stopped as I was gathering rocks with which to turn him off.

Our final day back to the landing was a short one and, were it not for a mounting west wind, would have been uneventful. Off South Point the waves had risen to a confused one metre and gave us a wet and tricky ride into the creek entrance. This, of course, is part of the danger as well as the excitement of canoeing on large bodies of water. One never knows what's to come and when it does, the experience is memorable.

For the most part, this trip is reasonably safe with only a few short stretches of open water and always an island to nip in behind to escape the worst of it. Still, Georgian Bay is unpredictable and one must be prudent. For those who have never canoed on open water before, this trip (there are probably hundreds of others like it along the west coast of the bay) would be an excellent introduction and the scenery (when you can see it) is stark, wild, and sufficiently different from more protected waters to justify the experience.

## UPDATE -- THE FRENCH RIVER VOYAGEUR WATERWAY

Jack Gregg

This proposed pleasureboat waterway project connecting Georgian Bay and Lake Nipissing stalled early this year when consultants Wyllie and Ufnal, having completed three-quarters of their four-phase study, found only the lower third of the project, that below Highway 69, economically feasible. The Phase III report was that the entire project construction cost would be \$13.6 million. Annual operating cost would be \$900,000. No financial return on the project could be expected for forty years. North Bay City Council immediately withdrew its support, and the project seemed dormant. Since then, several mayors, reeves, and chambers of commerce in the Nipissing area have endorsed the project, most notably Mayor Mike DeCaen of Sturgeon Falls. In early July, the private Voyageur Waterway Committee held a closed "information" meeting with Wyllie and Ufnal, inviting the North Bay City Council to attend. City Council subsequently re-endorsed the W&U study, urging its completion.

Because of the still-pending French River Provincial Park, W&U recommended a route following the North Channel of the French around Eighteen Mile Island. At the west end

of the island, the route would hook around into the Main Channel and then east of Cantin Island to the Pickereel River and continue along the Pickereel River to Georgian Bay. This route would leave the Five Mile Rapids, Recollet Falls, and the various rapids and channels at the mouth of the French as they are. But it would add an intolerable number of boats to all parts of the river system above Recollet Falls, except for the actual rapids. And the river is overcrowded now. W&U predict 3,000-9,000 new boats a year as a result of the waterway project. Unfortunately, Nipissing MPP Mike Harris wholeheartedly favors a boating canal, urging reconsideration of the Main Channel route, with a full system of locks and channelization. The project he envisions would cost \$104 million to build.

So the project still has pulse. W&U will soon complete the final phase of their study. Then, no matter what the findings, there will be at least private pressure to build the Voyageur Waterway. Meanwhile, politics has delayed full regulation of the French River Provincial Park, and that increases the danger.

Jack Gregg's article "The Voyageur Waterway" was published in the winter 1987 issue of Nastawgan.

Blue Chute

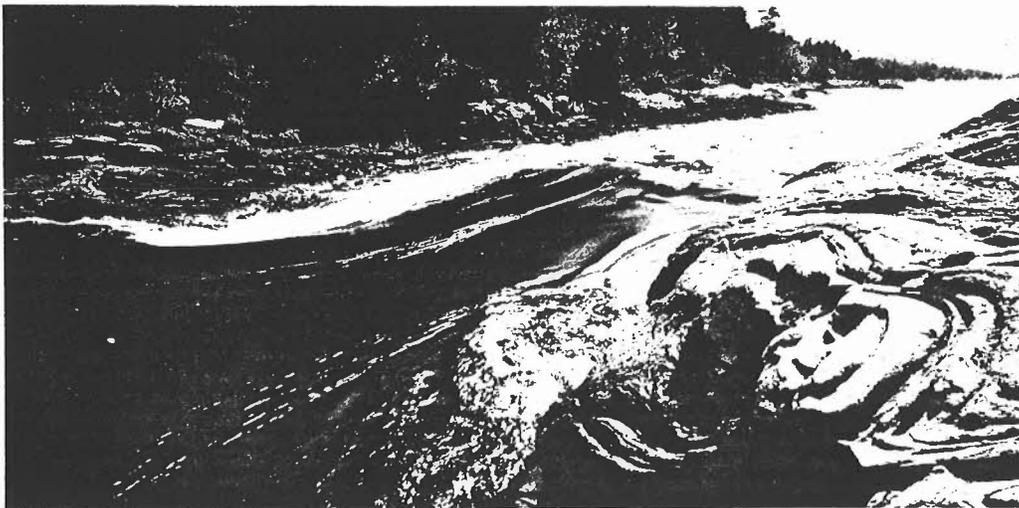


Photo by Toni Harting



1-2 October BURNT RIVER  
 Organizer: Dale Miner 416-730-8187  
 Book immediately.

This will be a leisurely trip down the Burnt, camping along the river Saturday night. We will start at Furnace falls and take out at the town of Burnt River. There will be some portaging. The fall colors should be at their peak, so bring your camera. Limit four canoes.

2 October ELORA GORGE  
 Organizer: Jeff Lane 519-837-3815  
 Book immediately.

A leisurely day trip through the scenic Elora Gorge, water levels permitting. Suitable for novices with some whitewater experience who would like the opportunity to improve their skills playing in the rapids. Limit six canoes.

8-10 October KILLARNEY PARK  
 Organizers: Marcia Farquhar 416-884-0208  
 Dave Houseman  
 Book before 2 October.

Join us for a leisurely fall canoe trip in this very scenic park. For the keen hikers in the group a climb up Silver Peak is planned for Sunday. Limit four canoes.

15-16 October MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE  
 Organizer: Jeff Lane 519-837-3815  
 Book immediately.

The rapids in this man-made whitewater course are technically challenging and provide an opportunity for skilled intermediates to get some experience in difficult rapids. The run-out can be used to advantage by novices for perfecting their ferries and eddy turns. Limit six canoes.



DANCING LOONS - Karyn Mikoliew  
 (Honorable Mention, Fauna; WCA 1988 Photo Contest)

16 October HEAD CREEK LOOP  
 Organizer: Rob Butler 416-487-2282  
 Book before 11 October.

From Moose falls on Highway 35 we will head west to Victoria Lake, then south down Head Creek to Head Lake, and end with a short car shuttle. This is a rugged, untravelled route with several portages. Limit three canoes with fit crews.

22-23 October MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE  
 Organizer: Dale Miner 416-730-8187  
 Book before 17 October.

This section of the Gull River offers technical, challenging rapids. Less experienced paddlers can practice their basic whitewater manoeuvres at the outflow of the rapids. Car camping is available.

22-23 October MORE ISLAND LAKE EXPLORATION  
 Organizer: John Winters 705-382-2293  
 Book before 15 October.

Another exploratory trip north of the Magnetawan River; this time to establish whether a loop route exists from Island Lake into John Lake. This trip may be very strenuous and could involve bushwhacking; there is no whitewater. Participants may camp on the organizer's lawn Friday night to enable an early start Saturday morning. Limit six canoes.

22-23 October BLACK RIVER  
 Organizers: Cathy and Hans Grim 416-649-3202  
 Book before 19 October.

A gentle, scenic river trip from Vankoughnet to Coopers Falls with an easy car shuttle. Suitable for novices. Limit four canoes.

23 October BURNT RIVER  
 Organizer: Bill Ness 416-321-3005  
 Book immediately.

On this leisurely-paced day trip we will follow the Burnt from Kinmount to the village of Burnt River as it placidly winds its way through attractive mixed forest, and here and there spills over ledges, adding a little whitewater excitement to our day. Limit six canoes.

29-30 October HIKING ON BEAUSOLEIL ISLAND  
 Organizer: Herb Pohl 416-637-7632  
 Book immediately.

We'll meet at the public dock in Honey Harbour Saturday morning, paddle to one of the camping areas on the island, and spend the weekend exploring the many scenic spots on the island. This is intended as a leisurely weekend devoted to food, fellowship, and photography. Limit four tents/canoes.

30 October ELORA GORGE  
 Organizer: Bill Ness 416-321-3005  
 Book immediately.

For those of us who just can't get enough of that cold, foamy stuff, and I don't mean beer, this will be a late-season run down the Gorge. With a little luck perhaps we can get some good water levels. Limit six canoes.

6 November HOCKLEY VALLEY HIKE  
 Organizers: Marcia Farquhar 416-884-0208  
 Dave Houseman  
 Book before 2 November.

This will be a day-hike along the Bruce Trail in the Hockley Valley area. Depending on the weather and the interests of the participants, we will be hiking approximately 8 - 13 kilometres.

13 November HOCKLEY VALLEY HIKE  
 Organizer: Ron Jasiuk 416-239-1380  
 Book before 6 November.

An invigorating day exploring the hills and valleys of this scenic area, keeping our eyes and ears open for interesting flora and fauna.

26 November ELORA GORGE  
 Organizer: Dale Miner 416-730-8187  
 Book before 22 November.

If the water levels are suitable, this trip may make you reconsider packing away your paddling gear. Suitable for intermediate paddlers who would like an opportunity to improve their skills this late in the year. Limit six canoes.



MORNING VISITOR - BILL King  
 (Honorable Mention, Fauna; WCA 1988 Photo Contest)

# products and services

This PRODUCTS AND SERVICES section is available, free of charge and on a first come / first serve basis, to members as well as non-members for their announcements regarding items for sale, special products, discounts, services, courses, etc. Contact the editor if more information is required.

**TRADITIONAL WINTER TRAVEL AND CAMPING WORKSHOP** A workshop on Traditional Winter Travel by Toboggan and Snowshoe will be held from Friday evening 13 to Sunday afternoon 15 January 1989, at the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre, Dorset, Ontario. The workshop leader will be Craig McDonald, Recreation Specialist, Frost Centre. This workshop is sponsored by the Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (Northern Region) and costs \$225.00 per person (includes all meals, accommodation, the use of specialized camping equipment, displays, handouts, and expert instruction. An optional field test and written exam for certification will be available at the end of the course for an additional \$25.00. An overnight trip is planned to provide training in equipment handling and safe operation of wood-heated tents and emergency shelters. Participants will be able to examine a wide range of sleds and toboggans as well as a collection of over 25 different styles of native-built snowshoes.

The first 15 paid registrations received will be accepted. To register, mail a cheque or money order payable to: Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (Northern Region), c/o Jan Heinonen, P.O. Box 517, South River, Ontario, POA 1X0, For further information, contact Jan at 705-386-2311 (w).

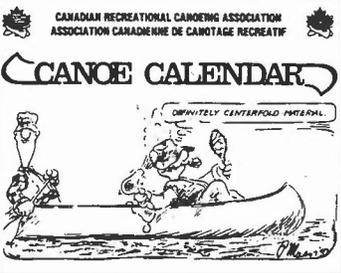
**DISCOUNTS ON CAMPING SUPPLIES** WCA members who present a membership card will receive a ten percent discount on many non-sale items at:  
A.B.C. Sports, 552 Yonge Street, Toronto,  
Algonquin Outfitters, RR#1, Oxtongue Lake, Dwight, Ontario,  
Rockwood Outfitters, 699 Speedvale Ave. West, Guelph, Ontario,  
The Sportsman's Shop, 2476 Yonge Street, Toronto.  
Members should check at each store to find out what items are discounted.

**CANEXUS: The Canoe in Canadian Culture** This softcover book can be obtained from more than one hundred independent booksellers in every province and every major city in Canada, and can also be ordered directly from the publisher: Betelgeuse Books, 53 Fraser Avenue, Bldg. 7, Suite 093, Toronto, Canada, M6K 1Y7. The price is \$19.95 Cdn. Postage and handling for books shipped inside Canada \$1.50 Cdn each, for books shipped outside Canada \$2.00 US or £2.00 UK each.

Most of the text in Nastawgan is wordprocessed by COMPUFLOW, Toronto.

Plan your 1989 canoeing adventures with the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association's "Canoeing Calendar" by Paul Mason. Available October 24th, 1988.

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CANADIAN RECREATIONAL CANOEING ASSOCIATION  
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**CANOEING CALENDAR**

WHITELY CENTERFOLD MEDAL

**THE NAHANNI PORTFOLIO** This lavishly-illustrated coffee-table book (180 pages with 119 full-color images and 65 historical black and white pictures) will be available in all bookstores in October 1988 at \$65.00. The book can also be ordered directly from the authors, Pat and Rosemarie Keough, at the same price, with several special incentives. The Keoughs would be pleased to autograph and inscribe a personal dedication if desired. As well, each book ordered through the Keoughs will be accompanied by a high-quality lithographic print, approximately 8" x 10", from The Nahanni Portfolio (a bonus value of \$15.00). Delivery free of charge to destinations anywhere in Canada. Send \$65.00 cheque or money order to Pat and Rosemarie Keough, Nahanni Productions, RR#1, Box 97, Arnprior, Ontario K7S 3G7. Please legibly print names, addresses, and any specific instructions.

## where it is



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

Algonquin Park	1	Southern Indian Lake	16
Nahanni River	10	Nottawasaga River	21
Magnetawan River	12	Phillip Edward Island	26
Kazan River	13	French River	26

## wca contacts

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

### INFORMATION

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

### MEMBERSHIP

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

### SECRETARY

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

### TREASURER

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

### OUTINGS

Tony Bird  
108 Arundel Ave.  
Toronto, Ont.  
M4K 3A4  
416-466-0172

### NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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

### COMPUTER

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

### CONSERVATION

Claire Muller  
2207 Young's Point Rd.  
R.R. 3; Lakefield, Ont.  
K0L 2H0  
705-652-7181

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marcia Farquhar (Chairperson) 187 Mill Street Richmond Hill, Ont. L4C 4B1 416-884-0208	Ron Jasiuk (Vice-Chair) 350 The East Mall, Apt. 707 Toronto, Ont. M9B 3Z7 416-239-1380
John Winters Box 283 Burks Falls, Ont. POA 1C0 705-382-2293	Rob Cepella 142 Wellesley Str. E, #90 Toronto, Ont. M4Y 1J1 416-925-8243
Dee Simpson 36 Albemarle Ave. Toronto, Ont. M4K 1H7 416-463-1821	Diane Willis 125 Bamburgh Circle Scarborough, Ont. M1W 3G4 416-493-1064

## 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 1988.

**Notes:** -This membership will expire January 31, 1989.  
-Please send completed form and cheque (payable to the Wilderness Canoe Association) to the membership committee chairman.