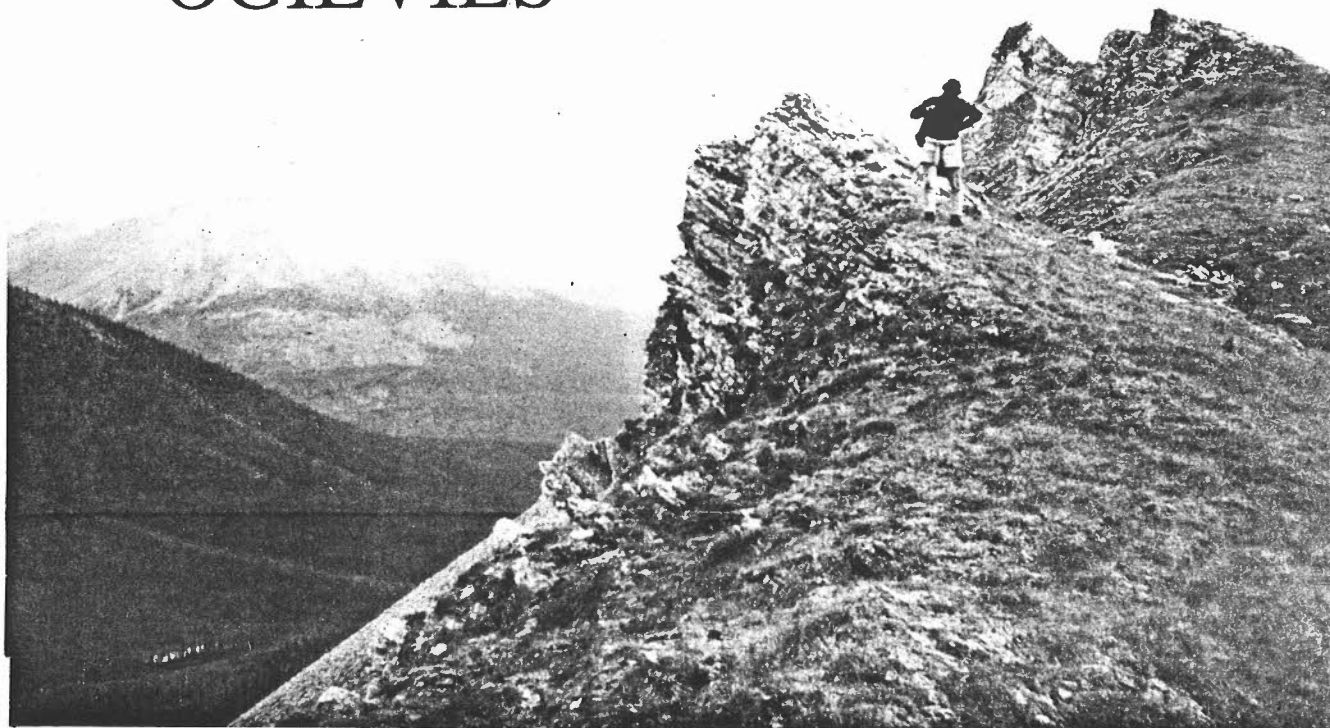




THROUGH THE OGILVIES



TRAVERSE OF THE OGILVIE MOUNTAINS, YUKON TERRITORY, AND A CENTENNIAL
CELEBRATION OF WILLIAM OGILVIE'S TATONDUC JOURNEY IN 1888

Steve Read

I first became aware of the Tatonduc and Miner rivers whilst sitting on the bank of the Porcupine River in 1984. Three companions and I had followed the old trade route from the Mackenzie River via the Rat and Bell rivers, and my appetite for upriver travel had been whetted. I traced the Porcupine on the 1:250,000 map to its source in the Ogilvie Mountains. Like most wilderness travellers, when I see a little-known river on a map, I want to explore it, to discover its secrets, to experience that feeling of timelessness that remote places have. I also noticed that two other rivers have their sources in the same area: the Ogilvie River goes east to join the Peel, and the Tatonduc goes south to join the Yukon River. Here then was a waterway right through the mountains.

A fortunate meeting in 1986 with Vancouver geologist, historian, and author Lewis Green furthered my interest. In his book, *The Boundary Hunters*, Lewis traces the history and establishment of the boundary between Canada and Alaska. This includes a journey made by British Government Surveyor William Ogilvie up the Tatonduc River in the spring of 1888. Lewis very kindly sent me a copy of Ogilvie's *Exploratory survey from the Pelly-Yukon to Mackenzie River by way of the Tatonduc, Porcupine, Bell, Trout and Peel rivers*, published in 1890, along with other useful information.

William Ogilvie was sent out as part of the three-pronged Yukon Expedition of 1887-1888, led by George M. Dawson of the Geological Survey of Canada. Dawson's Report² has been reprinted recently and is essential reading for Yukon buffs. Ogilvie's job was to cross the Chilkoot Pass and descend the Yukon River to the 141st meridian, making a careful instrument survey of the route. In particular he had to fix the point where the 141st meridian crosses the Yukon River, thus establishing the boundary between American Alaska and Canadian Yukon Territory. Ogilvie achieved his objectives with notable success, despite having to pack 6 tons of supplies including 18 and 19-foot canoes over the Chilkoot, build a boat on Lake Bennett, and being exploited by the Chilkoot Indians. He reached the boundary area in time to set up his observatory before winter, supporting his 200 lbs astronomical transit on a large tree stump.

Ogilvie's party wintered comfortably near the boundary site, and Ogilvie laboriously observed and computed his longitude and latitude, using lunar observations and tables to find Greenwich mean time. In February he did further

work on the boundary in the Forty Mile Creek area, to the south of the Yukon River, and then began preparations to travel northeast to the Mackenzie River with four men. He had portaged most of his supplies to the mouth of the Tatonduc before he persuaded the local Indians to guide them over to the Porcupine, paying them two dollars fifty cents per day for each team of dogs with driver, twice the local rate. Nine Indians with thirty-six dogs arrived, and on 17 March 1888 they started up the Tatonduc. Ogilvie expressed a thrill of satisfaction that he was on the way home despite another 2,500 miles to the railhead. His two Peterborough canoes were specially made and strengthened, and Ogilvie states that they were an easy load for two men as they only weighed 140 pounds each.

So here was a challenge with considerable historical interest. The maps showed the Tatonduc to be 70 miles in length, with a drop of 2,800 feet. That gives an average gradient of 40 feet per mile, which is too steep for canoeing down, but it might be possible to take a canoe up it. Most of the height lost is in four canyons and the final three miles to the watershed. The descent down the Miner River showed a reasonable drop of 26 feet per mile for 70 miles, then flat water for 550 miles to the mouth of the Porcupine River at Fort Yukon.

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Ogilvie had left some tantalizing descriptions of various features en route. The first canyon for instance was 15 feet wide with cliffs of 700 and 500 feet either side, through which one could look to the valley beyond. There was the smell of hydrogen sulphide and sulphur deposits, and a lake in a hidden valley below Sheep Mountain where the Indians claimed that sudden rushes of gas caused men to fall down and roll into the lake. Also there were three mysterious lakes Ogilvie named on the Miner River but shown on the map as wide, braided areas. And what of the fourth canyon, the largest and worst, described as impossible to pass? I was also hoping we might meet the remnants of the fierce Na-mone Tribe said to live at the source of the river. They were described as cannibals, living outside with no shelter from the cold, and requiring neither cover to rest nor fire to cook their food.

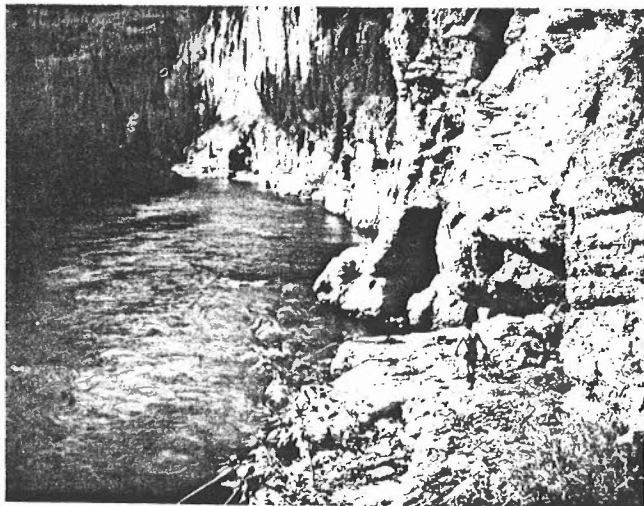
Hank Harrison and myself put in on the Yukon River on 6 July 1988 at Whitehorse. It took three weeks to paddle the 575 miles to the Tatonduc River, during which we got our paddling together, occasionally. We aimed to reach the Tatonduc late enough for the water level to have dropped sufficiently to allow us to get through the canyons, but not so late that the final creeks to the watershed had dried up when we reached them. The Yukon River is a lovely paddle through some superb scenery, with many historical landmarks. We spent a few days at Dawson City to enjoy their annual folk music festival, stocked up with final food supplies here, and carried 45 days rations to get us to Old Crow on the Porcupine River.

At the border where Ogilvie camped the Yukon valley is fairly enclosed by steep hillsides, and it is still possible to see the cut-lines through the spruce marking the boundary. The Tatonduc River did not rush wildly into the Yukon River as I had been half expecting. It crept surreptitiously out of the willows from a wide meandering valley, and we paddled easily into it. Within half a mile the wading began. We donned our specially made knee-length neoprene rubber wet socks, worn inside tough hiking boots. This gave us good ankle support on slippery rocks and meant we could stand in fast, cold water for hours in reasonable comfort. We had already made plywood seat backs which take the backache out of paddling against a current when you have reached the backache age.

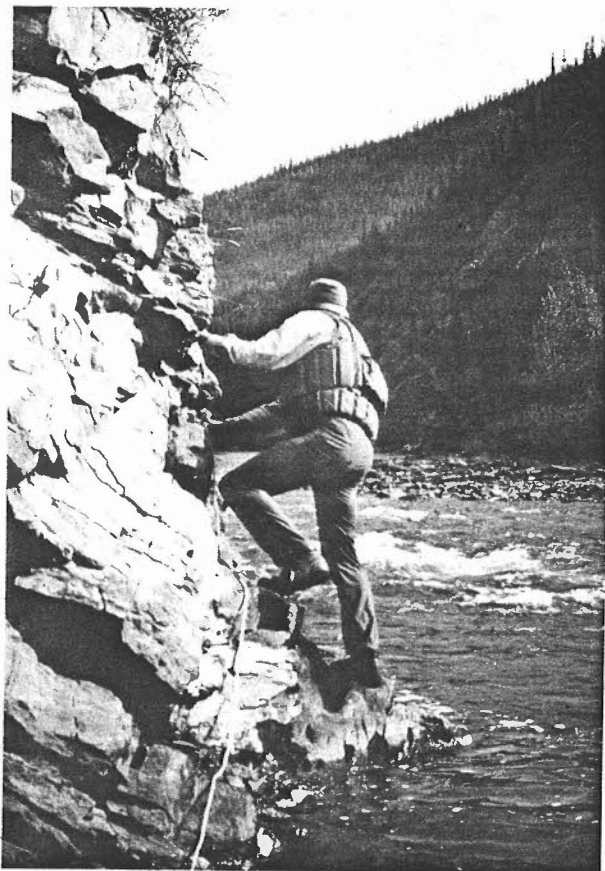
Next we bolted together our three-piece, 12-foot alloy pole, brought from England, which we used as a gee pole to guide the canoe. This method of tracking the canoe upriver I had first seen used in a 1910 photograph in the Yukon. The front man carries the hauling line attached directly to the bow of the canoe, and pulls from 30 or 40 feet in front. The back man carries the gee pole attached also to the bow, but loosely. As the front man pulls the canoe, the back man simply steers the nose around obstacles and keeps the canoe in deep water. The stern looks after itself. The pole is attached loosely by a four-inch loop of strong nylon line at its end, with a carabiner clipping this to the canoe's grab-loop. The end of the pole is then suspended below the bow allowing plenty of movement. The main hazard occurs when the bow is pushed from slack water into fast water. The back man must see that the stern has time to get out into the current before signalling the front man to pull, to avoid a broach and rolling the canoe. When the paddlers embark, the pole is not unclipped, but laid along the canoe, with a short stick wedged upright to stop it from falling off.

The first 12 miles were fairly easy. We waded a gravel shoreline and made occasional ferries across the river to easier ground. We soon got into a rhythm of movement and procedure which allowed us to communicate less frequently. We had time to let the land around take over our minds. We had time to hear the silence, sense the stillness, feel the power, and marvel at the harmony of the land we were travelling through. Nature does not have rough edges. To my eyes it always presents a perfect picture. Even at times of chaos like landslips or cut-banks the land seems to be changing naturally. I am reminded of those professional canoeists, the voyageurs, who heard voices in the rapids. If we can free our minds from the concerns of the moment, we can hear the land trying to say something to us, too.

As the valley narrowed, the river steepened, and limestone bluffs reminiscent of the Dolomites appeared on either side. Low cliffs fell into the river on either bank. Hank joined our two long ropes and climbed along the cliff on the right bank, paying out the rope into the water below. On regaining the shoreline he pulled the canoe out into the fast water. I stayed in the canoe and fended it off the cliff as he pulled us upstream. Shortly afterwards we came to the spot which Ogilvie described as giving the Tatonduc River its name, the Broken Stone River in English. We observed one huge waterworn boulder, but not the 'masses of rock in the channel' which Ogilvie describes. In the intervening 100 years the water and ice must have eroded and washed it away.



Camp on rock shelf, top of 1st canyon



Climbing along cliff edge

We reached the first canyon at 12 miles in two days travel, better than we had hoped. (Our estimate to reach the watershed was 20 days, and we made it in 18. Through the canyons we made about two miles a day, but between them made five to seven miles.) The canyon entrance is spectacular, as the river has cut a narrow defile through a limestone ridge. It emerges into a huge eddy, almost a lake, before speeding off again down to the Yukon River. I suddenly realized that we had crossed from Alaska into the Yukon without realizing it, or spotting the cut-line. The entrance looked inviting: no whitewater, just a dark, flat stream emerging from the defile. We paddled into it and eddy-hopped around a few buttresses before the first rapid appeared. By now the channel had narrowed to about 15 feet, making it impossible to turn a 17-foot canoe. Any manoeuvres had to work first time here. We put on the power along the right bank, then shot across to the left just below a huge souse hole into a 'Thank God' haven on the left bank. We then found we could climb along the rock shelf whilst lining the canoe below our feet. The rest of the day continued in similar fashion, overcoming one interesting problem after another. That night we slept on a rock shelf beneath the cliffs. The evening sun warmed the rock around us, whilst the shadows deepened amongst the spruce opposite. Paradise.

The first canyon runs about 2 1/2 miles, finishing in a half-mile portage almost to the south fork. It was here we saw what looked like two mountain sheep swimming upriver towards us, with their white heads and long necks standing well out of the water, or were we dreaming? Well satisfied with our efforts, I remarked to Hank that there was no chance of retreat down the first canyon, as there were too many rapids running into rock walls for our canoeing ability to cope with. At mile 17 we lined past some big ledge rapids, then portaged the last one on the right bank. The route followed the rising strata of a small cliff, but the descent to the gravel beach was completely choked by fallen trees. We resorted to a climbers' technique and lowered everything straight down the cliff using a carabiner brake as a friction device.

Yellow sulphur deposits began to appear in the river bed, and a small creek on the right bank felt warm. This appeared to be the site of an Indian village mentioned by Ogilvie at mile 19. Running water all winter would be a definite advantage. (This was the reason why Kraus built his cabin by the hot springs of the South Nahanni, but within two years the sulphur had rotted the sill logs.) Ogilvie describes the unusual tents being used here. They were 20 feet long, 10 feet or more wide, elliptical on the ground and dome-shaped above it. A framework of willows covered in deer skins with the hair inside, was banked around by snow. Each tent housed two or more families and fire inside was ventilated by a hole in the roof. The Indians had killed many caribou and moose, and I remembered hearing that the last caribou seen down on the Yukon River was in the 1940s. It is surprising to hear of this village in such an inaccessible valley, as the first canyon would not be easy to pass in winter or summer.

The second canyon occurs at mile 26, and is far less intimidating. However it proved harder to pass than the first canyon. It developed into a series of rock gardens, with braided whitewater as far as the eye could see. We spent most of the day waist-deep fighting our way up rushing torrents, and finally came to a halt in the middle of the river at the head of a rock garden. We had fast, deep water on all sides, which I failed to wade, despite several attempts. We sat on our isolated rock in the middle of the river, and Hank had a smoke, whilst I got the granola bars out. I said someone would have to swim for it, and Hank rashly admitted he was a good swimmer. Taking a rope he dived in and swam like a maniac to the shore, thus saving the day. A half-mile portage past a small fall left us exhausted but well satisfied with our day's work.

We saw our first beaver sign now, and several half-eaten salmon indicated the presence of bears. At times the smell of fish was very powerful, and the signs pointed to many others nearby. We had been catching glimpses of a notable peak ahead whose summit was crenelated on all sides with limestone towers. This turned out to be Sheep Mountain which we saw from the south, west, and north over the next seven days.

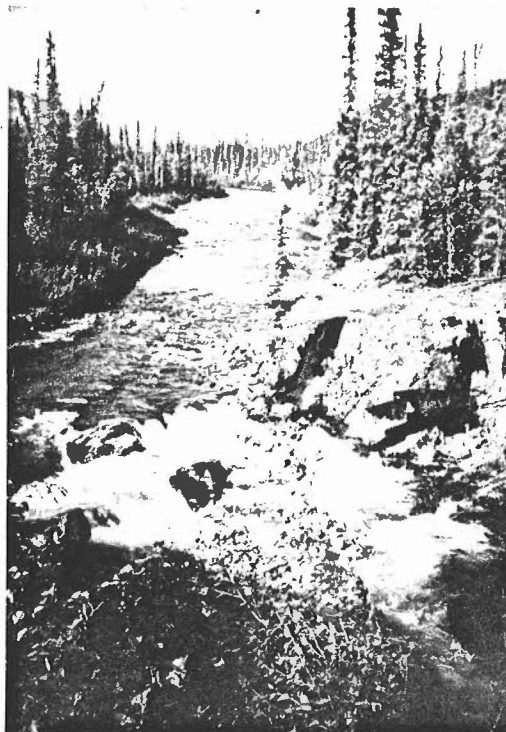
Huge rapids at miles 32 1/2 and 34 necessitated short portages on the right bank, before the third canyon was reached at mile 37. It began easily, but finally three large rapids ending in a fall made us head for the bank. The portage followed the rising strata on the left bank for a mile. As we had three carries to get everything over, every mile to be portaged meant 5 miles bushwhacking. After the third canyon the valley opened right out and we were surprised to come upon a well-maintained fly-in camp on the left bank. As it was only midday, however, we pushed on.

Our route parted from Ogilvie's route south of Mt. Deville. His Indian guides regarded the fourth canyon as impassable, and took Ogilvie over a pass between Mt. Deville and Mt. King to join the east fork of the Tatonduc above the canyon. His party then crossed the headwaters of the Ogilvie River and by-passed the mountains, reaching the Porcupine near Mt. Gale. The guides were reluctant to go past the watershed south of Mt. Klotz as they feared the mythical warriors waiting to eat them. Ogilvie persuaded them to break the trail and return. Then, along with his four men, it took him 17 days to pack all their supplies to their spring camp on what is now named the Miner River.

The fifth of August saw our first freak frost. Our waterlogged boots were frozen solid next morning, but putting them in the river quickly thawed them out. Of course we were camped in the frozen shade, whilst the sun warmed the opposite bank. Even the bannock, made the evening before, had rime on it. But the frost heralded a beautiful day, and life had never felt sweeter.



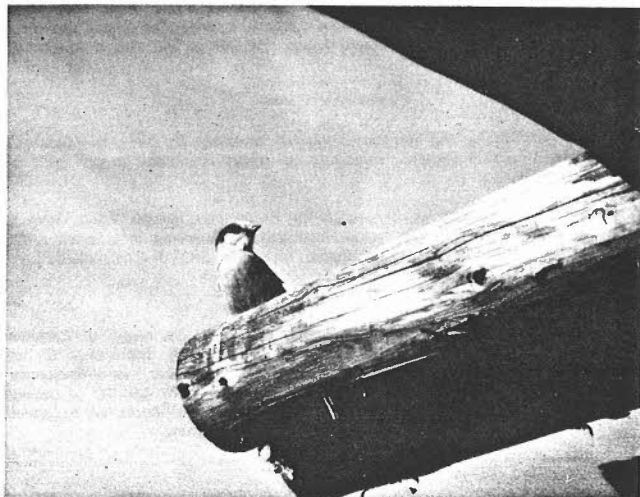
Portage descent by carabiner



End of 3rd canyon

We decided to avoid the fourth canyon by crossing a small pass to the north, as we wished to take the canoe up the north fork of the Tatonduc, to keep it on the water as long as possible. We also preferred to see what the mountains were like higher up. We considered trying the fourth canyon, but feared being stopped, being unable to retreat downriver, and having to abandon the canoe and face a 10-day hike out. The five-mile portage gained 700 feet to the tree line before descending to the north fork. The effort involved was made well worthwhile by the panoramic view from a small peak overlooking the fourth canyon. The canyon actually looked more feasible than the first canyon, with possible portage routes around the steep sections. Looking across the lakes to the north east we could see the narrow valley down which the north fork flowed. To the east we could see Ogilvie's route up the east fork to the watershed, and the steep descent he took between Mt. Deville and Mt. King. To the south we could see many miles of the river we had already travelled, and in the hazy distance our old friend, Sheep Mountain.

Another four days up a narrowing stream took us to the watershed at 3,650 feet. I had wondered if there would be wood and water up to this height, but had been reassured by seeing vegetation up to 3,000 feet in the gullies as we paddled down the Yukon river. We fixed our tarp in the last clump of spruce a mile below the summit, and two miles down the other side found a tall stand of poplars. A trickle of water flowed from the very summit, but we stopped hauling the canoe two miles back when it got stuck between the banks in several places.



Whisky Jack



Final mile to watershed



Using gee pole; Sheep Mountain in background

The watershed itself was an anticlimax. The weather was bad with a low overcast and rain squalls. Also the peaks around were bare and rounded, with none of the rock formations we had seen lower down. So we scurried over the top as fast as we could. There seemed to be plenty of water coming off the peaks around, but when we reached a creek bed it was bone dry. It was nine miles before we met water at the Miner River, which meant 45 miles of packing, half of it through wet scrub and lumpy tussock sedge, a portage which took us five days. We found the reason for the dry creek in its bed. The limestone strata in the valley were almost vertical, and all the water went underground. On the bonus side, however, this valley had many fine glacial features, with eskers, moraines, and a small cirque, plus wolves howling at night. We had a definite feeling of satisfaction in having reached the centre of these remote mountains under our own steam. As we broke through the bushes and saw a brimming Miner River I gave a shout of delight.

Initially many shallows and gravel bars meant we were in and out of the canoe, wading it into deeper water. But the relief of floating after so much heavy packing made it feel like a picnic. Then came two days of tight, fast bends, undercut bank and overhanging vegetation waiting to tip the canoe. Lightning decisions had to be made. Should we run the bend or backpaddle into the bank and line the canoe past the obstacle? Twice we dumped the canoe without serious consequences; our waterproofing system worked well and our gear remained dry. The first time we ran into a tree across the river because we did not co-ordinate our back paddling, due to lack of experience together. The second time we caught the back eddy with the nose on a tight bend. As the river was only 10 feet wide our stern caught the opposite bank and rolled us. We learnt a lot in those two days.

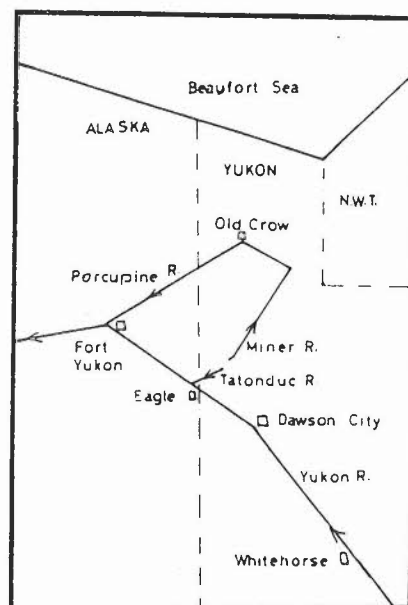
We saw several mountain sheep as we came out of the Ogilvies. One bunch were traversing a steep shale cliff, sending clouds of dust blowing up the valley. One evening we made an idyllic camp opposite a beaver lodge, and at dusk saw the beavers appear from under the water to swim around collecting cottonwood twigs for the evening meal. Grayling were jumping here, but we were unsuccessful fishermen.

Ogilvie's mysterious three lakes turned out to be wide, braided areas where the river split into as many as ten channels at one point. It was back to wet feet as we were in and out of the canoe trying to find a channel deep enough to float us. In winter conditions when Ogilvie travelled them, they would probably appear as huge sheets of snow-covered ice. The nearest thing we saw to a rapid on the Miner River was immediately after the third lake, where a steep riffle ran beneath a cliff. At its foot on the left bank was the remains of a very old cabin. Although we were still 300 miles from the nearest settlement at Old Crow, at one time there was an Indian village at the Whitestone river, only half that distance. Dick Nukon, who lives in Old Crow today, remembers hunting on the Miner River with his parents and building a skin boat to float out their catch.

Near Ogilvie's spring camp we saw some huge permafrost ice lenses in a cut bank above our heads. Ogilvie's positions and mileages stand up very well when compared with a modern map. He chose exactly the right spot to stop and wait for break-up, as from there on down we sat back and enjoyed the scenery. Ogilvie did mention one near mishap when his party came around a bend and shipped a lot of water, and I was on the lookout for this final obstacle. The river turned at right angles to the valley, and ran into a rock buttress beneath a steep hillside on the left bank. As we approached rapidly, I could see the river deflected off the cliff to the right. I anticipated heavy water along the face of the cliff, so took the bend well on the inside, and sure enough there were the waves that probably swamped Ogilvie's canoes one hundred years before.



Storm



Using gee pole downstream

Cathedral Rocks is the last significant feature on the Miner River, looming over the river for half a mile. Near here we saw a wolf pack sunning itself on the bank. They were all colors, and we got quite close before they spotted us. Sixty miles from Old Crow we were very lucky to paddle into the caribou migration. We had them swimming around the canoe in small groups, with the white patch on their tails looking like warning lights. As we passed Bell River we left Ogilvie's route behind us. His party went up the Bell and descended the Rat to the Peel River en route to the Mackenzie River and home. We continued down the Porcupine and the first people we met were Charlie and Phares Thomas who fed us in their hunting camp. We made more friends in Old Crow, and sat out two stormy days at Steve Frost's camp opposite Bluefish River. Near Fort Yukon we met Joe and Paul Herbert and their relatives at Shuman House. They made us so welcome and fed us so well that we were reluctant to leave. We finally tied up at Fort Yukon on 7 September, 64 days out of Whitehorse, but with a lifetime of memories inside us.

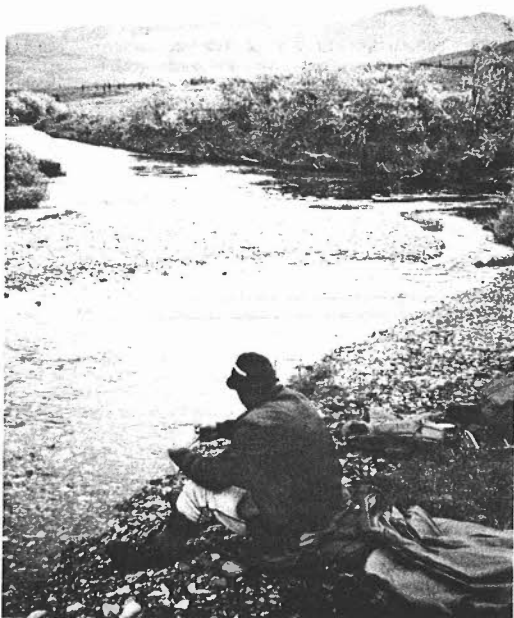
- (1) Green, Lewis. *The Boundary Hunters: Surveying the 141st Meridian and the Alaska Panhandle*. University of British Columbia Press; ISBN 0-7748-0150-6.
- (2) Dawson, George M. *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District, N.W.T. and B.C., 1887*. Yukon Historical and Museums Association, 1987; P.O. Box 4357, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 3S8; ISBN 0-92111-400-1.

Steve Read is an English rock climber who discovered the magic of Canadian rivers while climbing in the Upper Nahanni area in 1978. Since then he has returned every second year for long trips including the Yukon, Laird/MacKenzie/Rat (a 1700-mile trip), and Pelly/Woodside. For his next trip he is seeking information on the Dubawnt and Churchill rivers, and would like to buy a copy of the Tyrrells' book about their Athabaska and Dubawnt journey.

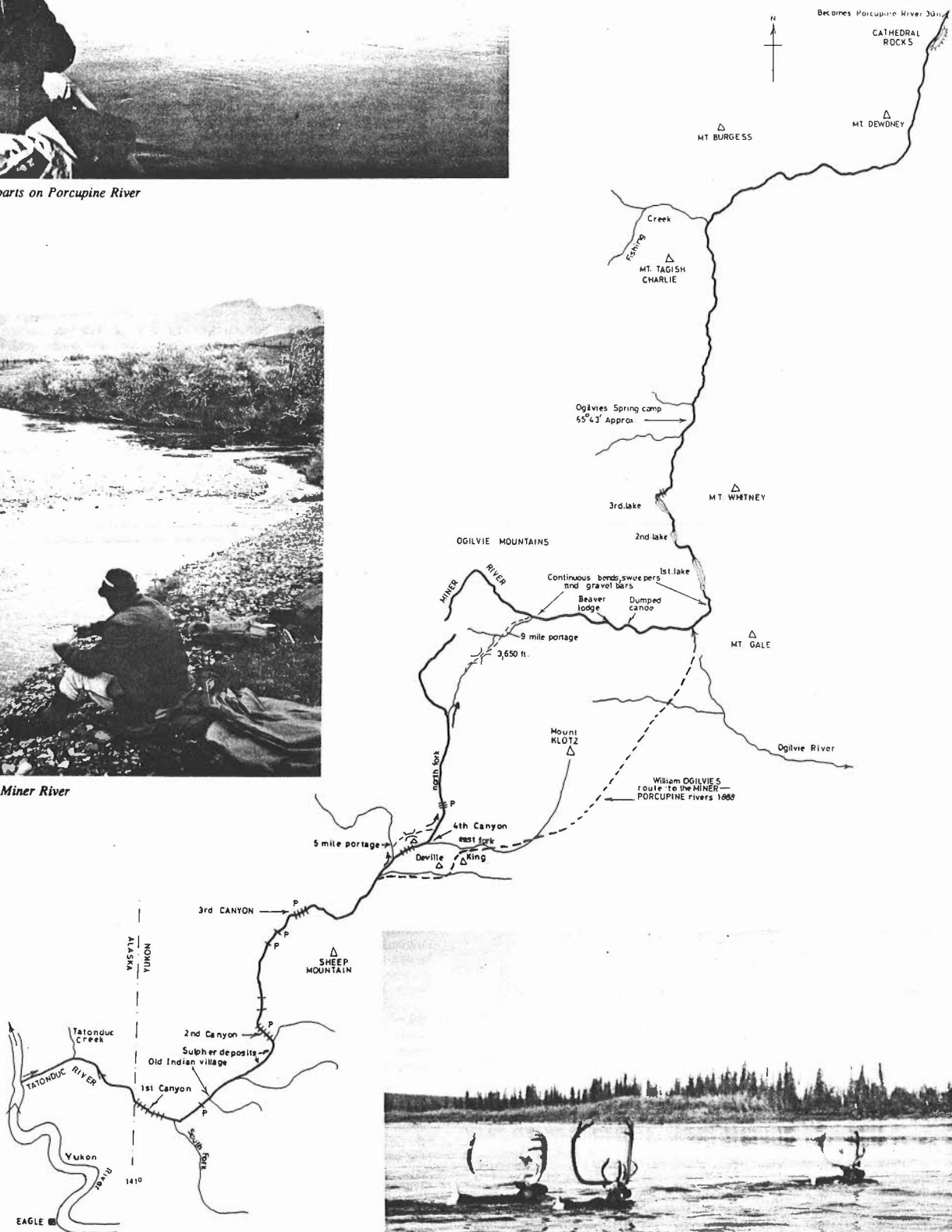
Distances and other measures have been kept in imperial units, not metric, for consistency with those reported by Ogilvie in 1890 and used by the author.



Lower ramparts on Porcupine River



Meeting the Miner River



Caribou

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

The article, "On the Future of the WCA," in the spring '89 issue expresses my viewpoints. If Toronto has other canoe organizations that can accommodate varied canoeing interests then I think the WCA should be careful to preserve what it is supposed to be by its very name. The other organizations should be supported and co-operated with all the way. On the other hand, if Toronto does not have other organizations that are like Minnesota's "Minnesota Canoe Association," which tries to be (and, I think, succeeds in being) everything to everybody, then maybe the WCA should consider being that everything to all and just recognize that one group of its members is a wilderness-loving group. However, if that should occur, the name of the organization should change.

Robert McCoubrie



HIDDEN TREASURES

An organization such as the WCA can only function because of the commitment of much time and effort by a relatively small number of dedicated volunteers. Several of these, namely the members of the Board of Directors and the Newsletter Editor, are rather high profile and are therefore relatively well known to the general membership. Others, namely the Secretary, the Information Officer, the Conservation Chairman, and the Outings Chairman, are also not unknown to many of us.

However, there are three people mentioned under WCA Contacts on the back page of *Nastawgan* who toil hard in almost total obscurity on various jobs of vital importance to our club. Those three are: Rob Butler, Treasurer, Paula Schimek, Membership Secretary, and Cash Belden, Membership Lists. For years they have been doing their jobs with great enthusiasm (and occasional grumblings), spending many hours to keep the affairs of the steadily growing WCA in order, always available to present the latest figures and information. Without them and their marvellous dedication the Wilderness Canoe Association simply would not function as smoothly as it has been doing for many years now, and we are truly grateful for what they're accomplishing. They are our Hidden Treasures, let's cherish them.

WCA QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

When the WCA was a small and intimate organization, directors knew most of the members personally and it was easy keeping track of members' opinions and interests. So much for the good old days! Now a director is lucky to know a small fraction of the membership and we recognize that, to have even the faintest idea of how you felt about key issues, we would have to reply upon one of those much hated and impersonal surveys. That so many of you replied to ours (31% of the membership) is truly remarkable and shows the WCA members either like to fill out questionnaires or felt a strong need to educate the board. In either case, we feel confident that we now have a reasonably accurate profile of the membership and your likes and dislikes.

Of course, a little data is a dangerous thing and one must not read more into it than is really there. While the response fits typical distribution curves, there is great diversity among us that is not apparent from simple numbers. With that caveat, here is what the survey tells about the "average" WCA member.

While one lucky fellow paddles 130 days per year, most of us will paddle 27 days of which nine days will be trips, eight days will be on weekends, and 10 days will be extended trips. There will be whitewater on about 56% of your canoeing days but it is worth noting that many members paddle no whitewater at all (27%). One respondent said, "...none, none at all, ever," which is fairly emphatic.

A little better than half responded that they wanted more organized trips of one type or another but fewer than half of those people expressed an interest in organizing trips. This suggests some confusion regarding how our trips are run. Unlike most "outings" clubs, all WCA trips are organized by members who are (within some constraints) free to run any trip they fancy. The Outings Committee confines itself to monitoring the outings but does not normally seek out people to run specific types of outings. In short, if you want it, organize it. So, why ask the question? Well, to stimulate you and to elicit commentary on our outings program. Recognizing that most of you are very shy, the Outings Committee will now put your responses to work in a constructive manner.

The questions regarding *Nastawgan* were illuminating and, frankly, surprising. We all knew what a superb job the editor was doing but we had no idea how superlative. Negative comments were far and few between and always referred to those aspects of editing beyond the editor's control such as content and type of article. *Nastawgan* is really YOUR newsletter. The editor is at the mercy of contributors and what you get is what you supply. The editor might correct punctuation, errant grammar, or clarify a sentence or two, but the articles are yours. *Nastawgan* is an amateur publication in the purest sense of the word and while the editor might grit his teeth when he reads an article, he tries not to meddle. Nevertheless, Toni appreciates the enthusiastic response and will do his best to satisfy as many of you as possible. What you must do is take a stab at writing about one of your trips and provide work for Toni's new assistant editors.

What kind of features interest you most? Major trip reports were favored by a wide margin followed by local trip reports, technical articles, and photo layouts in that order. "Other" was appropriately last but elicited some excellent suggestions such as more humor and fewer of my articles.

As an indication of the fine job done by Toni and his predecessor, 23 percent of the respondents belong to the WCA primarily to receive *Nastawgan*! Indeed, most non-members that I have talked with are amazed that such a small organization can produce a club newsletter of such consistently high quality.

Eighty-one percent of the respondents wanted some form of trip information booklet although there were as many versions of what it should be as there were positive responses. I suppose we must form a committee to explore this further since the suggestions ranged from a major publishing effort similar to the Wilson or Reid/Grand books down to a simple list of resources on were to get information. Worth noting were the strong feelings of those opposed to such a booklet — sometimes running to several paragraphs of opposition. Herein lay the makings of a good debate for the membership. I am sure Toni would welcome letters of opinion on this topic.

There were no surprises about the conservation involvement with response fairly evenly divided between "some" and "maximum" involvement. Obviously the terms used are relative and the WCA's idea of maximum involvement does not extend to blowing up dams or assassination of pulp-and-paper executives. A consistent theme of the commentary on environmental involvement was that we restrict our activities to those directly pertaining to canoeing.

We received 64 offers of help for our various activities and committees which alone made the survey worth the effort. The committee chairmen will be contacting those of you who volunteered in the very near future. Volunteers are the lifeblood of this organization and you can be sure that your services will be put to good use.

Almost everyone seemed to feel that the WCA had lived up to or exceeded their expectations, indicating that the club does satisfy a wide range of needs from the educational to the social. One disturbing note was the relative paucity of members who belong to the WCA because of a love for nature and a philosophical belief in preserving wilderness. One suspects that this lurks beneath the surface for most members but it is clearly not a priority. Ah well, it's hard to keep your mind on serious stuff when you are having so much fun.

Thank you for participating and pleasant paddling.

John Winters

Toni Harting

NASTAWGAN MATERIAL AND DEADLINE

issue:	autumn 1989	deadline date:	13 August 1989
	winter 1989		12 November 1989

WCA PHOTO CONTEST In February 1990 there will again be a competition for the many photographers in the WCA. The four categories are: 1) wilderness, 2) wilderness and man, 3) flora, 4) fauna. The official announcement will be published in the autumn issue of *Nastawean*.

NAHANNI DOCUMENTARY Pat and Rosemarie Keough have returned to the Nahanni wilderness with their 2 1/2-year-old daughter Rebekka Dawn to begin filming a television special for Baton Broadcasting based on their latest bestselling book, *The Nahanni Portfolio*. This show will be shot over the next year to portray the magnificence and diversity of this unique region of the North West Territories in all seasons.

A black and white photograph of a forest scene reflected in water, oriented horizontally. The image shows a dense forest of tall, thin trees, likely evergreens, mirrored in a calm body of water. The reflection is sharp and clear, creating a symmetrical composition. The overall tone is dark and moody, with high contrast between the dark foliage and the lighter sky/water.

A black and white photograph of a woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a heavy, light-colored winter parka. She is standing on a sidewalk and talking on a payphone. The payphone is mounted on a wall next to a building. To her left, there is a newspaper vending machine. A small, dark-colored dog is lying on the ground at her feet. The scene is outdoors, and the lighting suggests it might be daytime.

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Typical boulder field, north channel, Ogoki River

WILDERNESS IRONIES AND CONTRADICTIONS

Hugh Stewart

This was originally an informal talk delivered at the WCA Symposium on Northern Ontario at York University in Toronto on 28 January 1989. I have written it out as closely as I can to the way it was delivered.

Wilderness Ironies and Contradictions is the title you give a talk when you have many questions and ideas without any logical way to link them up or explain them. With George Luste's indulgence I have chosen not to present slides. For a decade I went on arduous recruiting trips showing slides to convince people to come on our wilderness trips. So I'll take a bit of a rest from that format. My motives for those seemingly endless slide shows were not monetary but they are a good starting point for my comments today. The motivations were some firm beliefs which I still hold even though I am no longer in the adventure travel business. First, travel by one's own physical energy and skill is invigorating, healthy, strengthens character, and uplifts the human spirit. Second, I feel that the best way to understand how the geography and natural resources of Canada have shaped our political and social evolution is to travel and live on the Canadian Shield for a while. Third, the harmony between man and nature is lost, if we ever had it. We need more appreciation of the complexity, power, and "interrelatedness" of the natural world, i.e. we need an ecological conscience. This lesson is easily visible in the wilderness when you put yourself in a position of subservience to the natural forces.

Given these motives, some wilderness experience, and some capable associates (some of them are here today), we were reasonably successful in attracting people to our programs and a) exposing them to the above ideas and b) giving them skills and perceptions they didn't have or have in focus when they came to Headwaters. In the process we met many people with different motives for wilderness travel. We saw the wilderness experience sometimes fall short of but more often exceed their expectations. I ended up inevitably drawn into the larger issues and became involved in speaking out on behalf of the wilderness and organizing groups to "save" it. Through it all I have discovered no brand-new ideas about people's relation to their natural environment and no definitive answers to the problems of preserving wilderness areas. But I do have many observations which amount to ironies, and questions which amount to apparent contradictions.

As I have gotten older and lived with these ironies for a while, the issues seem to me more grey and less black-and-white. I have not yet decided if a) my perception is actually becoming more sophisticated or b) the issues are actually changing. Maybe I am just slow to see the truth of the old Arab proverb, "Every stick has two ends." In any case here are some of the sticks:

RISK WITHOUT RISK. ADVENTURE WITHOUT DISCOMFORT

G.K. Chesterton once said that adventure is an attitude toward discomfort. I think that one of the main things that leads people to the wilderness is the extreme and unnecessary physical comfort of modern life. On a graph we would see, I am sure, that, compared with times gone by, many of the physical and spiritual highs and lows have been taken out by social welfare safety nets, affluence, and success. The graph for many of us tends toward a straight line rather than a succession of curves. How often do most urban dwellers find their human spirit truly uplifted in their day-to-day life? The result is a thirst for adventure, a search for some physical and spiritual highs. But there is a problem. More and more it seems that people want comfort in the wilderness. In the decade we were in the adventure travel business, the gear and the terrain did not change. However, people's expectations did change. More and more frequently there were complaints about the difficulty of the travel, the discomfort of the bugs, rain, etc. One girl even tried to sue us because her canoe trip began on a windy day and her trip leader snored at her. What her expectations of a wilderness trip were, I was never clear on.

My feeling is that, as a people, we are too psychologically flabby. People want the adventure and thrill with none of the sweaty, buggy, cold, exhausting aspects. They also want the risk but with the right of litigation if something goes wrong. The most-often-asked question to someone selling his wilderness trips is: "Is it safe?" The answer is, no. That's why it is worth doing. They don't like that answer. So, people want to break out of the comfort cycle but don't know what a real wilderness experience entails. They are getting less prepared as time goes on, but the comfort increment increases. Very distressing.

QUANTIFICATION OF THE WILDERNESS

There is not much that society does not try to quantify. The wilderness is not exempt from this urge. People want more detailed guidebooks, more sophisticated maps, more rivers graded, etc. People want the Ministry of Natural Resources and other government departments to keep the canoe routes and hiking routes open. They do not expect to reduce the length of their trip because the trails need clearing. To me, the trend toward having everything laid out for the wilderness traveller, like a trip to Europe with a travel agent, undercuts and erodes the important dimensions of the wilderness experience: the character development, judgment, self-reliance, skill-development, and the fun that is the purpose of so many forays, either private or organized, into the wilderness.

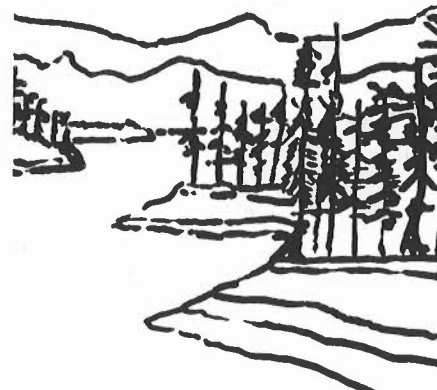
The ultimate result, to my way of thinking, is that there is an abdication of the need to develop skills and judgment and a misunderstanding of what real wilderness skills entail. In fact, although it might at first appear otherwise, the wilderness trail does not lend itself to easy quantification and cataloguing. The issue is not the accuracy of the guidebook or river survey. The issue is: do you have the judgment and skills to deal with the geographical obstacles you face? You get these from experience, not from the guidebook. Operative here is a bigger delusion that our society leads us into and that is: 'Take a course and become competent.' People do not want to take the time to learn the necessary skills. People want things, including knowledge and judgment, quickly and easily. Skills in the wilderness do not come that way and to think they do is a perilous exercise.

CERTIFICATION

Here I am talking about certification of guides and proprietors of wilderness trips. At first this issue might not appear to effect the WCA, but ultimately it effects everyone who goes on the trail. We are back on the risk-without-risk syndrome here. Somehow people want a guarantee that risk is little or accidents won't happen if people are "certified." After every wilderness "disaster" the crescendo of cries for regulation of "these groups" increases. Many of us in the wilderness travel business concluded a long time ago that certification does not equal competence and good leadership. I am one who believes good leaders are born, not made, and a large percentage of leadership is judgment and understanding of human nature.

But my biggest argument against this concept is that it lifts the whole "credentialization", hurdle-and-hoop-jumping format of modern urban society into the bush. You cannot do anything in this world without the proper credentials or qualifications. To be worthwhile, the wilderness experience needs to be a different way of doing things than we are normally locked into. Let us not bring all the baggage and bullshit of society with us into the bush. We need to rid ourselves of much of it, not increase it. I go into the bush to get down to the basics and strip myself of all the unnecessary paraphernalia I deal with in my "normal" life. Credentials are one of these non-essentials. The wilderness experience is exciting and enjoyable because it is different from our everyday lives. Trying to make it the same will destroy what we are after.

To the Indians and Inuit, the ultimate wilderness travellers, many of whom have forgotten more than most of us will ever know, the idea of certification is an absurdity. Why not emulate them? They have been at it longer than us. Let the trails, the rivers, the mountains do the certifying.



Sand cliffs and jack pine, Ogoki Reservoir

ADVENTURE TRAVEL: RESOURCE INDUSTRY OR DILETTANTISM

There is no doubt that the resource industries, as they are traditionally conceived, see adventure travel as just that: dilettantism. They think that we wilderness travellers do not really understand what forestry, mining, trapping are all about. Some of us may be guilty of ignorance here, but many of us are quite well informed and fully cognizant of the nature, importance, and impact (economic and otherwise) of these industries. I think one of the reasons adventure travel has so little credibility in the eyes of many is due to the separation of the techniques of wilderness travel from their original purposes.

Originally the way people travel in the slide shows we are watching was the only way to get around in the bush. The native peoples showed the Europeans these techniques. Commerce and much of the geological and forest survey was done by canoe and snowshoe until well into this century. Many of our heroes and the romantic figures of Canadian wilderness travel, Hearne, Mackenzie, and, more recently, less well-known but maybe more accomplished men of the G.S.C. (Low, Tyrrell, etc.), were DEVELOPERS after dollars. If around today they'd be in helicopters, running seismic tests, etc. They would never be in a canoe.

We, the wilderness travellers of the late 20th century, have taken the method they used for travel, i.e. a non-mechanized one using canoe and snowshoe, and elevated it into an end in itself because it is good for the human spirit. This phenomenon has a number of consequences: 1) We don't really fully understand the social impact ourselves yet and, therefore, do not understand the nature of the demands we put on the system to give us a place for the activity. 2) The resource industries have no understanding at all of the phenomenon. Hence the charges of dilettantism. The key players in the industries never had to work in canoes or travel by snowshoe, whereas 50 years ago they would have. 3) Society as a whole doesn't understand. 4) A relatively small group of people need a relatively large area for an activity. This does not make the activity any the less important. Is the case of the Inu of Labrador against low-level flying by NATO diminished because the natives are few in number and need a lot of geographical space for their lifestyle? Many of us here today do not have trouble with that idea but society as a whole does not know how to deal with it.

LET US DEFINE THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

This becomes harder and harder for me as time goes on. I used to grind out academic definitions involving no roads, no mechanization, untrammelled areas etc., but now, at age 43, these don't seem all that convincing to me. I once read a definition that said, it is wilderness when you travel far enough to feel danger. Certainly it is different for all of us and it is relative and always shifting depending on where you are and the time of year.

As an example, when I lived with my wife and children on Lake Temagami the trip to school at Bear Island (4 miles) was different in the spring, fall, and winter. Sometimes it felt like a trip on Highway 401 and other times it felt like an ascent of Everest. In fact, some of my most challenging wilderness experiences have not been on remote northern rivers but rather 2 or 3 miles from my home in an open motorboat in December in a north wind, or in my snowmachine stuck in the slush in the dark on thin ice with my family. Successfully dealing with these situations required as much of me as any remote canoe trips. Where does this leave me? Saying that everyone who tears around on a snowmachine is having a wilderness experience? No. However, it does lead me to understand, for example, that my friends who run traplines day in and day out all fall and winter using 'boats, canoes, snowmachines, and snowshoes have as valid a wilderness experience as I do going canoe tripping or winter camping, and just as much right to continue doing it.

PRESERVING THE HABITAT FOR WILDERNESS TRAVEL

In our efforts on behalf of the wilderness, lobbying for parks or restricted access by mechanized means we are, in my view, making many mistakes. First, we do not have enough empathy for other users; trappers, people who cut trees to make boards and paper, and all the other people who work in the bush. When you relate to the natural landscape every day, all year, you have a different perspective than if you go there as a retreat to regenerate the deprived human spirit.

Of course people who live in Temagami or Elk Lake will see the demands of the Temagami Wilderness Society as a threat to their livelihood. I often think everyone should trade places for a while. Let those people who make a living as loggers live in Toronto for a while and they will know how important wilderness areas are. Similarly, let many canoeists from Toronto put the clothes on their children's backs and food in their mouths by their speed and prowess with a chain saw. How would people react if it was decreed that York University had to be demolished and all teaching and related jobs lost? The reason: we need the areas to revert to farmland to grow food for all the people in Northern Ontario.

Second, and hand in hand with not enough empathy, is the pattern of creating green blobs on the map. This concept of park or land management creates as many problems as it solves. Right off, the resource industries see red, not green. We immediately set up a confrontationist format resulting from constantly polarized positions. As the debates rage, the positions tend to get repolarized (the media love it and help it along) and the lines harden. Everything in the green blob becomes inviolate and everything on the outside can have the hell torn out of it.

Temagami is an interesting example. I was intimately involved with life there and active on the issues for ten years but have viewed things from a distance since I moved off the lake a couple of years ago. The contrast in perspective is interesting and alarming. Listening to the radio, watching TV, and reading newspapers from 300 miles away, the thing that came across to me most poignantly was the incredible distortion both sides were appearing to perpetuate. One had the impression that: there were thousands of evil men with chain saws revving standing at a barrier and on the other side, not a tree had ever been cut down in Temagami. The nice little story on Sunday Morning on CBC radio one day last winter was shoddy, shoddy journalism. The two innocent computer programmers starting out on their wilderness canoe trip on a foggy Sunday morning at the end of the Lake Temagami Access Road had far more to fear from a powerboat that might mow them down than they did from a logger. The story ignored the reality that they were starting a trip on a lake with 700 cottages, a dozen lodges, two large marinas, a town, and an Indian community. The issues are not as simple as the media would lead us to believe. Grey, infinitely complex stories don't make good news. Simplified confrontationist ones do.

OTHER SOLUTIONS

When we polarize we look for the wrong solutions. I see in these wilderness debates similarities to the divorce and child custody laws and the language wars in Quebec, both of which I have also lived through. In all of these cases our ability as a society to deal with what appear to me to be issues in

human relations is incredibly primitive. Technologically we are advancing very quickly but in human relations we are so backward. In all three cases I have mentioned it seems to me that we use sledge hammers and whitewash brushes when we should be using tack hammers, sash brushes, and a whole variety of special tools, many not yet thought of.

In other words, we lack the appropriate mechanisms to reconcile differences. In the Temagami dispute the Ontario Cabinet did not really know what to do (like judges frequently in custody disputes, and like the premier of Quebec). It appointed a working group consisting of the main players in the polarized positions and then was surprised when the working group did not come up with a unanimous workable solution. To use the vernacular, "give me a break." There is not a pigeon hole for the Temagami situation to fit into. The parks "system" doesn't have a category to handle concurrent and overlapping land use practices that are so complex. We are in trouble (society as a whole) as long as we and our governments continue to think in this linear fashion, the ultimate short-sighted manifestation of which is the green blob concept. We have to start working on more innovative, sensitive, and original ideas to deal with these issues, which are, in the last analysis, human relations issues.

I see things having evolved in some discernible stages: Stage 1. Bring people to an awareness of the value of our wilderness heritage; books, movies, organized wilderness programs, symposiums or pep rallies like this one. Stage 2. Confrontation and presentation of the wilderness cause against other competing causes like forestry, mining, etc.; this is what we have done up till now. Stage 3. This is where we have to go; beyond confrontation and polarization into something else.

I do not have Stage 3 in a little handbook to give you. It has taken me a lot of hours on the trail, a lot of discussions, and a lot of experience in Stages 1 and 2 to come to the conclusions that we need a Stage 3. But I am ready to work on it and participate in it. Is anyone else?

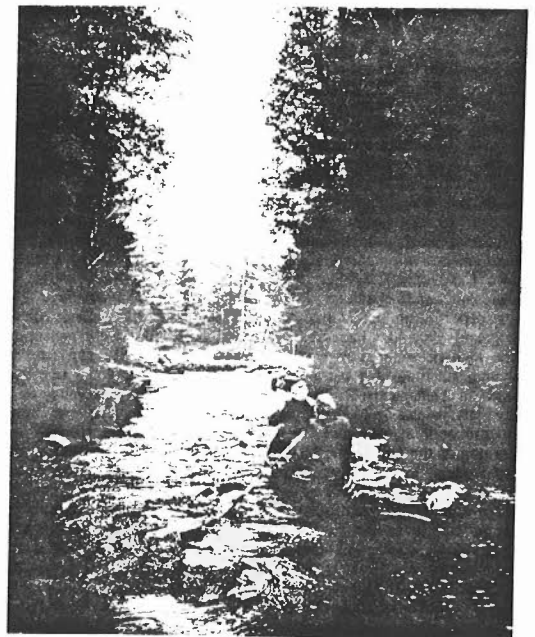
Hugh Stewart, Some Biographical Information

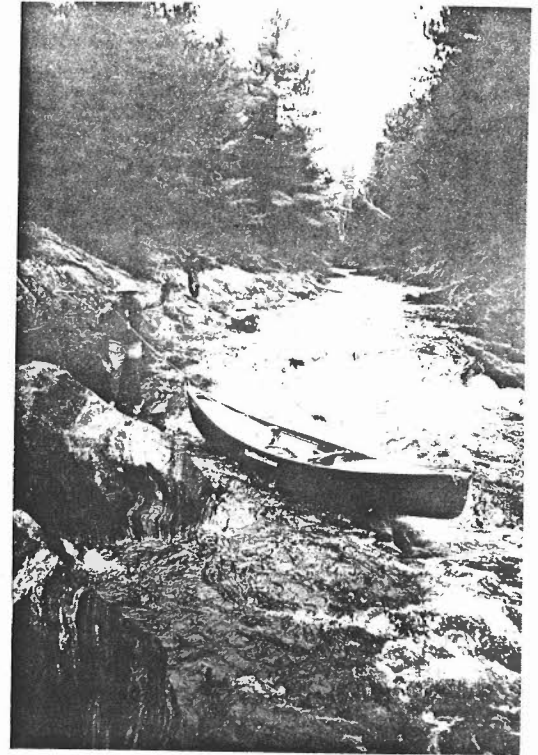
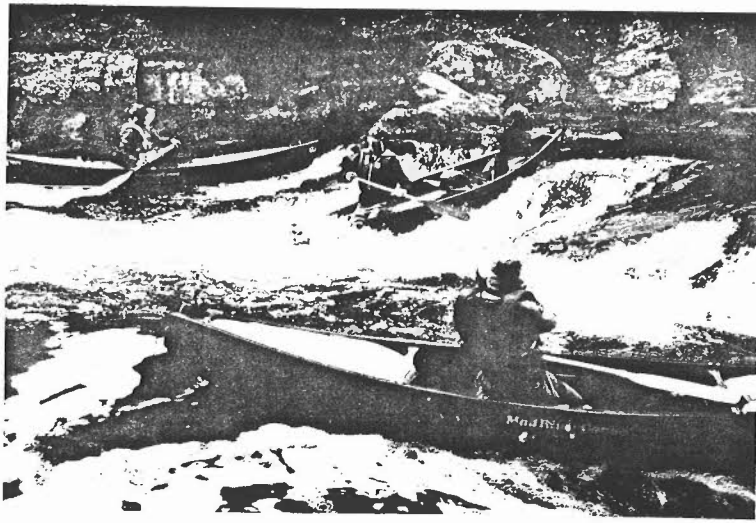
I have been working on the relationship between people and the wilderness all my life, I guess. I took my first canoe trip in Algonquin in 1957 when I was 11 and have not missed a season since. I studied and taught wilderness literature for a time but eventually came to feel I had had too much book learning and left the academic environment. I lived with my family on an island in Lake Temagami for 14 years and during that time ran Headwaters, a wilderness camping business. Now I am living north of Ottawa adjacent to Gatineau Park, building wood-canvas canoes on some original Chestnut molds. More importantly, I am raising and helping educate my daughter and trying to pass on to her and her brother my feel for the bush and my love for the life of the trail.



Entrance to Smoothrock Lake on the Lookout River

Sketches by Jonathan Berger





EELS CREEK

A WCA OUTING ON 30 APRIL 1989

What a marvellous little stream this is! More a small river than a creek, it offers all the wonders of a big northern trip, but then on a smaller, more accessible scale. Over a distance of only about seven kilometres, paralleling Southern Ontario's Highway 28 south of the Long Lake access road, one finds: flatwater, whitewater, falls, rapids, easy portages, tough portages, liftovers, logjams, canyons, wooded banks, everything that delights a canoetripper's heart. Marked by an easy put-in (thanks to the understanding and generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Black) and take-out as well as a simple car shuttle, this is a superb river for some excellent spring paddling by those who are willing and able to combine easy stuff with hard work.

Toni Harting





THELON RIVER

LYNX LAKE TO BAKER LAKE

Bill King

A Barren Lands canoe trip is one item found high on the "must do someday" list of most wilderness canoeists. The thought of complete isolation, unlimited horizons, icy whitewater, abundant wildlife, and unpredictable weather brings a combination of apprehension and anticipation. For four members of our six-person group, this summer 1988 trip was to be a first experience of Barren Lands canoeing.

I'm sure that second thoughts must have been common as we stood at the outlet of Lynx Lake gazing at the snow on the riverbanks around us. The biting wind and the sudden shower of rain made us want to crawl back into the warmth of the Twin Otter from which we had just disembarked. The date was 2 July. Was this really summer in the Barrens?

The 440-km flight from Yellowknife had been uneventful despite the fact that low-lying cloud had forced the pilot to fly at an altitude of about 100 m, in order to be able to see his landmarks. There were times when it seemed that we wouldn't get to the plane at all. Our food and personal gear had been carefully prepared and packaged over several weeks prior to our flight to Yellowknife. With food for six people for five weeks, it made an impressive mound. The problem was our canoes. We had sent them on ahead with a friend of George Luste's who was driving to Yellowknife, but when we arrived he was nowhere to be found. Fortunately it wasn't long before he showed up and we were able to stop holding our breaths.

In Yellowknife we learned that it had been a very late spring and that there had been a lot of rain during the month of June, meaning that we could expect high water levels and might run into trouble with ice on the lakes. The latter never proved to be a problem but the water levels were the highest in many years, increasing the danger in some of the rapids but also increasing their beauty.

Back on the Thelon, the departure of the plane put an end to any thoughts of turning around and going home. We were impressed how, even in its infancy, the Thelon was a wide and powerful river with a formidable current. The first priority, after digging out our raingear, was to organize all the various packs into the canoes and grab a hasty lunch. In time this would become a well-oiled routine enabling us to hike to a favorable lunch spot with all the necessary fixings in a single day pack. Given George's propensity for camping and lunching at the summit of some scenic lookout, this was indeed a boon.

After lunch we made about 22 km against a headwind to camp at the first rapid of the Thelon. There are numerous rapids on the upper part of the river. All are unnamed but most are accurately located on the topographic maps. This first rapid almost spelled disaster for Joan and I. As we ran it the next morning, we got our canoe at a bad angle in trying to sneak down the right shore. Joan, in an attempt to fend off a shore rock, managed to break her Mohawk paddle, a feat which I had thought next to impossible. We ended up doing a 180 and running the lower third of the rapid backwards. Not a very auspicious start! Whether we were all more careful after that, or whether that sacrifice appeased the gods, none of us got into any serious rapid trouble from then on.

Approximately 50 km further downstream there is a falls, also unnamed, which is one of the truly spectacular sights of the upper river. The main drop, around a central rock spire, reminiscent of the South Nahanni River's Virginia Falls, is only about 10 m high. The canyon below, which takes a 90 degree bend

to the right, presents a series of contrasts, the constantly swirling water, blue-green in the sunshine, standing out in sharp relief against the dark rock and the white of the snowbanks on the northern shore. The runout rapid goes on for at least two kilometres, but nature has been kind to the portager. A small bay at the end of the main section of the canyon, although somewhat difficult of access, provides an easy launching site into what is now a runnable rapid. From this point down to the confluence of the Elk River, the Thelon is a continuous series of mild-to-moderate rapids — great fun! Granite Falls, a two-kilometre hike up the Elk, is a sight well worth the effort.

Perhaps I might be permitted a slight digression to explain a source of some considerable frustration for George. Those of you who read his article in the winter 1988 issue of *Nastawgan*, will realize that George has a well-ried system for everything. You paddle with one person, cook with another, sleep with another, etc. One problem — our three canoe teams were three married couples. For those of you who are wondering — no, we didn't switch! The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men...!

Back on the river, enjoying our first completely sunny day, we zoomed along on the fast current making for a large transverse-lying, unnamed lake. A huge sandbank projects into the northern shore of this lake, towering a least 50 m above the water. This is the site of a well-constructed trappers cabin which features a shocking-pink outhouse. It is interesting to see the measures which have to be taken to protect a cabin which is vacant but not abandoned. In addition to the usual shutters and chimney lid, this cabin had a carpet of nails driven upward through plywood surrounding it to a distance of about two metres on all sides. That sand dune made a beautiful lunch spot — except for the bugs; they always seem worse near a place of human habitation.

Shortly after the outlet of the lake we spotted a small grizzly bear sitting on a snowbank on the shore looking for all the world as if he was cooling his bottom from the hot sunshine. The strong current swept us past him all too quickly and he wanted no part of our coming closer. Within an hour we also saw a wolverine (my first) and a very large wolf. We really began to feel that the promise of ample Barren Lands wildlife was being fulfilled.

Our next major obstacle was Eyeberry Lake. The leaden skies and strong winds at our campsite 12 km upstream didn't bode well for the crossing of such a large lake, but we thought we would see for ourselves. This resulted in the rather comical situation of abandoning a perfectly good campsite, only to have our suspicions amply confirmed and then having to hunker down in a willow swamp to escape the fury of the storm. Nevertheless, with a tarp shelter rigged over one of the canoes, and high-quality, wind-resistant tents (a must for Barren Land camping), we were surprisingly snug.

In the islands of the delta above Eyeberry Lake we had passed a party of four French people with a Canadian guide who told us that they were doing a scouting trip with a view to starting commercial outfitting of trips for other Europeans on the Thelon.(!) We had seen their flight go over us a couple of days before. They had landed at Jim Lake and were planning to take two weeks to get to their pickup site at Hornby Point; a rather odd and expensive itinerary, it struck us.

Typical riverbank campsite



The next morning, although we still had a quartering headwind which raised 1- to 1.5-m waves, with the aid of good spraycovers and lots of elbowgrease, we were able to make the 11-km crossing in just over four hours. The lunch stop at the end was particularly welcome. Of course, no sooner had we got back into the river when the wind died. The Frenchmen, who had sagely waited out the weather, cruised past us the next morning, probably having crossed the lake in half the time and with one-tenth the effort. Oh well; I'm sure it wasn't as memorable for them as it was for us.

The campsite above Eyeberry was a good example of another pleasant geographic feature of the Barrens, the numerous eskers. These glacial riverbeds, frequently 50 m or more above the surrounding terrain, provide a commanding view of the countryside and are great for hiking. The perspective obtained from the river, which is frequently that of a well-wooded valley, is actually quite atypical. From the top of the esker, the true nature of the Barrens, a vast expanse of rock, sand, ponds, and swamp, is revealed. Trees grow only in the occasional, sheltered pocket, and other vegetation survives only by clinging to the earth. Here and there some scattered bones tell a tale of pursuer and pursued, or discarded antlers provide a legacy of the once-mighty herds of caribou which roamed this area.

Another day's paddle down the river we reached the magnificent Thelon Canyon, a short distance above the confluence of the Hanbury and Thelon rivers. Although I did not travel this section of the river when I tripped with the Peake brothers in 1985 (see the article "Journey across the Barrens" in the spring 1986 issue of *Nastawgan*, ed.), I felt I had some knowledge of it from Michael's pictures and descriptions. What a difference a change in water level can make! The standard choices at this site (which do not include running the canyon, at least not in an open boat) are between a long portage (reputed to be 6.5 km) on the east shore and some rather tricky lining on the west shore. The Peakes chose the latter and nearly came to grief. After landing on a ledge just above the canyon, they lined around one corner, flipping one of their canoes in the strong current, and then ran around a second corner blind, encountering some "humungus" waves. Not a prospect to fill one with confidence.

We soon saw that our options were limited even further by the fact that the ledge was now well under water. We had to land well upstream and, even at that, were somewhat gloomy about being able to ferry to the other shore without a lengthy track back upstream. However, with the aid of aerial photos and a three-hour scout of the peninsula on the west shore of the river that evening, we reckoned we could shorten the distance, at the cost of encountering some rather nasty terrain, by following a series of gravel ridges which traversed the peninsula. This would cut out not only the canyon but a couple of rapids below it which looked pretty major from the top of the cliff.

The morning, inevitably, dawned fair and still to give the bugs maximum access. The portage probably wasn't much more than three to four kilometres but, with 2 1/2 trips per party, it took us about six hours. I won't dwell on the joys of

the crossing which featured such episodes as: forcing our way through willow thickets, sinking up to our thighs in boggy areas, and having a brief respite in our canoes at a pond part way along the route disturbed by George who, striding out from the shore willows into the centre of the pond, gave his impression of a moose in heat. Suffice it to say that when we finally reached the river we were all glad to strip down for a swim in the icy water.

Imagine our dismay when we found that the canyon had one more section just above the Hanbury junction featuring the usual humungus waves. Nobody wanted another portage! Fortunately we found that, underneath an overhanging ledge, there was a one-metre-wide sneak route on the west shore. This one corner passed, the rest of the rapid was quite manageable. This was the whitewater's "last hurrah" for over 500 km.

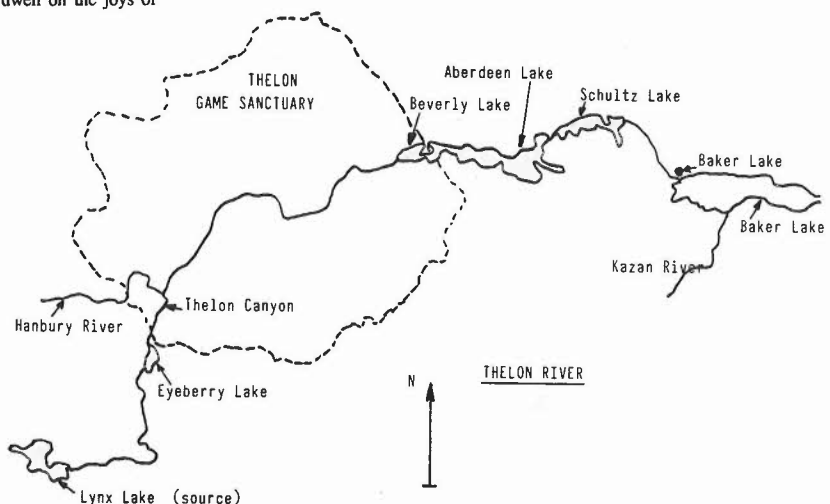
The Hanbury junction is a magnificent location: sand-and-boulder beaches, wide open vistas, and the sight and sound of rapids from the outlet of both rivers. It seemed like a perfect place for a day off, to celebrate a birthday (Suus Tissot), to rest and recuperate, and to give George and I a chance to hike up to Helen's Falls on the Hanbury which we were both anxious to see. The hike was excellent although the falls themselves failed to impress (we subsequently suspected that the



R.I.P.—John Hornby



Lone musk-ox





Old cabin at Warden's Grove

true Helen's Falls may have been higher up the river). As we sat over a leisurely lunch at the riverbank above the lip of the falls, the sun warm and the only sound being the complaints of the resident peregrine falcons at our presence, it was hard to remember that this is supposed to be a cruel and unforgiving land. One travel tip for anyone planning to hike this area: don't follow the riverbank but take the high ground inland.

The 70 km of river below the Hanbury junction contains three mandatory "tourist stops." The first, Warden's Grove, is reputed to be the finest stand of trees on the entire river. Several cabins have been built on this site; the one built in 1928 by W. B. Hoare, the first warden of the Thelon Game Sanctuary, still stands. There are a number of notable features in the area. One cabin seems to be reserved for graffiti — nice to see the names of friends and fellow WCA members. On another cabin, some artistic soul has carved gargoyle faces into the ends of each of the roof poles. There is a bench made from a half-log whose history is inscribed on the seat; and an outhouse, this one constructed of full timbers, which looks capable of withstanding a nuclear attack.

Cosmos Lake, a bit further downstream, is the site of the Russian Cosmos satellite crash in 1968. The recovery of its various bits and pieces, some of which seem to have been radioactive, created a minor cottage industry for several months. All which now commemorates these activities is a concrete monument which seems rather out of place in the surroundings.

For any tripper with a fondness for northern history, a stop at Hornby Point is an obligatory pilgrimage. As most know, it was at this site that Jack Hornby and his two young companions built a wintering cabin in the fall of 1926 and starved in it in the late spring of 1927, having missed the caribou migration. This process was heartwrenchingly detailed by one of the boys, Edgar Christian, in his diary, posthumously published under the title, "Unflinching." Of the cabin little remains but the foundation logs, but the simple wooden crosses over the graves where the Mounties buried them are very moving.

But another crisis was looming! The park brochure had specified that this stretch was the best musk-ox country of the entire sanctuary and we had seen neither musk-ox nor caribou. The undercurrents of discontent from the female members of the party were threatening to become strident. (Where are the musk-oxen? Where are the caribou? What a ripoff! Etc., etc.) Suggestions to George that he should try variations on his moose call produced little response; I guess his repertoire is limited. Just in time, having waited until we were well clear of the "abundant" zone, we saw musk-oxen aplenty — virtually to the point of boredom. They were invariably on the north shore of the river although, according to one expert we talked to, it provides no physical barrier. In time we also saw lots of caribou although always in ones and twos, never in a herd.

The remainder of the river to the beginning of the big lakes is generally pleasant travelling. Although the river is frequently braided around islands, there is usually a good current making 70-km days no undue hardship. As the name suggests, some fine vistas can be had from Lookout Point and there is also a fine view from the top of Thelon Bluff where a minor rapid brings back nostalgic memories of the upper river.

The three big lakes, Beverly, Aberdeen, and Schultz, are the bane of a Thelon River trip, if anything can be said to be. The only community on the river is Baker Lake, so one is left with the alternatives of a lake paddle (a week long, even under ideal circumstances) or an expensive pickup flight originating from Yellowknife or Rankin Inlet, both a long way away. In addition, the unpredictable weather, the low shoreline, affording essentially no wind protection, and the vast size particularly of Aberdeen Lake make precise scheduling impossible. Taking full advantage of dead calm on our first day on Aberdeen we were able to make two long traverses and 50 km. The next morning we awoke to howling winds and pounding surf and we moved no further for three days. (It should be mentioned that many others have spent much longer.) The eventual letup of the wind provided another new experience. By this time quite frustrated with our lack of



Boiling waters, upper Thelon

progress, we set out at 9 p.m. and paddled through an entire northern "night." The sun set about 10:30 and it became gradually darker for the next two hours, giving the northern hills an eerie glow from the backlighting and making distances very hard to evaluate — we would seem to paddle forever toward a point which never came nearer. At 12:30 the trend reversed and it gradually became lighter until the sun rose again about 3 a.m. While the night paddle was, at times, unpleasantly cold, the experience was one which I think we were all glad to have shared.



Taking the high ground

The Thelon had one more treat for us, Aleksektok Rapid. Shortly below the outlet of Schultz Lake, this is a formidable rapid under any conditions and spectacular at high water. By hugging tightly to the inside of the curve we were able to avoid the three- to four-meter waves in to centre and had only one tight spot requiring precise manoeuvring. All made it safely and were extremely exhilarated.

The river from here to Baker Lake was graphically described by George as a "big chute." How true; in one section we floated nine kilometres in a little over 30 minutes. The aptly named Halfway Hills provide a last opportunity to climb and view. For several kilometres above the outlet into Baker Lake the banks were lined with huge chunks of ice, still slowly melting after the spring runoff.

In the village of Baker Lake we whiled away the time by satisfying our craving for greasy french fries, stocking up on products of Inuit craftsmanship, going out to the graveyard to search out famous names such as Arthur Moffat and Father Bulliard, watching a local softball tournament in which the entire village seemed to take part, and visiting with Jim Raffan and Gail Simmons who were living in Baker Lake for the summer, providing base-camp support for Operation Raleigh.

Thanks to the wonders of modern transportation we were able to leave Baker Lake in the morning and be back in Toronto the same evening. The trials and tribulations of the Tissots, whom we left in Churchill to bring back the canoes, may someday be the subject of another article. Four weeks, almost to the day, after we left, we were home wondering how the time could possibly have gone so quickly.



Esker near Eyeberry Lake

FOOD FOR SKY WHALES

This is the time of the year when nature is at her most bountiful. Everyone knows that our woods and waters are full of living plants and animals and we all sense that life in these places is extraordinarily rich and complicated.

This being so, it is rather remarkable that our perception of the third possible area where life can exist is entirely different. We have in mind the air above our heads, a realm that we basically think of as empty. Its only users—and then only at low levels—seem to be transient birds flying from A to B and somewhat more numerous and purposeful mosquitoes.

The truth is, however, that the early summer skies above Algonquin are occupied by literally hundreds of thousands of tiny creatures suspended high in the air for as long as several days at a time. We almost never see these animals and even just 60 years ago their very existence was only guessed at, but they really are up there. As a matter of fact it took the invention of the airplane and deliberate attempts to sample the sky for living organisms by towing specially constructed nets before the question was settled.

Within a few years, the early researchers had collected tens of thousands of insects, spiders, and other creatures. Most were found at heights of 60 to 600 metres but some were collected as high as 4 1/2 km above the ground. Some of the collections were accounted for by strong insects such as large moths and dragonflies, but many more were small and weak fliers such as aphids, midges, and tiny beetles or wasps.

Even more amazing was the presence of animals with no wings at all. Among these were tiny spiders and caterpillars (wafted along on strands of silk spun by the animals themselves) but also thrips, mites, book-lice, and spring-tails, most of which have no obvious means of getting, or staying airborne. These animals are so tiny that they can easily be captured by a gust of wind and then they fall so slowly that even a gentle breeze can make them gain altitude.

At first it was thought that many of the high altitude insects must have been dead even before they hit the plane-mounted collecting screens, but gradually it became apparent that most were alive and that females could lay fertile eggs upon returning to earth.

Here was a clue as to why so many tiny animals deliberately flew up into the sky or otherwise allowed themselves to be helplessly carried by the wind hundreds or even thousands of kilometres away from their birthplace. Many tiny animals build up in numbers in local areas so rapidly that they can quickly outstrip their food supply. Since they have no way of knowing where food might be plentiful and no way of getting there under their own power in any case, perhaps their best—or only—chance is to get high enough that the wind can take over and blow them away to some new favorable area.

Some insects, it has been learned, have a definite pattern of leaving the ground at a set time of day, flying higher and higher over the next several hours and then, perhaps at nightfall, gradually starting to descend. They may repeat this for several days until finally their efforts are rewarded—they encounter strong winds which sweep the tiny gamblers away, perhaps to a prosperous new life. Of course, they may just as easily end up in a lake or ocean and die as a result, but even a small chance is better than no chance—and that is probably what they would have had if they had stayed at home.



Chimney Swifts

Whatever the fate of the individual animals, so many of them are aloft at any one time during June and July that one pioneering biologist was reminded of the millions of small floating animals in the ocean known as plankton. He coined the term "aerial plankton" to designate the huge and hitherto unsuspected populations of airborne animals and the name has stuck to this day. It is true that the animals making up the aerial plankton are not permanent residents of the sky the way that ocean plankton inhabits the water, but there are still many strong similarities between the two.

One of these concerns their predators. Plankton in the ocean is eaten by whales which, indeed, are mostly just huge plankton-eating machines. They merely swim along with their mouths open, filtering out plankton with their specially adapted, food-straining mouthparts. It may not sound particularly efficient but you can't argue with results as big as whales.

The skies over Algonquin aren't noted for whales but they do have seven different kinds of birds that make their living in a distinctly whale-like manner. Just like whales, they scoop up plankton with their (for them) large mouths as they buoyantly move along the nutritious soup in which they live—in this case the warm summer air.

Swallows, of which we have five resident species, specialize in flying insects found close to the ground or water and they often stop to perch and rest before assuming their hunt.

The other two eaters of aerial plankton, however, are real "ocean goers." Chimney Swifts stay in the air all day, often at heights and speeds so great we scarcely realize they are up there. Only when they give their rapid "chirping" calls do we look up and see their tiny, cigar-shaped silhouettes rocking by on twinkling wings.

The last and largest of Algonquin's airborne plankton eaters is the Common Nighthawk, a bird that leaves its daytime hiding places late in the day and rises to truly prodigious heights in the darkening sky. It apparently specializes



Nighthawks

in aerial plankton that also rises late in the day and again we earth-bound humans would hardly ever be aware of its presence were it not for the sound it makes. These include vocalizations best described as "nasal beeps" and other "booming" noises made by the nighthawks wings as it dives in its sky-high courtship display.

The most remarkable thing of all about the high altitude plankton feeders, however, is that they exist at all. The season for airborne insects, mites, and spiders in Algonquin is scarcely two and a half months long and yet there are so many of them that no fewer than seven species of birds make special trips up from the tropics to live, and raise their young, on aerial food.

Who would have thought that nature's early summer bounty could extend so richly even into the "empty" sky? It's food for sky whales and it's food for thought.

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

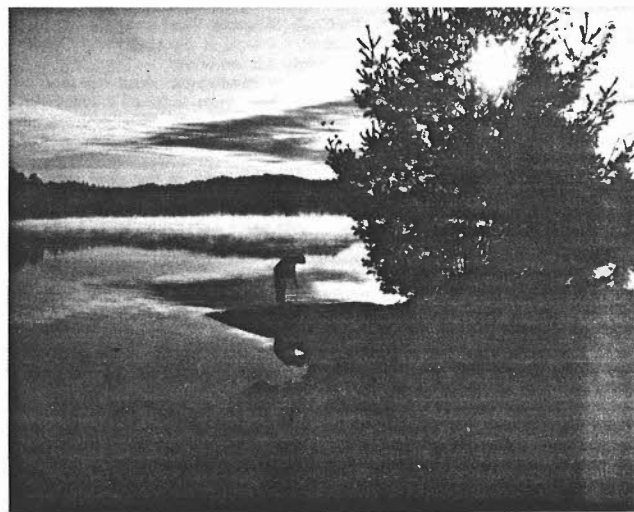


Photo by Paul Barsevskis

THE UPPER SAUGEEN RIVER

Phil Nusbaum

This day trip deserves to be one of the WCA's most popular April runs. The main branch of the Saugeen starts as a small stream just west of Durham and about five kilometres east of Hanover in Southern Ontario. It bends north, west, and then south again, picking up two other feeder branches and steadily gaining in volume, dropping 55 metres as it flows about 22 kilometres. The car shuttle is simplicity itself: 10 km along Highway 4.

We had perfect water levels on 15 April, after a cool, wet week in the region. Unlike many rivers in southern Ontario farm country, this one gives a clear look right to the bottom, as it is free of the silt and green-brown effluent of near neighbors such as the South Saugeen or the Upper Grand. It drains clean water

from spring-fed upland marshes and its shorelines are almost entirely cedarbrush with banks of firm sand or gravel.

In one way, this is a lazy person's river, because the strong current does virtually all the forward paddling work for you, without being so fast as to strike terror into the hearts of novices. I would judge the average rate of flow as slower than the lower Salmon or the lower Beaver but faster than the Lower Maitland. The hairiest section is the rather remote, eight-kilometre stretch between the second and third bridge, during which the river drops 30 metres. Novice canoeists should definitely bring along warm clothes against the potential swampings through this part. The river then relaxes as it flows past the occasional river cottage or farm field.

At the end, as we were loading up our canoes, a man stopped in his pickup truck to ask how we had fared. He said he thought this was the best spring canoeing stretch of river anywhere in Ontario, south of the Shield. Well, go and try it yourself next April and see what you think.

DREAMBOAT

Peter Verbeek



What is the perfect canoe?

People who delight in playing in the rapids for hours on end think that the perfect canoe is one with lots of rocker, made of Royalex or similar material, that can turn quickly and can move forward, backward, or sideways with equal ease, with plenty of freeboard to keep out of the water.

People who like to travel long distances on lakes or other flatwater think that the perfect canoe tracks well, is long, narrow, and fast and has a low profile to reduce being blown about by the wind.

People who face many portages think that the perfect canoe is very light, short, and easily manoeuvred over the portage trail.

Ideally, it would be nice to have one of each but few people have the financial resources and the storage space to have a number of canoes.

So, what is the perfect canoe for a more eclectic person of limited resources, who wants to do canoe tripping and run rapids, where possible, as they occur and if necessary walk the odd portage trail?

In 1986 I decided to start looking for my perfect canoe, whatever it would be. After savaging the bottom of my nylon/kevlar Bluewater Saugeen canoe in the low water levels of the Spanish River in 1987, I accelerated the search.

What did I want in a canoe? I wanted a solo canoe that was manoeuvrable and that I could handle by myself without difficulty. I wanted a Royalex hull that I could take into rapids, that could take hitting the odd rock and that could take spray and waves without filling up. I wanted a canoe that would track well on flat water. However, as a concession to my slowly increasing years, I also wanted to have the lowest weight possible. And I wanted it to have the capacity to carry supplies for trips of up to three weeks duration. It seemed like irreconcilable requirements.

I haunted the usual stores, Trailhead, Mountain Equipment Co-op, etc., and talked to many people about their canoes. I looked at the Mad River Courier but decided something with more stability would suit me better.

In late fall of 1987 I was getting quite discouraged about my lack of success and was about to start making compromises when suddenly I found her, my perfect canoe. I had just been on one of the Hike Ontario hikes near Guelph and decided to go to Rockwood Outfitters. There she was. It was love at first sight. My dreamboat.

Rockwood Outfitters were reducing their inventory at that time and had found the hull in one of their storage sheds. They finished it with wood fittings and offered it on sale. Rockwood did not normally sell that canoe but had bought a few hulls a few years before to satisfy a special request, but it had not caught on. The hull was from a Mohawk Challenger, made of Royalex, about 4.3 metres (14 ft) in length and had a moderate rocker.

It did not take me long to decide and soon I carried Dreamboat home. I tried her out on the pond in Unionville and on the flatwater she handled beautifully, tracking straight, paddling easily.

Before the winter set in I had removed the rear seat, moved the front seat closer to the centre, and installed a deep dish yoke. I sanded all the woodwork and put six coats of varnish on it.

During the winter I got some mahogany marine plywood, one-eighth inch (3 mm) thick and made a foredeck and a rear deck out of it. At the end of the deck that was closest to the middle I put a piece of half-round wood that would direct any water running down the deck sideward, and on the bottom of the foredeck I glued a backing for a compass. Then I put six coats of varnish on both sides and waited for spring.

As soon as the weather allowed, I installed the decks, mounted the compass, and then weighed Dreamboat. She was 27 kg (60 pounds).

I tried her out on the Credit River and was quite pleased with how she handled in moving water. Then I took her on the Salmon and the Moira at Glenn Spence's outing and was even happier. My friend Bob Dick from Kitchener asked to try her and after a short time was so convinced that he went to the States during the summer and got the exact same model.

During the summer of 1988, I took Dreamboat for a trip up the Kipawa and then down the Dumoine rivers, accompanied by Dean Gugler from Hamilton and Henk Fennema from London, who also were paddling solo. We all use double-bladed paddles when paddling solo and find that this reduces the effort considerably; in rapids it gives much better control. During trips, I also have a cover for the middle part of the canoe, which is held down with velcro and dome fasteners.

I always make a determined effort to limit the gear that I take on a canoe trip to the barest essentials and as a result I have found that I can carry enough gear and food for a three-week trip. All of the gear can be stored under the decks and the centre-cover.

Dreamboat has lived up to all my expectations. She can handle the big waves on the Salmon and Moira in early spring flood, she tracks well and, when using a double-bladed paddle, is fast enough to keep up with all but racing canoes. She is my perfect canoe.



Photos by Toni Harting

RETIRING GLENO'S WINDBREAKER

Greg Went

Doesn't look like much now. Used to be blue but now camouflaged with grease and dirt and charcoal from the hundred campfires it has seen and laughed and marvelled at. Cuffs are frayed. Holes too numerous to count from fire sparks that have found too friendly a home.

Bought it used from Gleno. He's starting a family and may not be coming back. Kept bringing the windbreaker back all these years in the hope that one trip it would meet Gleno again.

No such luck. Last year even the seams started letting in water, though sealed before the trip. It's time to part, old friend. Last trip together. Time to face reality. You and Gleno are not going to see each other again.

Was going to throw it into the fire towards the end of the trip, but caution and a deep fear kept me from doing it. No, don't do that. It can get cold at any time. Mean cold. Keep all of your protection. You may need all of it. Gleno's windbreaker deserved the fire ceremony but I could not do it. Too scared. You see, I've been there before.

Epilogue

Standing before the Dempsey Dumpster. Plane's motor is still warm. We're back. Safe for another year. Time to let the windbreaker go. Goodbye old friend.

The parting should have been special and sacred. More of life should have deep meaning. But I don't think I could have found the words at the fire ceremony anyway. Perhaps this way is better. Offer the holy sacrifice at the altar of civilization.

Seemed fitting after all.

Greg Went lives in Texas, and writes about all his trips.

THE NEWCOMERS

The remote and relatively unexplored Nahanni region, with its rumours of gold, lost mines, and vanishing prospectors, was viewed as one of the last true frontiers by many men of independent bent. These restless individuals felt stifled by what they perceived as the encroaching encumbrances of so-called civilized society with its laws, regulations, and order. These men craved freedom, adventure, and the right to be left alone to make their own way in an uncrowded land where life was reduced to the basics and Nature was the principal adversary. By the mid-1920s few such places were left on the continent, or for that matter anywhere on Earth. However, in the Nahanni Country, amid the sculpted peaks and deep canyons, a man could still disappear for a year or more, and no one would think anything of it.

Many who journeyed to the Nahanni in search of gold and furs or to hunt for food are all but forgotten. A few others are well known and remembered for various reasons. The names of some of these men have become so closely associated with the Nahanni that they, too, are now part of the legend.

Albert Faille was one of these, a loner who came to the Nahanni Country in 1927. Red Pant, the natives called him, because he always wore distinctive, heavy trousers of scarlet shroud. His driving ambition was to find gold—a dream that never came to fruition in 46 years of searching up the South Nahanni and Flat rivers. Despite the deaths of other prospectors and the enveloping sense of foreboding and mystery, Faille made the Nahanni his home. At times he was given up for dead. Yet, inevitably, he would show up once again at Fort Simpson for supplies. One spring on the way out he met two Mounties looking for him. "Each one had a shovel. They'd come to bury me," recalled Faille.

Out of his obsession grew the Faille legend. Folklore has it that he once broke his back in a fall while alone far up the South Nahanni River. "Faille was as tough as a wolverine ... probably a little tougher," noted his friend Fred Sibbeston. The injured Faille crawled to his isolated cabin where he survived by drinking water from melting icicles and eating what little food he had on hand. Eventually, his back healed but at a permanently bent angle. Later, when his teeth came loose from scurvy, he pulled four of them out with a pair of pliers. By the time he died at Fort Simpson in 1974 he had become a larger-than-life character whose exploits were well documented in magazine articles, books, and feature films.

Another famous figure whose name is indelibly linked to the Nahanni region is Raymond M. Patterson, an Oxford scholar and adventurer. Like Faille, Patterson first ventured up the South Nahanni River in 1927 in search of gold. Unlike Faille, Patterson spent only a few years roaming the Nahanni Country. However, what he saw and experienced inspired him later to write a wonderful, classic tale of wilderness adventure called *The Dangerous River*. A great communicator and a vivid author, Patterson did much to bring the colour, beauty, and spirit of the Nahanni to people around the world. It was he, perhaps more than anyone, who helped dispel the prevailing attitude that the South Nahanni was "straight suicide," a place to be avoided.

In 1930, near the beginning of the Great Depression, yet another notable and adventuresome young man, Dick Turner, came to the Nahanni, drawn by its promise of abundant fur-bearing animals. A strong and determined person, he brought his lovely bride, Vera, to the wilderness of this challenging north country where, working side by side, they made a home for themselves and raised four children. Turner was a man who responded to the changing times. He had many careers and was truly a jack-of-all-trades. Among other things, at one time or another, he was a trapper, wood cutter, prospector, independent trader, riverman, magistrate, and bush pilot. A keen observer and a skilled storyteller, Turner went on to write several excellent books, including *Nahanni* and *Wings of the North*, that tell of decades of life and experience in the Nahanni region.

The talk of a third Nahanni gold rush in 1933 attracted a fourth character, Gus Kraus, to Fort Simpson. As with so many others, Kraus headed up the Flat River to search for that elusive yellow metal. Along Bennett Creek, a tributary, Kraus and his partners came across old sluice boxes, shovels, and picks. Kraus was certain that these belonged to the ill-fated McLeod brothers and that in this area they had once found placer gold. Like Faille and Turner, Kraus spent a lifetime prospecting and trapping in the Nahanni wilderness, assisted much of the

time by Mary, his capable Dene wife. For many years the Krauses lived by the thermal pools below First Canyon on the South Nahanni River. Their old homestead is now known as Kraus Hot Springs. Gus himself, through his long association with these sulphurous springs, became known as Stinking Water Man to the Dene. In 1971, when land including the hot springs was set aside for the establishment of the Nahanni National Park Reserve, Gus and Mary moved to the magnificent setting of Little Doctor Lake.

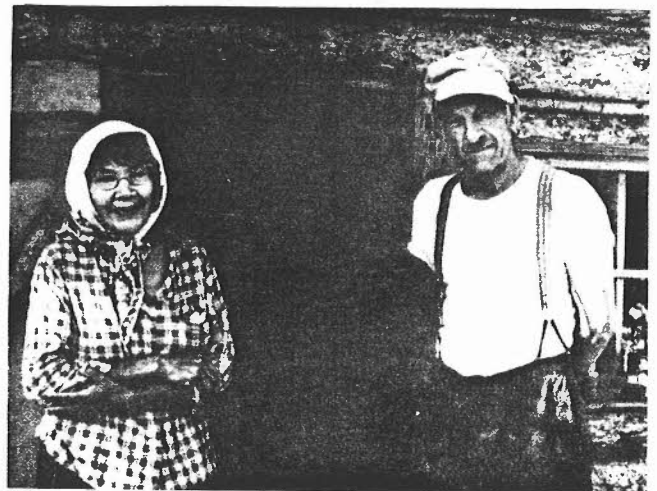
This is part of Section 5 of Pat and Rosemarie Keough's book *The Nahanni Portfolio*, a Stoddart/Nahanni production published in 1988.



Raymond Patterson in the South Nahanni canyons, 1928



Albert Faille at his Flat River cabin near Irvine Creek, 1927



Gus and Mary Kraus, Kraus Hot Springs, 1962



BAIDARKA

Author: George Dyson
 Publisher: Alaska Northwest Publishing Co., 1986
 Reviewed by: Sandy Richardson

Baidarka is the Russian word for the skin kayak that was used by the Alaskan coastal natives and Aleuts. *Baidarka*, the book, is the story of the history, development, and redevelopment of this boat.

The book is designed to appeal to two quite different potential audiences. One group consists of those people interested in learning more about the baidarka and its history. The other group consists of those people who read Kenneth Brower's book *The Starship and the Canoe*, and are interested in learning more about the author George Dyson.

The first part of the book describes the history and development of the baidarka over the two hundred years from the early 1700s to the early 1900s, told through the eyes of the Russians, the Americans, and others who had dealings with the Aleut, Kodiak, and Chugach peoples. As in his articles in *Sea-Kayaker* magazine, Dyson lets the historical sources speak for themselves as much as possible. What results is a fascinating and well told history not only of a type of boat, but of a part of the North American fur trade that is often overlooked. A hundred and fifty years ago the Aleuts and their Russian masters ranged far from their native Alaska in search of sea otter furs, paddling their baidarkas as far south as Mexico and Hawaii.

The second part of the book is about the redevelopment of the baidarka, and documents Dyson's own activities from 1972 to 1977. It is part description of Dyson's own building of a number of baidarkas, including the 48-foot *Mount Fairweather*; part trip reports of his voyages through the Inside Passage and the Gulf of Alaska in these baidarkas; and part philosophical musings. The result is an intensely personal, but uncloying record of the author's interest in the baidarka and the impact of that interest on his life. This section is presented primarily in the form of a photo album. And what a gorgeous and inspiring photo album it is, leaving the reader with an overwhelming desire to take kayak and paddle and get out there on the water.

There is still more to *Baidarka*, however. The third part describes in detail the construction of the 24-foot two-hole baidarka pictured on the front cover of the book. It is well illustrated with photographs of the construction process and includes a set of plans and a table of offsets. For the kayaker with any interest in building a boat, this section should serve as inspiration to try. As Dyson asserts: "The true baidarka is one you build yourself."

Perhaps surprisingly, these seemingly disparate parts do come together to form a unified whole. The unifying factor is Dyson's fascination with the baidarka, not only as historical and cultural phenomenon, but also as a living tradition and driving force in his own life.

Baidarka is a complex and idiosyncratic book, not unlike the baidarka itself (with its bifid bow and articulated frame). It is interesting and informative to read, and visually stimulating to look at. With *Baidarka* George Dyson has created a book that all sea kayakers can celebrate; one that will fascinate experienced paddlers, and inspire beginning ones.



CANOE TOONS
 PAUL MASON

THE BASIC ESSENTIALS OF MAP AND COMPASS

Author: Cliff Jacobson
 Publisher: ICS Books, Inc., Merrillville, Indiana, 1988 (\$6.95)
 Reviewed by: Joan Etheridge

This small book (64 pages) has been written as an introduction to the use of maps and compasses for those of us who like to get away from the beaten path. Most of the time the author manages to keep the explanations simple but occasionally it becomes apparent that he has forgotten what it was like to be totally ignorant of his subject - then I found him a little confusing.

The author provides a quiz at the end of most chapters to determine how well we have understood them. This is an entertaining way of encouraging the reader to apply his or her new knowledge, and even though I am not a total novice I couldn't resist playing the game.

The book starts with useful information on maps, charts, tide tables, and aerial photographs, where and how to order them, the different scales used, and the difference between the various "norths."

It moves on to discuss contour lines, but on the seventh point of this discussion I ran into a problem. The author states: "Contour lines become 'U-shaped' (the closed ends of the U's point down hill) to indicate the outjutting spur (ridge) of a hill." On examining the sample map I found it difficult to distinguish between a narrow U and a broad Vee (vees point upstream), as did three of my colleagues. However, the rest of the explanations on interpreting contour lines were perfectly clear, as was the section on how to draw a river profile, which contained many good tips.

The anatomy of the compass is described along with recommendations as to which type to buy in various price ranges and why. There is more on this in Appendix I also.

Instructions on how to obtain a bearing lead into obtaining your position by triangulation and how to get "unlost" by aiming off — all good straightforward stuff. Declination is also clearly explained; however, the part on correcting for it would have muddled me if I hadn't taken navigation courses before.

Navigation at night is covered, as is how to overcome the inadequacies of the map, e.g. a dam may have been built since your topo map was printed. There is even a guide on how to use your watch as a rough compass - not for those of us with digital watches though.

Despite my criticisms I like this book. It contains many practical tips drawn from Jacobson's years as a forester and outfitter. Any one of them is well worth the few dollars it costs to buy it.



MORNING WOODLIGHT—Dave Buckley
 (Honorable Mention, Wilderness; WCA 1989 Photo Contest)

OPERATION RALEIGH REPORTS

Two illustrated reports have been published by scientists of the Operation Raleigh Canadian Arctic Expedition 1988:

- *Mammal Sightings in the Kazan River Valley*; editor, Jane Claricoates; 52 pages,
- *A Survey of Breeding Birds in the Kazan River Valley*; editor, Judith Kennedy; 22 pages.

These publications can be obtained for \$5.00 each, which includes handling and postage, by sending cheque or money order to: David F. Pelly, P.O. Box 1334, Station B, Weston, Ontario, Canada M9L 2W9.



A GRATEFUL 'THANK YOU'

After five years of service, Tony Bird has resigned from the position of Outings Committee Chairman. I would like to thank Tony for all the effort he has put into doing such a successful job. The WCA outings list has been varied and interesting and Tony's committee has worked hard to ensure a balanced program.

Thanks also to Jim Greenacre and Herb Pohl for their part in all the work. Bill Ness and Rob Cepella remain as members of the committee and Mike Jones and Roger Harris have joined to assist them in carrying out Tony's work. I would like to ask all trip leaders to forward trip reports and waiver forms to me.

Roger Harris
43 Huntley Str.
Toronto M4Y 2K9
416-323-3603

8-9 July TEMAGAMI RIVER AREA

Richard Culpeper, 705-673-8988; book before 25 June.

Stimulating whitewater and scenery. A weekend suitable for intermediate paddlers. Limit five canoes.

15-16 July PALMER RAPIDS

Ken Coburn, 416-767-5845; book before 29 June.

First day will be spent at Palmer Rapids and, depending on participants' skills and interest, the following day will be spent on the lower section. Please note the organizer will not be available from 1 to 8 July. Limit six canoes.

22-23 July RIVER RESCUE CLINIC, PALMER RAPIDS

Sandy and Roger Harris, 416-323-3603; book before 14 July.

A workshop to practise the various techniques discussed in the book River Rescue. Participants should be familiar with the book and be prepared to explore the methods discussed in it. Bring 15 metres of strong rope, two carabiners, and two prusik loops. If anyone can obtain an old canoe suitable for pinning practice, please contact the organizers.

29-30 July BUTT LAKE AREA

Gerry Lannan, 705-636-7419; book before 14 July.

Canoe camping in the Butt Lake area in western Algonquin Park. A trip suitable for novices with emphasis on camping skills. Limit four canoes.

30 July BURNT RIVER

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005; book before 23 July.

This leisurely day trip will take us from Kinmount to the village of Burnt River. The Burnt River placidly winds its way through attractive mixed forest, here and there spilling over ledges to add a little excitement to our day. Limit six canoes.

5-7 August SOLO WHITEWATER CLINIC, PALMER RAPIDS

Bill Ness (416-321-3005), Jeff Lane, Neil McKay, Sandy and Roger Harris; book immediately.

This three-day clinic at Palmer Rapids is intended for tandem paddlers of experienced novice level or higher, who want to learn solo whitewater skills. From the basics of ferries and eddy turns to surfing and rolling we will try to help you become a more capable and confident solo canoeist. Limit ten paddlers.

12-13 August MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE

Mike Jones, 416-270-3256; book before 9 August.

The rapids on this "structured" whitewater course are technically challenging and provide a great way for aggressive intermediate paddlers to get some more experience. The run-out can be used to advantage by novices to perfect their ferries and eddy turns. Limit six canoes/kayaks.

19-20 August MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE

Sandy and Roger Harris, 416-323-3603; book before 17 August.

A favorite spot for a cool weekend in August. Challenging rapids will hone your skills. Aggressive intermediate paddlers are welcome. Limit eight canoes/kayaks.

26-27 August PALMER RAPIDS

Ken Coburn, 416-767-5845; book before 19 August.

The first day will be spent at Palmer Rapids with a trip on the Lower Madawaska on Sunday if participants are willing and able. Limit six canoes.

2-4 September OTTAWA RIVER

Dale Miner, 416-730-8187; book before 20 August.

This challenging river is suitable for experienced paddlers. On Saturday we will run the Middle Channel and, depending on water levels, we may run the Main Channel on Sunday. If enthusiasm is high and the participants are not too tired we will spend Monday on the Middle Channel. Limit six boats.

2-4 September LOWER MAGNETAWAN RIVER

Doug Ashton, 519-645-0336; book before 27 August.

This trip will take us into the Magnetawan via Harris Lake. We will travel upstream to visit scenic Canal Rapids and then head downriver to just below Thirty Dollar Rapids where a portage will take us back into Harris Lake. Our route will allow us to enjoy this beautiful section of river while avoiding the horrendous car shuttle usually associated with it. Suitable for novices who are capable of paddling for a long day and doing a couple of one-kilometre plus portages. Limit four canoes.

2-4 September ALGONQUIN PARK

Paul Siwy, 416-423-1698; book before 25 August.

Join us in Algonquin Park for the Labor Day Weekend. Our intention is to take things easy and bring along a camera to record a little of the park's natural splendor. We can mutually decide on an interesting route. Limit three canoes.

9-10 September POKER LAKE LOOP

Chris Motherwell, 416-461-2741; book before 1 September.

The beautiful small lakes in Haliburton's Poker Lake area are a delight for the photographer and naturalist. We will spend the weekend here moving at a leisurely pace that will allow us to take lots of photographs and otherwise appreciate the natural world. Limit five canoes.

16-17 September BIG CROW LAKE

Dale Miner, 416-730-8187; book before 5 September.

Starting at Opeongo Lake, by water taxi, we will paddle into Big Crow Lake. A highlight of this trip is a hike to see one of the last remaining stands of virgin white pine in Algonquin Park. Novice paddlers welcome. Limit five canoes.

17 September ELORA GORGE

Dave Sharp, 519-621-5599; book before 10 September.

A leisurely 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 by playing in the rapids. Limit six canoes.

1 October HEAD CREEK LOOP

Rob Butler, 416-487-2282; book before 27 September.

From Moore Falls on Highway 35 we will head West to Victoria Lake, then South down Head Creek to Head Lake, ending with a short car shuttle. This is a rugged, untravelled route with several portages. Limit three canoes with fit crews.

7-8 October FARM CREEK, ISLAND LAKE

John Winters, 705-382-2057; book before 29 September.

This will be a trip into the region north of Lake Wahwashkesh and the Magnetawan River. This is an attractive area with a lot to offer. Participants can camp Friday night in my lower forty to allow an early start on Saturday. Limit three canoes.



SUMMER CAMP—Dave Buckley
(Honorable Mention, Wilderness and Man; WCA 1989 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.

WILDERNESS CANOEING AND NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY Join professional photographer Ioni Harting on this trip to the heart of the famous Lady Evelyn Park in Temagami's wild country. This leisurely paced trip, organized and fully outfitted by Wanapitei, combines the joys of wilderness canoeing and camping with the unique opportunity to learn directly from an expert how best to photograph the beauty and excitement of canoe tripping. Dates: 12 - 20 August. Cost: \$855 (\$710 US). Participants meet at Wanapitei's Wilderness Centre on Friday night. From there they are flown into Lady Evelyn Park by bushplane. For more information contact Wanapitei at 705-745-8314 or Ioni Harting at 416-964-2495.

THE TEMAGAMI EXPERIENCE This new book, written by Bruce Hodgins and Jamie Benidickson and published by the University of Toronto Press, is subtitled "Recreation, Resources, and Aboriginal Rights in the Northern Ontario Wilderness," and provides the historic background to the dilemma of Temagami. It is the book for everybody who is concerned about the opposing claims of conservationists, native peoples, and developers, and for all those who search for fair settlement in one of the most beautiful stretches of Canadian wilderness. A review will be published in the next issue of *Nastawgan*.

VOYAGEURS NORTH provides outdoor services spanning all seasons: guided canoe trips - canoe trip planning - survival training - traditional Native life program - wilderness program development for businesses and organizations. From our base in Sioux Lookout, northwest Ontario, we help you turn the remote forests and waterways of northern Ontario into your arena of adventure and experience. We operate throughout Ontario's immense north, from the Trans-Canada Highway to the coasts of James and Hudson bays -- the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation of the Ojibway and Cree. For more information contact Voyageurs North, P.O. Box 507, Sioux Lookout, Ontario, POV 2T0.

LIMITED EDITION CANNONDALE AROOSTOOK TENTS Cliff Jacobson is having 100 of the very popular and practical Cannondale Aroostook tents specially made this coming spring. Those of you who have read any of Cliff's books will be familiar with the quality and versatility of the Aroostook which are no longer available through regular channels. He is making these available on a first come, first serve basis for US\$435. Any WCA member wishing to purchase one should send US\$100 to: Cliff Jacobson, 928 West 7th Street, Hastings, Minnesota 55033, USA. The balance is due 30 days prior to shipment.

WATERCLINICS Steve Scarborough, designer of Blue Hole and Dagger canoes, will be holding a whitewater clinic on the Gull River on 9 July and on the Ottawa River the following day. For details, contact Algonquin Outfitters at 705-635-1167.

WILDERNESS BOUND new 1989 brochure, offering canoeing courses and wilderness canoe trips, is now available. Call Wilderness Bound in Hamilton at 416-528-0059.

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

ABC Sports, 552 Yonge Street, Toronto,
Algonquin Outfitters, RR#1, Oxtongue Lake, Dwight, Ontario,
Rockwood Outfitters, 669 Speedvale Ave. West, Guelph, Ontario,
Suntrail Outfitters, 100 Spence Str. (Hwy 70), Hepworth, Ontario

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

FOR SALE OR TRADE one 17 ft. aluminum Grumman canoe, \$550 or best offer. Wanted one 18 ft. aluminum Grumman canoe. Contact George Luste in Toronto at 416-534-9313.

WHITE SQUALL Georgian Bay's Kayak and Canoe Centre. We offer a quiet waterfront for test paddling of a large selection of sea kayaks and canoes from eight different manufacturers. Our shop stocks a wide range of paddling, camping, and rescue gear at competitive prices. Ask about our 1989 sea kayak and canoe instruction and tour programs. Contact: Iim and Kathy Dyer, White Squall Wilderness Shop, Nobel, Ontario (near Parry Sound), POG 1G0, phone 705-342-5524.

The desktop typesetting for this issue of *Nastawgan* was done by **COMPUFLOW**

where it is



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

Ogilvie Mountains	1	Thelon River	12
Moisie River	7	Saugene River	15
Eels Creek	10	South Nahanni River	17

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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

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