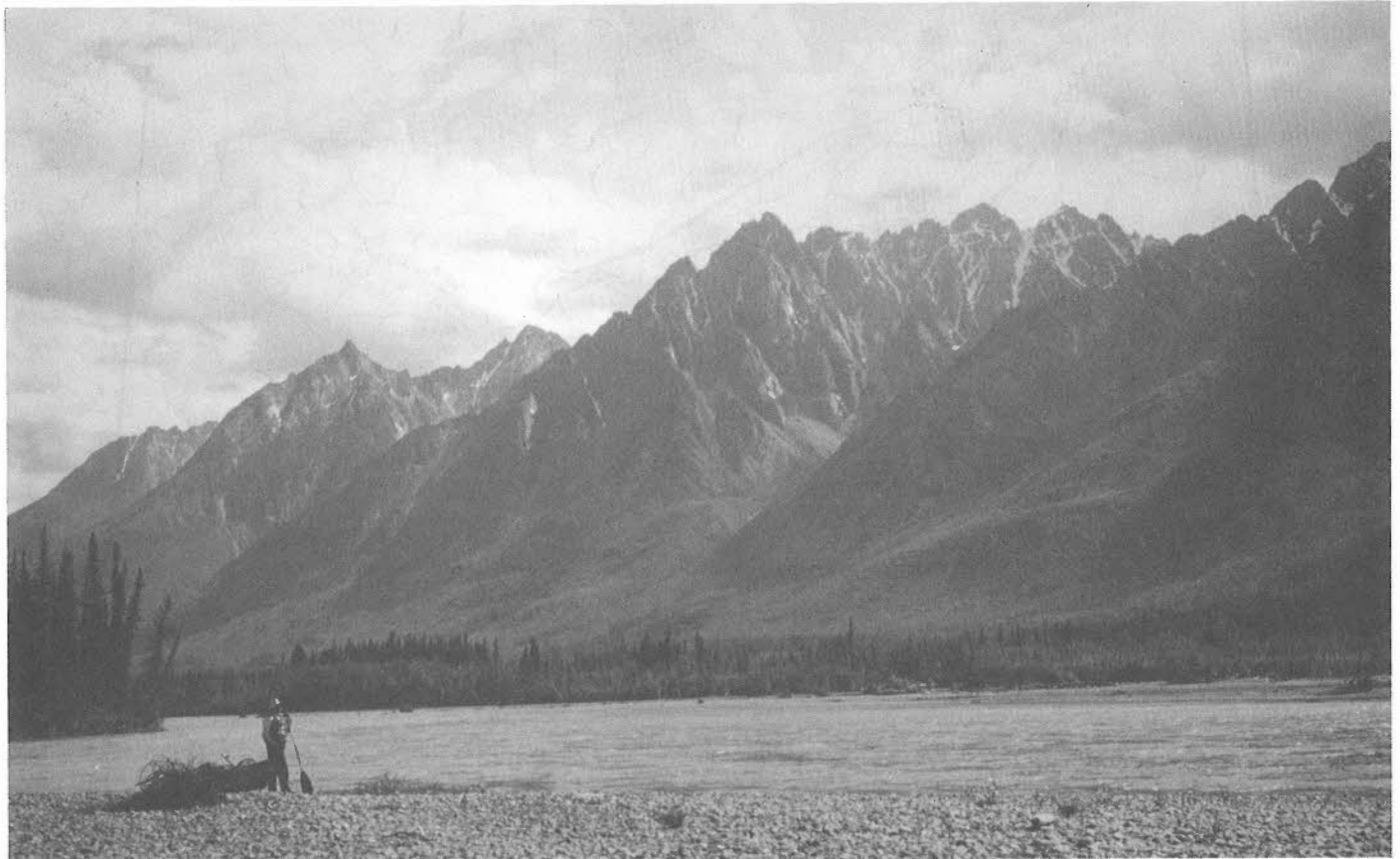




nastawgan

Autumn 1997 Vol. 24 No. 3

Quarterly Journal of the Wilderness Canoe Association



Ragged Range - Cirque of the Unclimbables

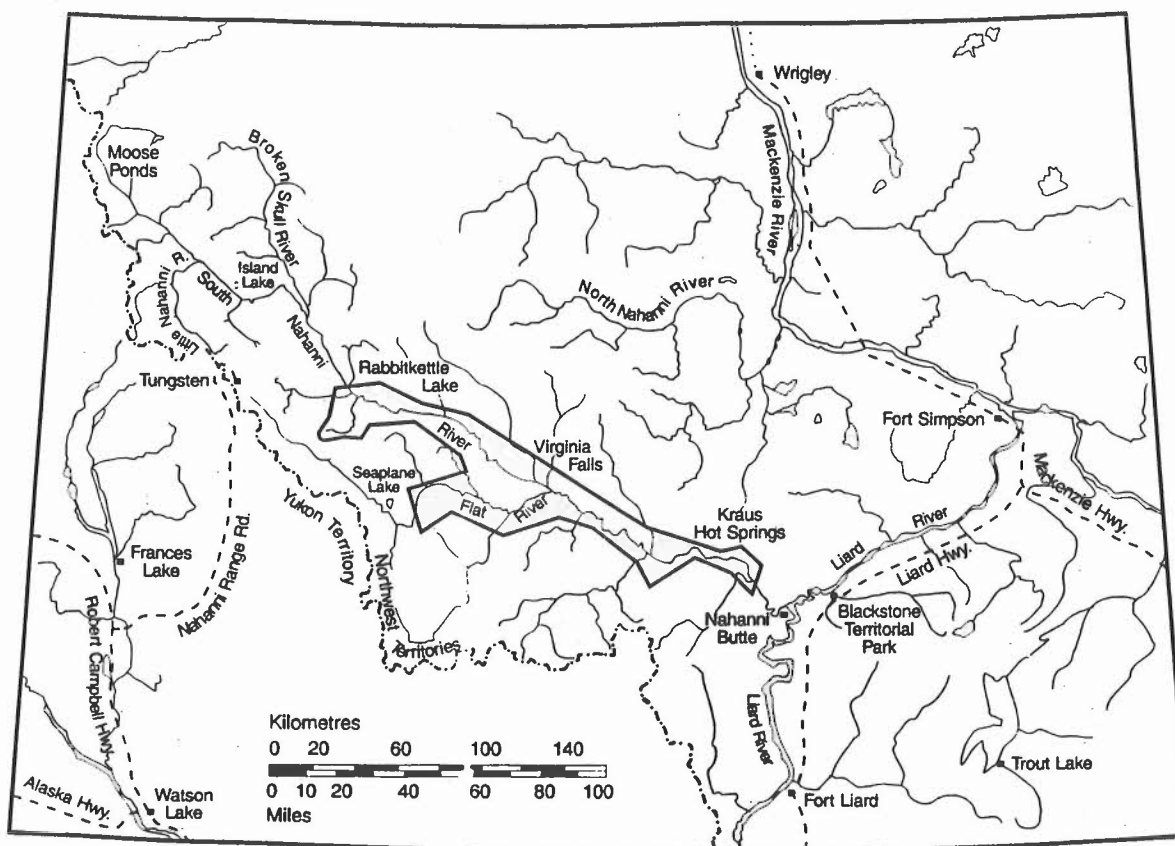
NAHANNI REFLECTIONS

Article: Jay Neilson and Frank 'Bear Paws' Knaapen

Photos: Jay Neilson

While we're flying up the Liard River valley in the NWT, an abandoned seismic survey line shows our relative position in the endless terrain of the Mackenzie Mountain ranges, so wildly abstract and beautiful that the region has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Area of global significance. The spectacular dolomitic sedimentary mountains of the Northern Thrust, ranging for thousands of miles, were created by the collision of the Arctic and the Northern continental plates, which lie to the north and south of the Nahanni River divide. Despite an unimaginable volume of fast-

flowing water, the Nahanni valley still meanders along its original course, established over 370 million years ago, when it drained a vast inland sea. (Dene legends recall the Nahanni as a heavenly tropical valley.) As the mountain ranges thrust upwards, the river cut through the rising rock strata. Although the river current averages between eight and thirteen miles per hour, there is very little whitewater in the canyons, except at Virginia Falls — where giant tree trunks are dispatched like toothpicks over a thundering 368-foot ledge, twice as high as Niagara Falls.



Getting Started: I'm waving a two-pound plastic baggie of flour over my head, expostulating its edibility compared to Frank's obviously excess baggage. Then the baggie bursts, crowning me in a glorious halo of white flour. I scrape most of the flour off Frank and the hangar floor.

It's worth knowing the fly-in baggage restrictions before inviting heavyweight trippers on a shared aeroplane! (DEH CHO insists on \$5 per pound after a limit of 330 pounds per person, including canoe and personal body weight.) We unpack, repack, dispute, and weigh each item a few times.

After a roaring start in a flyweight, single-engine Otter, accompanied by four tourists (who had no baggage at all), this sightseeing alternative sure is spectacular. As we splash down at Island Lakes, we are delighted by our start location in the scenic Ragged Range, presumably well below any treacherous rapids. It is drizzling, and the place includes a cabin complete with a waterproof porch.

On our second morning, a mother black bear wanders into camp to introduce her cute, scrawny cub to humans. Fortunately, the food barrel is locked. The warning is obvious: Nahanni Country is Bear Country!

Nahanni Magic: Descending from the soaring peaks of the Ragged Range, summer glaciers drain into emerald-green lakes, creating fertile oases of breathtaking beauty in a vast, barren landscape. Spruce forests surrounding glacial lakes are carpeted with a rich variety of mosses, lichens, and wildflowers, with dwarf blue lupines blooming everywhere. Sunlight filtering through the spring mists gives warmth and life to a fairyland kaleidoscope of miniature alpine flowers, which lend an enchantment to our rambles, and a profound reconnaissance of the Dene people's legends of heaven: leopard orchids, pink wintergreens, bearded bellflowers, purple monk's hood, blue columbines, clusters of dwarf raspberry blossoms, gentians, wood betony, black-tipped groundsel, exotic mushrooms and lichens, alpine roses, and carpets of delicate twinflowers emitting sweet perfumes.

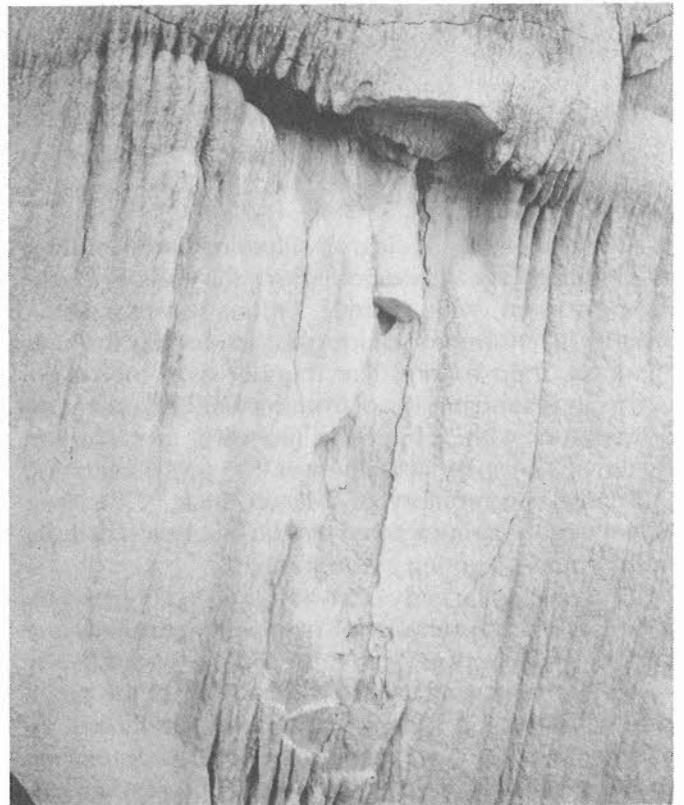
Cirque of the Unclimbables: An arduous 10-hour trek on a gorgeous sunny day (it only rained twice), takes us to a crystal-green glacier lake graced by a circle of majestic mountain peaks, and illuminated by a sunset complete with pink lining. Alpine fairy meadows beckon. The trail is wet, wet, wet — and we even get lost for a while, following various moose trails as we descend through the bog and the dampness. A rhapsody of flowers, mosses, and lichens covers the forest floor, including a magic saxifraga oppositifolia specimen which stands sentinel, like a red pine cone, with gold tips — and tiny round-leaved orchids with delicate mauve trimmings.



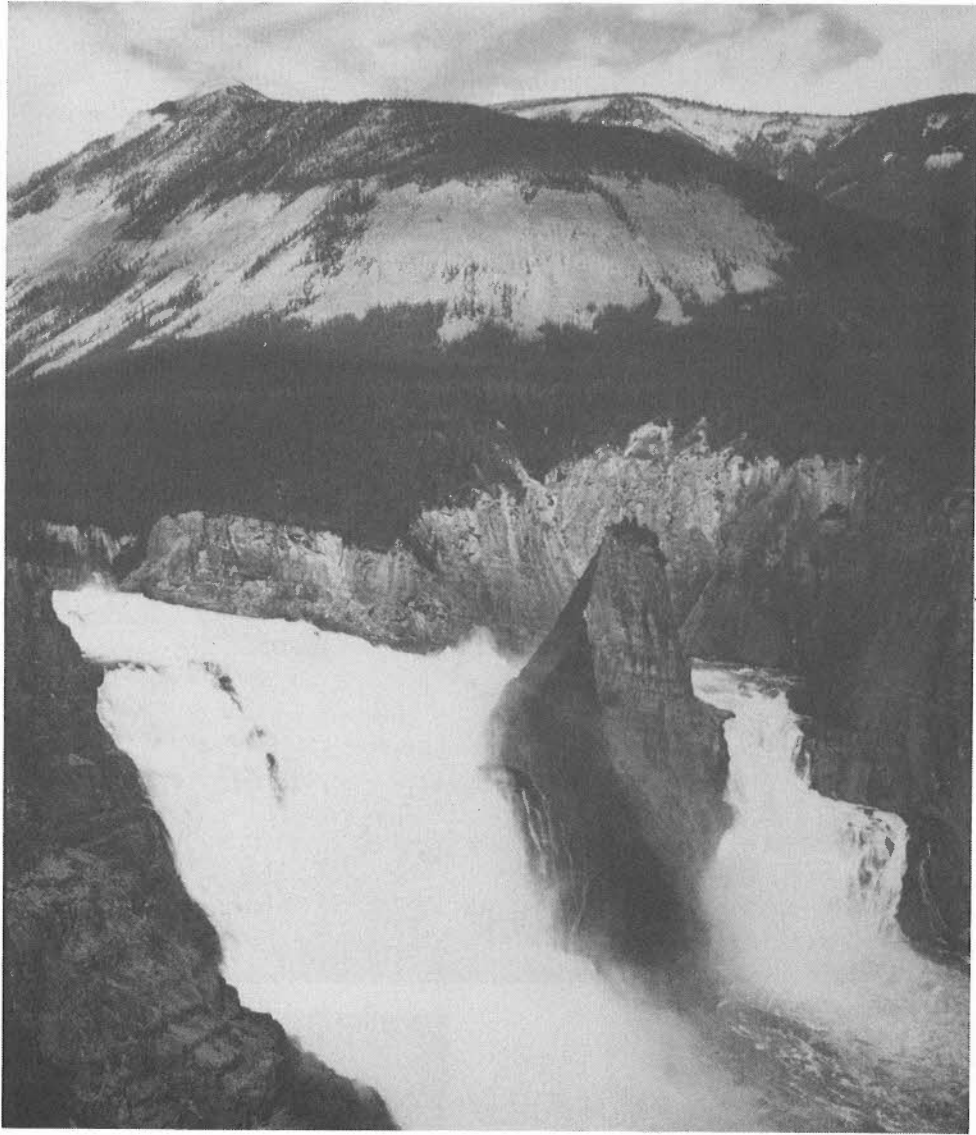
North Tuffa Mound at Rabbitkettle Lake

Tuffa Mound Trek: Through woods and over hills on a glorious sunny afternoon. An arctic loon sounds, a bald eagle coasts overhead, a golden eagle flies in freedom, a moose slurps lugubriously in a marsh, and a curious beaver languidly poses.

WOW! TUFA MOUNDS! We tip-toe up on our bare feet. It's huge — 60 feet high and at least 200 feet in diameter, taking over 10,000 years to form. Awesome! The view is both panoramic and microscopic. These are the most spectacular calcium deposits in the world; the only other significant calcium tufa formations are located in Turkey. On top of North Mound, a hot spring overflows from a well 6,000 feet deep, where it receives its warmth. The descending water forms a rotating sheen, with variegated channels, in perpetually evolving abstracts. The ripples create millions of tiny wave action ridges. As the sun evaporates the water, calcium "tufa" is deposited. Eventually, over thousands of years a mound is created.



The Tuffa Man



Virginia Falls, Mason Rock, Sunblood Mountains

Virginia Falls: A clear sky illuminates the thrilling and chilling. The sluice box above the Falls is a hell-raising torrent, with gigantic 20-foot waves trashing around in enormous whirlpools, exploding through channels, then roaring like thunder over the ledge. Great clouds and billows of frothing white, ever soaring downwards with a hypnotic intensity, in cascading rhythms. The spray actually rises 100 feet. Examining the craggy promontory of "Mason Rock," I discover "Cleopatra" wearing a green mantle of mosses, bathing in the spray, gleaming in the sunlight.

The skies clear early next morning, greeting us with a jubilant blue. Triumphant, I march off to the Falls one last time, with pack and camera. Fabulous photography — lying on my stomach at the very edge of the precipice of crumbling rock, to capture the essence of an alpine crocus, and not a breath of wind to disturb the details of its hairy stem. I chirp along the portage trail and rebound like a mountain goat. The portage is 1,000 yards long, and involves hauling your gear down the cliff to the river. Frank already has the red pack and the

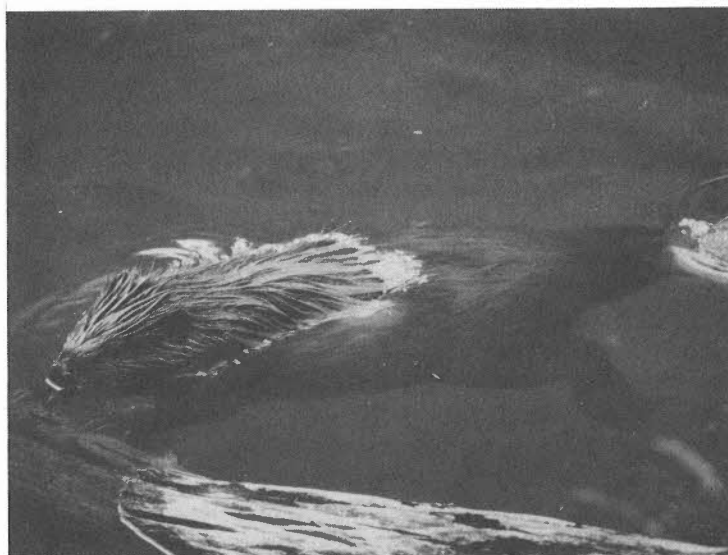
food barrel at the top of the canyon.

This year, in mid July 1996, the Nahanni River is flooded higher than ever in living memory, due to unceasing rains, causing us to delay our mandatory run down Fourth Canyon immediately below Virginia Falls. Alone, we will have no hope of rescuing our canoe and gear if we swamp in these flood conditions, while fighting for our lives in terrifying hypothermic hydraulics. A guided group ran Fourth Canyon in flood, on 19 July, our "booked" reservation date. They lost two canoes with all their gear (later rescued by helicopter), and the trip leaders were unable to grab four canoeists who had to swim the entire three-mile canyon. As Canada's northern rivers increase in popularity, some trippers arrive unprepared for the demanding conditions; spray deck covers and dry suits are required. Above Virginia Falls we met no one who could reliably describe the canyon run. Rafters generally agree that staying off the walls is "a good idea," anticipating six-to-eight-foot waves river centre and up to 14 ft along the walls.

Fourth Canyon Run: Detailed tour books set you off on an upstream ferry, then advise crossing river right and “enjoy the ride,” which is hopelessly inadequate in flood conditions. As Fourth Canyon is NOT scoutable below the first bend, we offer the following narrative as a river guide (see the map):

Upstream ferry — are you kidding? — there’s no upstream anything in that current. To prevent the bow from being forced around, the angle will be all wrong. It’s difficult to hold an efficient upstream ferry angle in a 13-mph-plus current with no defined standing waves to surf across on, in a fully loaded boat, while achieving a maximum across-river ferry (over 250 yards) at the same time, especially when you need to see downstream to avoid dumping. The problem with the upstream ferry, where the bow of the boat is pointing upstream, is that it means all of the across-river power depends on the bow strength (in our case, a woman), while the stern paddler is occupied maintaining the upstream angle, which is why strength is recommended in the bow, with brains in the stern. Some couples do actually paddle with the woman in the stern.

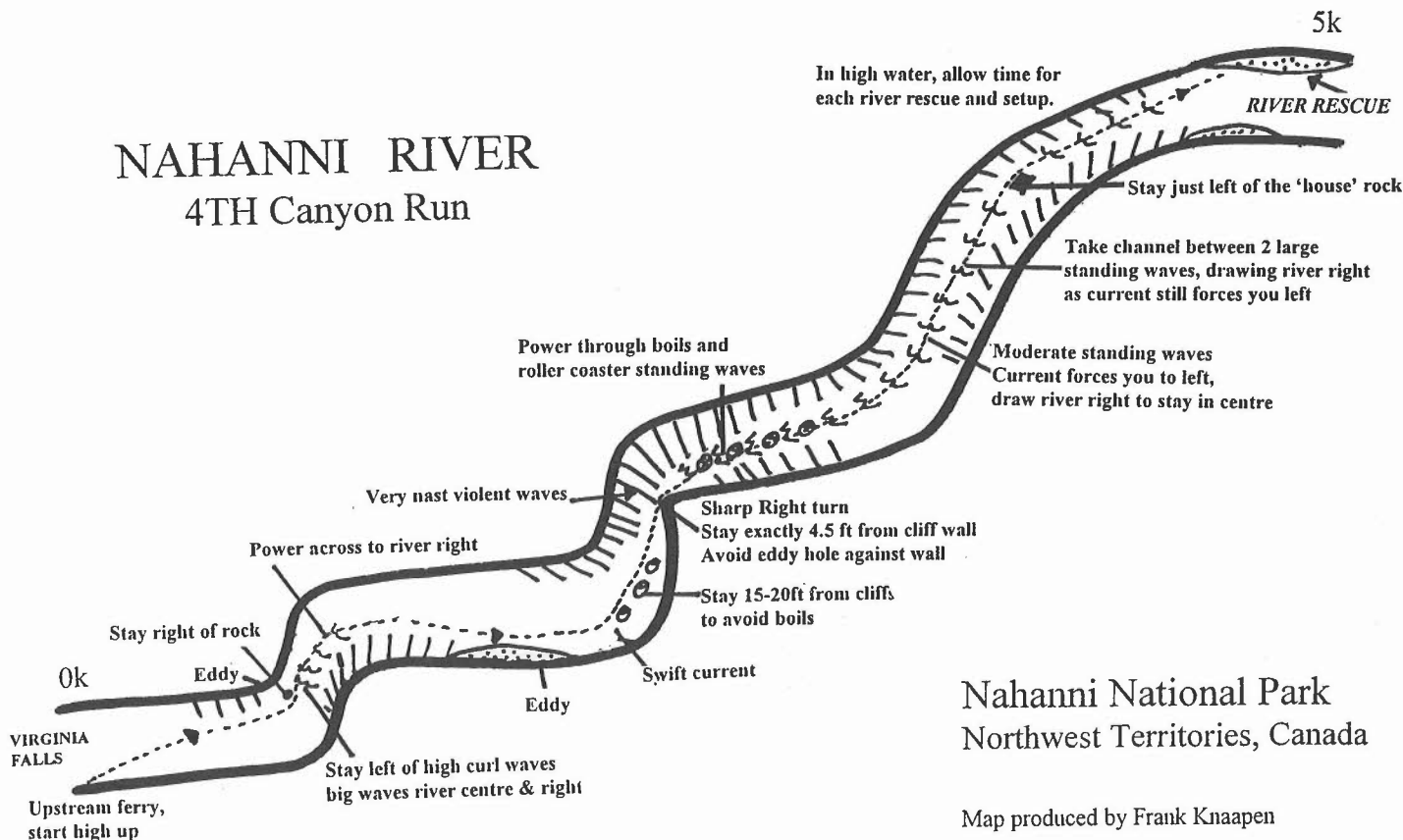
Anyway, Frank prefers to try the upstream ferry. We at least start high up and immediately get hosed around, which is just as well as Frank’s glasses mist up with the spray so he can barely see at all. (Fortunately I don’t know this.) Powering forward-ferry we now have both partners fighting across, with both paddles downstream which helps a lot, as Frank is the main power supply.



Beaver near Rabbitkettle Lake

As for that other first-bend dilemma: there’s NO WAY we want to run between those two curl waves — even the heads of the rafters disappeared there! If we dump at the start we’re in big trouble. Frank wants to stay centre left so we can cross river right ASAP. (Who knows what’s around the bend). It looks quiet along the far wall (we’re trying to see over half a mile away) — we should still have time, maybe. As we rapidly

NAHANNI RIVER 4TH Canyon Run

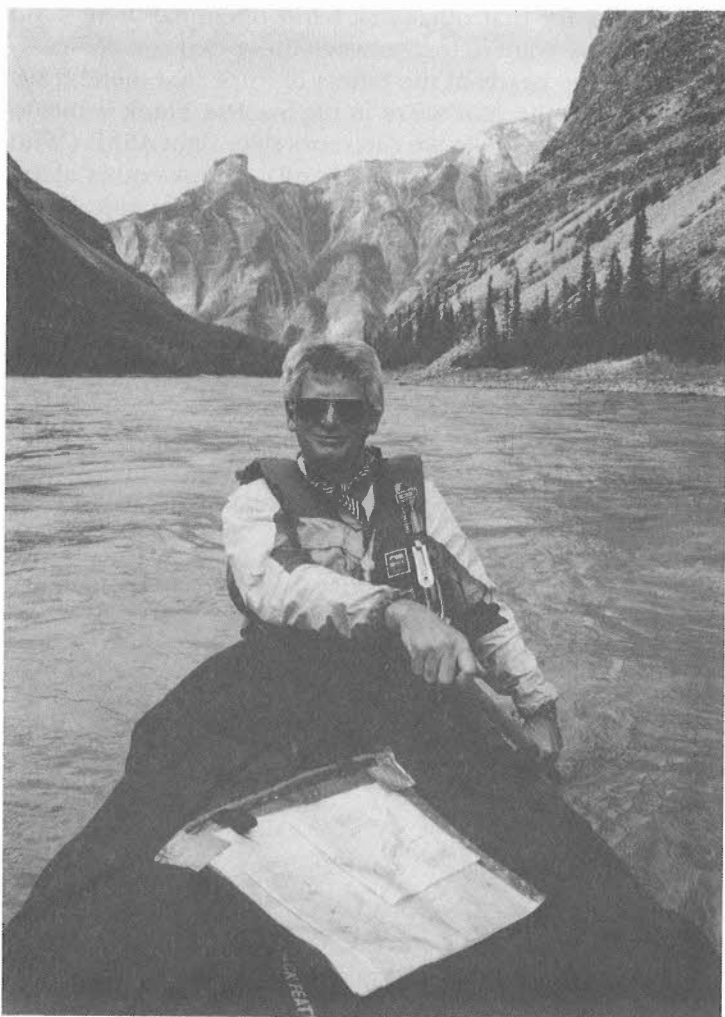


Nahanni National Park
Northwest Territories, Canada

Map produced by Frank Knaapen

approach, the two curlers are ENORMOUS, at least six feet with a few wicked rollers. "Holy Toledo, are you sure?" "Nooooo, go left!" I really doubt we'll make it and haul for all I'm worth — we sneak around and immediately start powering river right. Frank plays deaf and refuses to turn the bow (decorated with a newly-wed figurine) in nasty three-footers, while I'm courageously shouting "give me an angle!" as my power strokes are ineffective unless the boat is sideways. We are now a harmonious duet, with our pre-nuptial "will he? or won't she?" fully commandeered by the immediate challenge of survival.

Journal Entry 25 July (Fourth Canyon): I grin gleefully after avoiding the monsters in river centre. Every chance we get, we're hauling river right in the first bend, taking a few dives in the torrent of muddy brown flood. So far so good — still time to get river right in the calmer stretch. We head for the gravel bar and almost dive into the eddy but nooo! — we've got to run it. There is no exit from the eddy due to rocks and a line-up of boils. We haul left centre, away from



Frank approaching Abandoned Meander in First Canyon

the boils for the second left-hand turn. The elbow bend is now visible with gigantic waves piling up against the opposite cliff wall. We're in a good position, twenty feet off the right canyon wall. WOW — there's only five feet on the corner that looks runnable — hope we don't fall into an eddy hole — we hug the right wall — perfect — exactly five feet. We're now piling over and driving through a set of rollers. Oh boy — now we're in big boils. Power through them. We're making a few serious nose dives, starting to take on some water, despite our high-tech spraydeck cover.

So far so good. A short quiet section with a brisk current. We drift to river right. Now we see the monster curlers bouncing off the right wall on the next bend. We position river centre and power through some big stuff, trying to go right every chance we get.

(Oh, my God — there's a grizzly bear rolling on our duvet as I'm writing this journal ...!)

Holy Toledo, it's rougher than Hades on the left, down-river. We spot the rock at the bottom, as big as a house, and there are the two big curl waves centre left, and the channel between them. Looks like a challenging run through plenty of rollers. We're both surprised to find it's quiet for 40 ft in the channel — big-time power to the right heading for just left of the house to avoid more big water. We roller-coaster and brace a lot, submerging often. We paddle hard to keep out of the turbulent sloughs between the rollers. (No point running slowly through a garden sprinkler, you take on more water that way.) YEAH, we coast out of it. No way we can make the sand bar on the left, the current is still too swift. So much for being able to swim a swamped, fully loaded boat out at the end. In hindsight, probably not till the first mid-river gravel bar, three miles further on.

Close Encounter with a Grizzly Bear: Frank and I are drinking coffee and tea, myself sitting on my camera case writing the journal. Our duvet is spread out on the beach. Sheets and clothes are drying on the line in the morning sun. Unbeknownst to us, a male grizzly about three years old is foraging in the sand only 60 feet behind us, eating delicious ant eggs. We are surrounded by soapberry bushes everywhere, a favorite bear food. While writing, I look up for inspiration, and view big brown grizzly legs rolling in ecstasy on our strawberry-and-sandalwood-scented duvet, only 40 feet away! An instant assessment concludes: our canoe is very effectively beached; retreating to the woods will corner the bear in our camp; as a last resort we can swim in our shorts in the freezing Nahanni; or we may try to coax the bear out of our camp, standing on the dry shore.

I back off 20 ft to the fire where Frank is quietly observing the situation. "Oh my!" says Frank. I tweet-tweet: "What are you doing there?" The grizzly is surprised, and reacts slowly (no changing his mind once it's made up). The bear gets up and ambles around, towards the woods. Then he stops, about 60 feet away,

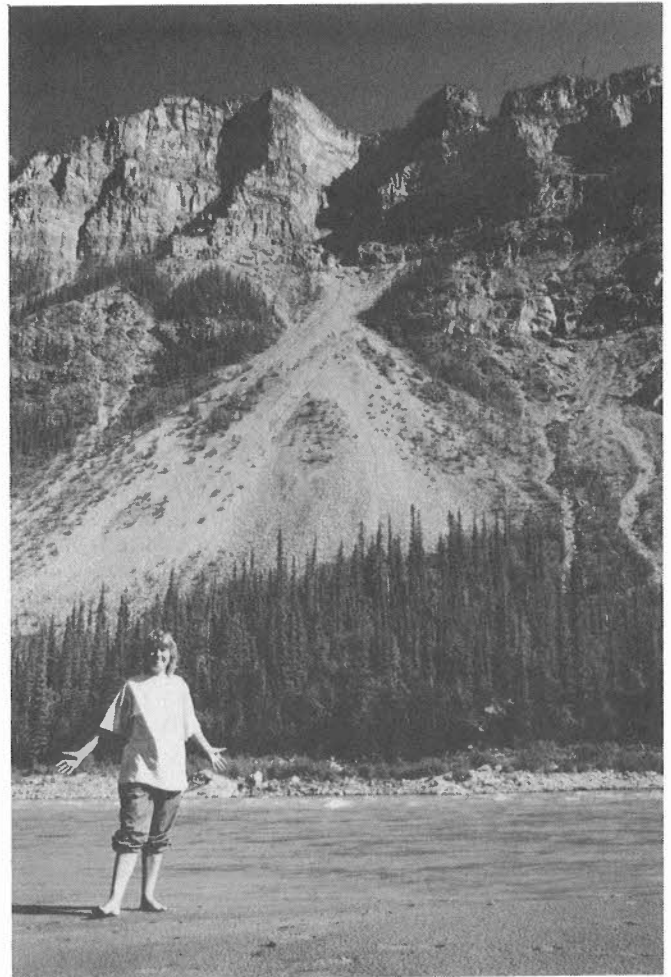
tempted by the scent of peanuts and salami, succulently wafting up his nose. Frank grabs the loose items and I snap the food barrel lid shut. Standing on his hind legs to size us up, the grizzly is seven feet tall, but Frank outsmarts him by raising his paddle, demonstrating a man at least 12 feet in stature, with very long paws! It is still too close to abandon our policy of polite bear etiquette. Frank later spots our grizzly heading across the gravel bar, at least 1,500 ft away, so we settle down to an unappetizing bowl of porridge, instead of the aromatic pancakes I had planned. Frank hastily begins packing, but there's no way he will budge this Mama Bear before she has finished her pot of camp coffee.

Nahanni "River of Gold": For 22 miles, Third Canyon towers 1,000 yards above us, framed by a glorious blue sky. Colorful purple fireweed, lichens, and scrub cover the lower slopes, yielding to a fantastic geometry of dolomitic sedimentary layers, glowing orange and brick reds against a kaleidoscope of tan-colored hues, gleaming golds and yellows in sheer massive breakaways, once an ocean floor. We camp just before Big Bend after a brief thunder shower, during which the sun still shines, radiating billions of heavy raindrops, as we race along in the current, gazing at 500-yard cliffs, brilliantly illuminated under the glow of a perfect double rainbow.

At the start of Big Bend we pan for gold. Using our plates, the fine shore sands yield flecks of gold dust glinting in the black, sandy mud seeping below the foot of the Funeral Range. Directly before us, the spine of grey headless ridges (more than a mile high) creates a continuous vision of Olympian grandeur. The sombre black shale of the Funeral Range, still part of Third Canyon, changes to the myriad greys of Second Canyon (700 yards high for nine miles). In Deadman Valley we marvel at the gigantic dimensions of spring runoff, now vast miles of parched alluvial creek terrain. Then finally to the glorious golden hues of First Canyon (900 yards high for 16 miles).

The Flats: For several days we drift downstream under a cloudless sky, our binoculars cruising The Flats, searching for wood bison. While Frank is collecting firewood at the spot where we pitch our tent, we are disturbed by an eclectic grunting only a few yards away in the trees. And then again. We hastily agree to pack up for a safer haven, having deduced a herd of invisible bison.

We paddle to our last Nahanni lunch spot to investigate the skeleton of a recent sweat lodge, skillfully constructed from willow branches and willow twine. The sweat rocks are still recently charred and we consider whether the fast foursome ahead of us partied here. More likely this expert craftsmanship is Dene. As we munch on delicious raisin bannock, we finally notice a large black bear, calmly sitting in the verge of trees only 40 feet away, camouflaged, obviously enjoying our delicious sit-in.



Jay in Second Canyon

Nahanni Butte: "Over there — it's a massive bull bison!" I cross the mud flat opposite Nahanni Butte for a closer photo, feet bare and theoretically naked, my only defence a pile of driftwood nearby. Satisfied with the close-up and retreating quickly across the sands to the muddy shore, I am suddenly aware of quicksand. In nanoseconds I sink up to my knees, experiencing an incredible sensation of bottomless mud. In a moment of abstract terror and fantastic physical strength, I explode skywards to safety.

Penultimate Visions: Trumpeter swans taking flight, whistling overhead ... fighting wind and waves on the Liard ... laughing and joking with the Dene ... admiring Athapaskan, Dene, and Inuit fine crafts: beautifully embroidered tanned hides, rare tufting art (which involves dying and twisting moose and caribou hair), and colorful quill and beadwork, adding beauty, creative skill, and devotion to our world.

* * * * *

Ref.: *Nahanni: the River Guide* by Peter Jowett, Rocky Mountain Books, 4 Spruce Centre, Calgary, Alberta T3C 3B3.

Nahanni Reflections

*Sitting by the campfire sipping strawberry wine,
We'll remember our honeymoon adventure until the end of time.
The Tufa Mounds, Pulpit Rock, the thunderous roar of Virginia Falls,
Paddling endless miles below magnificent canyon walls.*

*Frolicking lambs, bison, wolves, and grizzly bears,
Soaring eagles and arctic loons - all of this is theirs.
Still water reflections, alpine meadows, and cascading mountain streams,
The Nahanni sure is a River of Gold, a River of Dreams...*



"Still Water Reflection"

GUIDE

Donald H. Andersen

At the landing, the marina owner suggested that there were a few guides around if I needed one; some of them were available through a program to help youth increase their feelings of self worth. He stated that they weren't very experienced and pointed to some kids sitting nearby, several of whom appeared to be First Nations youth.

In my opinion, many Native youth seem to have an inherent sense of wilderness wisdom. With this in mind, I was interested in their approach to my well-designed, carefully orchestrated canoe trip down the river.

As I approached the group of kids, most in their early teens, I noticed the joking and jesting that was going on among them. I wasn't too serious either, just checking things out. I talked with the kids about the weather and what they thought of the water conditions. Just talk of nothing, really.

Then it happened. One of the Native teens who was apart from the others caught my eye. Different, at least a little bit, I thought; thin-faced, serious, sullen. This one, I sensed, seemed out of his element. I could perceive some deep feelings: sadness, mistrust, and a certain sensitivity that strangely enough I could seem to hear. The song of the ancient ones was written all over this one, I thought. There was no choice for me.

Much to the surprise of the others in the group I asked him if he was available to guide me on a trip. Without meeting my eyes he motioned he was. I found out that the government was subsidizing his work and my share of the expense was within my means. After making arrangements for additional food and camping items I phoned his mother to make sure that she authorized this arrangement. We started off for my destination.

Before, while packing the canoe, he wanted to know how I was going to fish because I had no pole. I said that I wanted him to take me to a place where I could watch them swim in the water. He glanced at me with misgivings. I said that it was better to see fish swimming freely in the water than to catch them. Again the look of mistrust, this time mixed with curiosity. After we had paddled for about an hour without a word being spoken, he looked around and said, "You aren't like the others." After some hesitation, I said, "Neither are you." His eyes then met mine for the first time, and after a moment he told me hesitantly in a soft voice, that his great-grandfather used to take him to a place where they could watch the fish swim in the waters and had told him that it was best to respect the ways of their lives as the Maker of All had given us freedoms to be ourselves and that the fish were there to remind the Native peoples of their own place on the earth. "Your great-grandfather was very wise," I said to him. An ever-so-slight smile appeared on his face.

I thought I knew the area well, but during the remainder of the trip I realized that I hadn't really seen it at all until this boy showed me many things as he allowed me to perceive them through the eyes and spirit of his great-grandfather. Now that I think about it, the government program was really for me, not him, because my spirit was so impoverished and my self-worth so misdirected. I came to know that while my ancestors were taking part in their renaissance, his were preparing for a different kind of re-birth when renewal of the values of solitary, untamed places would take place. The values of his great-grandfather passed on to him. My being's centre was touched through this experience. While hardly noticing it, things joined together for me, my existence and that of the earth indistinguishable, parts coming together. Guidance provided, ancient wisdom spoken and heard.

I wanted to remain, as I knew I was leaving a new and real part of myself behind. But more profoundly, I was reluctantly returning my young guide to a place and time where many would hear his song unsung and regard his ways disparagingly. Coming out of the wilderness is not an easy task for many of us because we leave an essential part of ourselves behind. As for me, my life is complex and I know that I have responsibilities and requirements elsewhere. However, my young guide was returning to a time and place that does not know; a place where dignity and worth of the human person can be something less than just.

On the way back home, when I reached that part of the highway near the airport that has many lanes of traffic on each side, I thought about the original paths that those lanes of traffic now cover. It came to me that those of us who revere the arts, culture, and technology that the city offers, have, as the years have passed, added layer upon layer of this sophistication over our real essential self resulting in an obstructed perspective. When we encounter personal experiences like the one I had had, fissures develop in these layers that allow the Creator's design to seep out of the kernel of our existence, bringing us back to review our aboriginal place. It can produce a change in our viewpoint that results in revaluation, wonder, then awe, making us see that what we were isn't all of what we are. For some, this presents a need to maintain, protect, recover, and restore what was or what should be, a necessity in our time. However, in my opinion, those who can come to terms with the contention can experience both worlds and be at peace with them. They are better for it because they have treasures available in both the old and the new, resulting in a more complete, fuller reality.

For those who can hear, my young guide will find his own honored place on the earth.



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

The WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization made up of individuals interested in wilderness travel, mainly by canoe and kayak, but also including backpacking and winter trips on both skis and snowshoes. The club publishes a quarterly journal,

Nastawgan, to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas of interest to wilderness travellers, organizes an extensive program of trips for members, runs a few basic workshops, and is involved in environmental issues relevant to wilderness canoeing.

NEWS BRIEFS

NASTAWGAN MATERIAL AND DEADLINE Articles, trip reports, book reviews, photographs, sketches, technical tips, or anything else that you think might be of interest to other readers, are needed for future issues. Submit your contributions on 3 1/2 in. computer disk (WordPerfect or text files preferred, but any format is welcome), by e-mail (aharting@netcom.ca), or in type-written form; contact the editor for more information. Contributor's Guidelines are available upon request; please follow these guidelines as much as possible to increase the efficiency of the production of our journal. The deadline dates for the next two issues are:

issue: Winter 1997 deadline date: 19 October
Spring 1998 25 January

WCA MEMBERSHIP LISTS are available to any members who wish one for personal, non-commercial use. The list can be ordered as hardcopy or on a 3 1/2 in. DD computer diskette. Send a five-dollar bill (no cheque, please!) to Cash Belden at the WCA postal address (see WCA Contacts on the back page).

WINTER POOL SESSIONS We will be renting a swimming pool again this winter for those paddling enthusiasts who want to stay in shape while the rivers are frozen. It's a great opportunity to work on your canoe or kayak roll in clean, warm water. Sessions start in January and continue into March. Cost is \$70 for a whole winter of paddling pleasure. Call Bill Ness at (416) 321-3005 to register. Don't delay — space is limited.

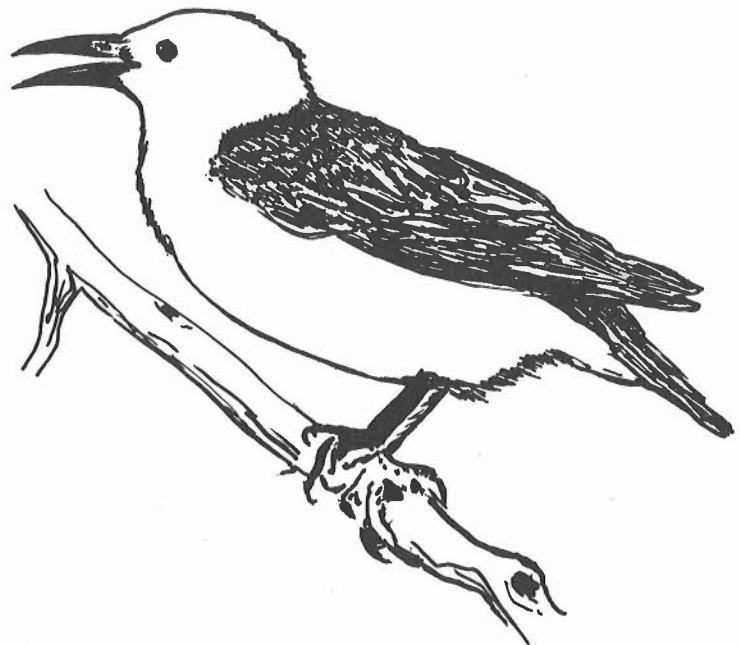
BOOBOO In the tribute to Elliott Merrick, published on pages 14 and 15 of the last issue, the date of the WCA Wilderness Symposium where Elliott gave a presentation was given as late January 1989. This should have been 1990.

FALL PARTY

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

Then come to the WCA Fall Party, also called Wine-and-Cheese Party, on Friday evening, 28 November at the new location: Metro Hall at 55 John Street in downtown Toronto (main entrance on the east side of John between King W and Wellington; there also are several other entrances to the building). An entry fee of \$8.00 per person will be charged at the door. Everybody is welcome, including non-members. The party will last from 7:30 to 10:30 and features several members (including our champion presenter/showman Herb Poh) who will show slides of some of their trips.

For more information contact Anne Snow at (416) 482-0810.



CLOSE ENCOUNTER

Diane Hamilton

I have always harbored a secret desire: solo tripping. Hearing the tales told by Herb Pohl, John Winters, and Jim Greenacre inspired me to try it myself.

For a first attempt, Algonquin Park would be my destination on a route I know well. "What can happen in Algonquin Park?" I answered to those who thought it was too dangerous to trip alone. I had been on far more "dangerous" trips before, albeit not on my lonesome. So off I went, 19 August 1996.

The first stop was at Algonquin Outfitters for a suitably lightweight boat as I knew I couldn't portage our whitewater boat. I managed to talk them into letting me take a Swift Osprey which they don't normally rent. I could handle the 40 pounds on the portage trail, and besides, it was designed by a solo boater, so I knew it would be good.

It had been a few years since taking a trip into the interior of Algonquin and I was shocked by the new computerized reservation system. I had thought I would head out towards Tom Thomson Lake and see how far I got before making camp. However, I had to camp where the computer said I could and ended up booked for two nights on Tepee Lake. So much for wilderness. Unperturbed, I emptied the car and set off for Canoe Lake. There must have been 30 boats leaving at the same time. I can proudly say I beat them all to the portage into Joe Lake. (It must have been the boat.) I got to Tepee Lake before lunch and decided to keep going towards Tom Thomson Lake. The thought crossed my mind to forget the rules and camp where I had intended, but like a good citizen I went back to where I was supposed to camp.



Just past Tepee Lake, I came upon a female moose having lunch. I was surprised at the complacency of this animal as about 10 canoes were lined up watching her eat. She actually seemed to be posing for the cameras. I think I could have paddled up and touched her. Welcome to Algonquin Park petting zoo!

I was having no problem handling the boat and seemed to be zooming along. I paddled up to Tom Thomson Lake and then went back to Tepee to make camp. I found an okay site, the only empty one around. Shortly after setting up the tent (not as easy with one person as with two), the park rangers came past in a motor boat, checking up on where people were camped.

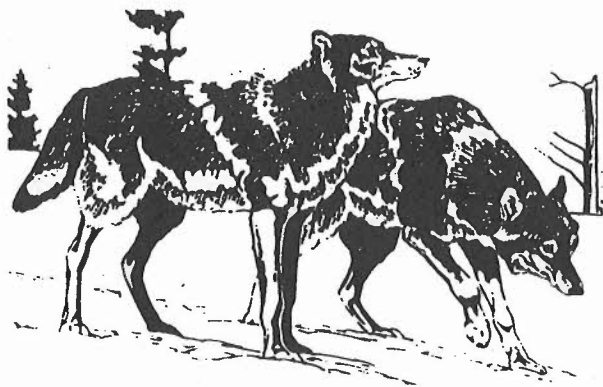
After a light dinner, I settled back to read in the fading sunlight. I had brought Henry David Thoreau's *Walden and Other Writings*. It seemed appropriate for a new adventure. I didn't get very far into it before I put it down. Thoreau's wilderness was not very wild, like Algonquin Park is now, I thought, or so it seemed.

I knew I had to hang my food pack, so I scouted for a suitable tree. I was surrounded by tall pine trees and only one with a branch I could get a rope over. This branch was no more than about seven feet up, but I thought raccoons were the biggest problem, so I wasn't overly worried about height. I had difficulty getting the rope over this branch and in the end the pack was at shoulder height.

I watched the sunlight fade into a yellow sunset while sipping my hot chocolate. I poked at the fire until it was out and finally headed into the tent. I took my flashlight and put my paddle outside the door, to scare off the raccoons I was sure would visit later. I did have a visitor, but it wasn't what I expected.

Around 1:00 a.m. I heard noises outside the tent as expected. I poked my head out, and turned on the flashlight to see. My first thought was, "What's a small pony doing out there?" Then it turned and looked at me ... it was a wolf! The two of us stared at each other for what seemed like a very long time. Neither of us moved. Suddenly the wolf turned toward my hanging pack and yanked a small stuff sac out of it, and ran off into the bush. I pulled my head into the tent, wide awake. What to do now?

Thoughts flooded my mind: I could pack up, jump in the boat, and paddle back. But that would take too long and the wolf could come back. Then again, he had what he wanted, maybe that was it. Maybe I should check out what he took, it looked like my first-aid kit. While thinking this over, I suddenly heard a whining, panting sound, followed by a strong wet "sheepdog" smell: he was back and close by. I turned on my flashlight and yelled in my deepest voice for him to "get out of here!" In response, I heard fabric tearing as he bit into the pack and proceeded to rip it apart. At this



point, I thought it was better to stay put in the tent. I didn't want him to think I was a threat. After awhile, I heard a loud clanging sound as he carried off my pot set and everything else in my pack, and disappeared into the bush.

What do I do? I began to stuff my sleeping bag and my clothes into their respective sacs. Then stopped. What was the point? It was very dark outside with no moon or stars. The boat was on the far side of the campsite, and I wasn't going to leave my gear behind. Besides, he was still out there. I unstuffed my sleeping bag and tried to sleep. I brought my paddle inside the tent, and had a firm grip on it.

I thought I heard him come back a third time, but I'm not sure. I even believed he was looking at me in the tent, but my night vision is not very good and I was tired and maybe a little scared, so I might have been seeing things. I thought I was hearing things too: at about 3 a.m., I heard what sounded like someone canoeing past my site. The noise got louder and I was right. I could hear two people, a man and a woman talking excitedly. Then I heard the man say: "Did you see how that bear attacked that garbage bag!" Now they had my full attention. I contemplated if I should get out and stop them, but now I feared there was a bear as well as a wolf wandering around out there too. I managed to convince myself that both the bear and wolf were probably not a threat any more as each had what they wanted. Besides I needed some sleep, it was going to be a long three-hour paddle out in the morning with no breakfast. Worse, no coffee!

Around 6 a.m., I got out of the tent to survey the damage. The pack was still attached to the rope, but the bottom had been ripped out. I searched around and found my pot set, cutlery bag, and my bowl with a large hole in it. I found my toothpaste with several bite marks. But that was all. Not even any garbage! Mr. Wolf took everything with him. I gathered up what was left and broke camp.

As if I didn't have enough problems, it was very overcast and a large black cloud was just behind me. I thought I should have enough time to at least get to the portage into Canoe Lake before the rain hit. Only just. I pulled out the rain suit and started out onto the big

lake. The wind had come up and I was having difficulty in the bay even before I got to Canoe Lake proper. I hoped this was going to be a quick storm. As I got into the lake, I was going two strokes back for every stroke forward and the waves were up to two feet high. As I neared the Tom Thomson memorial, I knew I had to land and wait out the storm. I didn't want to end up like the famous painter.

I paddled past a cottage, where a woman and her daughter were securing their motor boat. The woman motioned me over to her dock. "Do you need some help?" she asked. I nodded and attempted to land the Osprey without damaging it. It took two attempts to get the boat docked. I climbed out and the woman and I pulled the boat up onto the shore. She invited me up to the cabin to warm up by the fire and after hearing of my wolf encounter, gave me some toast and coffee (two cups!). What a godsend.

The cabin itself had once belonged to Tom Thomson; it was really just one big room with a wonderful stone fireplace. The woman, Laura, and her family had a lease on the place and had added a kitchen on the back. She had some boys from the camp nearby helping to clear some debris away from the renovation work and they offered to take me across Canoe Lake in their freighter canoe. I hate to say it, but I accepted. I was too wet and cold and tired to cross the lake. Besides as it turned out the storm lasted all day.

I got to the Canoe Lake store and immediately had another hot coffee. I then reported my close encounter with the wolf to the Park staff. They inquired if I was sure it was a wolf and not a bear, as there was a bear encounter at the next campsite to mine — the people I heard paddling past me in the night. I assured them that it was indeed a wolf and they admitted they were aware of a one wolf harassing campers in that area. Thanks for the warning! I wrote an incident report for them and left to return the boat to Algonquin Outfitters.

About a week or so after returning home, an article in the newspaper caught my eye. On 18 August 1996 a wolf was reported to have "attacked" a child who was sleeping "under the stars" at Tom Thomson Lake, a day before I got there. The article indicated the wolf was tracked down and shot by the Park staff around the 25th. I called up and spoke to the Park Superintendent about my encounter. The park was preparing a report on this wolf. Apparently he had been going around "collecting" things. He had taken people's running shoes, towels, and on one occasion a pillow from under someone's head while sleeping under the stars! They don't think this wolf intentionally tried to hurt the child, but was probably going for this kid's pillow too and, finding some resistance, had bit him in the head area. Since they couldn't be sure what was wrong with this wolf, they felt they had to shoot him and do some tests. As it turned out, he was a perfectly normal wolf. DNA tests were done to prove he wasn't a wolf-dog hybrid which might have explained his behavior. The Park had no explanation for this wolf's un-wolflike actions.

My theory is that the animals in Algonquin Park have gotten so used to people that they are not in the least afraid of us, as they should be. I directly or indirectly encountered a moose, wolf, and bear in one day, each showing their lack of fear of humans. This is wilderness in Algonquin Park? Yes and no. The wild elements are present and require our respect, but as

more and more people explore the Park, the wilderness changes into something else. All I know is, it's not my kind of wilderness! I will try solo tripping again (just a sucker for punishment, I guess), but next time on some nice Crown Land.

And I'm getting an airtight barrel pack for food!

BARREL SEAT

Graham McCallum

For those of us who love whitewater canoeing, thinking about methods of staying dry is right up there with finding a new river to paddle. If the method is also cheap and totally reliable, then the sun shines.

I am referring to olive barrels. These are the plastic barrels about 40 cm (16") high by 25 cm (10") wide with the watertight, screw-down lids. They are used for food and clothes storage and can fit up to four in a pack.

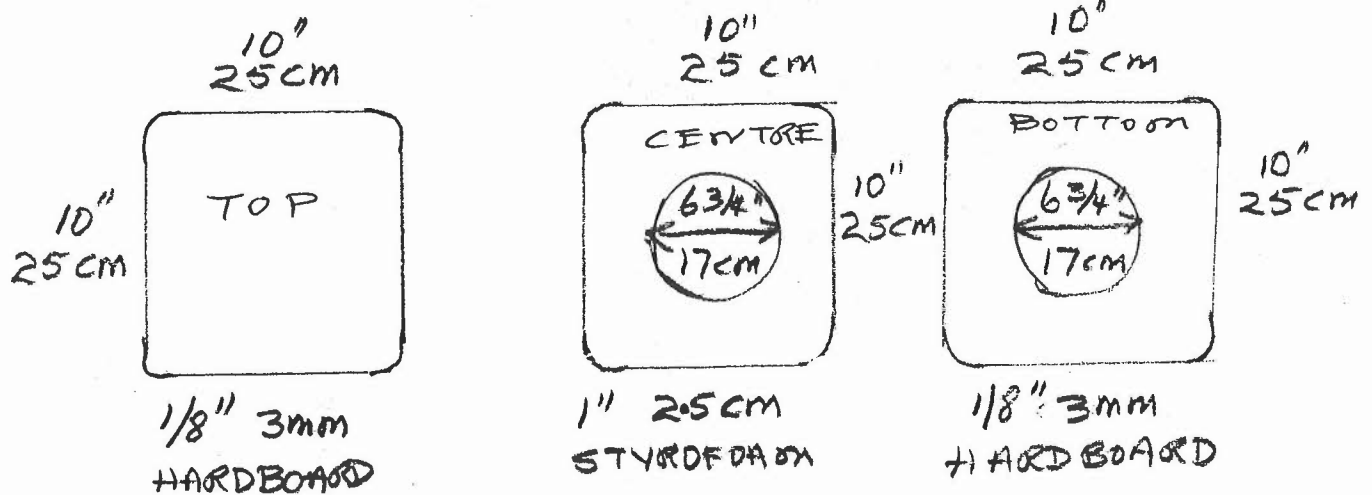
The barrels, from Greece, come over as containers for the tons of olives that are consumed in delis, etc., and are available for the modest sum of a dollar or two wherever olives are sold.

As with almost everything else in life, there are several drawbacks to the barrels. First, the smell of olives, which remains in the barrel, can only be relished by an olive lover. Since a lot of paddlers enjoy olives, this is not a big problem, but having clothes that smell

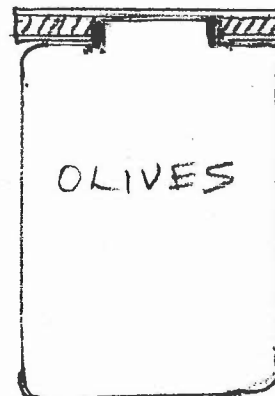
of olives is pushing it. This smell will largely disappear over time with exposure to sun and air but can be speeded up using several home remedies such as bicarb, tomato juice, etc.

The second drawback to olive barrels is that they are uncomfortable and can buckle and crack when used as a seat. Using a lifejacket on top can help but better yet, why not try the luxury of the following. Take some scrap hardboard and styrofoam and make a seat to fit on top. These are light (300 gr, 12 ozs.) and very comfortable. On trips down a river in the Barren Lands, where a good seat is as hard to find as a cold beer, they are perfect. Everyone in the group should have one.

If, at your next gathering of wilderness paddlers, you get the occasional whiff of olives, you will know that someone near you stays dry and at the same time, on their trips, has a comfortable place to sit.



Glue all three pieces together to make a sandwich with the styrofoam in the middle, and then paint it.



TEMAGAMI-STURGEON LOOP

Article: John Winters Photos: Peter Haskett

Those who paddle with me know that I don't take notes, pictures, or maps. What you read will, therefore, be a mixture of true-to-the-fact reminiscences, inaccurate interpretations of events, and pure fabrication. As my father said, "Never let the facts interfere with a good story." For the most part, however, this might be a factual account of our trip.

None of us had ever paddled down the Temagami River. I don't know what that says about people who have lived more than twenty years in Southern Ontario but there it is. Hap Wilson won't even speak to me next time we meet. At least we were getting around to it before our citizenship was revoked. "We" were Peter and Bob Haskett and Dan Rusciollelli and me.

There are no trip leaders on our trips. None of us are easily led. Bob, however, had Hap's book *Temagami Canoe Routes* and was anointed naviguesser for the duration. Dan and I would follow.

The muffler fell off in North Bay and it looked like rain. I mention that to set the mood.

The Central Temagami access point is a bit of culture shock to serious woodsman like ourselves. Lots of power boats, delightfully attractive girls going somewhere we weren't, and a packed parking lot that would make any Torontonion feel at home. We didn't paddle far before lunch and mused whether one of the thunder bumpers all around would hit. Silly boys. We were wet the rest of the day.

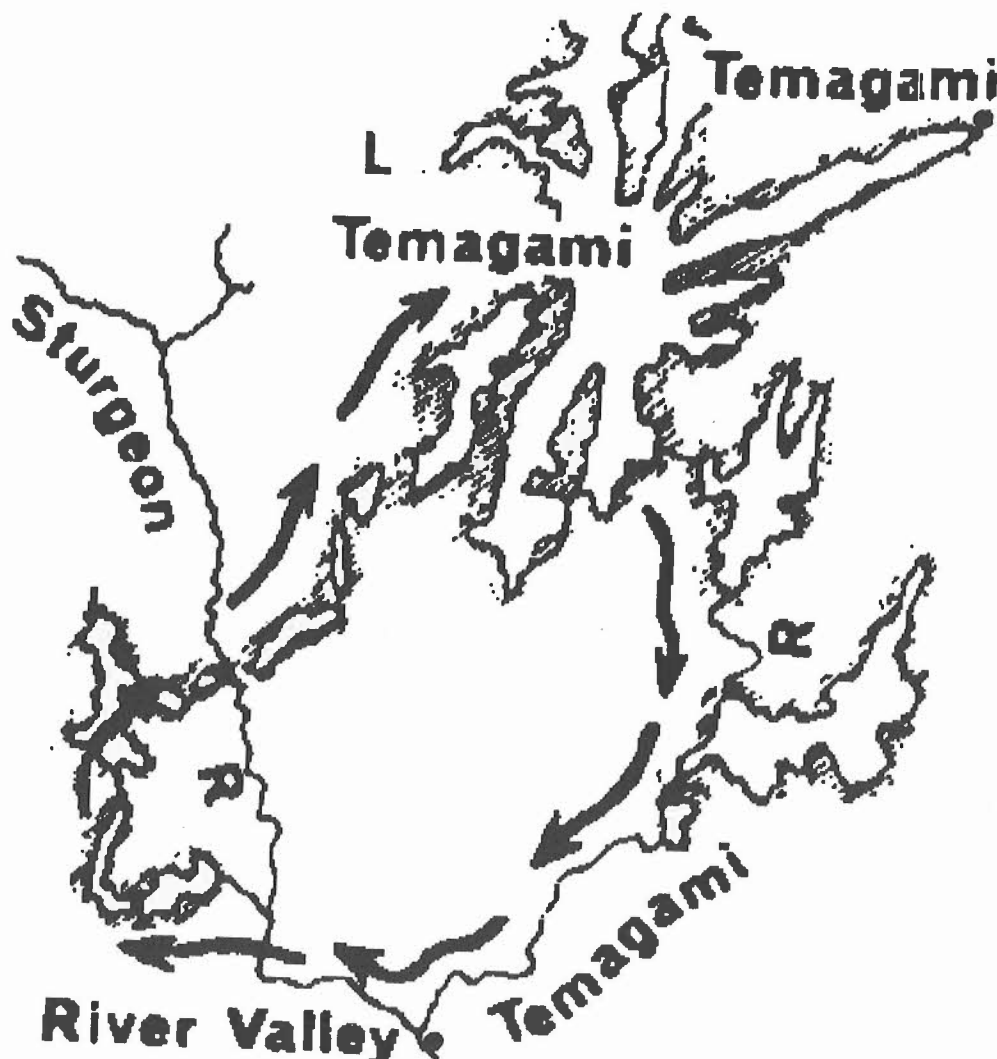
Our first camp was nice enough. Bob prepared the traditional fresh veggy dinner for the first night and Dan didn't snore. Rain the first day doesn't necessarily mean it will rain the whole week, so we looked forward to a good morrow.

The Temagami River doesn't begin until Cross Lake Dam. Even though it was late summer, the river was at spring levels. I wonder why. With high water we ran stuff that normally couldn't be navigated late in the summer. At the first decent rapid Dan and I had a small communication problem. I back-paddled like we were at the precipice of a waterfall. Dan was a tad more

aggressive in the other direction. We got that sorted out and made it down without incident. Bob and Peter always make it down without incident. The BOOK says "spring only" so we felt good even though it was raining.

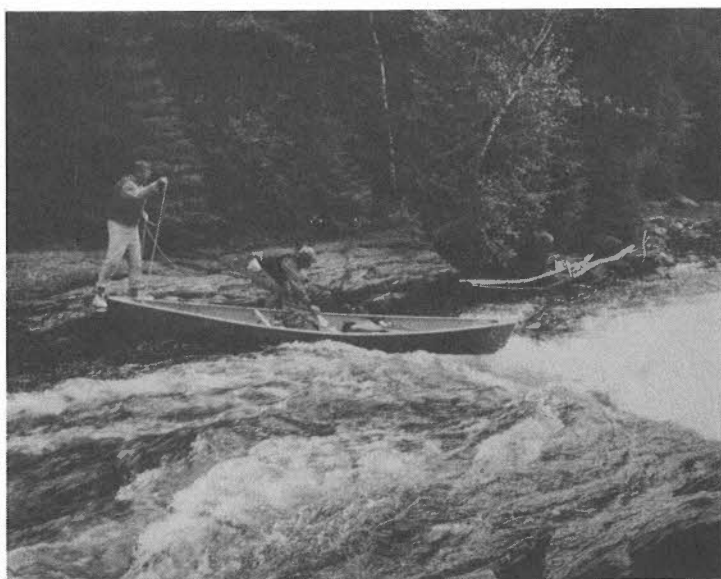
At one downright hairy looking thing, Dan and I carried around the first drop and watched the Hasketts. OK, I have seen this lots of times so it was no surprise to me but it was new to Dan. They poised at the top for what seemed like an eternity and then slowly dropped over the edge. Just when you thought they had been eaten by the river, they popped up and slowly eased through the standing waves, back-paddling steadily. They poised again, shifted across the river, and then dropped down the next ledge. They milked every drop of water and every wave out of the thing. At the bottom Bob scooped out a little water and calmly commented that he wasn't really sure they would pull it off.

We were impressed.



Dan and I were getting to know each other and were now running stuff we wouldn't have earlier in the day. We went down one set first just to show we could pick the proper line without help. Just before the fan at the bottom I turned to Dan and commented on the fine job when a rock reached up and cracked us a hard lick. That Kevlar is good stuff. Bob and Peter held back the laughter as they slid past in the deep water. Did I mention the rain? Ragged Chutes and the associated rapids are the last really good series until you get to River Valley. Dan and I carried past some boat eaters and watched Peter and Bob run it. "Doesn't bother me," I said. "Doesn't bother me," said Dan. "Wimps," we both thought to ourselves. Lunch was another sodden affair in the rain, watching the water crash over a falls that even Bob and Peter admit can't be run.

There were several saturated groups on the river at this point. They milled about in their helmets, knife-bedecked lifejackets, and wet suits, scouting the rapids. Apparently the trail wasn't easily found and it looked like none really wanted to try running the thing. Dan and I took the bull by the horns and lined down. The spectators had never seen this before, at least not the way we did it. We pushed the boat out into the current and one of us threw the line to his partner, while the boat slipped and slid its way down. No control, just absolute trust in a god that looks out for paddlers. Then we changed positions and down we went again. These boats can run anything as long as we aren't in them. From the bottom we looked back and figured there was no way it could be run.



Lining down Temagami River

Bob and Peter ran it anyway. The spectators were impressed. So were Bob and Peter. Peter's eyes were the size of saucers when they hit the biggest of the waves. Bob scooped out a few buckets of water and said to Peter: "You're going to have to backpaddle harder in that kind of current, Peter." Not sure what Peter replied.



Rare white-faced moose

Some fast water followed and we floated along at a good clip. I think it might have rained some more. Things eventually flattened out and got boring. So far we hadn't seen any wildlife except the four girls back at Ragged Chute. Up ahead two large animals were grazing on the shore.

"Hot dog, moose!"

"Stay quiet and we'll get close."

Sure enough they were two rare white-headed moose with their unusual antlers. Dan said they looked a lot like cows.

"No way," said I. "No cows out here."

Peter got a good picture to prove we actually saw the rare white-faced moose.

The rain was threatening when we got to River Valley and dumped on us just as we pulled in to scout the rapids below the bridge. I would have walked down the trail but I couldn't see. Just when I thought it couldn't rain any harder, it did. The rest of the crew came up on the bridge to scope out the situation. The BOOK says take the trail. After a lot of "iffing," "butting," and "what do you thinks?" the decision was made to line past the huge dumpers that are conveniently located to make running impossible. We then ran down to the bottom where we lifted over a small falls. The BOOK says the upper rapid can be run "carefully," so we ran it without even a look, just because we could.

It was time to stop for the night since campsites are few and far between on the Sturgeon. The only obvious campsite is a small trailer community and we passed that up, hoping to find something a bit less civilized. A decision was made to camp on the portage trail. Don't often see portage trails that have been mowed so nicely. Scouting about revealed it was a little-used trailer park. It was one of our best camps when it wasn't raining.

Dan and I have a system for tracking upstream. One person goes way upstream with the end of a long tracking line and gets a good solid position. The boat

person pushes the boat out into the stream and yells: "Pull dammit, pull!" Most of the time it works. "Uh, John, does the boat always get that close to capsizing?" "Oh sure, Dan, no sweat."

Paddling upstream on the Sturgeon is hard work. We zigged and zagged across the river trying to catch as many eddies as we could.

"How fast do you think this river is running?"

"Beats me, how fast can we paddle?"

"Not fast enough, I think we are falling back. Maybe we should ferry over closer to the shore."

"Sure 'nuff. Uh Dan, maybe I set the ferry a bit to wide. Can you paddle any harder?"

"I'm paddling as hard as I can."

"Dan, you'd better paddle harder or we're going back down that rapid!"

Amazing how hard Dan can paddle when he puts his mind to it.

Sometimes I made a mistake and picked the wrong side of a long rapid when we started tracking up. Once we ended up wading waist-deep across recently greased rocks and through tag alders on the outside of a bend. I was climbing over and under the tag alders at the bow when the boat started to swing into the bush.

"Let go of the damned boat, Dan. You're dragging it into the trees."

From well astern comes: "I don't have hold of the damned boat."

Hmmm. I'm a bit taller than Dan and the water was only up to my waist. The waves must have been breaking over Dan's head.

I reminded him that he was supposed to pull his weight and I shouldn't have to do all the work by myself. I couldn't hear his reply over the sound of the rain.

Peter and Bob were more cautious and picked their way up the rapids deliberately, which was a good thing. Somehow Dan's spare paddle got flipped out by a

branch without our noticing. Peter picked it up as it floated by and tried to sell it back to him that night. We had a nice camp at the confluence of the Chiniguchi and Sturgeon Rivers. Did I mention the rain?

We turned away from the Sturgeon River for a while and were back in civilization. The cottagers have taken over here and two (expletive deleted) personal watercraft were buzzing about. Very friendly, they were running circles around us and waving. I don't think they could hear our greetings. At least they didn't seem offended.

Found the best camp of the trip that afternoon and stopped early to dry out. Tried to buy beer at a lodge but they thought we looked like LCBO inspectors; we did without. The place was carpeted with blueberries on which we gorged. It hadn't rained for a few hours so we went for a swim.

The trails weren't bad but at Gamagowong Lake the trail supposedly at the end of the lake wasn't there. We couldn't even find a trace of a trail. Obviously the BOOK was not to be trusted.

Bob said: "Let's bushwhack across. We have this world-famous bushwhacker with us so it should be easy."

The bush was so dense you couldn't even see the trees so I told them that I could do it if I really wanted to but I was really keen on paddling and would just as soon see if we couldn't get through to the next lake via the swamp we passed. Bob and Peter were sceptical.

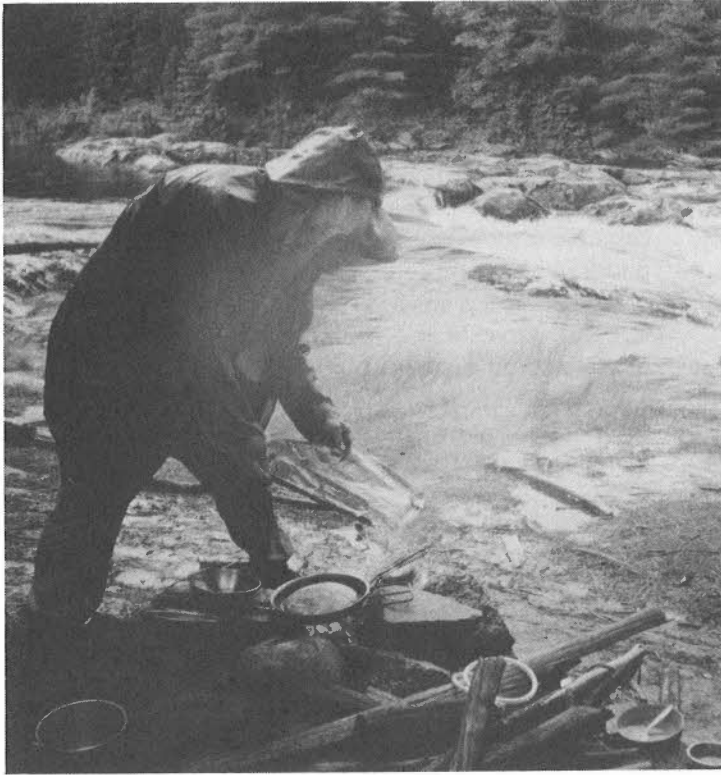
Off into the swamp we went. Sure enough the beavers had dammed the small stream filling the swamp, making easy paddling. Bob and Peter held back waiting to find out if I was wrong. Silly boys. Even saw a baby moose grazing among the water lilies, although it was the common brown-faced variety.

Raining again.

The trail down to the Sturgeon was a bit grown over but soon we were going downstream again. Steep,



Tracking up Sturgeon River



Baking bannock in the rain

sandy banks and a fast current swept us down to the Manitou River. Distracted by a barking dog I took a wrong turn on the portage at the north end of Wawiashkashi Lake. We sorted that out and soon were on Manitou Lake, which has become a kind of cottage slum. Across from our island campsite 2000 hungry dogs were howling while 2000 hungry children howled back. There are no zoning laws here so the accommodations are an eclectic mix of tents, old trailers, abandoned cars, and shacks.

The dogs howled all evening, stopping only when a drunken roar suggested that they would all be beaten if they didn't shut up. It worked on the dogs. I hollered over suggesting that they feed the children to the dogs but that was ignored. This seemed to be a good place to use Dan's water purifier. One doesn't know what those kids were putting in the water. We didn't miss the place after we left the next morning.

By noon we were at the last portage from Skunk Lake into Lake Temagami. We ate lunch before starting across. Did I mention it was raining?

Navigating on Lake Temagami is not an easy job. Fortunately Bob had a map. (The BOOK, having proven somewhat untrustworthy, was ignored). It rained in spurts carefully timed to wet any areas on your body that had dried. The Central Temagami access point was much as we had left it. A new group of very pretty girls, lots of powerboats, and it looked like it was clearing up.

REVIEWS

BROOK TROUT AND BLACKFLIES, A Paddler's Guide to Algonquin Park by Kevin Callan, published by Stoddart / The Boston Mills Press, Toronto, 1997, 144 pages, \$16.95 softcover.
Reviewed by Toni Harting.

This is Callan's fourth book on canoe trips in Ontario and they are getting better all the time. The 20 Algonquin Park trips he so vividly describes, many of them loops, take anywhere from two to 10 days and provide a good selection of the numerous trips possible in this marvellous (but increasingly crowded) park. His writing style is quite personal, recounting many adventures experienced by himself, his wife, and his friends, which makes reading the book a real pleasure. The text is filled with anecdotes and interesting background information, obviously the happy result of extensive research. A special word of admiration for the beautiful, clear, and uncluttered maps, providing the paddler with much essential information. Callan's photographs, all printed in black and white to keep the price of the book down (wisely so), range from great (few) to good (many) to disappointing (some), but they help to make the well-designed book a visual delight. We're looking forward to several more similar books on canoeing in Algonquin Park because of the many other trips that are possible there.

IDLENESS, WATER, AND A CANOE, Reflections on Paddling for Pleasure, by Jamie Benidickson, published by University of Toronto Press, 1997, softcover, 299 pages, \$55 (cloth), \$17.95 (paper).
Reviewed by Toni Harting.

The "culture" of canoeing is something many paddlers unfortunately don't worry about; what they basically want is to get from put-in to take-out in a convenient way and within a reasonable length of time. But that means ignoring the rich variety of other delights canoeing has to offer. In this book the author presents a rather scholarly collection of essays on many of those delights, and he does it in an impressively detailed way.

From the book: "*Idleness, Water, and a Canoe* is a study of the place of the canoe in Canadian life, with comparative references to the United States and Britain. A blend of history, economic analysis, technical information, and social commentary, it examines the rise of the canoe's popularity and its influence on leisure activity, economics and tourism, and literature and advertising in this country."

The book is not always easy to read because of the sometimes rather academic writing style, but by going slowly the reader will discover numerous gems to enjoy and thoughts to ponder. An impressive 35 pages of

notes and references shows the extent of the research performed by the author. All in all a splendid piece of work that should fascinate many a paddler, including the armchair variety. I am surprised, however, by the selection of the all-important photograph on the front cover of the book. The strangely distorted aluminum canoe should have been replaced by a much more aesthetically (and historically!) significant wood-canvas boat, thus better representing the beauty of the craft this book examines so well.

* * * * *

A NATURALIST'S GUIDE TO THE TATSHENSHINI-ALSEK, written by Heather Hamilton and illustrated by Andréa Meloche, published by Sierra Club of Canada (Suite 412, 1 Nicholas St., Ottawa, ON, K0A 2W0), 1996, 91 pages, softcover, \$9.95 plus p/h. Reviewed by Toni Harting.

Anyone lucky enough to have the opportunity to visit the fabulous Tatshenshini and Alsek Rivers in British Columbia and Alaska will greatly appreciate this handy booklet that provides a rich assortment of information to make the trip more meaningful. It not only gives some useful insight into the topography and history of the river itself, but presents a wealth of intriguing information on the plants and creatures that make the area come to life: mammals, birds, amphibians, insects, plants, trees, and more. The many black-and-white sketches illustrate the subjects very well, and the small size of the booklet makes it easy to take along on a trip.

* * * * *

THE WHOLE PADDLER'S CATALOG, edited by Zip Kellogg, published by Ragged Mountain Press, Camden, Maine, 1997, 194 pages, US\$19.95 softcover. Reviewed by Toni Harting.

This book will maybe not make you a better paddler, but definitely a much more informed one. It presents a mind-boggling collection of background information and trivia related to human-powered watercraft that will delight the hearts and minds of canoeists, kayakers, and rafters alike. Numerous illustrations (recent as well as historic) make the book a delight to study, and the extensive index is a great help when looking for a specific subject. Most of the contents of the book relates to paddling in the USA, but once in a while Canadian elements do indeed turn up. It makes fascinating reading, on both sides of the border.

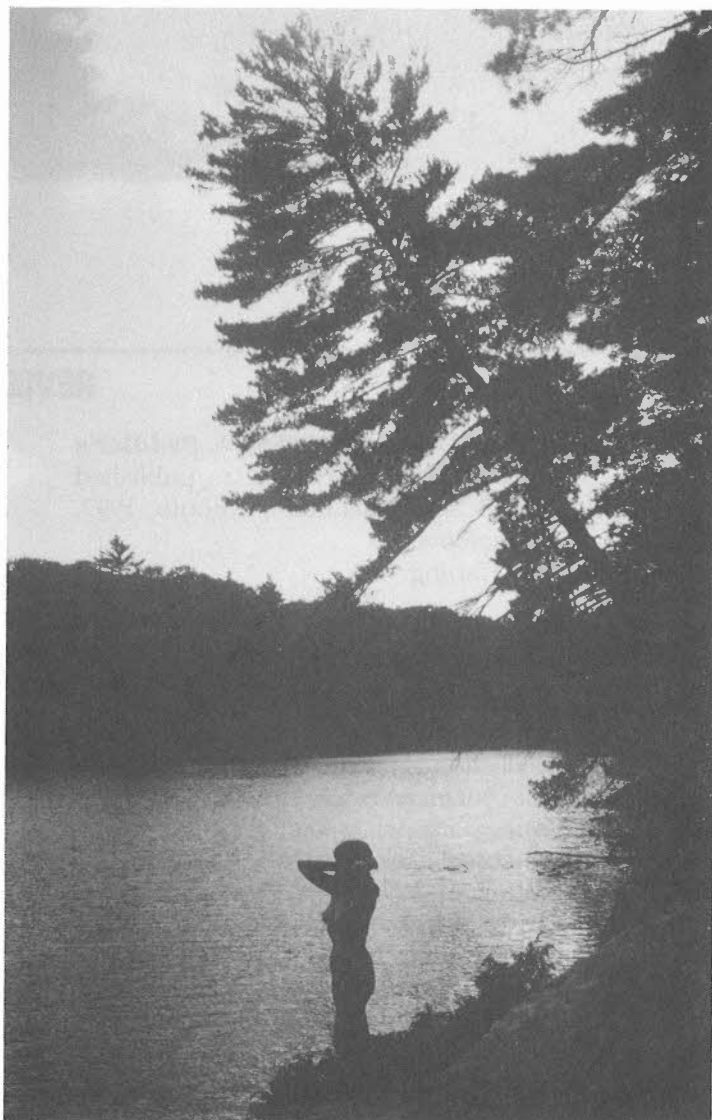
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THE SWEETWATER EXPLORER: Paddling in Grey and Bruce Counties, by Andrew Armitage with photographs by Willy Waterton, published by The Ginger

Press, Owen Sound, Ontario, 1995, 170 pages, \$21 softcover.

Reviewed by Toni Harting.

Because the publisher of this interesting book is a rather small, local one, with probably limited distribution, I missed its publication two years ago. That's a pity because it gives some quite useful information about paddling in a more relaxed part of canoe country, roughly centred around Owen Sound in southwestern Ontario. Most of the trips are on flatwater although some spring whitewater is also given attention. Twenty-seven daytrips plus a three-day float are presented seasonally, and many maps and photographs increase the usefulness of this pleasant guidebook.



Horse Lake, Frost Centre

THE NOIRE RIVER

John Hackert

In June 1996 we paddled the Noire River, which flows down from Quebec into the Ottawa River northwest of Pembroke, from Lake Patrice to Waltham Dam, enjoying high water and perfect weather. The trip started with a short fly-in with Bradley Air Services from Swisha (Rapides des Joachims), costing \$190 for the flight and \$50 for the car shuttle. The shuttle gets your car to the take-out on the day you want; meanwhile your car is safe in a parking compound at Bradley Air.

The river runs through a very sandy area; only at the rapids will you see the typical Canadian Shield rocks and hills. The river banks are unstable sand so the river meanders on its course, particularly above Lake Patrice. A constant current for 95% of the trip made the meandering quite acceptable. Below the Black River Inn the river becomes a dam impoundment. The scenery of the Noire is not remarkable as the trees at the side of the river obscure any view and there are few landmarks.

We went around one bend and saw a lynx on the side of a sand bank. It was heavier than an alley cat, about 45 centimetres high, and had no tail. The wind was blowing upstream so it could not smell us, but when it noticed us it quickly moved away. We also saw many large snapping turtles laying eggs.

As we turned one corner in the river there was a bunny rabbit in the shallow water facing away from shore with eyes open, twitching but not moving. The explanation was provided by the Red Tailed Hawk which circled about as he waited for us to leave so he could pick up his dinner again.

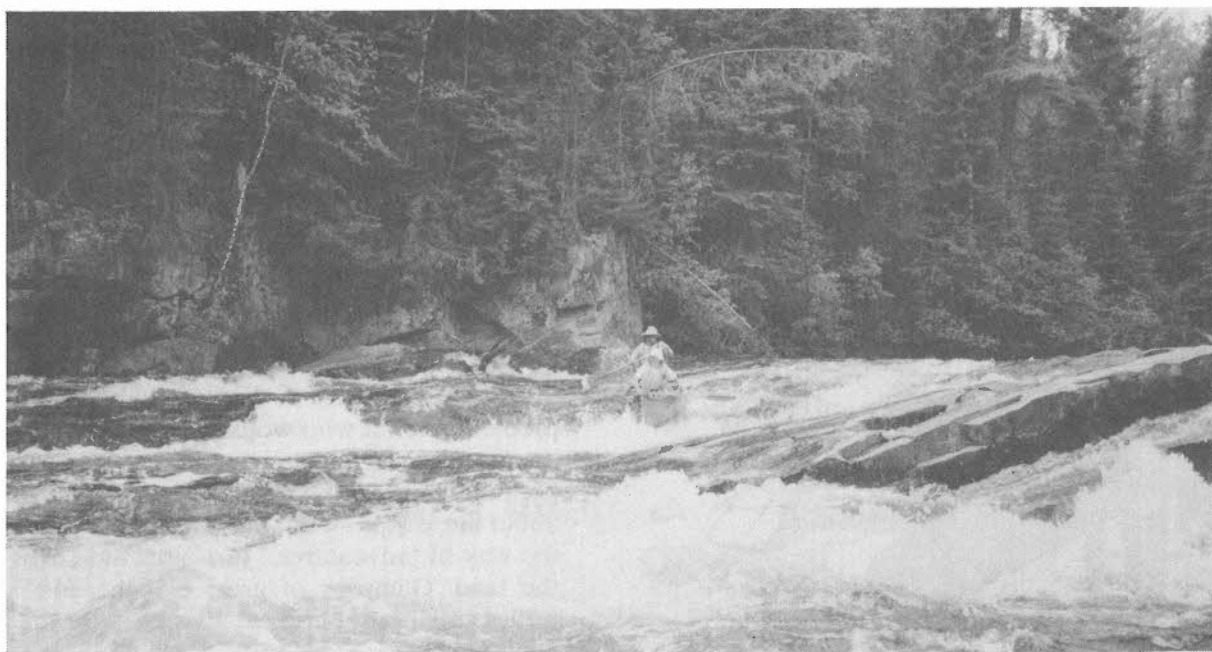
The description of the river in Hap Wilson's *Rivers of the Ottawa Valley* is extremely accurate and invaluable. The portages are very short and easy with one

notable exception. At Mountain Chutes Rapids Wilson's guide shows two portages. The first one, called "the portage from hell," is steep and 1500 metres long; the other is only 200 metres but the put-in is "extremely steep," which means rappelling your gear and canoes down a 25-metre drop and a 60-degree grade. That 200-metre portage took us at least 90 minutes. It's a good idea to plan that portage for the morning.

By setting a very slow pace of about 20 km a day, we were able to make the trip last six nights. On the last day we did not see any suitable campsites so we went 60 km to the dam. Four of those six nights we had very fine campsites by rapids where we were able to play in empty canoes and enjoy the sight and sound of the water in motion. There were also lots of potential flat campsites where the sand had gathered on the inside of a bend, but the sand gets into everything and the no-seeums thrive in it.

Apparently the river has reasonable flow throughout the summer as it is dam controlled. According to Ron at Bradley it does not get a lot of traffic. Most of the river is close to a major logging road that you will hear all night unless you camp by a rapid. The logging trucks seemed to pass us in 10-minute intervals at high speed. It is possible to drive in, but you are risking life and limb on that road. Though less scenic than the Dumoine, the portages of the Noire are fewer and the river is less crowded. Next time I would end at Black River Inn.

In summary, we enjoyed the whitewater at high water levels, the fairly easy portages, and the campsites by the rapids.



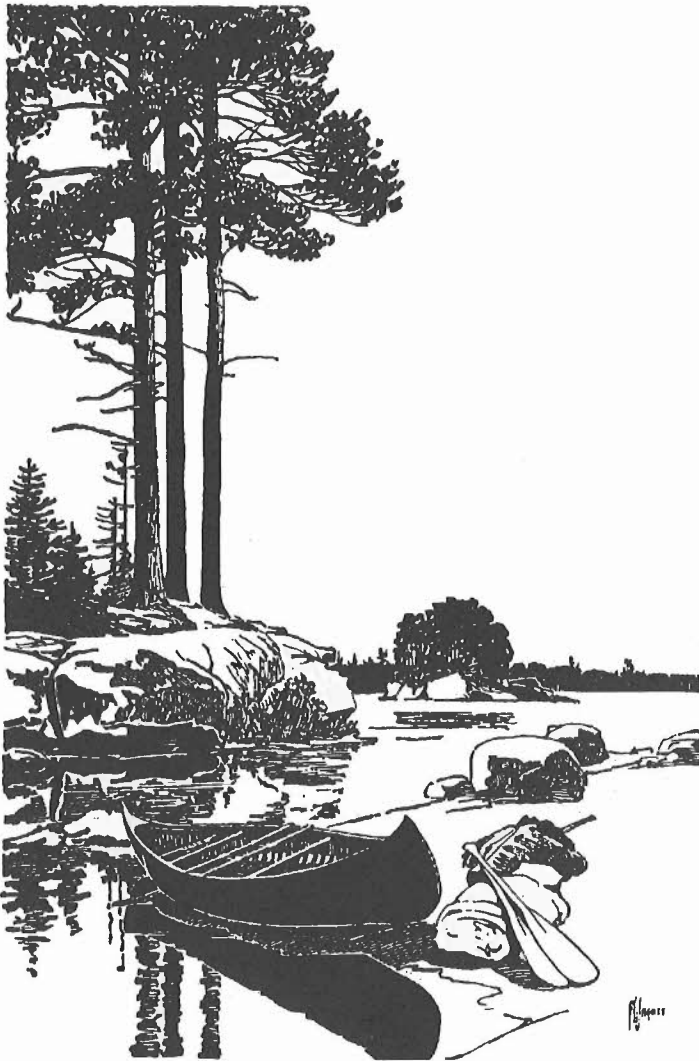
TRIPPING

Viki Mather

As I waited for the ice to slowly melt away last year's spring, I did a lot of reading about paddling. *A Death on the Barrens* by George Grinnell is an amazing tale of a river trip in the Barren Lands of the north. *Paddle to the Arctic* by Don Starkell gives a fine view of a badly planned and exceptionally difficult excursion.

Victoria Jason travelled with Don Starkell for part of his trip across the Arctic, and wrote *Kabloona in the Yellow Kayak*. The first half of her book also documents the trials they had to face travelling together. The second half is much more enjoyable as she writes of her solo trip down the MacKenzie River and across the Arctic Ocean.

While the men wrote books of adventure and troubles, Victoria wrote of the beauty of the land and the warm-heartedness of the people she met. She had few "adventures" while she travelled alone, and was able to overcome her troubles with planning and patience.



I especially enjoyed reading her account of a long wilderness journey. Through her journal, I came to know the people she met, how warm and caring people of the north can be, and how they, and she, felt the spirit of the land within themselves.

After reading these three books, I wrote to friends of mine who were canoeing somewhere around Ungava Bay (between Hudson Bay and the Atlantic Ocean) to see if they planned to write a book about their travels. I asked if it was true that Arctic travel was so difficult and dangerous (which I doubted) or is it that only crazy people write books that catch the eye of the publisher?

A few years ago they began a journey from their home on the Beaver River at the south end of Georgian Bay, up to James Bay. They return home when the ice comes, then go back each summer to paddle the next part of their expedition that will eventually bring them around the coast and back home up the St. Lawrence to Lake Huron and the Beaver River.

When I asked them if they were going to do a book once they completed the trip — perhaps as an example of how good planning and preparation can make for good travel — they replied:

"It's interesting that you have been reading books about northern adventurers. I read Starkell's book about his trip to the Amazon. ... I too became tired of hearing about all his suffering and hardships. Rather than doing some planning and preparation it seems he relied mostly on brute strength and will power.

"I think that most people could undertake such adventures if they really wanted to. It is just that we underestimate our capabilities in this age of easy living. We are nowhere near reaching our potential physically or intellectually.

"And no, we are not going to write about our trips — we are paddlers, not writers!"

Too bad. I would really enjoy taking their trip vicariously. Imagine travelling month after month in the nether reaches of the north. Imagine seeing the land one paddle stroke at a time, coming to know the land, to be part of it.

I would have enjoyed reading a whole book of a successful journey — no starvation, no frozen fingers or toes, no depending on luck to pull through. It would be nice to read a travel book for the Arctic focussed on the spirit of the land instead of the hardships of poor preparation. But who would publish it?

I've been fortunate to have lots of opportunities to get out canoeing the nearby lakes and rivers. I write about these trips — but I'm not likely to have much in the way of "adventures." Just quiet little trips through the land. Glimpses of great blue herons, snapping turtles and loons. I hope to give a feel for the land and all its wonders.

WALKING (AND TALKING) ON WATER

We think we are on safe ground in stating that everybody enjoys sitting at the water's edge and admiring the surroundings. This being the case, everyone has noticed, at one time or another, the long-legged insects called water striders skating over the surface of some quiet pond or river.

Water striders happen to be a special favorite of ours. Perhaps this is because we, like most humans, are just plain impressed by the ability to "walk on water." Beyond this, however, we find that the structures and behavior which go with the water strider's unique life style are particularly fascinating.

You see, water striders owe their "biblical" powers to much more than their small size. What they stand on is a thin surface film of slightly-denser-than-normal water which forms on calm surfaces. But even a water strider would eventually sink except for certain life-saving anatomical features. The most obvious of these is the considerable support provided by the long legs, but even more important is the presence on the feet of stiff, water-repellent hairs. These hairs have the effect of depressing (rather than penetrating) the skin-like surface film. Yet another feature is that the sharp claws on the water strider's feet are situated well back from the tips and therefore away from the surface film which they might otherwise puncture.

Movement on the slippery film is accomplished by rowing with the long middle legs while the hind legs and short front legs are held on the surface for support. Zipping around on the surface of a pond sounds like fun, but water striders usually give the appearance of moving quite erratically and may well leave you wondering why they have taken up such a strange mode of existence.

Well, you will have to observe closely to see it, but the rewards of living on the water surface are considerable. One important food source that is opened up is smaller insects that live below the surface but which come up to breathe, and a second is flying insects that fall on the surface and are unable to escape. A water strider attacks such a floundering insect in the twinkling of an eye, driving its mouth parts into the victim, and pumping in a digestive saliva. Several minutes later when the insides of the prey have turned into a nutritious "soup," the strider sucks out the conveniently liquified contents and then discards the victim's empty shell.

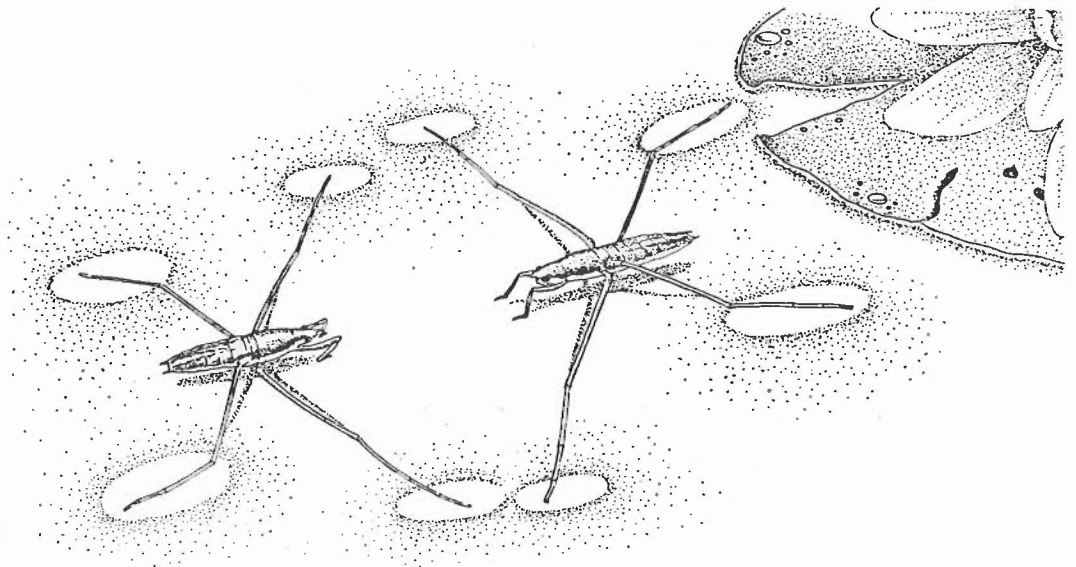
What we find especially amazing in all this is that the water strider is

alerted to the victim's presence, even in total darkness, by the tiny waves created by the struggles of the prey insect. In fact, there is a startling similarity to the detection by a spider of a victim struggling in its web. So sensitive are water striders to surface ripples, they can actually detect waves only a thousandth of a millimetre high and instantly pivot to face the precise direction they are coming from.

Even less apparent to the casual, pond-side observer of water striders is the fact that these remarkable insects make use of their keen wave-detection sense to communicate with each other. For example, a male who has found a suitable site for mating advertises the fact to passing females by moving his rowing legs up and down and thereby shaking the surface film. The waves he generates in this manner are not random, however. Each "call" begins at a high frequency (23 to 29 waves per second), shifts to a lower frequency (18 to 20 waves per second) and ends with one or two low-frequency waves (10 to 17 waves per second). If a female responds to such an interesting (for a water strider) proposition, she does so by gently beating her forelegs on the water to send out waves at a frequency of 22 to 25 per second. The male switches to a similar call and the female approaches. Later, while the female is laying her eggs, the male warns off any other males by sending out very high, or very low frequency calls.

It is extraordinary to realize that the surface film on which water striders glide about and find their food also serves them as a sort of watery tom-tom. Perhaps you may wish to think twice the next time you are sitting at the edge of a pond and are tempted to let your toes dangle in the water. After all, the ripples you create will drown out any being broadcast by the local striders — and nobody likes people who interrupt important conversations.

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



WCA TRIPS

For questions, suggestions, or anything else related to the WCA Trips, contact any of the members of the Outings Committee: Bill Ness (416) 321-3005; Mike Jones (905) 270-3256; Ann Dixie (416) 486-7402.

Remember that WCA trips may have an element of danger and that the ultimate responsibility for your safety is your own.

All fall **HAVE PADDLE WILL TRAVEL**

Steve Bernet, (519)-837-8774, call if you feel like going paddling.

Steve is out on the water most weekends and is open to suggestions regarding whitewater locations. Limit: your imagination.

5 October **BURNT RIVER**

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 28 September.

Between Kinmount and the village of Burnt River, the Burnt is a placid stretch of water with a few small riffles and a couple of larger scenic drops, which are easily portaged. By this time of year there should be few bugs, and the fall colors should be at their peak. This leisurely Sunday paddle makes an excellent family outing. Suitable for novices. Limit six canoes.

11-13 October **PETAWAWA RIVER**

Earl Silver, (416) 486-7402, book before 5 October.

The classic fall trip from Lake Traverse to Lake McManus. Some rapids, all can be portaged, most can be run by inter-

mediate or better paddlers. Limit six turkeys.

18 October **ELORA GORGE**

Mike Jones, (905)-270-3256, book before 11 October.

Fun in the Gorge. The levels should rise with the fall rains and the water is cooling. Rapids are Class 2 or maybe even 3 if rain is very heavy. A chance to play in the whitewater. Limit six canoes.

25-26 October **MAGNETAWAN RIVER**

Dan Rusciollelli, (905) 839-6004, book before 13 October.

An exciting whitewater weekend on the Magnetawan, from Ahmic Lake to Maple Island. The trip will cover the same section on both days. The upper section contains a series of Class 2-4 rapids which can easily be portaged. Cold water equipment and floatation advantageous. Fit, intermediate, whitewater paddlers should enjoy the challenge of this historic waterway. Limit five canoes.

2 November **ELORA GORGE**

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 26 October.

See 18 October.

The Outings Committee notes with sadness the recent death of our friend Tim Gill. He was an enthusiastic and aggressive whitewater canoeist, always ready to share a joke. For the past three years, Tim was an active member of the Outings Committee, leading trips and participating in the River Rescue Clinics. We shall miss him.

GLENO'S GOING AGAIN

Gleno called. Wants to go on another wilderness canoe trip. He hasn't been on one since we canoed the Nottaway River in Quebec in 1984. Did eight trips with us up till then. I kept him updated with our yearly trips, but I could never get him to rejoin us. He was getting married and finishing school. Replies similar to those we all get when trying to plan a two-canoe wilderness trip.

Gleno said he had to go on a canoe trip again. He needed to work his way through some personal problems and put some perspective back into his life. The marriage was over. His wife had filed for divorce. Said that she needed her freedom. Marriage was too constricting.

Gleno said that his weight was up. He mentioned that in the past going on wilderness canoe trips always helped that too.

The third area that he wanted to work on was his smoking. He was up to two packs a day.

At first there was some reluctance among the buddies to permit Gleno to go. We were going down the North Knife River in Manitoba. The other buddies did not know Gleno and were worried that Gleno would not pull his share of the load. They were also worried that he would burden the trip with his personal tragedy. While we are all here to help one another, a wilderness trip is a dangerous place to be if everyone is not pulling together.

Had to give the buddies my personal guarantee that Gleno was OK. Said that we had canoed with him for eight years and he was as good as they come for travelling in the wilderness. It seemed to calm the buddies down.

Then talked with Gleno. Told him that we would help him work through the marriage breakup. We are all in need of counselling and of a friendly ear at some time. The weight problem we could almost guarantee. Wilderness trips equal weight loss. It's not so much that the food intake goes down as the work output goes up. Way up. The equation's the same, calories in is less than calories out, but wilderness canoe trips concentrate on the calories-out side of the equation. End result, loss of weight, is the same.

Told Gleno the best way to deal with the cigarette problem was to just not bring them. The first couple of days would be tough, but then it would get easier. He would work so hard that he would soon forget about the cigarettes.

After all, a two-pack-a-day man has a much different meaning on the river.

Greg Went



PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

This PRODUCTS AND SERVICES section is available, free of charge and on a first-come, first-served 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:

- Algonquin Outfitters, RR#1, Oxtongue Lake, Dwight, Ont.
- Rockwood Outfitters, 669 Speedvale Ave. West, Guelph, Ont.
- Suntrail Outfitters, 100 Spence Str. (Hwy. 70), Hepworth, Ont.
- Smoothwater Outfitters, Temagami (Hwy. 11), Ont.

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

WCA JOURNAL INDEX Hardcopy printouts of the comprehensive 1974-1996 index presenting lists of articles, trip reports, technical subjects, and more are available from the editor for \$5.00; see address etc. on the back page.

CLASSIC SOLO CANOEING Two lessons totaling four hours instructed by Becky Mason at Meech Lake. Basic or advanced. All equipment provided. Fee \$65. Contact Box 126, RR#1, Chelsea, Quebec, J0X 1N0; ph. (819) 827-4159; e-mail redcanoe@istar.ca

COUREUR DE BOIS ADVENTURES Your canoe outfitter for the James Bay Frontier. Canoe rentals and sales, shuttle service, guiding, voyageur canoe tours, instruction, information, special events, ecotours, and more. Trips on Lake Abitibi and other lakes and on Missinaibi, Abitibi, Little Abitibi, Mattagami, Newpost, Frederick House Rivers, some fly-in rivers, and more. Contact Rick Chartier, P.O. Box 2221, Cochrane, ON, P0L 1C0; ph. (705) 272-3273; fax (705) 272-3672.

THE ADVENTURE MAP™ Chrismar Mapping Services is releasing the first titles in a new series of waterproof recreation maps designed specially for paddlers, hikers, and backpackers. The Adventure Map™ series targets National Parks, major Provincial Parks, an other popular wilderness recreation areas across Canada. Fifteen titles will be available for 1997, with many others to follow including some river maps. Prices range from \$4.95 to \$10.95 each. Free catalogue. Contact Chrismar Mapping Services, Box 1277, Uxbridge, Ontario, L9P 1H8; ph. (905) 852-6151; fax (905) 852-9474; email@chrismar.com; Internet www.chrismar.com

NATURAL OUTINGS Exotic wilderness hiking ecotrips. One-week bargain adventures. November: Costa Rica Pacific and Caribbean jungles, cloud forest,

volcanoes, beach basecamps. January/March: Belize, sail along barrier reef, camp, canoe, explore atoll, jungle ruins, caves, includes cabanas and most meals. February: Baja desert backpacking, whale nursery experience. Natural Outings, Box 100, Mansfield, ON, L0N 1M0, ph/fax (705) 434-0848, e-mail outings@msn.com

KAWARTHA LAKES FALL SAMPLER A group of quality resorts have partnered with the Canadian Canoe Museum to offer special "behind the scenes" tours of this developing museum and its collection of over 550 canoes from around the world. After a morning paddle, visit the museum, return to a cosy waterfront cottage. Spend another day canoeing, Mississagua River, Eels Creek, Long Lake chain, or Burnt River system. Overnight accommodation and breakfast included in mid-week October prices ranging from \$89 to \$109 per couple/night. For an information brochure on these special fall experiences, call the Peterborough Kawartha Tourism and Conservation Bureau at 1-800-461-6424.

SKIERS WANTED Ski at a variety of 1st class locations in Ontario, Quebec, North-Eastern states, and beyond. Receive free high-quality instruction from our CSIA-certified instructors. Enjoy a wonderful wintersport without the hassle of planning things or driving yourself. We are an adult downhill ski club dedicated to helping people learn to ski, meet new friends, and enjoy each other's company on and off the slopes. Membership to our Voyageurs Ski Club is \$100 if you join before 6 November 1997. For more information contact us at (416) 422-3214 or e-mail voyageurs@scsi.org or write to P.O. Box 533, Adelaide Post office, Toronto, ON, M5C 2J6.

TRAVERSÉE DE CHARLEVOIX is Quebec's premier seven-day cabin-to-cabin ski tour. This 100-km trail east of Quebec City has six woodstove-heated cabins with propane stoves and lights, each separated by 7 to 21 km of backcountry skiing in the Charlevoix Mountains, the Switzerland of Quebec, with Rocky Mountain-like views. Spring skiing at its best. Supplies are moved daily, so we only carry a day pack. Optional side trips. Speed is not important. The 7 or 15 March 1998 trips cost Cdn\$950 (US\$730) and include everything from Ste-Agathe-des-Monts, Montreal, or Quebec. Contact: Bill Pollock, Tuckamor Trips, 7123 Lac Noir Road, Ste-Agathe-des-Monts, Qc, J8C 2Z8, ph. (819) 326-3602, e-mail bill@tuckamor.com

NASTAWGAN SETS FOR SALE One complete set (1974 - Summer 1997), part photocopied and part original, asking \$200 plus postage. One partial set (1974 - Autumn 1991), small part photocopied and large part original, asking \$150 plus postage. Deal offered by Jan Tissot but I'm handling it for him. Toni Harting, address etc. see back page.

Where it is ...



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Wilderness Canoe Association

membership application

I enclose a cheque for CDN \$25 (single) or CDN \$35 (family) for membership in the *Wilderness Canoe Association* (for non-residents US \$25 or US \$35). I understand that this gives me/us the opportunity to participate in WCA trips and activities, and entitles me/us to receive *Nastawgan* and to vote at meetings of the Association. I also understand that WCA trips may have an element of danger and that the ultimate responsibility for the member's safety is his/her own.

PRINT CLEARLY!

Date: _____

New member Member # if renewal: _____

Name(s): _____

Single Family

Address: _____

Phone Number(s):
 (_____) _____ (h)

City: _____ Prov. _____

(_____) _____ (w)

* This membership is valid for one year. Postal Code: _____ Ext. _____

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