

# nastawgan

Summer 1990 Vol. 17 No. 2

Quarterly Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association



## ***PERESTROIKA COMES TO PADDLING***

John W. Lentz

The fisherman's words drifted out from shore. "Hey, Slava, who are you paddling with?"

"Americans," our Russian friend replied.

"You gotta be crazy! We don't let Americans in here," came the astonished retort.

That night, within the soft glow of a Siberian hearth somewhere near the upper Katun River, I'm sure our bank-side observer had a wild story to tell: Americans paddling our turbulent Katun . . . no less in Soviet catamarans . . . all this *glasnost-perestroika* talk from Moscow really is changing things . . .

You've got it, Mr. Siberia. In the 20 years before our breakthrough I had tried to gain entry time after time. At every rebuff I consoled myself with another canoe trip in Canada's Northwest Territories, but always casting a glance

toward the "other side." By early 1987 I didn't expect much more from my latest efforts, though support from the National Geographic Society and our retiring Maryland Senator, Charles "Mac" Mathias, was not harming the cause.

An overcast March morning at my Washington desk was fast forgotten when I took the call from a friend at the U.S. Information Agency announcing arrival of a cable from our Moscow Embassy. Its key words: "Sovintersport (an arm of the U.S.S.R. State Committee on Sports and Physical Culture) offers a trip on the Katun River . . . an exception made." Great day—sun was out! Those months before our mid-July departure shot by on fast forward: recruiting a competent, multi-faceted crew; meetings to sort out a yellow pad full of "must-does"; and local tune-up trips. Just hours

after the last errand was run I settled into my seat on Aeroflot's Ilyushin-62. The other side.

After the sights of Moscow and Novosibirsk, the informal capital of Siberia, our preparatory conditioning program was put to the test. Outside Novosibirsk at the dacha of Maria and Pavel Batanin, parents of one of our guides, we had a restorative sauna to purge jet lag (sipped vodka between trips), delicious fresh produce supper (drank a bit more between courses), then exchanged heartfelt toasts (now draining tumblers). The whole was a time-honored Russian tradition of which I have urged adoption in my Bethesda neighborhood.

A blur of bus, plane, and helicopter travel carried us 400 miles south into the Altay (Golden) Mountains. When a chance arrived to fully uncork my body from the sitting position, I found it in the midst of Sovintersport's Camp Altay. To us eight Americans the Altays were Siberia's Switzerland, to the early explorer Yadrinski a "precious gem." We groped for words to pigeonhole the soaring, snow-mantled peaks, their richly timbered slopes and verdant valleys. Nestled beside Lake Akkem, the camp harbored some 30 Western climbers come to go up against the Altays. Dominating all was 14,783-foot Mount Belukha (White Mountain). Above 10,000 feet there was perpetual snow and we even caught a few falls at our 7,000-foot camp. Summer in Siberia!

Those days at Camp Altay passed quickly, the more so because I slept through one of them. Our hosts ladled home-brewed grain alcohol known as "spirit" into the tea (or was it the other way) at a first-night feast. When recovery set in there was time to get acquainted with our veteran river guides, Misha Kolchevnikov and Slava Tolmachov, not to mention guitar-playing Igor Sarkisov. We also became friends with a dozen California rafters who had come to scout the Katun River as a future site for what turned out to be highly successful joint Soviet-American rafting expeditions. They contributed a boundless, infectious enthusiasm plus another guitar player . . .

One evening, Sasha Vladimirov, a local school teacher and one of the translators, gave us a primer on the Altay. Almost at dead centre of the sprawling Eurasian landmass, the range acts as a true spine, dividing the Soviet north from the Chinese-Mongolian south as it does rivers flowing toward the Arctic and Indian Oceans. The Turkic-speaking Altay peoples had been under the heel of the Khans before 17th century Russian conquest. Yadrinski's gem yielded wealth aplenty: well-watered foothills were turned into Siberia's granary, mineral treasures became the grist of industry, and the high country was an outdoor person's paradise.

On a rainy afternoon, as I hiked a few miles from Camp Altay, paradise had taken a holiday. I wandered into the dreary, well-soaked camp of young Soviet hikers. Comparing my Gore-Tex and fiberpile with their sodden cotton and wool, it was little wonder they half believed my story that I had been parachuted in from Washington to see if I could be of service. A girl finally found voice to explain, well, maybe I could. It was a most gloomy camp, she said, after the first string on her boyfriend's guitar had snapped. Could I help? I thought of Igor, probably playing in the mess tent, then led them back to Camp Altay where he generously offered the vital string. The girl gave me her plastic Novosibirsk lapel pin plus a "made-my-day" smile.

The time finally came, none too soon for us eastern seaboard river rats, when we clamored into another helicopter — this for the ride around Mount Belukha to its southern face, the Katun Glacier, and our river put-in. Half swathed in cloud, the ethereal beauty of the country below was deceptive. Slava pointed to an emerald green valley where in 1919 contending factions in the U.S.S.R.'s wrenching civil war had a bloody clash. But all was harmony as our chopper settled onto a flower-spangled meadow beside the river. I thought of Sasha telling us that Katun was the name of a legendary Altay princess of yesteryear. Born of the Katun Glacier, six miles upstream, the young river — vigorous, tempting — was an undoubted princess.

"Don't go far. Be back soon." Slava's words of concern were almost lost as we took off on what veteran climber and trip doctor, John Ross, called his best hike ever. A sense of relief at being alone propelled us upward through Norway spruce, tamarack, and Siberian pine to fields thick with purple columbine, Queen Anne's lace, plus a monster six-foot plant ominously called "bear's food." At elevation the sky opened to reveal jagged, white-capped peaks parading south toward China and Mongolia. Over-stuffed marmots, "soroks" to the Russians, waddled out of the way; falcons rode the air currents above. Fatigue was banished (but cardiac arrest tempted) with a swim in an icy tarn. Approaching camp at dusk, we passed through a stand of massive, original growth spruce festooned with Spanish moss. All day the gem had sparkled.

Under pressure from a tangle-footed Moscow bureaucracy, we had left our cherished canoes at home. Instead, it would be Soviet catamarans — novel craft to us. "Looks like something out of Huck Finn," remarked school director Ron McClain as he helped lash an aluminum pole frame to twin 17-foot, sausage-like rubber hulls. Bob Schaefer, an experi-



enced Northwest Territories canoeist, scratched his head. Could these funny ducks handle the heavy whitewater ahead? With skepticism all round, I was relieved when Misha motioned that the four of us might paddle together. Slava commanded a second cat and Bruce Conover, our translator and heavy-water expert, the third. Encased in protective dry suit, wet boots, helmet, and life-jacket — with collective paddling time approaching two centuries — we were ready for whatever the Katun would dish out.

Stroking around an early bend, I saw us fast closing on trouble. A large rock in centre stream left no space on either side for our broad-beamed craft to pass. Bob and Ron were poised for a command from the stem. I shot a worried look at Misha, got no response for a few long seconds, then three beautiful English words, his first to us: "Rock in between." A correcting move and the menace flashed between our hulls. The discovery of Misha's English and the deft performance of our once-castigated cats were bringing things together.

Though paddling at about 5,000 feet elevation and still in sight of Mount Belukha, we were not alone. Cattle trails crisscrossed the valley, a shepherd's yurt was a quarter mile inland, and we watched with fascination as a distant Altay rider and his dog herded 50 horses along. All reflective of settlement patterns developed over the millennia. An exotic land, I concluded, but not a wilderness. By day's end all of us had come to terms with our cats, terms of affection and respect.

Stark Biddle knew exactly what to do for dinner. A Vermont sheep rancher, he took one look at the piece of meat the Soviets produced, then went to work. My role was to gather wood — a basic, mechanical task for which I am well suited. When the evening meal was announced, Chez Biddle served up deboned leg of Siberian lamb marinated in garlic, lemon-butter sauce, boiled new potatoes, and melange of vegetables.

Later on we compared maps. It has usually been problematic, if not impossible, for Soviets to get detailed scale maps of their own country. After looking over our U.S. Government four-mile-to-the-inch series, Misha produced something like a Chinese scroll. His six-foot, pencil-drawn sheet was a bend-by-bend depiction of the Katun with rapids and campsites noted. This most accurate yet private creation told me that the official Soviet renderings were unsuitable for basic navigation.

Next morning we entered the Katun's steepest gradient. Falling 80 feet per mile for the next 20 miles, the white-flecked river was on a constant angle as it cascaded away in front of us. Our most intense action came in the Five Cheeks Rapids. The so-called Cheeks were actually mini canyons laced with whitewater.

We almost got masticated in the teeth of Second Cheeks. Scouting from 30 feet above the surging Katun, our choice was clear: go with the flow and combat the backwash off an undercut wall or try a tough sneak route on river right inside a massive rock. We opted for technical virtuosity: river right. Misha's perfect set-up had us hurtling toward the narrow, frothing channel. When bowmen Bob and Ron flinched, I yanked my outer leg inside the rubber hull. SCREECH!!!

Aluminum pole ends ground violently between rocky island and canyon wall. Speed dropped to first gear effort. Instinctively, we paddled like dogs to prevent a flip. Our trusty craft lurched through, but it turned the other route into a universal favorite.

In the Cheeks we first encountered Soviet recreational catamaran boaters. They began running the Katun some 25 years ago in log rafts steered by giant sweeps. Talented



paddlers and a river-loving bunch, they had to make do with basically home-made equipment. The U.S.S.R. has almost no whitewater equipment industry and little foreign exchange for imports. So the rubber hulls for their cats were protected with hand-stitched abrasion covers, poles and seats cut from the forest, while paddles and life jackets were products of their own invention.

I had an immediate respect for the esprit of these young people. Whether an engineer from Novosibirsk or a tractor mechanic out of Volgograd, they often spoke of motherland. With its powerful concept of ties to the soil (not asphalt), there should be no surprise at the depth of today's burgeoning Soviet environmental movement.

Early on the fourth day we hove into an eddy on river left. Misha led photographer Ken Garrett, Bruce Conover, and me inland to visit a classic Siberian log home. We were graciously received by a Kazakh beekeeper and his family. Over bread and tea he told us how they pass April through November tending this one-family collective farm (if that's not too much of a contradiction) with about a hundred hives,

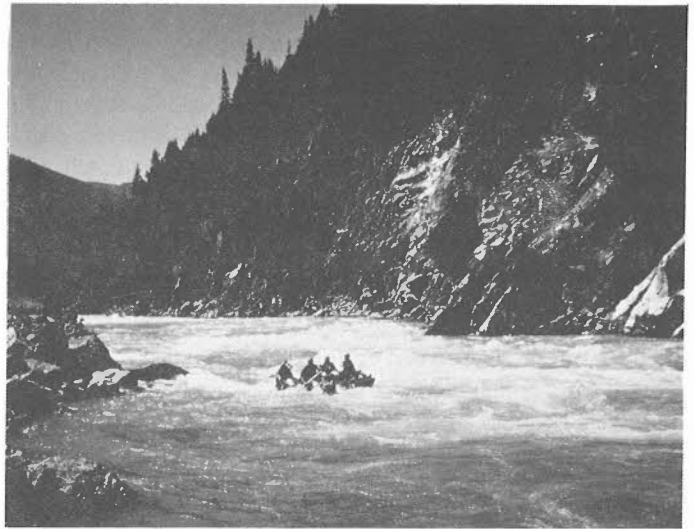
then retire to lower altitudes for the winter. From the appearance of their comfortable two-room cottage, solidly built of hand-hewn timbers chinked with mortar, it looked as if they could get along all year in the Altay if the bees would have found it salubrious.

Downstream next day, our social program came completely unglued. Sighting the well-weathered frame structures of Kaytanak, the village nearest to the Katun's headwaters, I asked Misha if a stop was possible. "Twenty minutes," came his quick reply.

When we assembled on the bank, the question had obviously become more complex. Sasha, the teacher from nearby Ust-Koksa, lowered his head while the other Soviets gathered round to hear him out. Result: no go — back in the cats. Over lunch Sasha's concern surfaced in the form of that perennial Russian fear of showing foreigners something less than perfect. Kaytanak, a pre-Revolutionary village of only modest prosperity, was deemed unsuitable. Mike Springer put our side of the issue: that it was better to show everything —warts included—than to hold sympathetic visitors at bay. We were mollified by promises of a tour of Ust-Koksa, just ahead, and our appreciation that the region was being opened to Westerners for the first time in generations. Inevitably, we became "point men" on such problems.

Some three hours later, in high anticipation, Americans and Soviets started across a swinging bridge connecting an island with Ust-Koksa. From the other side there advanced a stocky, gray-uniformed militiaman — the police. Firm in the right as his captain gave him to see the right, he grabbed each railing and told everyone, in effect, that these were not visiting hours. Our Soviets put up a good argument, but it all came to a familiar conclusion: no go — back in the cats.

Later on we pieced together the likely events behind this bizarre scenario. An hour after our pulling out of Kaytanak the California rafters appeared. A colorful crowd with tie-dye wardrobe and flip-flops, they bounded into town to have



one great time: full tour with a visit to school in session, detailed exchanges on organic gardening, even a much-needed back massage for one. I can imagine the panicky call from Kaytanak's chief militiaman down to Ust-Koksa . . . Intruders have landed, defend your walls! The phone was barely cradled, then there we were, mistaken for Californians (particularly distressing to an Easterner).

In camp that evening there was what the State Department calls a "frank exchange of views." This village stiff-arm had to stop. It did. A few miles downstream the Soviets ushered us into Upper Uymon where we experienced a day-long visit to a charming, quintessential Siberian community. Described by an old lady as one of the first villages established during Russian colonization of the Altay the 1870s, Upper Uymon had a foot in both centuries. Many of the traditional Hansel and Gretel log homes dated from the early days, one even displaying ancient Christian icons in a revered corner. Down the road our era intruded. Motorbikes were parked outside Sergei Ilych's modern rambler and the TV was on. Sergei, director of the local collective farm, invited us in for a lunch of dried mural (similar to elk), bread with honey, and the everpresent tea.

There was a moving moment on our tour of the village museum. I asked the attractive, young guide how many from Upper Uymon had served in World War I. "A hundred men were called," she said. Then, dropping her voice, "and twenty-nine came back."

Just an inkling of the tragedy this land endured. But out on the wide dirt streets life went on. Kids thrilled to gaze through Ken's telephoto lens; an old man proffered pine nuts along with questions about the States; and finally two pretty, pre-teen girls waved a wistful goodbye. From all reports of later travellers on the Katun there have been no problems



with village visits. I like to think we made a difference.

At one of our later campsites Slava gave a fishing demonstration. That's all it was as he had little hope of success until the silt settled out of the Katun's milky, glacier-fed waters. Though we passed a number of fishermen trying their luck with immense wooden poles, I suspect they were just enjoying an excuse to get out of the house. Slava's technique was to launch a foot-long model catamaran angled for the opposite shore. Line was played out as hydraulic pressure moved the little craft to mid-river. Secondary lines, baited with hand-tied flies, dangled every ten feet in trotline fashion. Too bad we couldn't have seen some action with this ingenious system.

It was a crystal-clear morning as we shoved off for our last day on the river. Confident of our skills with the Russian boats, I asked Misha about the Akkem Gorge ahead where the Katun breaks through the Terektinskiy Range to begin its northerly course to form the mighty Ob. "Fifty-fifty chance a catamaran will flip," he replied. Misha then related the chilling tale of his up-ending in the Gorge that spring. An exhausting swim through pounding whitewater left him ever respectful of the Katun's power.

The Gorge's entrance rapid gave us a general sloshing, then things got serious. At the second set everyone got out to scout. The route etched in our minds, we experienced a privilege of travelling with the senior guide: our cat would run first. Americans and Soviets lined the banks, their safety line throw bags at the ready. With a big craft in big water anticipation or set-up is everything. Last-second moves are useless.

After a hard ferry to mid-river, Misha's orders came in rapid fire: "Sharp right . . . paddle ahead . . . now dig, dig!" We dove into a yawning five-foot hole. Our two bow engines disappeared through a wall of gray-green water. Astern, the rubber hull bucked like an Army mule and lashings flexed

as the cat felt stress. I drew a hard breath — getting ready for swim time — but Misha looked serene.

Blasting out of the hole, we rode through another curler, then made a mandatory eddy on river right just above the next white froth. "Whoa — what a run!" exulted Ron. I let my breath out. This last lunge for the bank, between two major rapids, was possible because a cat cannot take on water. Apart from an inner tube, it is the ultimate self-bailing boat. Only after Misha collected each of his charges in the eddy did he let us tackle the next set. Almost a rerun of the last, but now we powered through with Soviet-like aplomb. I felt as if connected to a well-balanced tool. Some of their boaters were also in the Gorge. All of us rallied a few miles downstream on a broad, sandy beach at the inflow of the Argut River.

Our camaraderie with these paddlers was broken off when they pushed on downstream, while we were told to wait. Though most felt we could have doubled our 180 miles on the Katun, time was up. A helicopter lifted us back to Camp Altay so we could participate in its closing. Speeches that had a tentative, uncertain tone at Camp opening were now given with understanding, genuine warmth, and a commitment to perpetuate new friendships.

Over the months as these matured, I searched for the real meaning of our days in the Altay. Not quite the Katun, that princess of a river, nor those many exceptional experiences. Our early travel in this stunning country was a resoundingly unique adventure, but its essence was the Siberians themselves — an elegant, vibrant people forever welcome in my home.

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This article also appears in the June 1990 issue of *The Explorers Journal*, the quarterly of The Explorers Club. John Lentz' previous article on paddling in Siberia was published in the Summer 1988 issue of *Nastawgan*.



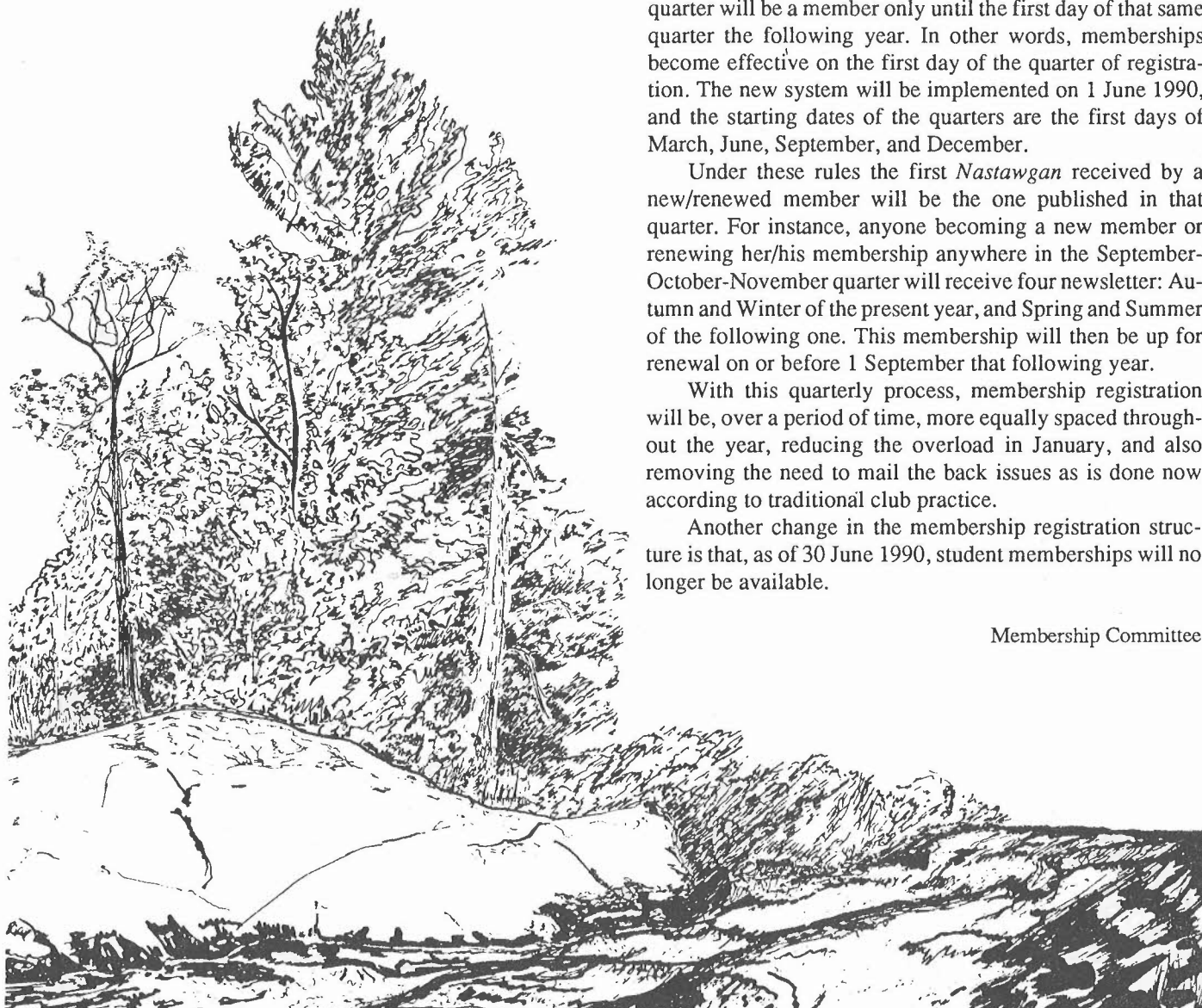


ISSN 1828-1327

Published by the Wilderness Canoe Association — Editor: Toni Harting  
Nastawgan is an Anishinabi word meaning 'the way or route'

## EDITORIAL

I'm grateful for the constructive comments received after the new-format *Nastawgan* saw the light of day. Your reactions are very much appreciated and the Communications Committee will certainly try to follow your suggestions. Step by step we're getting closer to the goal we've set for *Nastawgan*: a good quality journal that presents a wide variety of information of value to the wilderness canoeist, produced by a small team for the lowest possible cost in time and money. From this Summer issue on our journal is printed on recycled, acid-free paper which helps save a few trees from destruction. Using recycled paper as much as possible for letterhead, envelopes, writing paper, brochures, etc., is one important way in which the WCA and also its individual members can support the crucial fight for a healthier environment.



## NEW RULES FOR MEMBERSHIP YEAR

Traditionally, the WCA membership year runs from 1 February to 31 January the following year. This means that most of the Membership Committee's work is concentrated in and around January when renewals are coming in. With about 600 members, that amounts to a lot of work for too few people. Also, somebody joining/rejoining the WCA in, say, August receives all the *Nastawgan* back issues for that membership year, i.e. the ones (Spring and Summer) already published. This creates extra work, costs, and confusion.

Even with the help of our computer this is obviously not the way to use precious volunteers' time and enthusiasm. The Membership Committee has therefore proposed to and received permission from the Board of Directors to divide the membership year into four quarters of three months each, so that anyone joining/rejoining the WCA in a specific quarter will be a member only until the first day of that same quarter the following year. In other words, memberships become effective on the first day of the quarter of registration. The new system will be implemented on 1 June 1990, and the starting dates of the quarters are the first days of March, June, September, and December.

Under these rules the first *Nastawgan* received by a new/renewed member will be the one published in that quarter. For instance, anyone becoming a new member or renewing her/his membership anywhere in the September-October-November quarter will receive four newsletters: Autumn and Winter of the present year, and Spring and Summer of the following one. This membership will then be up for renewal on or before 1 September that following year.

With this quarterly process, membership registration will be, over a period of time, more equally spaced throughout the year, reducing the overload in January, and also removing the need to mail the back issues as is done now according to traditional club practice.

Another change in the membership registration structure is that, as of 30 June 1990, student memberships will no longer be available.

Membership Committee



# WILDER-BLINDNESS

(Part 1 of 3)

Raymond Chipeniuk

Somewhat oddly, for a people who inhabit one of the wilder countries on earth, Canadians appear to have the hardest time of it when it comes to seeing wilderness. Like someone who goes snow-blind from looking too long at the dazzling white of a northern countryside in March, as a nation we seem to have gone unsuspectingly wilderness-blind.

Not so, some will say.

Hundreds of thousands of us use the wilderness for recreation and regard it as part of our heritage. In the North we have entire national parks described as "wilderness parks." And in the South there are wilderness

provincial parks, at least in some provinces, as well as wilderness zones in the national parks. We have wilderness societies, a wilderness literature, and wilderness commerce.

But it takes others to see us as we really are. The foremost American authority on wilderness sums us up by saying: "the wilderness preservation movement in Canada lags some two generations behind that in the United States."<sup>1</sup> Through American eyes Canadians are barely conscious of wilderness as an idea, only slightly interested in saving some of the thing itself, and very poorly organized to promote preservation in the political arena. In the United States wilderness is as demotic as apple pie; in Canada love of wilderness is "elitism."

It is not the purpose of this article to examine the notion that Canadians do not worry so much about the loss of wilderness as Americans do. That can just about be taken as self-evident, with four decades of almost uncontested country-sized hydroelectric projects, mindless "roads to resources", catastrophic logging, consumptive tourism, and now the despoliation of provincial parks. Instead, what follows is an attempt to answer the next question: if Canadians are indeed less mindful of wilderness than Americans, then how come?

Roderick Nash thinks he knows. He says it is because we have too much wilderness:

The Canadian experience furnishes . . . evidence for the paradox that the possession of wilderness is a *disadvantage* in the preservation of wilderness. In Canada's case it is the northcountry — unbelievably huge and empty, a continuing frontier that elicits frontier attitudes toward land. The result of having this vast reservoir of wildness to the north is that the urgency for wilderness protection is lessened.<sup>2</sup>

But who could have too much wilderness, if they loved it? When a particularly rich tract of wild country was threatened, in the Queen Charlotte Islands, Canadians from all across the country wrote to British Columbia Premier Bill Vander Zalm to protest. Few of them could have had any



thought of visiting the place or "using" it. They just valued wild country, and any diminution in it they found painful to contemplate.

At any rate, do Canadians have so much wilderness as all that? As other writers have pointed out before, much the greatest extent of our wild country lies a long way off from where the mass of Canadians live. From Toronto really wild country now stands off at least 600 kilometres, from Montreal perhaps 500, from Vancouver several hours by car. If you live in southern Canada with nearly all the rest of us and you know what wilderness is, you will not have the feeling there is a lot of it around.

This very distance of wild country from the major centres of Canadian population may in fact be part of the problem. When we hear that the government of Quebec has authorized a single clear-cut 77,000 square kilometres in extent, or the government of British Columbia has collaborated in building a railroad across the northern Rockies to rip apart a mountain for coal that is not economic to mine, often it just seems too far away to concern us. If the land is not widely publicized as being special for some reason other than its mere wildness, we let it go.

Provincial jurisdiction it is, too. In the United States the bulk of uncultivated land is federal. In Canada Crown lands are mainly owned by the provinces. Federal governments seem to respond to electorates on a higher plane than do provincial governments. For one thing, regard for wilderness is commoner among the university-educated, professional, and nicely-employed, who concentrate themselves in big cities, than it is among rural or small-town folk.<sup>3</sup> Those big cities, of course, are scattered across the country in a very uneven way; and some geographically large provinces have but one or none of them.

A related factor is how well politicians on the federal scene versus the provincial are educated. A quick survey of a *Parliamentary Guide*<sup>4</sup> reveals that whereas members of the House of Commons average about 1.2 university degrees or equivalent certificates apiece, members of legislative assemblies average just over 0.9. In some provinces the average drops as low as 0.6. Whatever their wit or wisdom, these provincial representatives of the people are statistically less inclined to canoe a wilderness river for the pleasure of it, and hence, it is fair to infer, are less inclined to have convictions about the worth of preserving such rivers unimpaired.

Quite possibly the fact that the United States is a "melting pot" while Canada is a "mosaic," as the old clichés have it, has something to do with the matter too. Immigrants usually come to the New World from densely populated parts of the world and with no experience of wilderness. If their new home is the United States they soon absorb American attitudes towards wild lands and the American mythology of wilderness. If they take up residence in Canada,



they and their descendants may remain ignorant of the significance of wilderness in Canada for generations.

With a little thinking one could come up with further relevant differences between us and our southern neighbors. It all adds up to quite a lot; but is it enough to warrant the contempt American wilderness preservationists evidently reserve for us? Are these features of Canadian life collectively the reason for why we are wilderness-blind?

Not necessarily. Some of us believe it is because Canadians know something about wilderness that Americans on the whole do not.

#### Footnotes

1 Roderick Nash, "International Concepts of Wilderness Preservation", chapter 3 in John C. Hendee, George H.

Stankey, and Robert C. Lucas, *Wilderness Management* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), p. 53.

2 Nash, cited above, p. 53

3 The well-developed literature supporting this claim is summarized in Hendee, Stankey, and Lucas, *Wilderness Management*, cited above, chapter 13, especially on pp. 306-307.

4 Pierre G. Normandin, *The Canadian Parliamentary Guide* (Ottawa, privately printed, 1976); I surveyed fifty MPs and fifty MLAs (the MLAs from Ontario and Quebec, fifteen each, and Alberta and New Brunswick, ten each, skipping every other member.

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## WCA'S FUTURE

### RESPONSE TO MR. RICHARDSON

Although our move to British Columbia has taken me from an active role in the WCA, the Farquhar ire was raised in reading Sandy Richardson's article in the Winter 1989 issue of *Nastawgan* entitled, "Is there a Future for the WCA?" Before launching into my own tirade however, I should confess to sharing Sandy's concerns over the level of involvement by the WCA in environmental issues. Although people have not joined the WCA to be environmental activists, there is too much at stake not to be defenders of the waterways that mean so much to us. While the Association could do more, the record is not as bleak as he would lead us to believe.

Both the organization and individual members have donated time and financial support to a number of issues such as Temagami and the Credit River court case. In 1989, two representatives of the WCA flew to Timmins at the invitation of the Ministry of Natural Resources to provide input on planning for Missinaibi Provincial Park. *Nastawgan* provides regular reviews on key issues of environmental concern. Overall our record may not be very great, but it is not silence either.

Aside from sharing Sandy's concerns over the environmental activities of the WCA, I must take exception to many of his points. Nowhere in his critique of the direction of the Association was there any attempt to identify the common thread amongst the hundreds of members. Despite diversity in the degree of "wilderness" experienced by our membership, do we not all share a passion for paddling, derive great pleasure in being on a river in the backcountry, and have a special feeling for being close to nature and able to meet her challenges? Is this perspective made any less valid by a failure to make regular pilgrimages to points accessible only by bush plane or train? Are day trips on the Black, Eels Creek, or Elora Gorge not part of this appreciation of the outdoors, even if the paddlers lack Labrador experience and winter camping on their vitae?

For so many people, the day trips offered by the WCA are real highlights to weeks spent cooped up in city living surrounded by people, traffic, concrete, and asphalt. Even a run down the Credit River provides some measure of escape. Is this wrong for the WCA to endorse? If the frequency of such trips is somehow detracting from the concept of wilderness in the association, how then does one explain the great popularity of *Nastawgan* and the annual slidefests devoted to paddling in the far north? Is the awe and envy by those who have never been on the likes of the Mountain River not obvious?

The very activities Sandy has criticized — day-trips, "courses," social evenings devoted to showing slides — can be stepping stones which help members develop the skills and the contacts to plan extended trips. Although Sandy criticized the current availability of "training sessions," when I pulled out the oldest WCA newsletter (then called "*The Wilderness Canoeist*") in our collection dating back to March, 1976, what did I find? There was an article on WCA outings written by Mr. Richardson promoting a course for which members were to be charged \$45 plus \$10 for canoe rentals.

Quite frankly, the paranoia over providing skill development opportunities smacks of a cliquish attitude which in itself is a very destructive element in an organization. Contrast such thinking to the approach of the canoe club here in Victoria which takes pride in the training course it offers as a community service. Volunteer "instructors" are held in esteem, their contribution viewed as an integral part of the organization. The passion for paddling is shared so that others can partake of its joys.

I have only gratitude for all those in the WCA who have given so many hours of their time in helping others learn not only the basics of paddling but where to paddle. They have assisted many "greenhorns" down the road to become competent canoeists in the "wilderness" as well as active members of the WCA. Herein lies our future.

Marcia Farquhar

## CRYPTOZOOLOGY AND WILDERNESS CANOEING

Ron Jasiuk

"... Cryptozoologists concern themselves with creatures that have been rumored to exist in shapes, in places, in sizes, or in time periods whereby they somehow violate what is expected."

From *The Flight of the Iguana* by D. Quammen

In the summer of '88 my wife Ann and I were looking for an out-of-the-ordinary canoe trip. We wanted a questing-type expedition. Since both of us were trained as biologists, something along the lines of searching for barren-ground grizzlies in the Northwest Territories or photographing freshwater seals in Ungava would have been most suitable. Unfortunately, as in previous years and most likely for a few more years to come, lack of resources (money and time) limit our wanderings. In spite of these limitations we discovered for ourselves a tripping area a mere four-hour drive from home that fulfilled our desire for some canoeing exotica.

The setting of our trip was the lower French River, west of Highway 69 and south-southeast of Sudbury, Ontario. We started at a marina within earshot of the highway. The first part of our route was to take us down the French River to its mouth, then east across a portion of Georgian Bay. The return leg of the loop involved travelling north and east up the Pickerel River to a portage east of Highway 69 that took us back to the French just upstream of our put-in. The rivers and the route can be traced on a road map of Ontario. The journey appears simple and straightforward. The true nature of the area, though, is one of a vast array of channels, thick with ice-scoured, wind-swept islands and deceptively long bays.

The paddling attributes of the area are quite varied. One morning we paddled large open sections of Georgian Bay, entranced by its emerald green waters and limitless horizons; by the afternoon we were in protected channels so narrow that we could touch both shores at the same time with outstretched paddles. We ran two easy rapids, lined down a third, and made only five portages during 80 km of canoeing. The portage at Recollet Falls involved dragging our loaded canoe along a wooden tramway. The multitude of islands and channels in the area gave us an almost infinite number of possible route variations. During our four days of paddling we saw only two other canoeing parties. Fishermen in small motorboats were quite common in some areas, particularly as we neared the highway crossings of the French and Pickerel Rivers.

The historical importance of the French River is well known. A historic marker on the west side of Highway 69 on the south shore of the river commemorates the passage of the Voyageurs and others. We explored another historical feature not as widely known as the routes of the Voyageurs, the remains of the town of Coponaning. Little is left of this

town along the shores of the Main Outlet of the French. Reid and Grand write that in the 1890s the town had houses for 300 people, two hotels, and two churches. While exploring the shrub-covered town site, we found old rusting boilers and the foundation of a mill. There was an abundance of game trails crisscrossing the site. It was here that we found the carcass of a black bear. Unexpected, but not what we were searching for.

For us the allure of this area was the possibility of encountering some of its unusual fauna. It is in this part of Ontario that one has the chance of seeing such cryptic creatures as rattlesnakes, elk (also known as wapiti), and bison. The rare massasauga rattlesnake, Ontario's only surviving rattlesnake, is said to be abundant at the mouth of the French. Both the elk and the bison are present as re-introduced species. The wapiti is the second largest member of the deer family next to the moose, and the bison is the largest terrestrial mammal in Canada.

It was with these insights that Ann and I went to the lower French River to enjoy the paddling, the sense of history, and to search for signs of massasaugas, wapiti, and bison. Like all good quests, success was not assured. It was the prospect of discovery that gave our trip its exotic flavor. We felt that seeing a snake would be most likely and would please us greatly, but finding any clue indicating the presence of wapiti or bison would send us into ecstasy. As it turned out, the massasaugas eluded us, and the bison took on a mythical form, but the wapiti came through spectacularly. To describe the encounter I have deciphered, transcribed, and fleshed-out our map notes.

*Fri. Aug. 19* Map Reference: 41-1/2 Delamere, Grid reference - 143945

Another windless, sunny, bug-free morning. Late start this morning, 10:00 am, as we went for a swim, lingered over breakfast and waited for the dew to evaporate off of the tent. From the large island to the north, we heard low moaning snorts. Deer, wapiti, bison, moose? Toured a small marshy bay to the east of our site to search for rattlers and hoofprints. No luck, though green frogs were plentiful. As we entered Canoe Channel saw the head of a large deer-like animal about 100 m to the north swimming from east to west towards the island. We watched through binoculars as it got up on the near shore. Description: A very large antlerless "deer." Tawny colour. Ran into the woods. Ron searched site of emergence from water for hoofprints while Ann searched for hair that might have been brushed off as it entered the woods. (Had we found any hair we would have taken it to a biologist or taxidermist for identification.) Tried to trail the animal, no use. Found one track in earth, measurements 7.6 cm wide and 12.7 cm long.

At first Ann and I called the creature a DELK for although we got a good look at it, neither of us could positively say whether it was a deer or an elk. We have seen

elk only once before and have seen deer countless times and it did look like a very large deer. It wasn't until afterwards that we realized that it was what we hadn't seen that would provide the clues needed for the identification. What we didn't see was a white tail nor did the animal bound into the woods. These two characteristics are seen every time one encounters a startled deer. Wapiti do not wave a white flag of a tail when alarmed and they trot rather than bound. Although we did not observe a yellowish rump which is a diagnostic characteristic of wapiti as are the antlers, the size of the hoofprint and the other observations that we did make convinced us that the DELK was actually an elk. Were we ecstatic? Does wapiti start with a w?

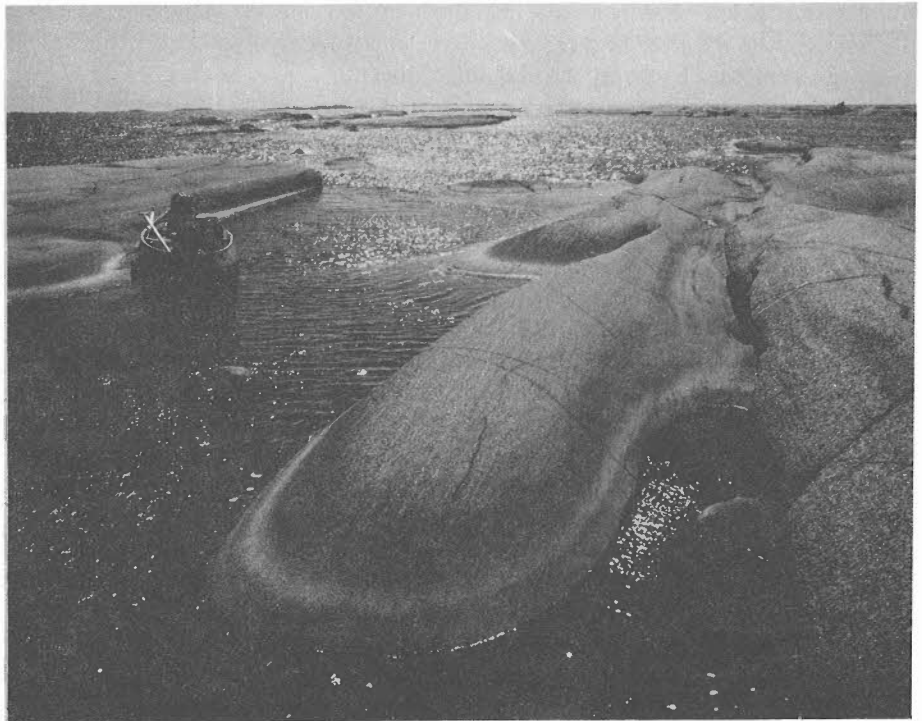
Later that day we found a scattering of weathered leg and skull bones belonging to a small deer, moose, or elk. Along the Pickerel River we passed a cottage on the south shore just west of the railway trestle, that boasted two huge sets of wapiti antlers. (41-1/2 205940)

The story of the disappearance and subsequent re-appearance of wapiti and bison in Ontario is not only fascinating but also encouraging. Both wapiti and bison were naturally occurring components of pre-European Ontario. The wapiti in particular were widespread. Their range included the Eastern Townships of Quebec as well as Ontario south of Lake Nipissing. By the 1830s the eastern subspecies of this animal, known as the Ontario elk, was already near extinction. The last reported sightings of Ontario elk was one near North Bay in 1893 and one near Ottawa in 1914. Today wapiti are restricted to isolated pockets of unexploited habitat and are primarily thought of as a western animal.

Though bison were never common nor widespread in Ontario, their history is strikingly similar to that of the Ontario elk. Both wapiti and bison were re-introduced into Ontario during the early 1930s. The re-introduction was part of a deal where Ontario received Rocky Mountain elk from Buffalo National Park near Wainright, Alberta (which was abolished in 1947). In exchange, Ontario helped to re-stock Quebec beaver preserves and Ontario shipped smallmouth bass to Alberta. One of the elk re-introduction sites was Burwash Correctional Centre, on the Wanapitei River approximately 25 km north of where the Wanapitei joins the French. In fact, a private camp in the area is still known as Camp Bison. Originally the animals were kept in an enclosure. Fortunately, some bison broke down the fence and wapiti along with bison roamed wild in Ontario once again. In 1949, the wapiti, which numbered about 500 head, and the bison were wrongly accused of harboring a parasite that was endangering cattle and sheep livestock. The management decision was to kill all the wapiti and bison. Within the next year as many as 115 wapiti and 200 bison were killed. It wasn't until

1979 that the animals were exonerated and hunting was banned. Miraculously there were survivors, partly due to the survival instincts of the animals and, I am sure, partly due to the lack of road access and development in the area.

Karen Laws, the district biologist for Sudbury, was most informative when I called her after our trip. She estimates that the wapiti population is about 25 animals and that it has stabilized. The MNR does an aerial census of the herd once a year. Currently there is no management policy concerning the wapiti except to leave them alone. It is believed that the herd migrates between Burwash and King's Island, most likely spending the fall and winter around the island. I was disappointed to hear that the last bison was seen in 1983 and Karen thinks that they no longer roam the area. When asked when would be our best chance to hear the famous high-pitched bugling of the males as they challenge other males during the rut, Karen suggested mid-October to November. As you might have guessed we are already trying to schedule a fall trip back to the lower French as soon as possible.



Ballfield, A. W. F. *The Mammals of Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.

MacCrimmon, H. R. *Animals, Man and Change*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977. A book about alien and extinct wildlife of Ontario.

Ministry of Natural Resources. *Wildlife '87*. Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1987. A historical overview of wildlife in Ontario and the MNR's involvement.

Reid, R. and Grand, J. *Canoeing Ontario's Rivers*. Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985. The chapter about the French River is an excellent historical and natural history reference.

Taylor, J. D. "Survival by Consent: The Elk." *Seasons*, Autumn 1981, pp. 19-25. A very thorough article discussing the past, present and possible future situation of elk in Ontario.

## CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE WORST KIND

Just about everyone, we imagine, is familiar with the recurring science fiction theme of a devastating attack on our planet by some alien life-form. The attackers possess such formidable weapons that their victory over the human race seems totally inescapable. Only the last-minute detection of a fatal weakness in the attackers enables the desperate human defenders to save the day.

Now it may be that we are exaggerating a little, but we maintain that there are distinct similarities between this scenario and the attack we have been undergoing for the last several weeks. We refer, of course, to the annual onslaught of mosquitoes. Some proud survivors of previous attacks belittle the seriousness of the current one by pointing out that of the world's 3000 kinds of mosquitoes, only about 25 are found in the Park. They go on to point out that only about six of these 25 ever attack humans, that even then it is just the females which bite, and that they only take two or three milligrams of blood—hardly a great quantity.

We concede the truth of these statements but, frankly, we are not impressed by them. The individuals that bite may be a small minority of all mosquitoes, but it really doesn't matter; they are still so numerous that they constitute a definite threat, if not to our lives, then certainly to our enjoyment of the outdoors.

To those of you who share our view about the gravity of the present situation, we submit that our only hope lies in following the strategy employed in all the science fiction stories: we must carefully study the pesky aliens in an effort to find some weakness which we can exploit. The rallying cry must be, "Know thine enemy!"

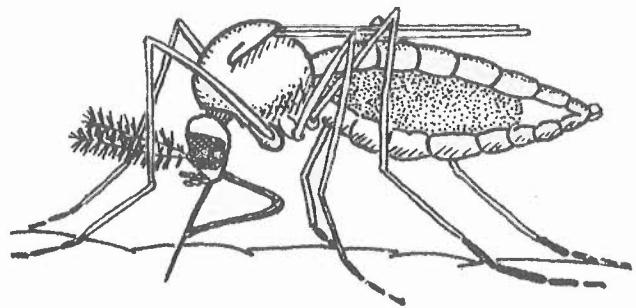
The first step is to watch a mosquito stick it to you. (It may go against the grain but, let's face it, lots are going to get you no matter what you do, so you may as well watch one.) You have to admit, however grudgingly, that mosquitoes are marvelously well adapted for their way of life. In most cases they land so lightly that you don't even know it, and within seconds they are penetrating your skin. If you look closely, you will see two parts to the feeding apparatus. There is a larger, outer sheath which is not inserted in your skin but is bent back like a hairpin during feeding, and a more slender tube which is inserted straight down for about half its length into your skin. Actually, this feeding tube consists of six separate parts. These include a large tube for drawing your blood up, a much smaller tube for sending saliva down (to prevent your blood from coagulating), and two structures with fine teeth on their edges which the mosquito uses to literally saw its way down into your skin. For even the most thick-skinned human, a mosquito takes no more than 50 seconds to insert its feeding tube, another 2 1/2 minutes to "fill er up," and a mere five seconds to withdraw the tube and make its getaway.

If you always terminate your observations at this point by obliterating the mosquito you get no marks for scientific detachment, and you will have to settle for the smug satisfaction stemming from the act of paying one back. It must be admitted also that there isn't much to be gained by

watching a mosquito taking your blood with impunity because no-one has yet found an exploitable weakness in this part of the mosquito's behavior.

For example, mosquito repellents do not work by giving you a bad taste or smell that dissuades a mosquito from inserting its feeding tube into your skin. Rather, they work by jamming the mosquito's detection system and deflecting the potential attacker before it lands in the first place. To understand how this happens we must first understand how mosquitoes find us and, thanks to many years of research, we now know the basic sequence of events.

More often than not, even a hungry female mosquito rests on vegetation and does not fly very often. Even a small local increase in carbon dioxide, however, such as one caused by a passing animal, causes the mosquito to take flight and fly about more or less randomly. If she encounters



a warm, moist convection current, given off by all warm-blooded animals, the mosquito will quickly fly "upwind" and perhaps encounter the source. Of course, a mosquito can't see a convection current any better than we can and she may very well fly out of the current by mistake and lose the trail. When this happens, however, the sudden decrease in air moisture is detected by special sensors on the mosquito's antennae, and this causes the mosquito to turn. The chances are reasonably good that she will then fly into the same or another moist convection current and she will once again be on the right track.

When the potential victim is one of us (the good guys), liberally doused with repellent, the sequence is altered. At first, things are not too encouraging because repellents actually cause resting mosquitoes to take flight, just the way carbon dioxide does. In other words, the repellent actually helps alert mosquitoes to our presence and makes it more likely they will find our convection current trail. As they make their final approach, however, the moisture sensors are jammed by the repellent vapor coming off our skin. What this means is that even if the air moisture is increasing (as it does close to our skin), the sensors detect less moisture, just as they would if the mosquito had flown out of a moist convection current.

Thus the repellent "fools" the mosquito into "thinking" that she has flown off track, and she turns. Normally, this would give her a chance to relocate the trail, but in this case she will be "automatically" turned away each time she approaches the source of the repellent vapor.

So do not despair, fellow mosquito fighters; the enemy may assault us in countless bloodthirsty hordes, and rend the night-time silence with their fearful whines. But stand firm, praise the Lord, pass the diethyl toluamide, and watch them turn harmlessly aside. The day is saved!

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

## BUG REPELLENT

### The Inside Dope

I've always been a little skeptical about the safety of insect repellents, especially those with N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide (aka "deet"). It's tough to convince me that a chemical that dissolves plastic is 100% harmless to humans.

The 19 May 1989 issue of the Medical Newsletter on Drugs and Therapeutics has some interesting information on deet which should cause us to think twice before gooping up with the stuff. When you apply deet to your skin it doesn't just evaporate or get washed off with your perspiration, it is absorbed through your skin into your body. And for those of us who are into recycling, you can recover 10% to 15% of it from your urine.

In addition to taking the varnish off your paddle, deet may cause skin eruptions, toxic encephalopathy, grand mal seizures, and anaphylaxis. In the Medical Newsletter article there is mention of five fatalities in persons aged one to 33 years who died after ingesting unspecified quantities of deet.

Due to concerns over the potential toxicity of deet a number of outdoors persons have tried Avon Skin-So-Soft as a "natural" alternative. Its "natural" ingredients are di-isopropyl adipate, mineral oil, isopropyl palmitate, dioctyl sodium sulfosuccinate, the sun screen benzophenone-11, and fragrance.

While the Medical Newsletter concedes Skin-So-Soft may offer some short-term insect protection, it warns that this product was formulated as a concentrated bath oil, and that the effects of pouring this concentrate over yourself are unknown.

However, all is not doom and gloom as a new concoction of deet with a polymer to prevent its absorption and evaporation has been developed and should be commercially available, hopefully within the next year. The addition of this polymer gives effective protection with a lower concentration of deet and reduces the frequency of re-application.

In the meantime, I'm not going to throw my bug juice away but I will continue to exercise caution in my use of it, wearing protective clothing and only putting repellent on my hands and face when I can't cover them.

Bill Ness



Photo by Dave Buckley

## WCA'S FUTURE

### ANOTHER CONCERN

Is there a future for the WCA? Is the attitude of today's general membership one of take, take, and take, but never put anything back?

The Nominations Committee, whose responsibility it is to find suitable members to run for the Board of Directors, has, during the past few years, found it increasingly difficult to find members willing to serve on the Board. This year the Committee had to approach seventeen members before they finally found the three candidates required to replace the three retiring directors. All three are longtime members. Glenn Spence is a founding member of the WCA, and this must be at least his fourth time around as a director. Herb Pohl is another oldtimer (in service, Herb, not in age) who is doing his third stint as a director. Tony Bird is a longtime member who, for several years, did an outstanding job as Outings Committee Chairman. My concern is, what are the longterm prospects of the WCA when the old guard finally retires for good?

The Outings Committee also seems to be having the same problems recruiting organizers. Take a look at this year's spring list (including those listed in the Winter 1989 issue of *Nastawgan*) of club outings. Only 33 trips listed compared to 51 in 1989 and 48 in 1988. It appears everybody wants to go on trips, but very few members are prepared to be organizers.

The WCA keeps on growing in numbers (over 600 members at the end of 1989), but willingness of members to help run the club is sadly lacking. If this attitude persists then, in my opinion, the WCA has no longterm future.

Jim Greenacre (Retired: Outings Committee, Communications Committee, Sporstmen's Show Committee, trip organizer, director.)

# CONSERVATION

## WHAT DOES THE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE DO?

There seem to be so many environmental issues that it is overwhelming — acid rain, greenhouse effect, ozone layer depletion, Great Lakes pollution, garbage, . . . the list goes on. How can a relatively small organization such as the WCA have any effect on this huge problem?

We definitely can have an effect. We can have an effect by focusing on *specific issues that have a direct impact on wilderness canoeing*. Other issues, such as nuclear waste for example, are more effectively dealt with by other organizations, like Greenpeace.

How is a specific issue picked?

Who takes it on? How is it fought? How can I get involved without it consuming all my spare time?

These and many other questions come to mind when thinking about the Conservation Committee and getting involved. The answer, though, is quite simple: *you decide*. When you see an issue that you feel you want to get involved with, give me a call and take it on. If you would like to get involved but do not know what issue you could help with, again, call me and I will help you find something to get

involved with. Remember, you decide the issue, you decide how much time you can spend on it.

I will be keeping you informed of current issues through *Nastawgan*. When you call I can put you in touch with other members that are interested in the same issue, I can give you specific suggestions on what you should do to fight the issue, and I will keep you posted by phone of any developments I hear relevant to that issue.

What does the Conservation Committee do? You all are the Conservation Committee, you each decide what is done, and it are your efforts and commitment that determine how much it achieves.

Make no mistake, wilderness is disappearing. Give me a call and help save what we all have a love of — wilderness canoeing.

Stephen Crouch, Conservation Committee Chairman, (416) 782-7741.

"If Crown land in Canada is not designated as a park/wilderness area or not somehow protected from resource development, it should be assumed that it will be opened up for exploitation, sooner more probably than later."

Alternatives

## CONSERVATION NEWS AND UPDATES

Stephen Crough

### CANOE ROUTE CLEAN-UP

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Northern Region Parks Branch, has initiated a canoe route clean-up program. Participants would be compensated for any expenses, i.e. they would get a canoe trip with expenses paid. Work would involve, but not be limited to, cleaning of trails, portages, and campsites. Three routes have been identified for summer 1990, the Missinaibi, Chapleau-Nemegosenda, and Groundhog rivers.

John Winters made the suggestion that the WCA adopt a route or area further south to clean up. The specific area suggested is between Highways 11 and 69 and the Pickerel and Magnetawan rivers. There are a number of very nice trips in this area. If you have suggestions for other areas we could adopt, let me have them. It would be extremely rewarding for us to adopt an area, document the routes, and maintain them. Perhaps we could set up registration and information booths to monitor who uses our routes. Other ideas are welcome.

Adopting an area would significantly strengthen our voice in advocating the area become a reserve or park, if that seemed appropriate at some point. It would also increase our credibility as an organization that cares about the canoeing environment, again making us stronger in fighting issues.

If you are interested in helping out on improving or documenting routes in *our* area this summer, let me know.

The Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association has also kicked off a canoe route clean-up program. I will co-ordinate our efforts with both them and the MNR.

### ORCA ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

The Ontario Recreational Canoeing Association has kicked off a new initiative to help save canoeing areas and routes in Ontario. ORCA will be setting up a monitoring system to keep an eye on threats to canoe routes. Other initiatives are yet to be decided. We will be following what they are doing and co-ordinating our conservation efforts where appropriate.

### TEMAGAMI

On 23 April the Ontario provincial government announced the setting up of the joint stewardship of four districts in Temagami, with equal input from the government and the Teme-Augama Anishnabi on what tree cutting will be allowed in the districts. The districts include the Wakimiki triangle where there is significant old growth forest. However, the districts only represent 3.2% of the Indian land claim and 8% of the proposed wildland preserve.

Also on 23 April, nine cutting licenses were issued! The Temagami Wilderness Society (TWS) is continuing their

efforts to educate people as to what is happening in the area. The TWS has a trail-building program this summer going on in Temagami — anyone interested can get an information kit by phoning them on (416) 599-0152.

**ALGONQUIN PROVINCIAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Provincial Parks Council has reviewed the public input to the management plan and has sent its recommendations to the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources. A response is expected soon. The master plan will then be rewritten, incorporating the recommendations, which is expected to take about a year. The timber management plan for the area is moving ahead independently of the Park master plan. The CPWS has asked for an environmental assessment of the timber management plan.

**MISSISSAGI RIVER PROVINCIAL PARK and BISCOTASING AREA**

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources produced a paper in January of this year outlining various resource management issues and options in the Biscotasing area, northwest of Sudbury. Some of the options include expanding the Mississagi Provincial Park's no-road-zone and no-cut-reserve around Biscotasi, Indian, and Ramsey lakes, and no further disposition on land for cottaging. However, other alternative options include lake access, 113 cottage lots, and so on! If the wilderness canoeing value of this area, connecting the Mississagi River to the Spanish River, is to be

preserved, we must act immediately. Please let me know if you could write a letter or make some phone calls to help.

**POLAR BEAR PROVINCIAL PARK**

As noted in the previous issue of *Nastawgan*, the long-term management plan for Polar Bear Provincial Park in northern Ontario is now undergoing review. There seems to be an opportunity to propose expanding the park and including additional rivers such as the Sutton River. Due to lack of development in the area such rivers could be set up as true wilderness river parks with no compromises. An exiting opportunity for us! Give me a call if you would like to get involved.

**SPANISH RIVER**

The Spanish River Special Area Plan has now been approved. The Special Area includes the East Branch, the West Branch, and the main channel of the upper Spanish River, northwest of Sudbury. The length of the Special Area is 130 km via the East Branch, and 120 km via the West Branch. The area includes 6500 hectares of land and 2700 hectares of water, encompassing the bed of the river channel and a 200-m wide strip of land on each bank. Access roads, cottaging, and disposition of Crown land is not permitted. Timber management, mining, and two river crossings are allowed! Hydro dams, although not permitted in the plan, may be allowed by amending the District Land Use Guidelines! The end result of the planning process is not good for wilderness canoeing.

**DEEP DOWN**

To you  
poetry is  
a sunset,  
a river,  
    and sometimes  
        the rhythm  
            of a canoe.

To me,  
poetry is  
the way I feel  
    deep  
        down  
especially  
    when I'm with you!

Then,  
when nature surrounds  
us  
    her heartbeat  
speaks;  
    her silence  
becomes —  
our  
poetry.

Elisabeth Parsons

# THE BONNET PLUME RIVER

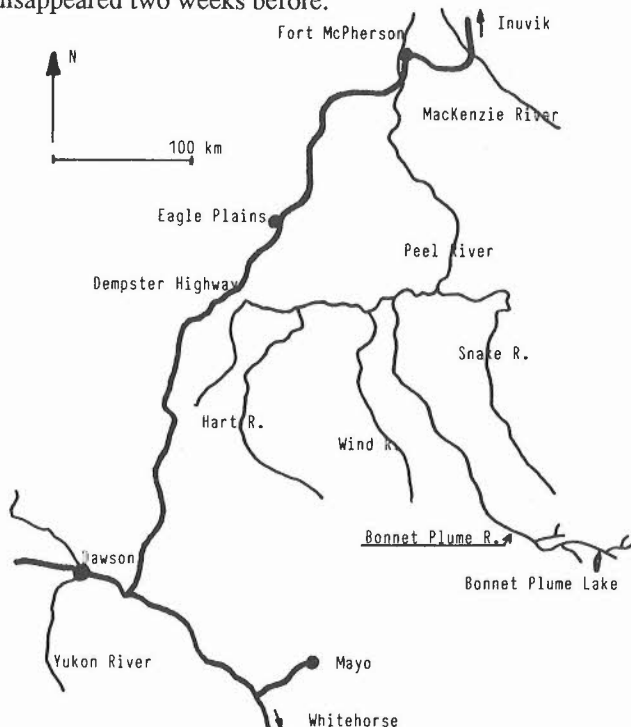
Ross Sutherland

In July, 1989, four friends — Nancy Bayly, Rudy Koehler, Kathy Moffat, and Ross Sutherland — canoed down the Bonnet Plume River from Bonnet Plume Lake in the Yukon to Fort McPherson in the Northwest Territories.

In planning our summer in the Yukon, we wanted to include a long river trip. It had to be primarily in the wilderness, mostly in the mountains (to cut down on the bugs), downstream (we were on vacation), beautiful, and exciting. More and more, our discussions focussed on the Bonnet Plume.

Our first problem was obtaining good detailed information on the river. We reviewed the video shown at the WCA symposium and read a trip report from Wanapitei. Both indicated big waves and stormy weather. We upgraded our rain gear. We discovered that Arctic Edge, a Yukon expedition company, had stopped taking trips down the Bonnet Plume because the river ate canoes. Several short descriptions mentioned two to six portages, three or four canyons, 150 km of whitewater, but gave no details. Nonetheless, most people seemed to have made it down, and all thought it was a great river.

After many phone calls, we arranged with a pilot from Old Crow, The Yukon, who agreed to meet us in Fort McPherson and fly us into Bonnet Plume Lake. This would have allowed us to paddle the 570 km back to both our cars, removing the need for a long, cramped shuttle. Unfortunately, when we arrived in Fort McPherson we could not find our pilot. Instead, we found rumors that he drank too much, was notoriously unreliable (but a good pilot), and that he had disappeared two weeks before.



Our attempts to find a pilot in Inuvik, the only other community in the area with pilots, were unsuccessful, so we started the long drive back to Mayo, 407 km north of Whitehorse and the most common fly-in point for the Bonnet Plume trip. As luck would have it, we were able to arrange a flight in from Mayo three days later.

The car shuttle from Fort McPherson to Mayo was a 12-hour trip one way. By the end of our three trips back and forth on the Dempster Highway, we had broken two windshields, punctured a gas tank, and had one flat tire. The Dempster is also the main thoroughfare for transport trucks into the far Northwest Territories. These trucks drove at the maximum possible speed on a road that was often only wide enough for two cars, showed no inclination to stop, and kicked up a blinding dust storm. When we saw one coming we would pull over as far as possible, stop, and hope for the best.

Except for this excitement, the Dempster was a beautiful drive. Most of it is above tree line passing through the rugged Tombstone Range and then following the top of a ridge that separates the Peel River Valley from the North Slope to the Arctic Ocean, with simultaneous views in each direction.

We flew in from Mayo on 4 July, with Areokon Air. It was a beautiful day — clear and calm. The flight went up the Stewart River Valley, topped a 1,950-m high mountain, and dropped quickly down onto Bonnet Plume Lake. Our original plan had been to fly 15 km further upstream into a small lake and spend four days hiking up to the headwater glaciers. Our pilot had flown into this lake once before, at higher water, and almost killed himself and his passengers. With our full agreement he refused to try again. This left us without enough time to try the longer hike, but the views we had of the headwater valley were tantalizing.

We spent our first two nights camped on Bonnet Plume Lake. The water was crystal clear and schools of pan-sized trout swam within sight of the shore. We caught our breakfast, lunch, and supper out in deeper water. The hiking opportunities were endless. After a short distance of bushwhacking we were onto alpine slopes. On top of the north slope we found a nice ridge to hike along. The only distraction on the lake was an outfitting operation preparing for another hunting season. Other wildlife we saw included a moose and an arctic wolf.

By day three, a daily weather pattern began to emerge that stayed with us until we left the mountains. We would wake up to a bright, clear sky. By the time we were on the water, usually around noon, a few small clouds would appear which would steadily grow bigger through the afternoon. By late afternoon the clouds were threatening and on three or four occasions produced substantial storms. These would clear leaving lovely evenings and nights — a bit of a misnomer since the midnight sun did not give us a proper sunset until the third week of the trip.





When the sun was out it was hot and burning. We were thankful for the many tubes of sunscreen we had brought. Nancy and Kathy rigged up masks that hung from their hats to protect their faces. Rudy and Ross grew beards. But the clouds were a mixed blessing: when they hid the sun it became chilly immediately.

It was a short paddle from the lake into the Bonnet Plume River, which had just enough water to float us over a few gravel bars. The first six kilometres were swift with some tight corners and riffles. The first landmark was the Rockslide Canyon. On river left rose a hill of rubble while on the right was a high gravel/boulder bank. The canyon was formed by the river cutting through a rockslide that had started high on the right-hand slopes and covered the entire river valley. The rapids in the canyon were a challenging grade 2 plus with big boulders, sharp turns, chutes, and numerous nice eddies. They were fairly continuous for almost three kilometres.

Halfway through the canyon we camped on the river right at the only good campsite in the canyon. Previous trippers had cleared two tent sites on a small wooded shelf. A rock bench provided a good cook site and the canyon walls were just low enough that mountains could be seen in two directions.

We took the next day to hike up the rockslide. It was an incredible trip around huge decaying boulders that jutted 7–10 metres above a slope covered in fist-sized chunks of scree. The day was hot and sunny and we found no running water until we discovered a small snow-melt stream near the top. The slide provided us with easy access to a high ridge and a great view down the Bonnet Plume Valley. The real treat, though, was on the other side of the ridge, which dropped off in a sheer cliff that left our slope jutting up into the sky. After the hike our evening's entertainment was watching a beaver try and swim up the canyon rapids.

After Rockslide Canyon there was a pleasant drift section before the next rapids. Two wavy corners led to a short straight stretch before a class 3 rapid, which we scouted from a good trail on top of the bluff. Ross and Nancy portaged their packs. Both canoes put on their spray decks. A big hole half-way through easily submerged our canoes, and Rudy and Kathy took water over the top of their splash cover. This

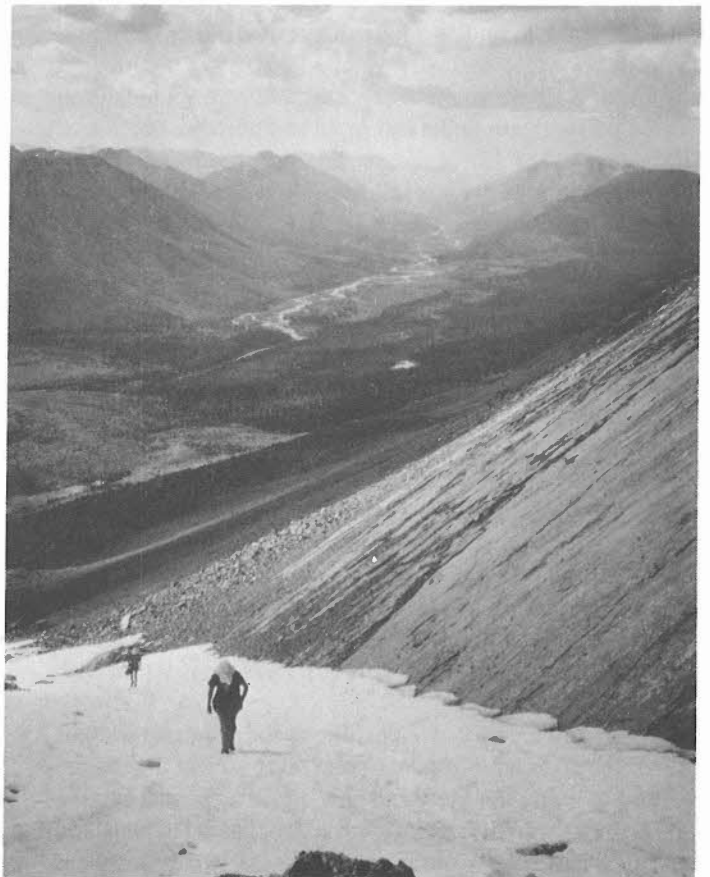
rapid had a recovery pool and some nice eddies that made it more relaxing than some rapids further on.

We camped at a clear water spring just below the rapid, and started the next day with a portage around a small falls 50 metres downstream from our campsite. A good trail on river right follows the top of the canyon, but it led us 100 metres past the put-in, which is actually just below the falls. Some tricky boulders and chutes in the canyon came next, followed for about six kilometres by one set of exciting and challenging rapids after another. Rudy and Kathy were the lead boat. Whenever we saw them pull over and bail we knew it was time to stop and take a second look. None of these rapids were a true class 3, but some of them pushed it.

The next set of class 3 rapids was difficult to tell until we arrived there. They started soon after a major creek entered from river left. The lead-up was a long, tricky rock garden with a couple of ledges. In the middle was a tight S-turn around a drop, ending in a canyon with big waves and a tight corner. Rudy and Kathy ran the distance, Ross and Nancy lined around the S-turn. We camped that night on a high mossy bluff. With the lack of rain, the moss and lichens cracked and broke beneath our feet as we walked to our tents.

Day 7 was a fast drift through braids and a few wavy rapids to Goz Creek. We stopped there for lunch and watched a moose cross the Bonnet Plume about 30 m downstream from us. The afternoon was spent hiking up Goz Creek in search of a swimming hole and then into a nearby lake.

That evening at camp we watched a bank of smoke roll up the Bonnet Plume Valley towards us. As it crossed the ridge immediately downstream, general panic ensued. Tents were taken down and canoes packed up as we prepared to





spend the night anchored to a gravel bar in the middle of the river. While we waited for the crackle of flames we finished dinner, played some bridge, and at midnight, when the situation had not deteriorated, repitched our tents and tried to sleep.

The next day we arose in a smoke-filled valley. We headed downstream because it seemed more interesting to paddle through a forest fire than to struggle back upstream. Stopping on a gravel bar for lunch, we watched the white smoke in the sky turn black. The thunder started and gale-force winds blew sand storms. We hastily packed up and sought protection from the hail and rain under the trees. Then it cleared, taking the smoke and leaving a beautiful evening. We never did find the fire that the smoke came from. In the newly cleared air we had freshly caught grayling for dinner and watched a grizzly bear make its rounds on the high slope across the river. It was to bed early to catch up on some sleep.

After a cloudy night with a smattering of rain we awoke to a perfect clear day. A cool breeze was blowing so we broke out the hammocks and decided to stay put at our creek mouth campsite.

On day 10 we broke camp early, eleven o'clock, and headed downstream to the last rapid and portage. Some five kilometres before Koshe Creek there is a river-wide ledge. It may be runnable but it is followed by a 200-m class 2 rock garden that disappears over a fall. Rudy and Kathy lined the ledge and paddled to the top of the fall. Ross and Nancy portaged on river left from the ledge to the bottom of the fall.

After the fall there is a canyon with class 2 rapids and big waves that continue for a couple of kilometres. Casualness, and an ambiguity in *The Rivers Of The Yukon* book, led us not to expect these rapids. After the portage we had not put on our spray skirts or tied in our gear, and we were lamenting the end of the rapids when suddenly we ended up in a tight S-bend with big waves. Rudy and Kathy took water, but Ross and Nancy went one better by filling up, grounding out, and tipping in the current. Rudy and Kathy performed feats above and beyond the call of duty and rescued everything but the next section of map, two pots, and, ironically, the splash cover. That night we dried out at the junction with Koshe Creek.

On day 11 we started out to hike up the ridge on the other side of the river from Koshe Creek. Half way to the top we stopped to enjoy the view and saw a grizzly bear leave the woods directly below us and cross a dry channel to an island across the river from our camp. The next two hours were

spent watching the bear forage, and waiting to see whether we would have a camp left when we descended. Eventually, old man grizz wandered back onto the hillside and disappeared. Bunched closely together and talking loudly we made our way back to camp only to find one of our canoes missing. Apparently a gust of wind had rolled the canoe into the river where it ended right side up and merrily headed off for the Arctic Ocean. After a frantic paddle we found it calmly eddying out about three kilometres downstream. Some lining, poling, and the longest portage on the trip took us back to camp, a good supper, and a game of bridge.

The next two days were easy paddling on a fast, braided river. The mountains had a few more trees at their base but quickly turned into alpine slopes topped with multicolored cliffs and peaks. We drifted by many excellent hiking opportunities.

The evening of day 14 found us at an outfitter's cabin near the mouth of Fairchild Creek. When we arrived, a half dozen "hombres" from an Italian western were just heading out with 29 fully loaded pack horses. They were the outfitting guides for that area, on their eighth day of a trip into their main camp. As they headed off into the setting sun they invited us to use their cabin. It had four walls, a door, no latch, was marginally waterproof in at least one corner, and had an eclectic collection of supplies and equipment. We decided to camp at the creek mouth.

The next day we began an overnight hike into Fairchild Lake. A good trail that started from behind the corral was clear and easy to follow except at stream crossings and in swamps. The weather steadily deteriorated as we walked in; the wind became stronger and colder. For the first time a large bank of low-lying clouds obscured the horizon. The trail came to the south end of a gorgeous lake, surrounded by high mountains with beautiful valleys heading off from each end. Unfortunately, the shores of the lake were very steep except for a small swampy margin. We found tent sites that had been cleared by the outfitters, but they were littered with garbage. Across the lake was an old mining survey camp where a dump of 50 oil drums was slowly leaching their contents into the lake.

After a couple of hours of searching and deliberation we abandoned our overnight intentions and headed back. By the time we reached our river camp the wind had become worse and it had started to rain. At last, a chance to use our cooking tarp. Obliging, it rained through dinner and cleared up at 10 p.m.



Day 15 was our last day in the mountains. The river had become quite clear, perhaps because all the braiding had filtered out the silt from the glaciers and the canyons. This was good timing because that night was our first without a clear water stream. The mountains had receded from the river and the incoming streams were increasingly silty.

We camped on an island. In the brush behind our tents there was a reasonably fresh caribou kill. Blood was still on the bones, and there was plenty of hair, but no flesh. Wolf tracks in the area suggested that they might have been the predators. The island was also covered in sweet, juicy strawberries.

Next day the heat drove us into the water for an early morning swim. The river fanned out in an increasingly complex braid to match its new surroundings — a seemingly endless expanse of flat taiga forest. That evening on the flats was surprisingly bug-free. On the northern horizon we watched the smoke from another forest fire rise in a mushroom cloud over the Bonnet Plume downstream from us.

Our first morning out of the mountains we experienced our first real encounter with the northern bugs. They had us cowering in our tents as we tried to see through them to figure out where our bug jackets were packed. We had a fast breakfast and, still in full protective gear, made it onto the water in record time. This established a pattern that would last until the end of the trip. Our mornings became a battle against the mosquitoes. We were often forced to stay in full bug regalia for hours after we were on the water. Sometime through the afternoon they would clear and if we did not venture into the grass or woods we spent virtually bug-free evenings.

The last day on the Bonnet Plume we travelled unbelievably quickly, covering 60-70 km in 5 1/2 hours. This included paddling through a burnt-out forest that

was still smoldering, and getting lost in the braids. At one point we went two hours without both canoes knowing where each other was. On the evening of day 17 we camped within site of the cliffs of the Peel River, approximately half-way to Fort McPherson, our take-out point.

The 250 km on the Peel River were heralded by everyone as the work part of the trip. It was about 30 hours of paddling which some energetic sorts try to complete in three long days. A change of pace to that speed would have sent our systems into shock so we paddled it in a leisurely but steady five days.

As we started down the Peel River, a bull moose with a full rack stood at the mouth of the Bonnet Plume and watched us go. From here to the Snake River, the Peel passes through high-walled rock canyons. After the Snake River the cliffs become sandy and the river water goes from reasonably clear to murky, to dense, to unbelievably dirty. The current slowly decreases until the last 80-90 km are a virtual lake. Camping sites became increasingly difficult to find. The Peel did have its own beauty, wonderful canyons, eagles, falcons, a lone musk-ox, great sunsets, and beautiful views; but it was not the Bonnet Plume.

We arrived at the Dempster Highway ferry crossing, 10 km from Fort McPherson, 22 days after we had been dropped at Bonnet Plume Lake. A local resident drove us from the ferry crossing to our car. The people we had left the car with had covered it with a tarp to protect it from weather and vandals. The car started without problems and we headed back to Mayo to complete our marathon shuttle. From the high ridges of the Dempster Highway we could just make out the hazy outline of the Bonnet Plume mountain range. It was our farewell to a remarkable wilderness trip.



## UPDATE—THE VOYAGEUR RECREATIONAL WATERWAY PROPOSED FOR THE FRENCH RIVER

Jack Gregg

Phase Four of the proposed French River Voyageur Recreational Waterway Feasibility Study, by Toronto consultants Wyllie and Ufnal, was released in the fall of 1989. Phase Four is a slightly modified summary of the previous phases of the study. In my previous update on this boating canal project between Ontario's Lake Nipissing and Georgian Bay, published in the Fall 1988 issue of *Nastawgan*, I wrote that the Pickerel River Channel would be used as an entry to Georgian Bay. This is incorrect. The final proposal is to use the French River's Bad River Channel, the principal route now used by small craft. The Voyageur Waterway would, of course, allow far larger craft to ascend the French River. The proposal is for a channel 1.8 metres deep (6 feet), providing passage for watercraft up to 12.2 metres (40 feet) long, all the way from Georgian Bay to Lake Nipissing.

Using the lowest construction cost proposal, rapids would be by-passed by marine railways (in three cases) or travelifts/tote roads (in two cases), or completely destroyed by a lift lock (in one case). Marine railways would lift boats from the water and transport them by rail cars; travelifts would lift boats from the water and transport them in self-propelled wagons over roads. The highest construction cost proposal includes four lift locks and one marine railway.

The following is extracted from Phase IV of the Wyllie and Ufnal study:

### *SELECTED ROUTE*

The primary factors involved in the selection of an optimum route are environmental protection and economic considerations. There are numerous other factors which also play a role in the selection of an "optimum" scheme. The French River Provincial Park and Canadian Heritage River status are major factors in the route selection process. A key factor in the selection of an optimum route was the preservation of a *scenic canoe route separate from the sportsman/powerboater route*, to allow for both types of unhindered recreational use on the French River. With these factors in mind, a process of elimination was used to determine an "optimum" route.

The optimum route which evolved out of the study of alternatives is:

- 1) the Bad River/Western Outlet entrance into the French and Pickerel River system;
- 2) the Pickerel River to Little French Rapids to Deer Bay;
- 3) across Michaud Falls/Stony Rapids into the North Channel; along the North Channel bypassing
- 4) Ouelette Rapids and
- 5) Cedar Rapids; and finally across
- 6) the Portage/Chaudiere Dam into lower Upper French River/Lake Nipissing.

The study recommends that an operating authority be established under the guidance of, and chaired by, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, Marine Services Division. The purpose of this authority would be to secure the Voyageur Waterway route by land purchases and rights of way so that development at some time in the future would be relatively easy. Such negotiations would be critical for the Little French River Rapids, where French River Indian Reserve #13 is involved. At present, the economics do not work out well for development, even with the manipulated numbers used in the study (the cost/benefit ratio tends to estimates of *low* construction costs, *high* public use, and *mid-to-high* visitor expenditures).

The study proposes two routes down the French River, one the "optimum" route for boat users, and one the canoe route. The routes would cross three times, but generally be separate. The canoe route would follow the north channel around Okickendawt Island (the Dokis Indian Reserve), the south channel around Eighteen-Mile Island, the north channel around Fourteen-Mile Island, and the Main Channel to Georgian Bay. The boat route would follow the other channel in each case. The canoe route would not follow the route of the Voyageurs down the Main Channel of the French River between Chaudiere Falls and the head of Eighteen-Mile Island, nor down the Western Channel of the outlet.

There has been very little news of the project since last fall. The City of North Bay has stated that it is interested in the project but not willing to put any money into it. In view of the dismal economics presented in the Wyllie and Ufnal study, the city is being politically and financially prudent. There was some agitation by private boat owners in North Bay to proceed with the project. They were encouraged by the closing words of the study:

### *Open Waterway Year 2000*

Ontario could enter the Twenty-first Century with North America's first all recreational waterway. It would set new patterns in design and operation that would enhance the environment and complement the economy.

Thus Canada's first heritage river system would incorporate Canada's first recreational waterway . . . a sharing of waterways in keeping with the requirements of a Heritage River System Designation. A worthwhile challenge to be accepted by the citizens of all Ontario for enjoyment today as well as tomorrow.

The proponents choose to ignore the closing words of Phase III, the economic impact analysis. Phase II summarized that operating costs per year will average more than \$900,000 (1987 dollars) over the first ten years of operation of the Voyageur Waterway. "The benefits which can be identified and projected in advance are not comparable and fall short of justifying the waterway on economic grounds."

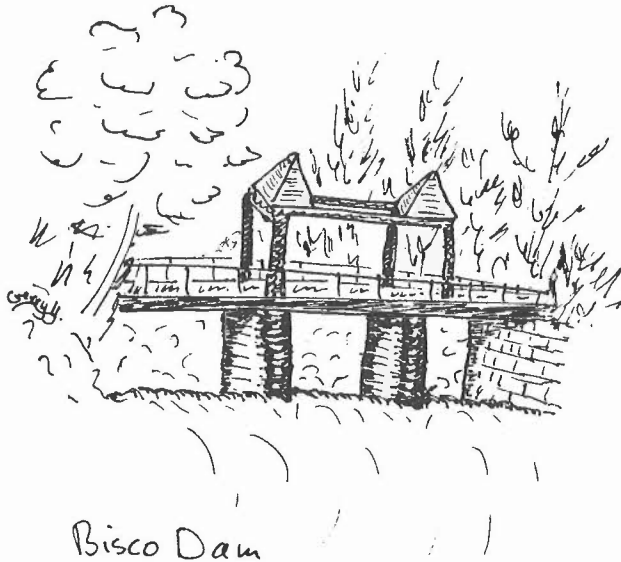
For the time being, the Voyageur Waterway proposal is dormant.

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Jack Gregg's first report on the Voyageur Waterway appeared in the Winter 1987 issue of *Nastawgan*.

## ALL ABOUT MY TRIP

These are some of the personal experiences of five-year-old Jamie Ness when he guided his parents and other friends on a canoe trip down the west branch of the Spanish River in the summer of 1989. The sentences printed in *italics* are his direct speech, the rest of the text represents his unspoken thoughts; everything as observed, recorded, and reported by Gerry Yellowlees. Jamie's party consisted of Bill and Rita Ness, Doug and Lisa Ashton, Paul and Diane Hamilton, Vic Benjamin, and Gerry Yellowlees. And Rubber Ducky.



8 July — *Mom, I'm going to throw up!* We had an easy drive from Toronto to Agnew Lake Marina on the Spanish River but from there things went down (up?) hill. You see, it was a very small plane with very big people and luggage in it. I had no room to move. The plane started bucking up and down like a horse at the Calgary Stampede. I felt sick. There was nowhere to go to escape so I turned to mom and threw up.

When the plane landed, it was great because not only could I get out and explore but also I could go fishing.

*Screech!* That was the sound the baby rabbit made when dad stepped on it. It was about five centimetres long and bumped its nose against my hand when I went to pat it.

*Where's everyone going?* Weasels? I've got to go to the other side of Bisco Dam and see this! They are brown animals that look like stretched squirrels.

*What's Gerry doing, dad?* He's drawing a picture of the bridge. *Let me see — that's good!*

*Where are the fishes, dad?*

9 July — *Is the bunny gone?* I bet his mommy came back for him last night.

*Vic, can I help make pancakes, too?* These blueberries are good.

*Gerry, can I help breaking the eggs?* I'm good at picking the pieces of shell out.

*Are you going to run the rapids, Vic?*

*Dad, where is my fishing net?*

Thank goodness we're stopping to camp. I'm tired of wearing this red bandana and sitting in the canoe.

*Gerry, can I some swimming too? Mom, where's my bathing suit?*

Net! What net? Why does my mom keep bugging me to wear a net over my head? It falls over my face and I can't see the fish. GET TO BED now it's my dad yelling at me. All I want to do is fish.

10 July — The sun is shining but I'm tired of being bitten by bugs. It hurts. I think I'll stay in bed.

*Mom! Look what I've got! Don't let Doug step on my toad like last time — he squashed it!*

This rafting is fun. Lisa almost got blown overboard by the sail. Look how fast we're going. Maybe if I lean over I can catch some waves.

This is fun! You know what — mom gave me a piggy-back ride all the way over the portage. It was a long one. I asked dad if I could fish but he said no, there will be more fish later. He looked kind of hot.

Dad is OK. He let me dive into the tent because the bugs were so bad. You see, we couldn't leave the door open for a long time, so I got to dive in.

11 July — *Can you make me a daisy chain, Gerry? You're not as good as mom, are you?*

*Mom, me and Gerry made this crown for you.*

*Doug will you PLEASE come and help me catch some grasshoppers.*

*You want a black one first — OK.*

*Oh no, now you want a ten-foot one!*

*Can I help pull the sacks up?*

Why is everyone yelling at me to get out from beneath them?

Wow, can rubber ducky ever swim! Lisa let ducky shoot the rapids at lunch time on the Pogamasing River. But Lisa didn't do it as well as rubber ducky. I was kinda worried about the red marks the rocks made on her.

You know what? Dad caught some fish.

Ketchup, Mustard, and Relish! The canoes! It's their names because of the colors.

12 July — *Don't pee in the water? But dad, I need to pee!*

Oh good, he's going to pee with me on the shore.

Stand on the rocks at Graveyard Rapids with nothing on and let you take a picture of me? *No way, mom!*

I'm hot and I want to swim. The others can swim, why can't I? OK dad, I'll go fishing if you'll come with me.

13 July — I'm cold. Put more clothes on! — I don't have time. I have to go fishing. I can see lots of fish.

Its lunch time and Gerry found a pretty blue and white marble. For me? Thank you!

*Doug, I think we need more wood. The fire is going out.* Well, I know the flames are high but it'll soon burn out. Maybe if I poke it a bit more it'll burn better. I'm warm now.

14 July — No bugs, thank goodness, but it's boring on flatwater — at least it was until Lisa rediscovered my water pistol. Now I can shoot Doug.

We're back at the airport, but I don't have to fly in *that* plane again!

## CANOEING WITH OUR KID

Bill Ness

For over a decade, from spring thaw to winter freeze-up, Rita and I had enjoyed freedom together in a canoe. Then Jamie came into our lives. Little miracles can sure make big changes.

We were truly grateful for Rita's parents whose generosity in providing babysitting services made it still possible for us to paddle together on occasion. However, we wanted our son to love the outdoors as we did and we wanted to enjoy our leisure time together as a family. This meant that we had to adapt our outings to his interests and limitations if we expected him to enjoy canoeing with us.

Much to our initial annoyance we learned that young children do not share our feeling of personal challenge in trying to get from Point A to Point B in the fastest possible time. It was necessary to change our outlook to learn to relax outdoors, to savor the sense of being there rather than getting there. Our early outings were confined to afternoon or single-day poke-about on local rivers and lakes that allowed Jamie ample time to play, explore, and discover our natural world. As he began to increasingly enjoy and feel comfortable with these excursions we started to move further afield on progressively longer trips.



Rita and I were fortunate that by the time junior came along we were experienced canoeists and campers who felt at home in a canoe and in the bush. We could still remember the frustrations of the early years as we learned the ropes and were glad that we did not have to worry about mastering the J-stroke while trying to appease a bored and unhappy child. It was because of our confidence in our abilities that we felt the risk of paddling with an infant was reasonable for us. Nonetheless, as Jamie couldn't swim and was too small for a PFD, we ventured out only in warm, dry weather and hugged the shoreline with him regally enthroned in his car seat—straps undone, of course.

It wasn't until our son was big enough to fit properly into a PFD that we were able to do any serious canoeing. That purchase of his first life vest was a milestone for us.

Still, a PFD was not a substitute for the feeling that every paddler must have, that of being at home in the water. So swimming lessons for Jamie followed. We also made games of capsizing and re-entering the canoe, and he learned to float through a rapid safely with dad and to grab a throw line. Our decision on what kind of a life vest to buy our son established the direction we would take in the purchase of all his outdoor equipment. The foam-filled vest-style PFD with Fastex-buckled straps at waist and crotch and big collar grab loops for frantic parents had all the features we wanted, but it was twice the price of the horse-collar PFD at the discount stores. We've always opted for good gear for ourselves on the assumption that we wouldn't have much fun outdoors if we were cold, wet, or uncomfortable. And when it came to safety-related equipment we've never scrimped. After all, how much is your life worth? The choice was obvious and Jamie was so proud with a PFD just like ours. His only beef was: "Why don't I have a Tekna knife?"

Fortunately we found that we didn't have to spend a bundle to purchase a good wardrobe of outdoor clothes for junior. A visit to the children's section of any discount department store would get us almost everything we needed. Warm, quick-drying acrylic socks, track suits, and sweaters could be found at bargain prices. Toques and mitts were easily acquired, but we had to have the foresight to buy in January. Cotton-polyester blend shirts and pants proved as hardwearing for him as they were for us. Over it all we added a light nylon shell suit — a K-Way or some far-eastern facsimile — to protect from bugs and mud on the trip and to save us a lot of post-trip scrubbing of his other clothes.

It took some experimenting to find adequate footwear, but we finally settled on rubber boots. These were cheap, durable, warm, quickdrying and easy to clean. Jamie also likes them because they didn't leak, which for him meant that they made good water containers for playing on the beach. Then at the end of the day he changed into dry runners for around camp.

For several items we found that we couldn't avoid the camping specialty shops. The children's rainwear sold in the department stores was of two varieties; either cheap, flimsy vinyl with cartoon characters on it, or heavy, bulky rubberized cloth. Consequently, Jamie ended up with a junior version of a coated nylon rainsuit, which kept him dry even it wasn't high tech. A tube of glue and some patching material proved to be a useful accessory for the rain pants which were, alas, never designed to withstand bum-sliding down rocks.

For some reason the concept of vapor-transport underwear has yet to penetrate the world of department store children's underwear. Kids, we learned, were thought to be comfy in something called cotton thermal underwear which soaks up water like an old dish towel. It took considerable searching to find synthetic children's underwear, but we finally did locate it in the larger ski shops. Inexplicably, the price wasn't much less than for the adult sizes. However, end-of-season clearance sales enabled us to pick it up at a



reasonable price, and since it stretches, it lasts junior over several years.

We soon concluded that if we were going to take Jamie with us on outings in cooler weather he would need a wet suit. His small body mass would cause him to lose body heat and become hypothermic much easier than us. Fortunately, the sail-boarding boom had led to the production of kiddies' wet suits, and these could be bought at surprisingly low prices at season-end clearances in the windsurfing shops.

While good equipment can help reduce the discomforts we may face in our outdoor adventures, Jamie, like his mom and dad, has had to learn that the wilderness traveller must be a bit of a stoic. Since he is strongly influenced by our attitudes and behavior, we found that, while it doesn't work all the time, if we displayed a cheerful, positive attitude in adverse circumstances, his level of anxiety or unhappiness about the situation was made more manageable.

Cultivating a stoic's attitude has been most important in Jamie's relationships with the tiny winged creatures of our wildlands. We were reluctant to smear his body with "deet," which has been implicated in a number of serious reactions in small children, including anaphylaxis, toxic encephalopathy, and seizures. Instead, we chose to rely on good protective clothing as the first line of defense and limited the use of repellents to hands and face (when a headnet could not be worn). Initially, we exposed him to very small doses to test his response. However, he quickly learned that, no matter what precautions you take, a number of them will still dine on you, and that you have to learn to live with it.

In addition to all the regular outdoor gear that we normally carried on trips, we now had to tote along items to keep junior amused. We chose toys that were small, light, durable, and cheap. As

well, they preferably should be designed to encourage play in and discovery of the natural world. Some of his favorites have been a dip net and margarine tub for collecting aquatic life, plastic bags for collecting rocks and other treasures, plastic sand shover, water gun, inflatable beach ball, and frisbee. As well, we always had a book for a bedtime story and a small stuffed friend to sleep with.

When Jamie got bored, if a toy didn't remedy the complaint, a snack did. Kids are great snackers and a readily accessible supply of goodies is a necessity on a canoe trip. While many adults are satisfied with some gorp and a bottle of water, most kids like to have a variety to chose from. Beside the useful assortment from the bulk good store, we have found foods such as fruit roll-ups and granola bars make conveniently prepackaged tasty treats. In addition, the advent of the Tetra pack has made it possible to take along a wide selection of fruit and milk drinks in single serving containers. (Assistant Editor's note: Tetra packs produce a lot of garbage for a little drink. Alternate ways of making small quantities of drink might be looked into.)

We quickly found that carrying all these additional supplies for a third person was a challenge to our packing and portaging skills. It was imperative that bulk and weight be kept to a minimum. We were determined to keep the number of packs low, even on longer trips. It was enough of a chore chasing the little guy down the portage trail without having to worry about transporting a mound of packs. Consequently, we decided three was the maximum on any trip. This could be accomplished by using a jumbo canoe pack that would accommodate all our light, bulky equipment. At least one of the packs had to have huge outside pockets for quick access to snack, toys, and extra clothes while in the canoe.

Sometimes, when we're chasing after him down the trail before he can get lost or we catch him using the axe to split rocks, we wonder if bringing him along is worth all the aggravations. But when he comes to us proudly presenting the frog he's found or when we catch a glimpse of him sitting staring into the evening campfire, we know he belongs there with us.





UPDATE - FEBRUARY 1990

MORE THAN FOUR THOUSAND kilometres of eighteen rivers have now been nominated to the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. The latest addition to the System is the Grand River in Ontario which was nominated at the 13th meeting of the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board on January 16. The 290 kilometre Grand was accepted by the Board on the basis of its outstanding historical and recreational features.

As shown on the map below, nine of the eighteen nominated rivers have so far been designated, meaning that management plans for the rivers have been lodged with the Canadian Heritage Rivers Board and the rivers are formally accepted into the System. Information on these rivers is provided in the first chart on the next page.

RIVERS IN THE SYSTEM



\* Nominated rivers

DESIGNATED RIVERS

River	Province (Park <sup>1</sup> )	Designation Date	Length
French	Ontario (French River P.P.)	Feb. 1986	110 km
Aisek	Yukon (Kluane N.P. Reserve)	Feb. 1986	90 km
Clearwater	Saskatchewan (Clearwater R. P.P.)	June 1986	187 km
South Nahanni	NWT (Nahanni N.P. Reserve)	Jan. 1987	300 km
Bloodvein <sup>2</sup>	Manitoba (Atikaki P.P.)	June 1987	200 km
Mattawa	Ontario (Mattawa River P.P. and Samuel de Champlain P.P.)	Jan. 1988	33 km
Athabasca	Alberta (Jasper N.P.)	Jan. 1989	168 km
North Saskatchewan	Alberta (Banff N.P.)	Jan. 1989	49 km
Kicking Horse	British Columbia (Yoho N.P.)	Jan. 1989	67 km
<b>Total</b>			<b>1,204 km</b>

NOMINATED RIVERS

Management plans are in preparation for all of the nominated rivers. The dates when these plans are expected to be lodged with the Board are shown in the following chart.

River	Province (Park <sup>1</sup> )	Anticipated Designation	Length
St. Croix	New Brunswick	July 1990	185 km
Seal	Manitoba (Proposed Seal R. P.P.)	July 1990	260 km
Jacques Cartier	Quebec (Jacques Cartier P.P.)	July 1990	128 km
Thelon	Northwest Territories	July 1990	545 km
Kazan	Northwest Territories	July 1990	615 km
Grand	Ontario	Jan. 1991	290 km
The Thirty Mile (Yukon River)	Yukon	Jan. 1991	48 km
Missinaibi	Ontario (Missinaibi P.P.)	Jan. 1992	426 km
Bloodvein <sup>2</sup>	Ontario (Woodland Caribou P.P.)	Jan. 1992	106 km
Boundary Waters	Ontario (LaVerendrye/Quetico P.P.)	Jan. 1992	250 km
<b>Total</b>			<b>2,853 km</b>

<sup>1</sup> N.P. denotes national park, P.P. provincial park.

<sup>2</sup> The Bloodvein River was nominated in two parts by Manitoba and Ontario.



## WCA TRIPS

Summer 1990 **PICKEREL MAGNETAWAN AREA**  
Stephen Crouch, (416) 782-7741.

See Conservation column. Route assessment trips. Come and help to document and improve routes in our adopted canoeing area this summer. As well as having a lot of fun, this could be the most rewarding trip you have had in a long time! At least two or three trips are anticipated, dates and precise locations to be set. Trip organizers and participants needed. Limit: your imagination.

8 July **BURNT RIVER**  
Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005; book now.

This trip from Kinmount to the village of Burnt River is an easy, relaxed-paced paddle with a few short portages. Mainly slow moving water with several small riffles. Suitable for the family. Limit six canoes.

14-15 July **WOLF AND PICKEREL RIVER LOOP**

Diane Hamilton, (416) 279-0789; book before 7 July.

This will be a 51-km trip that is exploratory for the organizer. The route will take us through the scenic Georgian Bay country. Suitable for novices with canoe camping experience. Limit three canoes.

14-15 July **GULL RIVER, MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE**

Jeff Lane, (519) 837-3815; book before 7 July.

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. It is not unusual to spend some time in the river, planned or not. Limit six canoes/kayaks.

21-22 July **PALMER RAPIDS**  
Mike Jones, (416) 270-3256; book before 21 July.

A play weekend at Palmer on the historic Madawaska River. Whitewater paddlers from novice to experienced will enjoy the rapids and find interesting places to play in. Limit eight canoes/kayaks.

4-6 August **OTTAWA RIVER**  
Dale Miner, (416) 730-8187; book before 28 July.

Aggressive intermediate paddlers will find paddling on the Ottawa an experience to remember. Rapids are likely to be running high at this time of year and running them successfully takes all a canoeist's skill and luck. According to level, we will run the Middle Channel or perhaps the Main Channel as well. A campsite close to the river offers a chance to rest and recuperate for the next day's challenge. This is some of the biggest water in Ontario. Limit six canoes/kayaks.

10(?) - 11-12 Aug. **FRENCH RIVER**  
Alison Cleverly, (416) 467-7956 or (416) 424-3268.  
Mark Barsevskis, (416) 239-2830; book before 28 July.

KIDS! Are you tired of hearing the old folks whining about never getting out paddling? Have you heard tall tales about WCA canoe trips, but only ever been to the fall whine and cheese party? Come and network with your future paddling partners at the campsite while parents get in their strokes on whitewater. This trip involves an easy two-hour paddle to our base camp at Blue Chute. Limited to kids, their parents, and their friends.

12-18 August **TEMAGAMI AREA**  
Mary and Jasper Megelink, (416) 877-0012; book before 1 August.

We will start at Mowats Landing on the Montreal River. Our route will take us through Anima Nipissing Lake, Lake Temagami, and Lady Evelyn Lake. We hope to climb Maple Mountain as well as have time to enjoy the blueberries. Limit is four canoes with fit crews.

13-17 August **KILLARNEY PARK**  
Gary Walters, (416) 323-3603; book before 8 August.

A mid-week paddle through the beautiful Killarney lakes. We will paddle and hike, exploring the Park. A chance to avoid the weekend crowds and find some peace and quiet. Limit three canoes.

18-19 August **ALGONQUIN PARK**  
Hugh Valliant, (416) 699-3464; book before 11 August.

We will travel to a little known area of the Park, where there are, according to reputable sources, Indian pictographs. This is a trip for experienced light paddling trippers who are not afraid of portaging on their way to these two interior sites. The exact route will depend on water levels and there could be portages up to three kilometres. Limit four canoes.

18-19 August **MINDEN (GULL RIVER)**  
Steve Lukasko, (416) 532-0898; book before 12 August.

Fast water, steep drops, and some sharp "chicken heads" make the Gull a challenge to all open boaters. A good place to hone your skills. Limit six boats.

25-26 August **MAGNETAWAN LAKES**  
Sandy and Roger Harris, (416) 323-3603; book before 18 August.

After searching the maps for a relatively inaccessible access point, we will paddle on some of the tributary streams and creeks of the Magnetawan. Exact route will be determined to avoid cottages and motor boats as much as possible. We are going exploring, so be prepared for an interesting campsite. Limit four canoes with patient paddlers who are prepared to wade and portage.

25-26 August **MINDEN (GULL RIVER)**  
Ken Coburn, (416) 767-5845; book between 6 and 23 August.

The world-class whitewater course on the Gull will challenge the expert paddler and provide an exiting run through fast, technical rapids. A thrill for even the most jaded boater. Limit six canoes.

1-3 September **SOUTH GEORGIAN BAY LOOP**  
Jasper and Mary Megelink, (416) 877-0012; book between 19 and 28 August.

We will meet Saturday morning at Oastler Lake Provincial Park. This will be a leisurely flatwater loop through the magnificent lakes southwest of Parry Sound. Suitable for canoeists capable of paddling 18-20 km a day with a few short portages. Limit five canoes.

1-3 September **OTTAWA RIVER**  
Dale Miner, (416) 730-8187; book before 21 August.

This is the trip for the whitewater aficionado. The rapids are big and the holes are deep and demand respect. Expert paddlers will find a challenging weekend in store for them on the Middle and Main channels of the Ottawa. A nearby campsite for apres-canoe gourmet cooking is available. Limit six canoes with crews who don't mind getting wet.

15-16 September **MAGNETAWAN RIVER**  
Hugh Valliant, (416) 699-3464; book before 8 September.

This is an exploratory trip for the organizer, a reconnaissance in anticipation of running this wildwater river after the rafters have finished, next spring. The 22 km between Ahmic Lake and Wahwashkesh Lake will offer plenty of spots to play, or maybe walk, depending on the water level. A trip for experienced paddlers who enjoy the unknown. Solo paddlers welcome. Limit four canoes.

16 September **ELORA GORGE**  
Dave Sharp, (519) 621-5599; book before 10 September.

At this season, the fall rains are beginning to refill the Grand River. The Gorge has many small rapids providing ample opportunity to practice and improve your whitewater skill. Suitable for intermediate paddlers. Limit six canoes.

22-23 September **LOWER MADAWASKA**  
Ken Coburn, (416) 767-5845; book between 10 and 18 September.

This fall trip down the Lower Mad is always a delight whether you enjoy playing in the rapids or relaxing and looking at the autumn colors. Overnight camping on the river. Intermediate paddlers. Limit four canoes.

6-8 October **PETAWAWA RIVER**  
Diane Hamilton, (416) 279-0789; book before 28 September.

This fall trip down the Petawawa from Lake Traverse to Lake McManus, through Algonquin's fall colors, is a classic.

Don't forget your camera. Limit four canoes with crews experienced in cold weather tripping.

14 October **ELORA GORGE**  
Ken Coburn, (416) 767-5845; book between 8 and 13 October.

Often the water level is quite high at this time of year so we could have an exiting trip. Whitewater play for intermediate paddlers prepared for colder weather. Limit six canoes.

20 October **SOUTH GEORGIAN BAY**  
Hugh Valliant, (416) 699-3464; book before 12 October.

A flatwater trip suitable for novices who are prepared for inclement weather. The trip will begin north of Six Mile Lake Provincial Park and run west to McCrae Lake where we will set up a base camp. We will then paddle to Georgian Bay Island National Park. Along the way we will see a historic shrine and a wooden cross. Limit five canoes.

A note from the Outings Committee. Firstly a heartfelt 'thank you' to all our trip organizers. You give a lot of pleasure to trip participants. For those of our members who feel that they would like to organize a trip but are not quite sure about what is involved, give me a call and find out how easy it is.

If you have suggestions for routes that would be interesting, particularly in the Pickerel-Magnetawan area, for either one-day or two-day trips or longer, we would welcome your input. New route ideas are always interesting. If you have difficulty contacting one of the organizers, please feel free to phone me, Roger Harris, (416) 323-3603.

### THE PIECE OF GRANITE

Back from the river and unpacking. Noticing how light the bags are. Stuffed stitch-busting full on my way up. Now the bags are almost pathetically light. On most vacations the reverse is true. You come back with more than you leave with. Panama hats, straw hats, art work. Different coming back from the river. There you leave with more and come back with less. Much less. Food mainly, but you also come back with less clothes, less fishing gear, less camping equipment. Offered willingly as donations to the river god or taken arbitrarily. Tolls for the right of passage.

What comes back extra? A piece of driftwood, some pictures or slides, a piece of granite, several pages of notes. The sum total of the herculean effort of 20 days of river travel.

Looking at the little pile of extra and what value one would place on it. The piece of granite now held so lightly so far south of its birthplace has treasure value. Midas's millions are less desirable than the vision of adventure you can conjure up by holding the piece of granite in your hand. The wind, the cold, the campsites, the sunsets, the fish, the big brawling river all permeate from the granite rock to you. Osmosis of the best kind.

Greg Went

# 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.*

**DISCOUNTS ON TRIPPING SUPPLIES** WCA members who present a membership card will receive a 10 percent discount on many non-sale times 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.

**INUIT ART** Carvings by Labrador Inuit carver, Gilbert Hay (speaker at the 1990 WCA Labrador Symposium), are available at wholesale prices. Catalog of photos, prices, etc. can be obtained by contacting Herb Brown, c/o General Delivery Stn. B, Happy Valley, Labrador AOP 1E0.

**WHITE SQUALL** Join us in exploring the 30,000 islands of Georgian Bay by sea kayak. We teach carefully and with a smile. Our shop has paddling and trip gear that works, fine folk music, friendly chickens, and the best selection of canoes and kayaks on the Bay. RR#1, Nobel, Ontario, P0G 1G0; (705) 342-5324.

**ADVENTURE NOMADE QUEBEC EASTERN CANADA** Adventure travel in a French ambiance with bilingual guides: seakayak, backpack, canoe, dog sled, nordic ski. Two-week trips, made to measure trips for groups. Contact: C.P. 1432, Sept-Iles, QC, Canada, G4R 4X8; phone (418) 962-1123; fax (418) 962-6518. Or: Quebec Tourism Office, 20 Queen St. West, Toronto, Ontario; phone(416) 977-1367.

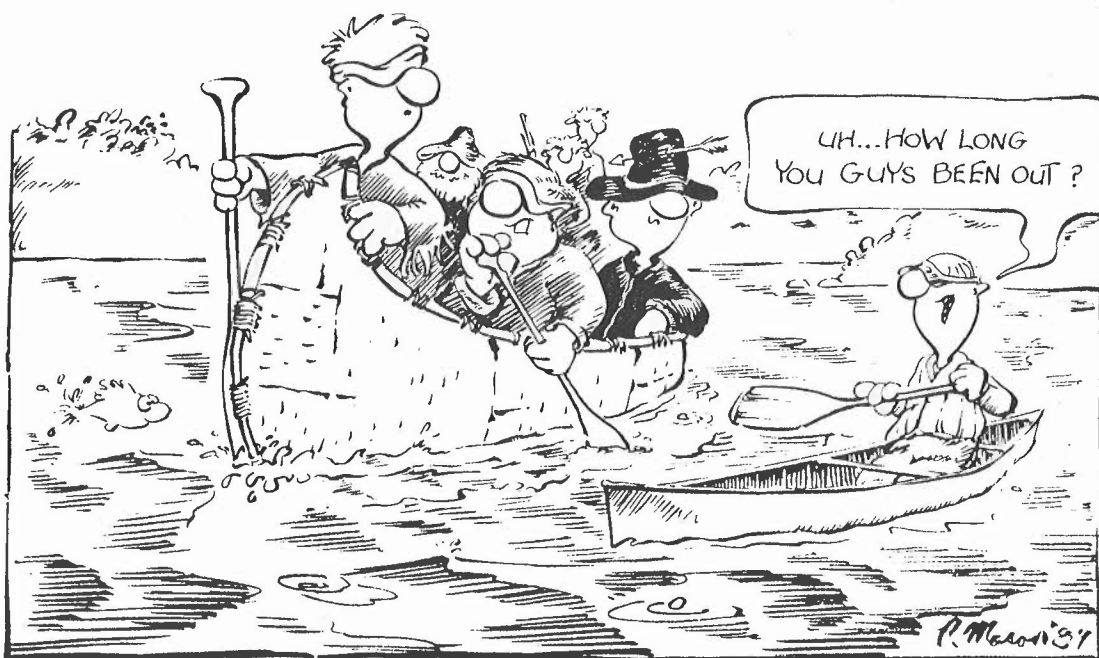
**FOR SALE** Two "old fashioned" bush lightweight canvas wall tents 12x14 with 7 1/2 high ridge. Both ends full-height zippered mosquito/midge net. Internal or external wood pole suspension. Good family bush tents or for large encampment. One very new and one very old. Both for US\$265 delivered or will sell separately. Also: new large-size L.L. Bean packbasket. I'll be travelling east/west in Ontario in the fall. Bob McCoubrie, 2830 Lower 138th St., Rosemount, MN 55068, USA; phone (612) 423-2327.

**CLASSIC SOLO CANOE COURSE I** offer an instruction program in three levels. Through these clinics the canoeist can discover the joy of handling a canoe in any condition, from the quiet of a misty morning to the pounding waves of a stormy lake. The client is supplied with a canoe of wood-canvas, cedar strip, or kevlar in a new or old design. A four-hour clinic with a 1:3 ratio costs \$60. All courses take place in the evening on Meech Lake in the Gatineau Hills, Quebec, from May to September. Contact: Becky Mason, Meech Lake Rd., Old Chelsea, Quebec J0X 2N0; phone (819) 827-2282.

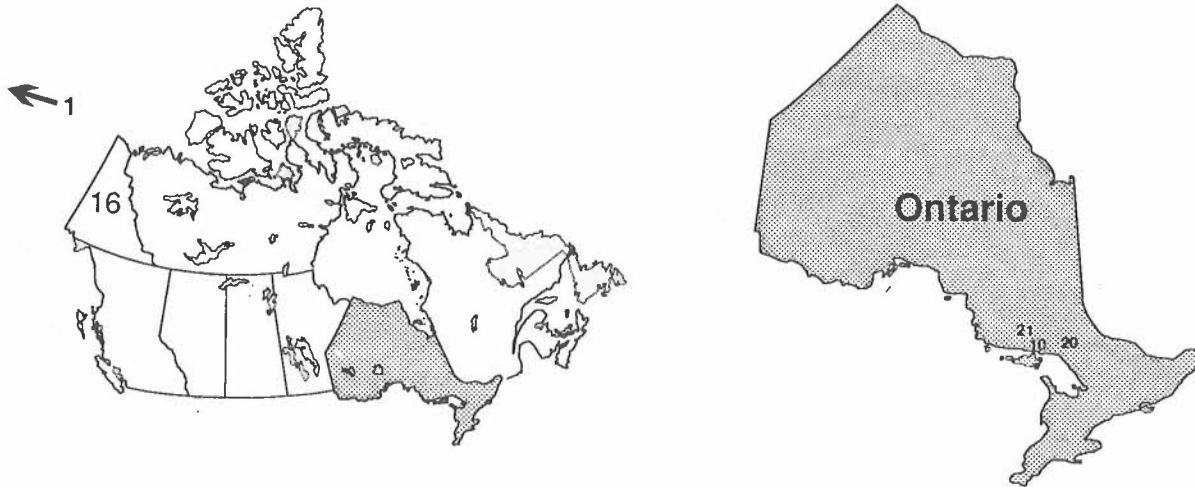
**MYSTERY COUNTRY INTERNATIONAL** of Thompson, Manitoba, has prepared a canoeing guide for their own area and other more distant areas in that sector of the province. Possible trips range from short to long, easy to difficult, flatwater to whitewater, safe to hazardous, lakes, streams, and rivers — something for all tastes. There are excellent entry and exit points and a good transportation web. Any needed equipment and supplies are available in Thompson, and safe parking is provided free. Contact: Mystery Country International, 4 Nelson Road, Thompson, Manitoba R8N 0B4.

**YUKON PADDLE** This canoe adventure, air service, and outfitting business wants to reach all paddlers and hikers interested in exploring some of Canada's last remaining wilderness. Many Yukon rivers are seldom travelled; the potential in this area is endless. From our base at Inconnu we are also in easy access of the Nahanni, Canada's premier wilderness river. Both guided and independent trips are available. Contact: Andy Blaine, Yukon Paddle, 25 Claude Ave., Toronto, M6R 2T5; phone (416) 533-6301.

**CANOEJOONS**  
PAUL MASON



# Where it is ...



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## Wilderness Canoe Association

## membership application

I enclose a cheque for \$25 (adult) or \$35 (family) for membership in the Wilderness Canoe Association. I understand that this gives me/us the opportunity to participate in WCA outings and activities, and entitles me/us to receive *Nastawgan* and to vote at meetings of the Association.  New member  Renewal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_(h) \_\_\_\_\_(w)

\* This membership is valid for one year.

\* Send completed form and cheque, payable to the WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION, to the membership secretary at the WCA postal address.