

PISHKANOGAMI CANOE ROUTE

Don Haig

The Pishkanogami canoe route follows the Kinogama and Ivanhoe Rivers for 105 kilometres from the once thriving, but now deserted, town of Kormak to Ivanhoe Lake Provincial Park near Folyet on Highway 101. Pishkanogami is the Indian name for the Ivanhoe River; it means "farther still." The area is accessible only by canoe or fly-in and features great fishing as well as a nine-metre waterfall. A three-kilometre portage near the end pretty well ensures solitude; a local outfitter says that this route gets as few as 10 parties a year. This area is due to be logged over the next few years so now is the perfect time to visit this relatively untouched wilderness. An excellent trip guide is available from: Ministry of Natural Resources, 190 Cherry Street, Chapleau, Ontario, P0M 1K0, tel. (705) 864-1710.

19 July 1997 After waving my truck goodbye, I turned towards the Kinogama River where my canoe and gear were strewn about on the ground. The grass leading down to the river had been flattened as if another boat had recently been launched — perhaps I wouldn't be alone after all. I loaded the gear into the boat and slid it down the bank and into the water. It had been a hot, dry summer, so consequently water levels were really low and at first glance the Kinogama didn't appear like much of a river. After paddling about 50 metres it looked considerably less so as I was met by a seemingly impenetrable wall of cattails. It took about half an hour to push, pull, pole, slide, and wiggle through them, all to gain 300 metres of river. I was beginning to doubt my choice of route; what was I going to do if the rest

of the river was like this?

But then the river opened up into a small lake, also choked with weeds, but at least there was a narrow channel through them. Swimming along beside me about 50 metres to my left was bear number one of the trip; as soon as he spotted me he took off for the far shore. Soon I was in the river proper, which was marshy, full of small log jams and beaver dams requiring a lift-over every 100 to 150 metres, making it passable but not easy. I started looking for the first carry, a 500-metre portage on river left that goes up over a hill and into a small lake before rejoining the river. It would bypass the worst of the log jams and a marsh. I was beginning to really worry that I had missed it when I saw a bit of a landing and a broken-off tree with a small blaze carved on it — this must be the place. There was fresh vegetation trampled down with tracks heading off in five directions or so, no doubt made by the people I assumed were in front of me. I followed the tracks for several metres and discovered what their makers had already found before me: there was no portage here. I had wasted half an hour and got my legs scratched, all for nothing.

Anyway, now that I knew where the portage was not, there remained the task of finding where it was. I got back into the boat, paddled 10 metres, lifted over a small beaver dam, and continued on for about another kilometre, repeating this operation a few more times before coming to an dense jumble of logs, trees, and swamp that went on as far as I could see. There was no signage and little evidence of a path, but this MUST be the take-out. I hauled the boat out onto the soft, muddy bank and sure enough there was a faint trail with only some old moose tracks in it, heading into the forest.

I picked up one of the bags and the water jug and headed inland. After about 20 metres all semblance of a path disappeared. To say that the trail was overgrown was an understatement, what a mess! I stumbled around deadfalls and the jumble of undergrowth trying to keep the trail in sight. Many times I lost it, then found it again, all the while working my way steadily up the incline. After about 300 metres I got to the top where there was a clearing, thick with mosquitoes and deer flies. The repellent worked fine for the mosquitoes but the deer flies were treating it as an aphrodisiac — I could see why these things can drive people insane. Looking down I saw that my legs were covered with streaks of blood. I'd have to remember to put long

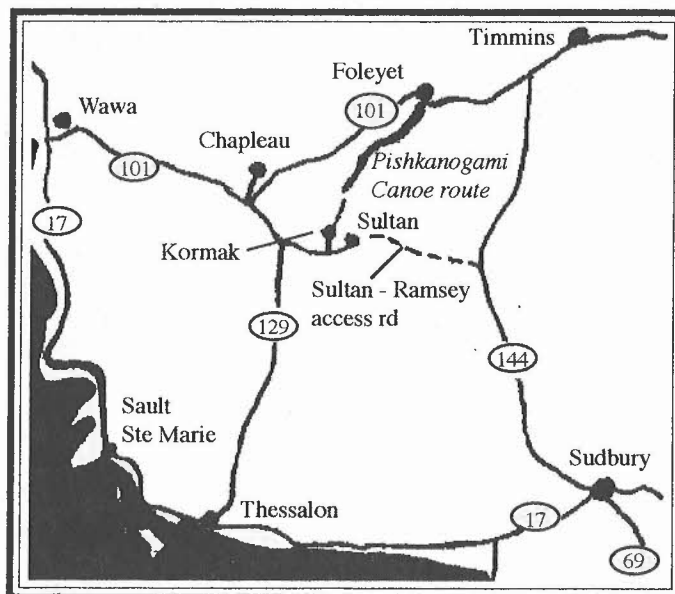
pants on when I got back to the boat.

The bigger problem was that the trail had disappeared. I searched for 20 minutes with no luck and was beginning to get very worried; what if this was not the portage but only some game trail, where was the real trail then? I had to fight back the feeling of panic that was starting to set in. There was nothing to do but work my way back to the boat and see if I could find another way. After 15 more minutes of pushing through the underbrush I was back at the boat, searching up and down the river bank for another path, all to no avail. The path I had been on had to be the one. I put on long pants, a long-sleeve shirt, picked up the water jug, and started back up the track.

About halfway to the clearing I noticed some old blue flagging tape on a tree, furthering my determination that this indeed was the right trail. Once again reaching the clearing, I started a calmer, more methodical search and was rewarded by finding another piece of the flagging tape on a small fallen tree. This gave me a starting point for the search and within a few minutes I had found the trail again. It was difficult to follow and I lost it a couple of times, but I finally emerged from the bush onto an old logging road. I knew that the trail crossed this road because nailed to a big tree on the other side was a big, shiny,

yellow portage sign! The trail started down a steep hill and I could see water below, so I knew that I had finally made it through. It occurred to me that people may be accessing this route from the road and if I ever do this route again I will definitely check it out.

Now that I knew that I wasn't lost, the work of getting the gear across could begin. I walked back, clearing the trail as best I could as I went. I usually make a carry in two trips, but in these conditions I knew this was out of the question. Two trips later, I had all the baggage across but I was getting tired and still had the boat to carry. I plodded back, doing a little more housekeeping on the trail. I shouldered the boat and started up the path but didn't get far before I had to put it down — there just wasn't enough room above me in this jungle to carry it, so I ended up dragging it a lot of the way. Thank God for ABS. Finally, physically and emotionally exhausted, I had filled the boat with gear and had water under her. It had been four and a half hours since the start of the trip. I did not see so much as a broken twig on this portage trail. What happened to the people in the phantom boat that I was following? I never saw another trace of them.



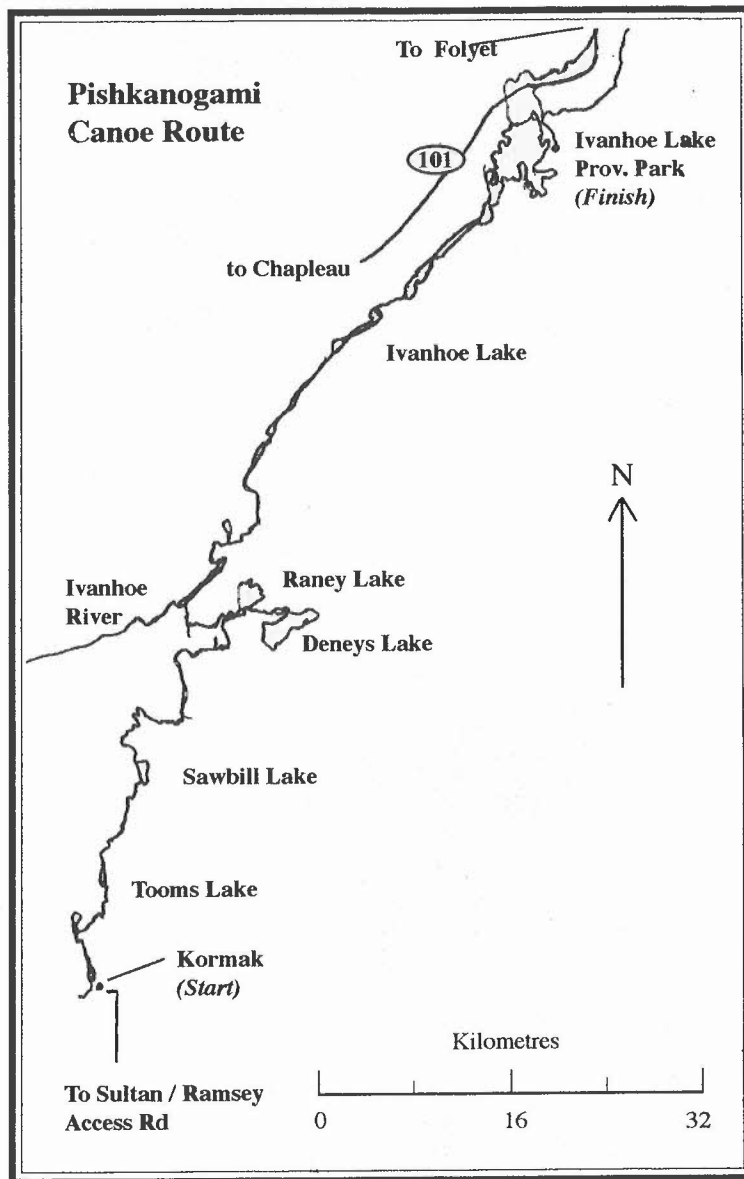
I had originally planned to paddle as far as the campsite on Tooms Lake, but given my physical condition that was now out of the question. Thankfully there was a spot on the north end of this little lake about one kilometre away. Fifteen minutes paddling later I pulled up on a small sand beach, unloaded the boat, and set up camp on the large, airy site. After supper, with sagging eyes, I watched the sun go down behind the trees and by 9 o'clock I was in my tent, sound asleep.

20 July By 8 a.m. I was up and around getting the coffee brewed. It had been a chilly night and I realised that I had guessed wrong about which sleeping bag to bring — the light Thinsulate bag just does not perform as the label says it will. The river from here to Tooms Lake is slow and meandering and starts out weed-choked with a small channel to navigate, but it gradually opens up. There were some lift-overs as well but a lot fewer than yesterday. It was quite a trick sometimes to stand on these rotting logs and work the boat over them without falling in. The trip guide notes a bridge at the north end of Tooms Lake where the river narrows, but this bridge looks as if it has been gone for a long time; it's a nice camping spot though.

The river speeds up through here for 500 metres or so but then slows back down. Until Sawbill Lake the river widens so deadfalls are not a big problem because they seldom are long enough to block the entire river. You are forced, however, to take a very zig-zag route to get around them. It is quite marshy here and ducks abound.

By the time I was entering Sawbill Lake the sky was looking ominous and the south wind was picking up. It was strong enough that I didn't have to paddle much so I threw the fishing line in. It was just minutes before I had a nice dinner-sized walleye. It had taken five hours to paddle to the campsite on the north end of the

lake and because of the deteriorating weather, as well as all the presence of portages between here and the next spot, I decided to camp here. It was a good choice — big sunny spot, lots of firewood, and even a lawn chair. I got the rainfly up just as the rain started. It rained off and on all night, not heavily — more of a heavy fog — but everything was soaked next morning just the same.



21 July I waited till 10:30 a.m. to give the weather time to start clearing, and then headed out. It wasn't long before I got to the rapids at P-2 (100 m) as indicated on the trip guide. It's a small drop with some beaver workings at the start that required a liftover and then I ran the chute below with ease. Following shortly was P-3 (60 m). These rapids are shallow and rocky and I lined them without incident. A short paddle brought me to P-4 (200 m). This carry bypasses two sets of rapids and fits into the "must-carry" category. The adventurous can run the first set fairly easily to another, unmarked take-out just above the second drop which is totally unrunable. Paddlers will have to decide for themselves if the risk is worth the bother to bypass just 100 metres of trail. Since I

was travelling solo, I did not wish to risk a swim and get swept into the second drop, so I carried the whole portage.

Shortly on the left, I got to P-5 (340 m), which avoids what the trip guide describes as "rapids with a strong current." The start looked deceptively easy and with the low water levels I decided to run and line it. After the first 75 metres the river curves to the right and this is where the trouble starts. The river narrows into a steep, rocky gorge that has lots of logs across it for good measure. It took me an hour and a half to get through it — across slippery rocks, over and under

logs, and then wading a shallow gravel/boulder bar at the bottom. Never again. This should be listed as "must carry" as I can't imagine running it at any water level. In high water, it would be a lot like a "slide ride," but without the smooth, soft sides. A short paddle brought me to P-6 (60 m). This rapid is short and easy and I ran it without incident.

Following closely on the right comes P-7 (70 m). This run has been dubbed "run and duck" because of the low-hanging cedars across the river. I think that time has lowered these trees and I couldn't imagine getting a canoe under some of them. Further complicating this run is the formation of a log jam about 20 metres upstream that is too unstable to stand on safely. Since you're going to be on land anyway to get around this obstacle, I seriously recommend carrying the entire portage — it's only 70 metres and avoids a potentially dangerous situation.

The river now widens into Halcrow Lake. The outlet comes shortly on the right and soon narrows for a short distance before opening up again into a small lake. On the north shore halfway down this lake there is a nice, large campsite situated on a small point of



land. Continuing on for another kilometre or so, the river narrows again and soon brings you to P-8 (65 m). The rapids here are short and steep and in high water are likely a fun ride, but with the low water this trip, the decision to carry was easy. Along this section there is one small unmarked rapid as well as a low ledge. Both are easy to run and the only danger is being caught unawares by them.

Soon the river turns northward and comes to P-9 (20 m) that all canoeists must use to circumvent a one-metre ledge that spans the entire river. It's just a short liftover in low water conditions.

From here the river meanders slowly northward until it reaches Vice Lake. It was in this section, where the river opens up into a marshy area, that I came upon moose number two of the trip. Where the first one had been an ordinary, even ratty looking, small bull, this fellow was everything a moose should be — a magnificent bull in his prime that had the biggest rack of antlers I had ever seen. I imagine he will be very popular with the ladies this fall.

One of the highlights of the trip, a nine-metre falls, is found at the north end of Vice Lake. As you approach the falls the granite walls start to rise upward and close in forming a gorge that squeezes the river down to about seven metres wide at the lip of the falls. The 135-metre portage on the left starts up a steep rocky incline for 50 metres and then descends steeply down into the gorge below the falls. The trip guide shows two campsites here, one at the start of the carry and the other near the end. The first one is small, an emergency spot at best, and the other is a little better with room for two to three tents, if a little uneven. It was 5:30 p.m. so I set up camp quickly, had supper, and was cleaned up by the time the sun was sinking below the trees.

The gorge looked like a great fishing spot so I got out the gear and looked over my tackle selection. I picked out a silver and pink flatfish that I had been carrying around for years, had never used it, never



intended to use it, didn't even know where it came from, and I thought to myself: Today's the day! With *the* lure attached to my line, I climbed down to the water and casted. It took ten minutes to land the biggest walleye I had ever seen! It was about 80 cm long and so big around that I couldn't hold it securely enough when trying to remove the hook. As a result I took a nasty cut on the finger from the sharp edge of his gill when it started flopping around. Moments later, the hooks were out and he was revived and swimming away. I fished for another 20 minutes and never got another nibble — probably just beginners luck for that lure.

22 July It dawned a crisp and sunny morning and I was packed up, fed, and on the river by 8:00 a.m. The direction of the river here forms an almost complete box before heading north again. There is little relief here and the area is a myriad of large and small lakes, all joined by easily navigable channels, in short a fisherman's paradise. I heard a few float planes coming and going but they only momentarily disturbed the solitude.

Before long, the river turns northward again and narrows between rocky hills. P-11 (360 m) soon appears on the left and bypasses a fast, shallow rapid. You have to be part mountain goat to do this carry — the trail goes almost straight up for 17 metres or so before levelling out and then descending slowly to the finish.

I carried half the gear over and had a good look at the rapids below; the view is fabulous. I didn't like the idea of lugging the boat and the other pack up that hill, so I decided, with a lot of apprehension — it was a solo

trip after all — to make the run. There were two drops near the top that required good braces to make it through and then an easy stretch before coming to the chute near the bottom. The main chute on the right had a freshly fallen sweeper in it, so I took the eddy on the left and waded the boat through on that side — all in all a fun, if slightly scary ride.

Immediately following this portage comes P-12 (100 m) and P-13 (70 m), both on the right. They bypass small, easy rapids both of which were no problem to run. The river from here meanders a couple of kilometres, first west and then north until its junction with the Ivanhoe River. There is a huge campsite here and one a bit smaller, about one kilometre downriver. The second one is a fair climb from the river, and of the two the first one is by far the best. A short distance downstream, the slow-moving Ivanhoe opens up into a long, narrow lake with another campsite marked in the trip guide as being directly across from the outlet. I had planned to camp here but I never did find it.

What I did find in (or near) its place was a five-star fly-in lodge, so I continued on to the next spot, five kilometres further on at the end of the next portage. Bear number two was sighted 750 m from the start of the carry but one look at me and he ran into the bush. P-14 (360 m) is on the left and is a level, easy path that circumvents a rapid that drops in two stages. The first drop is not too difficult and the guide talks of an alternate take-out before the second and more difficult drop, but I saw little sign of it as it was heavily grown over. The second drop is an S-bend complete with rocks that have not been placed properly. If you decide to run this rapid, first scout it well.

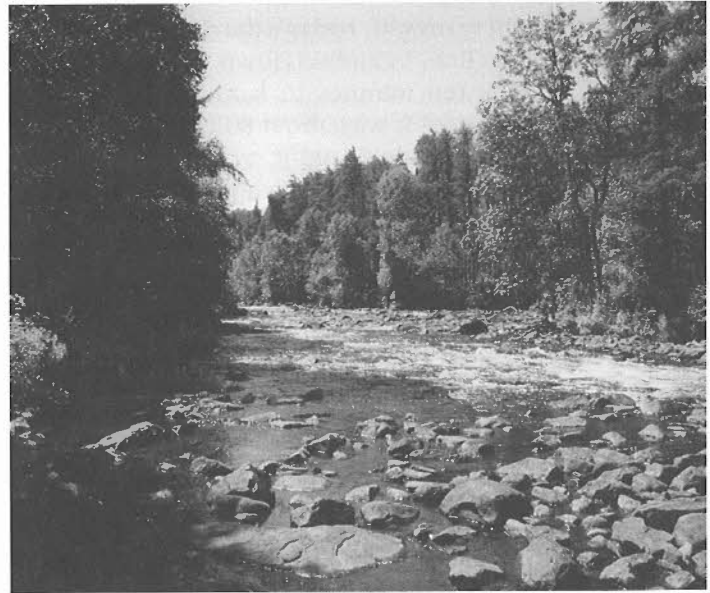


It was 4:30 p.m. and I was very tired, so I decided to take the portage trail. I would carry the gear over first, set up camp, eat, and then go back at my leisure and get the boat. After just a few metres into the carry, there was evidence that the bear had recently been on this side of the river — a freshly dug-up bees' nest. The bees were still buzzing around, no doubt wondering what had happened to destroy their world, and I didn't hang around long enough to get blamed. The campsite at the end of the carry had room for only a couple of tents but was one of those idyllic spots that you don't come across often enough. It has a huge flat slab of granite that juts out into the river making a perfect spot for the fire ring. You can sit and watch the fire and, as a backdrop, look upstream and watch the fire's reflection in the water as it tumbles over the rocks in the deepening twilight.

Four days into the trip and I was filthy and would have had trouble talking a wet dog into sitting next to me. I needed a bath! Down to the river with water jugs, pots, and boat bailer to get wet, and then collect water for the rinse cycle. Up by the campsite — there I was, stark naked and covered in suds (an unusual sight at best, I assure you) and I looked across the river to see that I was being scrutinized by bear number three (or perhaps number two again — it's tough to tell without name tags). I pointed to where I wanted him to go and yelled at him, and off he went. The poor bear is probably still haunted to this day wondering just what that pink, sudsy thing was. I keep my food in an airtight portage barrel and am very careful with food scraps and garbage, and have never had any problem with bears, even sows with cubs. I don't know why, but bears in the wild seem scared shitless of humans.

23 July Today would be the big day (the reason you eat all the heavy stuff first): portage day. An hour's paddle downriver was P-15 (400 m), followed closely by the biggie: P-16 (3 km). On the way to the first rapid I kept thinking to myself how nice it would be if I could run or at least line it so as to preserve some much-needed energy for the long one. When I got to the portage take-out I saw that it was one of those crummy trails full of jagged rocks. I paddled over to the top of the rapid and had a look down it. It was steep and fast! About 100 metres down, just after some huge van-sized rocks, it disappeared around a bend to the right. It was anybody's guess what was lurking beyond that. I thought maybe I could run it carefully down to the corner, get out, and line it from there, but I wasn't liking this idea much better than the rocky take-out. I paddled back over to the portage, got out, and paced around glaring at the rocky shore. I decided to give it a try, got back into the boat, and headed for the start of the run. It was a decision I would soon regret.

A short time later I was over the lip and heading downhill. It always amazes me that, at moments like this, time goes into fast forward and things happen a lot faster than they should. It seemed like only seconds



before I was nearing the bend and saw that there were no eddies. I started paddling furiously backward hoping to get into some slacker water near shore. That's when I hit the rock with the left side of the boat which went corkscrewing into the air. It was almost upside down as it hit the water, throwing me unceremoniously into the drink. The barrel and dry-bag bounced out as well and started their run to freedom, but everything else was fastened to the boat and stayed put.

After drifting for a few metres into slower water, I stood up, grabbed the boat and waded to shore. I carefully lifted the boat up and out of the water and then flipped it back, right side up, threw my paddle into it, and then looked downstream for my gear. The dry-bag had snagged on a rock a few metres away, but the barrel was still bouncing merrily towards the end of the rapid. Retrieving it would be no problem — the rapid flows into a large pool and the wind was blowing in the right direction, so it would drift into a large bay on the right.

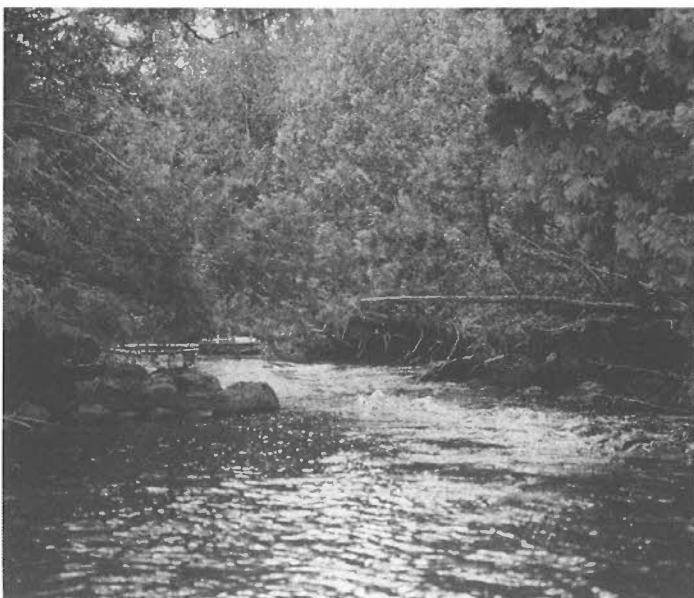
So far, things were going almost according to plan — I was, after all, at the bend in the river and ready to line the boat the rest of the way down. The five kilograms of water that my clothes had absorbed would have to be described as adventure. Looking back to the river, I saw that lining was going to be difficult but not impossible. The main channel roared down the right side of the river, dividing a few times into two or three secondary channels. The trick was to find a way through the many little channels between the rocks on the left side. I worked my way slowly downriver, collected my dry bag, and dragged the boat over some rocks to get around the left side of those huge boulders. It was slow work but I was steadily making progress. After fifteen minutes there remained only one more difficult spot and the worst would be over.

By now, I was almost in the middle of the river, sometimes jumping, sometimes wading between the rocks, and would now have to go through one of the secondary chutes that was splitting from the main flow.

Just as the boat was entering this chute, I slipped on an algae-covered rock and lost control of the line. In a split second, the front of the boat hit a rock, stopping its forward motion, and the force of the water pulled the upstream gunwale down into the water, swamping the canoe instantly. Now sideways and full of water, the current pinned it against rocks at both the bow and stern. It took some moments to fully comprehend the impact of the scene in front of me and I could only stare in disbelief. My brain was cycling through many emotions finally ending with: What am I going to do now? It took a few minutes to wade my way down to the boat and after reaching out and pulling up on the bow, my arms told me what my eyes already knew — this boat wasn't going anywhere soon.

I had to fight the urge to try and do everything at once; I had to approach this with a plan and carry it out one step at a time. The first step would be to gather all my gear and be ready to set up camp at the end of the portage to await rescue if the canoe should prove unrecoverable. When the boat swamped, the dry bag and my paddle were set adrift again but everything else — day pack, camera case, spare paddle, portage yoke, and bailer — were still attached to the boat. But the way they were thrashing around in the current, it was anybody's guess how long they would stay that way. All I could do was hope for the best — getting the boat back minus the paddles or yoke wasn't going to do me much good.

I swam and waded through the pool below the boat to where the bag was pinned on the rocks and using it for stability, waded the remaining 200 metres to the bottom of the rapid. To get to the portage I had to wade across the main flow in water up to one metre deep, terrified of getting one of my feet trapped between the rocks and falling over. It was a good thing that the river fans out a bit at the bottom, but even then I'm not sure I would have made it if I hadn't had the bag for stability. Now I at least had the tent, bedding, and dry clothes safe and I focused my mind on what to



do next. I checked on the barrel and saw that it was still over on the far side of the pool and going nowhere.

I had been in the water for about three quarters of an hour now and was getting sick of it, so I started walking up the portage trail. When I thought I was even with the boat, I bushwhacked over to the river to see if there was any chance of rescuing it from this side. Most of the current here goes along the right bank and I saw that there was no way I would be able to wade across this raging water with a rope. If the boat was to be recovered, it would have to be from the other side.

Back at the trail's end, I was getting ready to go after the barrel when I looked up towards the boat and saw my Pelican camera case bouncing down the rapid. The knot holding it to the boat must have worked loose. Its trajectory was going to bring it very close to me, so I only had to wade out a short distance to scoop it up as it went by. The case had endured a rough ride down the river, so I was a little apprehensive as I opened it up. But the equipment inside was undamaged and bone dry. I really like it when gear justifies its cost by performing the way it was designed to.

I started to walk around the pool towards the barrel. It had to be next on the recovery list as it contained, in addition to the food, the equipment I would need to rescue the canoe. I didn't get far before the ground turned into a black, oozy, boot-sucking muck that I would have to wade through. I thoroughly hate this disgusting stuff. God knows what slithery, wormy, blood-sucking life forms are evolving in it and I gave serious consideration to eating bark and leaves until I was rescued. I hate this shit. You try to find sticks and old logs to walk on to keep from sinking so deep, but you then risk slipping and falling in, making a bad situation far worse — who wants to land on their face in this ooze. It took three quarters of an hour to make it over to the barrel and the same amount of time to walk back, sometimes sinking to mid thigh — I almost lost a boot a few times.

Finally, back at the end of the portage, and after washing the goo off, I ate some lunch and thought of ways to get the boat back. The usual way this is done is to attach a rope to the boat and using carabiners to fashion a pulley, haul the boat off against the current. This method works best with lots of muscle helping to haul on the rope, muscle I didn't have. I couldn't get a rope across the river in any case because of the strong current. I decided that the best chance I had would be to try and pry the boat off with a long pole. The part I dreaded most was crossing the main channel to get to the other side of the river; I was starting to get scared of it. I got the saw and some rope out of the barrel, wrapped the rope around me, cut a long staff, and started across. I used the staff as a third leg to help me through the fast water and like a cane to keep me from falling over the slippery rocks as I waded resolutely upstream. At this point, I really didn't have a lot of faith that this was going to work, but since my dance card was empty anyway ...



As I neared the boat I came across a pole, about three metres long and twelve centimetres in diameter — just the perfect size. To wade out to the boat, I had to cross two small chutes and wiggle between a couple of big boulders at the top of the pool that was just below the boat. Once out there, I was in a calm spot with water boiling past me on both sides and now could survey the best course of action. Luck was with me in that there was a submerged rock under the boat and just in front of the rock that the bow was pinned against. I got the pole into position using this rock as a fulcrum and placed my weight on it and pushed down. The pole snapped in half like a piece of balsa wood. I had just begun to think that this might work — but what now?

I needed a stronger pole. Looking around me, I saw a stand of birch trees about 20 metres upriver — one of them would do nicely. I waded back to the shore, picked up the saw, and started to push my way through the nearly impenetrable bush along the shore. Once at the clump of trees, and after ten minutes sawing, I had a solid pole three metres long and twelve centimetres thick. Back at the boat, with renewed confidence that this was going to work, I positioned the pole and threw all my weight down on it. The bow slid up and off the rock and the whole boat slowly corkscrewed and turned in the current and started to float downstream.

It didn't get far before it stopped — no apparent reason, it just stopped and hung there wallowing from side to side in the current. The front painter must have worked loose and was now wedged in between some rocks, keeping the boat from floating free of the chute. Cutting the rope would quickly solve the problem — that is if I had a knife, which I didn't — so I waded out through the chest-high water and snagged the boat when it got close to my side of the chute. Working it

into slower water allowed me to pull it upstream slightly to ease the strain on the rope, and with my other hand I worked to untie the knot. The knot in the wet rope had really tightened so it was quite a job to undo it with one hand, but finally it was free and I had my boat back.

I backed over into the pool pulling the boat behind me until I felt some better footing under me and then took stock of what I had. The spare paddle was hanging by a thread — it would not have been long before it would have been lost, but the portage yoke and bailer were still secure. The daybag, however, was gone. It's a gym bag that I carry all the things in that I want handy such as rain gear, binoculars, etc. The contents were quite valuable and I hoped that I would find it wedged on a rock downstream and that it wasn't gone for good.

Of course I still had the problem of getting a ton of water out of the boat and back into the river where it belonged. I was perched precariously on two rocks in chest-deep water. Combine that with a gimpy right arm, and I was not even going to try emptying the canoe by lifting it up and out of the water. That left bailing — not as easy as it sounds. An ABS boat floats, but just barely, so the trick is to get it floating evenly with the gunwales just out of the water and then bailing like mad before a small wave comes along that rolls over the gunwales and refills the boat with water, forcing you to start over. This happened twice but eventually I started making headway. I had no idea that a canoe held this much water, and removing it, half a Javex bottle at a time, is sure hard on the arm.

Finally the boat was empty enough to start downstream, so I pushed off across the pool and towards shore intending to collect my saw and rope and be on my way. I was half-way across when the current

grabbed the boat and tried to twist it from my grasp, which wrenched my bad shoulder causing it to scream out in agony. But by now nothing could make me let go of this boat. Once on shore, I had to sit and wait for the pain to subside enough for me to pick up my gear and continue. The 200 metres to the bottom of the rapid was easy. I even found my daybag half way down. It was in bad need of drying out but the only thing damaged was my tape recorder that was in a leaking Ziploc bag. I had been working for over three hours in deep, fast-flowing water, fearful that one slip could have caused death from entrapment or some broken bones from an unscheduled swim, and I felt a great sense of relief that this ordeal was over.

The canoe was soon loaded up and after a scan for the missing paddle (never did find it), and one last look upstream, I was on the way to the next portage. I had made many mistakes, but realised that the root cause of this particular bit of adventure was that I had lost all perspective about why I was here in the first place. By allowing myself to become so worried about the next rapid, I didn't pay the proper attention to this one. I had become fixated on the destination and not the journey. I vowed that this was one mistake I will never make again.

A fifteen-minute paddle brought me to the next, last, and longest portage. I had originally thought that it could be avoided by wading, lining, and careful running, but now I was thinking "perhaps next time." Who am I kidding, the decision not to run it was made about two hours ago.

The portage is three kilometres long, but only the first 1.5 km is considered a "must carry." There is a put-in at the halfway point for those who want to run the last half of the rapid, which is what I planned to do. The guide shows a campsite at the start of the carry, but it's so small that it must be classified as an emergency spot at best. The trail leaves the river and starts off level. After 100 metres it begins to climb, and over the next 300 metres you ascend three very steep hills, gaining more elevation on each one. The trail then levels off for 200 metres before returning to the river and then turns to the right along the brow of a steep hill, which gives a fabulous view of the river over 30 metres below. From up here anyway, it doesn't look like such a tough run.

For the last 800 metres, the trail follows the side of this winding esker and works its way slowly downhill until you are walking on the flat river bank. Overall the trail is in good condition with a well-defined, easy-to-follow treadway and only a few deadfalls to detour around. The turn-off at the halfway point is easy to find as this path gets far more traffic than the one that continues on to the end of the portage.

Now comes one of the highlights of the trip, 1.5 km of C-1 rapids. The only catch was that, because of the low water, I had to wade the loaded boat out into the main channel to begin the run. This, after all the walking on the portage trail had finally dried my boots out and I had, at last, dry feet. Well, for five minutes any-

way! This is a fun ride that winds its way following the esker until the river finally runs out into Ivanhoe Lake. The trip guide also shows a campsite at the end of the portage but I didn't find it. What I did see as I whizzed by was a boulder beach with what looked like a big clearing farther back, up on the river bank.

A short distance further on the left, there is a long, flat bank about 1.5 m above river level that could be used as a campsite if needed. I was getting really tired but wanted to make the next nice, large campsite, which was five kilometres further down the lake. The lake was perfectly calm and it was an enjoyable one-and-a-half-hour paddle in spite of my fatigue. Once there, I had plenty to do setting things out to dry in addition to the regular camp duties. It was a pretty tired camper who turned in just as darkness was descending. In spite of all the memories of the day's events racing through my mind, sleep overtook me almost instantly.



23 July Ivanhoe lake is 36 kilometres long and, because there are no developed campsites, has to be paddled in one day. The lake is aligned in a southwest-northeast direction which lines it up well with the summer prevailing wind. Travelling solo into a strong wind is difficult at best, so I had decided that I would not attempt the long paddle today, unless the wind was in my favor. I was up at dawn, watching the morning mist rising off the water to see if it would give me an idea as to which way the wind would blow today. The mist would start to drift downstream a little causing my spirits to soar, then soon begin swirling upstream, causing me to fret. This pattern continued for about an hour and then, slowly at first, the mist decided on a single direction: downstream. I was packed and on my way within half an hour.

For the next three hours a gentle breeze helped my paddle propel me down the lake but the breeze was starting to pick up and was soon blowing quite briskly. This lake, while generally long and thin, opens up into

wide spots then narrows into small channels that soon lead to wider sections again — a pattern that continues for about 30 kilometres, after which it then opens up into a large, round body of water four kilometres across. To get an image in your mind, picture a giant tadpole with a four-kilometre-diameter head and a 32-kilometre tail.

The wind was starting to cause problems on the wide sections, kicking up waves as large as a third of a metre. It was nothing really dangerous, but the situation required constant attention. About halfway down I had the company of a pair of bald eagles circling high overhead, gracefully riding on the rising currents of air. I was meeting people now and then — the odd fishermen and some tourists at the few outpost cabins that were scattered along the shoreline. When I reached the island campsite near the outlet into the big part of the lake, I had been paddling non-stop for seven hours. My legs, arms, and back were screaming for a rest and a chance to stretch. My bladder was also getting very insistent.

Landing at the campsite for a walkabout seemed like a great idea. It's a nice, big spot and not a bad place to spend your last night on the river, especially if the wind would make the lake crossing too dangerous. Fifteen minutes later, revived and refreshed, I was back in the boat and heading towards the last leg of the trip — the main lake crossing.

I was entering the lake on the lee side, so the water was calm. But out in the centre, I could see whitecaps — a place to definitely avoid. To make the crossing, I headed along the south shore towards a long promontory that extends out from the south shore for about

one and a half kilometres. It took half an hour to reach it and the waves were starting to get really big this far out. In these deepening swells I let the wind supply most of the forward power and I concentrated more on keeping the boat at ninety degrees to the waves. Some of these waves were now approaching two-thirds of a metre in height and I did not want to broach and get swamped. Once past the spit, I slipped in behind it and finished the crossing in its wind shadow. As I neared the beaches on the other side, the waves were again getting rather large, but this concerned me far less than the fact that the wind had forced me to take a course that brought me ashore a kilometre south of Red Pine Lodge where I hoped my truck was parked. Twenty minutes later after a sideways roller-coaster ride through the surf, I was on the beach in front of the lodge. I was home!

My truck was there, complete with a flat tire. After getting the tire filled and everything packed up and loaded, I drove down the road to Ivanhoe Lake Provincial Park to camp for the night, before the long drive home in the morning.

As dusk was approaching, I took a walk down to the lake for one last look. The water now was as calm as a sheet of glass and reflected in it was a magnificent magenta sunset. As my eyes stared transfixed, my mind travelled back over the last five days — mistakes had been made, lessons had been learned, but in spite of this I had enjoyed the trip, with its scenery, solitude, and even its challenges. Perhaps because of that, I knew that the memories of this trip would be with me for a long time.



TREASURE CHESTS

Many years ago we took a canoe trip on Lake Temagami. Temagami is an amazingly huge and beautiful lake. We found a campsite in the heart of the lake which we used as a base camp while we explored many of the bays and islands of the lake.

As usual, upon arriving at our campsite we did a quick reconnaissance to pick up litter. It was a well-cared-for site, so we didn't have much work to do. However, I was more than a little dismayed to find an outdoor toilet box well back from the site. How could I feel I was in the wilderness when this modern convenience marred the natural forest?

I refused to use the silly thing. I was perfectly capable of pooping in the woods without leaving any trace to show where I'd gone. When I needed to "go" I found a well-out-of-the-way secluded spot, dug a shallow hole, and made my deposit. After burying everything, no one would ever know I'd been by.

Our next canoe trip a few weeks later took us much farther into the wilderness, along a beautiful route north of Lake Obabika. Late in the afternoon we started to look for a campsite. We were encouraged in our efforts by the rainshower we could see approaching from across the lake.

We pulled onto an island campsite to seek shelter from the rain. Quickly we stashed the packs under the canoe and threw up a tarp for us to duck under. Unfortunately, the shrubs just behind us were decorated with toilet paper. As the showers abated, we took a hesitant look over this campsite and found that it had been heavily used all through the summer. Toilet paper was everywhere. I never looked close enough to see what else accompanied the paper. We left the site as fast as we could.

Fortunately, the beach where we next stopped at the north end of Wakimika Lake was pristinely clean. There were many places to put up the tent under the shelter of the forest, and a great place to put up our tarp to keep us out of the rain.

Over the next few years we travelled through many lakes and forests. When we camped in the interior of Provincial Parks we always found the toilet boxes nearby. The sites were generally clean and we rarely, if ever, came across any out-of-place toilet paper. On the other hand, whenever we travelled outside of the park, bits of white paper and worse were often distributed in the background.

It didn't take a lot of thought to figure out that the toilet boxes were not a bad idea. They may seem out of place in a "wilderness" setting, but the alternative is far more disgusting.

With this in mind, I suggested to the Sudbury Naturalists that we, as a group, take some steps to help clean up some of the beautiful canoeing areas near Sudbury. We applied to the Canada Trust Friends of the Environment Foundation and the federal Green Plan's "Partners" for funding to build a dozen boxes. We

researched the design, modified it to fit into the canoe we would use to get them into the wilderness, and built a dozen "Treasure Chests."

A group of the Sudbury Naturalists got together in early July to build the boxes, then in mid-August we took a field trip into Wolf Lake for our "ceremonial" installation.

The campsite we had chosen to place the box was occupied when our three canoes arrived on Wolf Lake. We introduced ourselves to the women who were camped there, and told them of our mission. They were delighted. They helped us select the best spot for the box — taking into account the need for privacy, and the appeal of having a good view. The hole was dug, the box was placed, many photos were taken, and the resident women were honored to have the pleasure of being the first users.

We then paddled on down the lake. We enjoyed lunch atop a great cliff, overlooking Wolf Lake. Then we carried on to Sylvester Lake, where another of the boxes had been placed a month earlier.

Happily we found that the campsite was very clean, not a stray piece of toilet paper anywhere. The Treasure Chest was doing its job — apparently a welcome fixture in the wilderness.

Viki Mather



HOOTS, MONSIEUR!

Coueurs de bois go Scottish ...

Think of the coueurs de bois — by day plunging their canoes through raging rivers and by night asleep in teepees — and transfer that very Canadian image to the Scottish Highlands.

Travellers to Scotland can take an adventure holiday exploring rivers, lochs and islands much like the early French-Canadian fur traders — complete with Canadian-made, eight-metre-long freight canoes that carry 10 and overnight accommodation in teepees. Details: Scottish Voyageurs, 1 Craigdam Cottages, Tarves, Ellon, Aberdeenshire, AB41 7NR, U.K.

(*The Toronto Star*, 20 Dec 97)



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Published by the Wilderness Canoe Association — Editor: Toni Harting
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.

EDITORIAL

Rejoice, rejoice, all you lovers of this illustrious journal, we have a new computer system! A Dell Dimension XPS M233 (233 Mhz, 32 Mb memory, 4.3 Gb hard drive, 32x CDROM, 56 K modem, 17 in. monitor), complete with an HP ScanJet 5100C flatbed scanner, an HP LaserJet 6L printer (600 dpi), and a 100 Mb Zip drive. This finally enables us to install the practically universally used Windows 95 operating system as well as various modern applications, so we can now make in-house copies, scan hardcopy to perform OCR, improve the printing quality of the photographs (in the future), convert various wordprocessing formats to the one we use (WordPerfect) more easily, accept most if not all e-mail documents with less hassle, save on outside-work expenses, and more. In short, the editing work will go faster (once I'm used to it all) and efficiency will go up, our main goal. Again, my gratitude to Roger Harris for all the wisdom and support he so patiently brought to the big job of finding an appropriate computer. And to the WCA Board of Directors for authorizing the acquisition of the system.

However, it's not all sunshine and joy at my editor's desk. The stack of submissions is dangerously low; it does not look good for the near future as far as filling a reasonably sized journal is concerned if I don't receive more material within the next two months. I have only one longish article for the Autumn issue and a few short items, and that's not nearly enough to fill a 28-page *Nastawgan* with. So, "old" as well as "new" members, lift yourself off your canoe seat and do something for **your** journal. There is so much you can contribute: long and short trip reports (including trips close to home!), technical reports, diaries, opinions, reviews, anecdotes, jokes, reflective pieces, photographs, sketches, poems; there are numerous possibilities. Not everything submitted will make it to print, of course; there will always be some rejections (or in most cases re-writings), but without trying it you will never feel the satisfaction of being published in *Nastawgan*. If you need advice, by all means contact me. Drop the paddle, pick up the pen! Start now! Please ...

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. Try to submit your contributions by e-mail, on 3 1/2 in. computer disk (WordPerfect or MS-Word or text files preferred, but any format is welcome), or in typewritten form, but legibly handwritten material is also welcome. For more information contact the editor (address etc. see WCA Contacts on the back page). 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:

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------|
| <i>issue:</i> | Autumn 1998 | <i>deadline date:</i> | 2 August |
| | Winter 1998 | | 1 November |

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).

BILL MASON STAMP has indeed become reality and will be released for sale by Canada Post in August 1998, thanks to years of dedicated efforts by Wayne Bagley, a paddler from Windsor, Ontario.



CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

It is now nineteen years since I last wrote a column under this heading and curiosity as well as nostalgia had me leafing through the old copies of the *Wilderness Canoeist*, the forerunner of *Nastawgan*. It reminded me just how much some aspects of the activities of the WCA have changed. The newsletter then was laid up by hand in a setting which was as much a gathering of friends as it was work. Copy was typed by several members on typewriters with nonmatching fonts, often in a last-second rush. Outings, more often than not, where "exploratory," meaning that the organizer was as un-informed about the conditions along the proposed route as any of the other participants. This added tremendously to the sense of adventure but also slowed progress, since much more scouting was required, resulting in some very late returns home. There was very little useful information on travel in more remote regions and few ventured into the real North.

Today, the newsletter is produced with the aid of a computer almost single-handedly by the editor. Participants in current WCA outings are technically more advanced, have better equipment, and have access to detailed route descriptions if they venture into new terrain, even for many regions of the far North.

The process of change which we have experienced is going to continue. At the request of Toni Harting, our editor, the Board has authorized the acquisition of a more powerful computer and ancillary equipment and software with the expectation that it will improve the quality of the product and decrease the considerable amount of time Toni has to spend on the newsletter. We have also gratefully accepted the offer to set up and maintain a website for the WCA, free of charge, from Martin Heppner. Details on this topic will appear in *Nastawgan* as soon as possible.

However, not all of the changes have been positive. Some key problems which give cause for concern are the reduction in number and variety of outings due to a shortage of organizers, the lack of volunteers to fill vacancies on the board or to help with organizing club events, and a decline in participation levels. In order to try and address these issues, the Outings Committee convened a meeting of some thirty members of the WCA to identify causes and suggest remedies. Bill Ness, the committee chairman, has presented the report of these deliberations to the Board (and a condensed version elsewhere in this newsletter). The main aim of the recommendations is to increase participation levels within the organization. To this end the Outings Committee has already expanded its instructional outings and the Board is committed to separate mailings for the Fall Meeting as well as more prominent displays of club events in *Nastawgan*.

In this connection I invite comments and suggestions from individuals willing to play a role in the continued vitality of the WCA. I hope to meet many of you at Camp Kandalore in September, if not sooner. In

closing I would like to thank the three directors — Mike Jones, Dan Rusciollelli, and the past chairman, Earl Silver — whose term expired at the Annual General Meeting, for all the work performed during the last two years.

Happy paddling.

Herb Pohl

WCA FALL MEETING

This annual get-together is scheduled for the weekend of 25 to 27 September 1998 at Camp Kandalore. As many of you know, Camp Kandalore was the original location of Kirk Wipper's canoe museum, which is now in new quarters in Peterborough. For those not familiar with the place, it is located just west of Hwy. 35 approximately halfway between Minden and Dorset, and some 250 km NNE from Toronto the good.

During the third week of August, a full description of the program and a registration form for the weekend will be sent by separate mail to all members who live within a radius of 350 km of the camp. Anyone beyond that radius who wants to attend is asked to contact the organizer (Herb Pohl, address and phone # at the back of the newsletter, or check the WCA website?). The emphasis during the day(s) will be on outings. There will be a minimum of four different lake loops of from three to six hours duration to choose from and at least one hike. Antisocial types or people of more esoteric tastes are of course always welcome to do their own thing. Whatever the chosen activity, it will expose participants to the rugged and colorful beauty of the region.

There will be no formal program Friday evening, but members are urged to bring slides of their latest exploits for informal presentations. Following dinner on Saturday we will have a session on "provisioning for longer wilderness trips," essentially a free-for-all under the control of a moderator. The highlight of the evening will be a presentation by Greg and Suzanne Brown on their quest to circumnavigate the Labrador peninsula by canoe. The Browns started their multi-year journey by paddling away from their home on the Beaver River (southeast of Owen Sound, Ontario) in the early nineties and managed to get as far as Kuujjuaarapik (Great Whale River) on the east coast of Hudson Bay during the first summer. Since then they have managed to get out each summer to add to the total distance covered and will be at it again as this issue goes to press.

And by the way — the organizer of this remarkable event will seriously consider any offers of help.

OUTINGS COMMITTEE SPECIAL REPORT

WCA FOCUS GROUP ON STIMULATING MEMBER PARTICIPATION

8 February 1998

BACKGROUND

During the past year the Outings Committee has become increasingly concerned about the progressive difficulty in finding members who are willing to organize club trips. On the surface we appear to enjoy a healthy, active outings program. But a more careful analysis will show that 67% of our 1997 outings were the result of the efforts of only eight organizers or organizer partnerships. Forty-five per cent of our trips last year were made available to our members due to the enthusiastic support of a mere four organizers. The simple fact is that our outings program exists due to the contributions of a very small group of people.

Last fall the Outings Committee met to assess this situation and determine what actions might be taken to turn it around. One of our first conclusions was that our recruitment difficulties were just part of a larger problem the WCA increasingly was facing of finding members interested in taking an active role in their club. Whether it was standing for the Board, organizing a social event, writing an article for *Nastawgan*, or doing conservation work, finding people has become a struggle or impossibility. For several years, despite a growing total membership, we have been experiencing a dwindling number of active members. Our decline in participation levels, if they continue, will jeopardize our ability to provide the range of high-quality activities that members have come to expect.

WCA FOCUS GROUP

The Outings Committee felt that the problem of members' declining interest in organizing outings had to be dealt with as part of this overall issue of decreased active participation in the club. To obtain feedback on members' attitudes towards participation, we sponsored a focus group of both long-term active members and persons who had joined more recently.

The question we posed to our 30 participants was: what changes could be made to the WCA in the next year to make this club more appealing to paddlers and increase their desire to become actively involved in its activities? With Anne Lessio acting as facilitator, members wrote individual ideas on cards, which the group then organized into nine categories of related ideas. Participants then numerically ranked the categories in order of importance. Listed below are the ranked categories and a commentary on the ideas expressed.

Trip Diversity A belief was strongly voiced that the club must offer a broad range of activities if it is to be

appealing. The message came through loud and clear that active members join the WCA to go canoeing and to meet others who share this interest. A wide range of outings activities encourages participation. There was a broad support for both family oriented outings and for outings with particular themes (such as photography or nature study). Also, it was felt that we should try to provide more non-paddling activities such as mountain biking, and hiking.

Trip Leaders Trips won't happen without trip leaders. The WCA must cultivate a corps of trip organizers. A need was seen for a program to train and develop future trip leaders. This program could include such training and educational tools as mentorship by experienced organizers for newcomers, how-to newsletter articles, trip leadership workshops, and club-paid commercial courses.

Member Education People actively interested in canoeing join canoe clubs to improve their paddling and tripping skills. If we expect to attract such individuals, we have to offer an ongoing educational program. Such educational events are inviting to new members. They allow them to socialize and meet other WCAers, and build future commitment to the club. There was very strong support for the provision of workshops and seminars on all topics related to canoeing.

Communication Participants felt that effective communication with our membership was vital. They believed that we did not use *Nastawgan* to its fullest advantage to add value to WCA membership. Many paddlers are equipment junkies, and love reading articles on equipment and technique, yet there are few such articles in the newsletter. Also, those new to the sport want to learn about good local spots to paddle. We need to put a concerted effort into soliciting such material. In addition, the old-style articles about our local club trips contributed valuable publicity for our outings program and encouraged people to get involved. We also fail to communicate well what is happening in the club. It would be helpful if the Board could publish a summary of its activities in each issue of the newsletter. We used to include a Chairman's Letter, too, which imparted to members a sense of the club's direction or highlighted any areas of concern. Announcements of club events are not very visible, and they need to be written with flair to attract attention and entice people to attend. There was also strong support for a club Internet site for member communication.

New Members Participants believed that the club

should make a special effort to communicate with our new members. Having a wide range of outings suitable for persons of all skill levels, as well as a program of educational and skill-building workshops, would go a long way towards creating a more welcoming environment. In addition, there was a feeling that we should be more proactive in our efforts to make new members feel part of the club.

Communications Outreach This category refers to our efforts to make contact with potential new members and with other organizations with similar objectives to the WCA. Participants seemed to be satisfied that our participation in Canoe Expo and the Outdoor Adventure Sports Show were effective ways of getting the word out about us to the local paddling community. It was felt that we should take steps to insure that our brochures were displayed in the southern Ontario's major outdoors shops and outfitters during the paddling season. If we had a website for member communication, it could also have an outreach function.

Conservation While on a philosophical plane the group thought canoeists should care about the preservation of our wild places and waterways, there was the candid admission that this is not why people joined our club or became enthusiastically involved in it. Conservation activities should be encouraged in the WCA, but they were seen as not our primary objective.

Social Activities There seemed to be little support for social activities such as dances. On the other hand there was a very strong approval for outdoors-related events such as slide shows or workshops, which are, in effect, also social activities. WCAers apparently want their social activities to revolve around their common outdoors interests.

Club Direction/Organization We had a consensus that the last reason in the world why anybody would join the WCA would be so they could sit on boards and committees and organize meetings. This is what members do after they have become involved and passionate about our club — having reaped the benefits, they are prepared to give back. The role of the Board and various committees is to work behind the scenes to insure that we have a club that appears dynamic and vital, and welcoming to new members. An area of organizational weakness that was identified was our absence of a permanent group to oversee the planning

and execution of the WCA's special events, such as meetings and shows. It was felt that we would greatly benefit from a permanent Events Committee. We also heard the comment that the club should be more liberal in its financial support of social and educational activities; that it was certainly justified to make expenditures that furthered our goals of increased member participation and enjoyment.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We must promote a diversity of outings which will be of interest and accessible to the broadest range of paddlers.

Members should be provided with a meaningful educational and skill-building program, which should include workshops, on-water clinics, and technical articles.

The WCA must use our newsletter more effectively to communicate our activities, and should explore the use of the Internet as a tool for members to keep up-to-date and in touch.

1. We should institute a program to contact our newest members to insure they feel welcome, are fully aware of how our club runs, and obtain some feedback about how they feel about their new home.
2. A simple, effective way of reaching potential members in our core geographical area is to have a network of members who will take on the task of distributing leaflets to their local outdoors shop throughout the paddling season.
3. Conservation should be recognized as a peripheral issue for most members, and while the WCA supports wilderness preservation, our energies should be focused on issues that are more important to the WCA at this time.
4. Recognize the importance of social events that are outdoors related for bringing our members together, and provide a number of these throughout the year.
5. A permanent Events Committee should be established to organize our meetings and shows.
6. The Board of Directors must determine to what degree the club's substantial financial assets should be used to further the objective of increasing active member participation in the WCA.
7. The Board of Directors should become more visible and accessible to the average member, and their activities better publicized.

Lastly, the Outings Committee would like to thank those members who generously gave their support and participation to our focus group. Special thanks also go to Roger Harris for arranging for the excellent meeting facilities, to Anne Lessio for acting as our facilitator, and to the Board of Directors for giving their blessing and financial support to this initiative.

A copy of the full report to the Board can be obtained from Bill Ness.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ... !

Did you know that 1999 is the 25th anniversary of the "modern" WCA? Your Directors would like to celebrate this momentous occasion suitably and are looking for suggestions as to the form or forms which these celebrations should take. WCA members with good ideas could contact any member of the Board or call, write, or fax Bill King at (416) 223-4646, fax # 223-5109.

CANOEING NORTH OF 40

Randy Gangbar

Life is what happens while you were planning other things. (Unknown)

On my 40th birthday, I went for a solo paddle as I first had done exactly thirty summers earlier. In what seemed like a light offshore breeze, I set out from Toronto's Cherry Beach on Lake Ontario for a brief paddle into a whole new world. Out in the open bay, the wind turned out to be more gale than breeze and, despite years of canoeing experience, I was in over my head, so to speak. Blown further and further towards the outer perimeter of islands encircling the bay, I considered beaching the canoe to wait out the wind. But convinced of my invulnerability (what could possibly go wrong on my birthday?), I opted to head for shore.

I have little recall of the paddle back, save that as I neared shore, I was able to slow down the frantic pace enough to realize that my arms and shoulders hurt. A lot. At the time, it seemed a magnificent paddle fitting the occasion — I had, after all, survived — but the next morning I awoke with pain in my left arm unlike any I had experienced before.

Over the next few days, pain turned into agony, and it became difficult to work. Thinking that I had simply overdone things, I waited. Eventually a sports medicine clinic diagnosed a rotator cuff tear, a torn shoulder muscle. Reassured, I went ahead with plans to organize our usual summer family canoe trip. Several days later I was abruptly unable to hold anything heavy in my left hand. This was frightening; whatever was wrong was far worse than torn muscle fibres. My birthday invulnerability gave way to a sense of unease.

One month and three doctors later, we had cancelled our summer plans: a disc in my neck had herniated. I was advised to protect my neck from further strain and forbidden to paddle, let alone lift a canoe. Horsing around with our children was now considered high-risk. I felt separated from my family, an outsider to their play; I would come home from work and feel lost. The injury to my disc was painful, with recovery measured in months. The injury to my sense of intactness was invisible and alienating — I could not imagine how to begin to recover. Prior accidents had left lumps, bumps, and scars but none had been so clearly life-changing. My family doctor told me not to take delivery of the new solo boat my wife had bought for my birthday, and to sell the canoe I already had: under no circumstances was I to paddle again.

Cut off from almost all physical activities, I felt a sense of bewilderment and despair at my inability to do things as ordinary (and wonderful) as picking up my son, tickling my daughter, going for a paddle. I am not by nature especially muddle-headed, yet it was impossible to shake the odd sense that while nothing

external was different, everything had changed. The world seemed upside-down. Most strange was my inability to entertain canoe escape fantasies. These day-dreams had gotten me through many an otherwise dull or difficult moment. Now, the dreams themselves seemed to have escaped, leaving me in their wake.

I hadn't reckoned with the loss of something that had until then seemed like a hobby. Our summer plans had always included a canoe trip with the kids, a trip as a couple, and other short sojourns with friends lasting until winter would finally sink in as a concept if not as a season, and the paddles would get hung up for another year. Instead, I found myself in Algonquin Park at the end of summer, a lowly non-paddling passenger in our canoe guided by my wife in waters we'd explored many times before, but always as a team.

In early grade school I most loved one particular library book on the 'big trees': Redwoods and Sequoias, Red and White pines, Douglas firs. They seemed to possess a magical and timeless quality and did not, at least back then, seem at all vulnerable. Later, my father told me stories of Army life "up the Alaska Highway"; I looked forward to seeing the northern wilderness that was taking shape in my mind's eye. My big chance to go on my first summer camp canoe trip came when I was nine. I had to be coerced into going — the invented wilderness of my nine-year-old imagination seemed far too scary. The trees still seemed indestructible, but as for me, well, I had my doubts.

By the time my tenth birthday rolled around in the middle of the trip, I was thoroughly hooked, sold, in love, enthralled with the Great Northern Wilderness that was southern Algonquin Park. And so I took my first solo paddle on Big Trout Lake, a ten-year-old's rite of passage. The next years saw several canoe trips, and then I set down my paddle for almost fifteen years. When I took it up again at 30, I began canoeing in earnest, learning whitewater skills, leading trips with friends, and travelling a few rivers of the southern Canadian Shield. I carried with me a contradictory sense of fear and joyful exhilaration as I would begin the descent of a stretch of whitewater or cross a large open bay.

Now, at the ripe age of 40, it would be easy to stereotype me as one of those Neanderthal men who must regularly demonstrate that they are *not* hormonally challenged by paddling and portaging long, awkward routes in areas frequented by minute biting insects — but this is simply not the case. Something I had always taken for granted had simply up and disappeared, and I felt robbed. Worse yet, the friends to whom I had introduced canoeing could pick up and go whenever they wished. As one of them put it: "A bad day on the river is still better than a good day at the office."

Time passed, and my neck did not improve. It was a depressing time and as I reflected on an uncertain future (including the possibility that I would not regain full use of my neck and arm), I came to understand something about the meaning that canoeing held for me. Years earlier an old friend asked me — challenged me, really — to explain this habit of heading north, getting into a boat, and getting cold, wet, sometimes hungry and dirty. While I knew it was important to me, I couldn't begin to articulate why. Now I understood.

Paddling is a way to connect not only with a beautiful if austere land and with the history of the North, but also with people in my life with whom I canoe. It is in one sense just a rugged, primitive fashion of getting from point A to point B (or more commonly from point A to point A via point B). But in another sense, it is a unique way to get to know another person, and to deepen and expand a friendship with a fellow traveller. And in my case, at least, canoe tripping is a paradox: on the one hand an expression of my vulnerability to all those vague childhood threats that "the North" represents, on the other a chance to (temporarily) join forces with the dauntless Voyageurs of our collective past, connecting through the grace of the all-too-fragile trees and waters in the presence of friends. To my surprise, I have much in common with my beloved trees — not in their invulnerability, for this is a myth of childhood, but in their need for care and feeding, their resilient fragility.

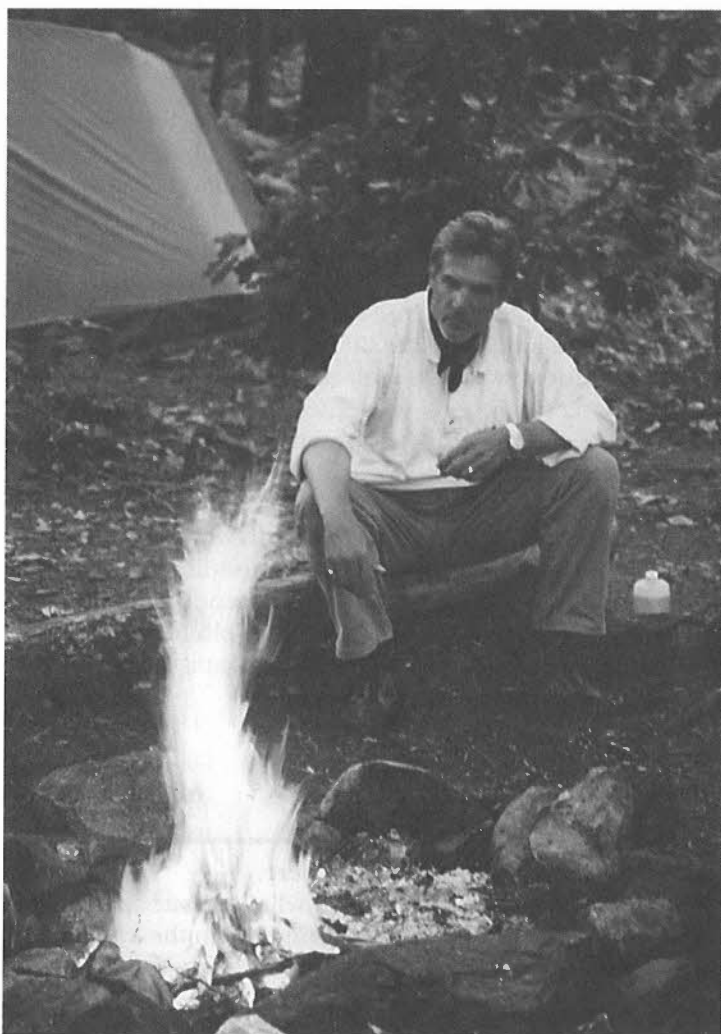
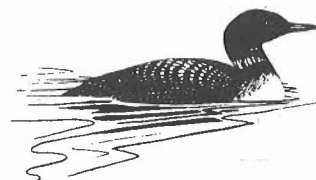
A kindhearted neurologist advised me to give the injury time; to paraphrase Mark Twain, rumors of the death of my canoeing career were greatly exaggerated. Quite late in the fall of that exceptionally warm year, I organized a day trip down a little river, and just days before Christmas dipped my paddle into river water one last time for the season. It continued to be a challenging year but being back in the boat and holding the business end of a paddle again was restorative. Most of my canoeing is now done fairly close to home and, although I dream of trips farther afield following historic routes of the fur trade, I have two young children to raise and, I hope, ample time to explore.

Hope was what was almost lost in that deceptive off-shore wind and the *annus horribilus* that followed: hope and a sense of connection to my "inner voyageur," the land, the past, and my way of sharing it with family and friends. It was news to me that in my 40th year I still had to come to terms with my *own* resilient fragility but, as I have come to understand only too well, experience is what you get when you don't get what you want. It is unlikely that my neck will ever completely heal, but that pales in comparison to what has been repaired by the simple act of paddling a canoe again. I found what I feared had been lost, and it is more precious for the rediscovery.

The following spring, I took my first "post-disc" trip with a group of long-time paddling friends. We travelled a route which had been a winter dream of mine for several years, crossing Algonquin Park from north

to south. It was glorious. For the first time in months, sleep came easily.

The canoeing daydreams have returned, and I am content.



PARTNER WANTED

NATASHQUAN RIVER, Quebec North Shore. Partner sought for this 2-3 week canoe trip (late July, early August) down from the river's headwaters to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Plan would be to fly to the headwaters from Natashquan. Please contact Terry Aitken, 204 Huron Street, Stratford, Ontario, N5A 5S8, tel. (519) 273-2233 evenings.

Letter to the Editor

Re: Review of: ARCTIC CAIRN NOTES

In his thoughtful, positive review, George Drought may have inadvertently given readers the wrong impression on a couple of points. I would like to clarify.

First, although I did remove the decaying original notes from the cairns, I did not do so entirely at my own initiative! The action was directed by a non-revenue contract from the NWT government. In fact the originals, placed in individual archival protectors, are presently in the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife. Copies are held at the Baker Lake visitors' centre.

While George is quite correct that, for two summers, there was no copy in the Helen Falls cairn, that has been rectified. A new, waterproofed, bound copy was deposited there in the summer of 1996. So now both that cairn and the one at Kazan Falls should have a complete collection of the historical notes for passers-by to read.

Finally, it is important that I alone do not receive credit for this undertaking. Betelgeuse Books, the publisher, is a collection of people who work in a variety of ways (publishing requires an amalgam of skills) to bring our readers what we feel are worthwhile books about Canada's northern wilderness. This could not happen as successfully as it does without the co-operation of several dedicated (and largely unpaid!) colleagues.

Of course, we agree whole-heartedly with George that *Arctic Cairn Notes* "is a must for the libraries of serious canoeists and travellers," not to mention public libraries, everywhere. We hope that this volume serves to preserve and make accessible an important element of these northern rivers' heritage.

David Pelly

It was black fly, black fly everywhere,
A-crawlin' in your whiskers, a-crawlin' in your hair.
A-swimmin' in the soup and a-swimmin' in the tea;
Oh, the devil take the black fly and let me be.

Fowke, 1984

(Submitted by Douglas Read)

Letter to the Editor

Re: DON'T LEAVE HOME WITH ALL OF IT

I am writing in response to the article "Don't leave home with all of it" in the Spring 1998 *Nastawgan*. I am one of those people who buys very little in communities near wilderness areas, and I would like to explain why.

Everything I take on a canoe trip is carefully selected for quality, weight, durability, and value. If I need a new pack, paddle, canoe, or other such item, I spend a considerable amount of time and effort choosing the specific brand and model that I prefer. I then shop carefully to get the best price for that item. Unfortunately, it is not practical to make such purchases in small-town stores at the last minute. What if the store does not have the pack, paddle, or other item, in the brand, model, or size I want? What if the store does not have the item at all, or the store is closed when I get there? I simply cannot take the risk of going on a trip without some essential item -- and almost everything I take is essential.

The situation with food is similar. I cannot just buy a bag of groceries at a local store and put it in my canoe. I buy most items, especially staple items such as flour and oatmeal, in large quantities in advance. I often premix the ingredients for items such as bannock. I then carefully measure out and repack all of my food in Ziploc bags, and pack them into my food pack. It is simply not practical to do this at the last minute. What if the store is closed, or does not have the dried apricots, or cinnamon, or whatever, that I need? What if I get the food, and then have to repack it late at night at a windy, rainy campground?

To give an example, my partner Sara once went on a trip down the entire Missinaibi River and stopped halfway in Mattice to buy groceries for half of two people's food supply. The selection was poor, and she bought enough white bread to last an entire week. She cleared out most of the stale white bread in the only grocery. Would the other canoeists and townspeople appreciate that?

I hope this letter will help Francis Boyes and others understand why I and other canoeists do not buy much at their stores. I understand why you are frustrated, but please don't take it personally. I'm sorry I don't have a solution to your economic problems. Contrary to what you say, I doubt that forestry and mining are a better alternative, since little of the profits from these industries stay in the local communities.

Mike Wevrick



Letter to the Editor

Re: DON'T LEAVE HOME WITH ALL OF IT

The article in the Spring '98 edition of *Nastawgan* provoked a variety of responses in me, being a business person myself in a service industry. I could sympathise with a lot of the points raised, but I think that Francis Boyes' statement "when you pull out of the driveway you want to be sure you've got everything you need" really does sum it all up about preparing for a wilderness trip. To do otherwise would be foolish, and downright irresponsible to the various rescue agencies, and those who love you.

I live in England and all our wilderness trips are planned from here, five trips in all so far and a sixth on the way. The first two trips were in Algonquin Park. We (being relative novices) relied a lot on the local outfitters for just about all of our needs, and generally they served us well, but I can remember on the first trip, starting 1 October, and end of season, that we bought the last three canoe route maps in the outfitter's store, which for nine of us was not too many, never mind getting any as souvenirs. Pity the next group arriving who could buy none from that outfitter. It is difficult to go around the Park without such a map.

The next (whitewater) trip was again adequately outfitted by our local outfitter, but again, end of season, we could not rent eight Thermarest mattresses for all of us, when there were well over 100 canoes for hire. Admittedly, the idea of renting Thermarest mattresses was a last-minute idea (as we'd never known of them before), but still, we were surprised that for an outfitter that offered fully outfitted trips, they could not come up with a mere eight at the end of season. I should perhaps add that his stock of paddles was so extensive that we parted with well over \$1,000 on paddles.

So, the next time we went, some three years later, we, having bashed those paddles about in the whitewater on the trip and back here in England, resolved to buy another hitload at the next outfitter's. But alas, this outfitter had no stock of anything whatsoever to buy, and we ended up with godawful hire paddles for the duration of the trip, and none to take home with us. Call it naivete if you will, we should have checked what they had before we left home.

We were now wise to the degree of variability of what an outfitter has to offer, so this (most recent) time, we brought with us just about **everything** and only attempted to rent the bare minimum, namely canoe, spraydeck, and PLB which we could not bring from England. All was pre-booked and confirmed months in advance. We got there: the canoe had a broken seat that needed repair and it was under a pile of other canoes; the spray deck was not designed for this boat (we only found that out when we were in the bush but did manage to adapt it to do a serviceable job); and "sorry, but two of our previous parties had to use their PLBs and so they've been sent away for recharging and we

don't have any more." And we had to mind the shop and repair the seat ourselves whilst the only guy working in the shop went off to pick up another party from the airport. You could put a lot of it down to it being the end of season again, but really, would we have got any better service if they were really busy?!

This coming trip, we've fixed it so we own everything, rent nothing, and as usual, bring with us everything we need. You can't afford to leave it to chance that the outfitter might or might not have it on the day you arrive — survival is a serious business after all, and when you are coming from this distance, you haven't got a lot of time to play about with. Sadly, I've got so I won't even think about doing a trip which ends at a point where we have to depend on someone else to pick us up.

I am a volunteer for the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association and have run their stand at the International Canoe Exhibition here in England for the last five or six years. The singlemost question asked of me by people planning to organise a wilderness trip in Canada is "where do I find a good outfitter?" I tell them what I can and *always* warn them to pin the outfitter down to precise times and equipment, and even then be prepared to be disappointed in some respect. It's a sad thing to have to say this, but I don't feel that I would be doing them any favours not to forewarn them. As a Canadian living abroad, and wanting to share the wonders of our Canadian wilderness with those living in a crowded Britain, I wish I could be prouder of the Canadian outfitting industry as a whole. We are famous for our friendliness (never had any problems there) but what is needed is a friendly *and* efficient service.

I sympathise with all the problems outfitters must have: damaged and lost kit, people not showing up, unexpected people showing up, and no doubt many more quirks and all the time trying to do this from relatively remote locations. Any business has got to be well-stocked (throughout the entire season) and well-staffed by knowledgeable people who understand the punters' need for the service to be delivered at the appointed time. The bottom line on all this is that outfitting is a serious *business*, needing far more capitalisation than most outfitters have. It seems to me that far too many outfitters are canoeists first and business people second and those who do not make the adjustment to the commercial realities of business will sadly, but inevitably, fail.

Debbey Del Valle



NIGHT-TIME ENTERTAINERS

Just about every regular Algonquin camper has, at one time or another, been woken up, or possibly been scared out of his wits, by explosive hoots, shrieks, and cacklings suddenly turning the night-time silence outside his tent into a madhouse. If you have not had this experience yet yourself, it's just a question of time before you do because the creature responsible for all this bedlam, the Barred Owl, is a common, year-round Algonquin Park resident.

When one of these owls finally does choose a perch near your campsite, you may not get much sleep but you may also be treated to some real entertainment — especially if you can see the performer. One fairly typical incident was described over 50 years ago by an early naturalist.

“At one of my lonely wilderness camps in the month of March a pair of Barred Owls came to the trees over my campfire and took up the night with their grotesque courting antics. As imperfectly seen by moonlight and firelight, they nodded and bowed with half-spread wings, and wobbled and twisted their heads from side to side, meantime uttering the most weird and uncouth sounds imaginable; some like maniacal laughter and others like mere chuckles interspersed here and there between loud “whahas” and “hoo-hoo-aws.”

Unfortunately, these occasional night-time visits are all we normally see of the Barred Owl. True, many people have had good success in bringing them in by imitating their most common call — an emphatic, rhythmic “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?” — but most of the time we just hear the distant, crazy hoots coming from black hills silhouetted against starry skies and we can only guess at what the owls are up to.

Personally, we find this a little frustrating, if for no other reason than that we share the common human curiosity about the lives of entertainers. Learning about the Barred Owl's world is doubly difficult, and doubly fascinating, because it is one in which we humans are almost totally helpless. In fact, when you stop and think about it, the ability of our Barred Owls to navigate among the branches of a pitch-black forest and to successfully locate and capture prey is nothing short of astounding.

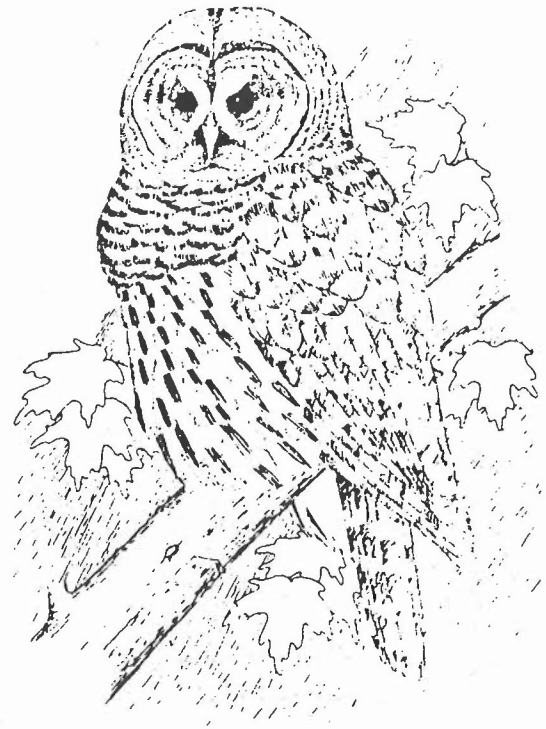
Of course, everyone knows that owls have superb night vision; the eyes of the Barred Owl in particular are about 100 times more sensitive to light than our eyes, and this means that the owl can see in what to us appears to be total darkness. But even this is only half the story. Experiments have shown that even in the complete absence of all light, when even an owl can't see a thing, the Barred Owl can still capture mice using its hearing alone. The secret of this uncanny ability is that the owl's ears, hidden under the feathers behind its face, have a different shape and location on either side of the head. A given sound therefore arrives at the

owl's brain slightly faster through one ear than through the other, and the owl can interpret the difference so as to exactly pinpoint where the sound is coming from.

At first glance, it may seem odd that the Barred Owl should have this ability. After all, it is probably rarely or never so dark that a Barred Owl cannot see, and hearing alone is of little use in avoiding obstacles like trees. However, when you remember that Algonquin Barred Owls stay here all winter, the importance of keen hearing becomes obvious. Night or day, the mice the Barred Owl hunts are almost always hidden beneath the snow. If you can imagine sitting for hours 30 feet up in a tree on a cold winter night, waiting to hear the sound of a mouse running along a tunnel under a deep blanket of snow, and then dropping down feet first to grab the unseen victim, then you will have some idea of what every Barred Owl can, must, and does do to survive.

However impressive this capacity to find even invisible prey may be, the Barred Owl is not guaranteed to “live happily ever after.” For one thing, it is a virtual prisoner of the night — not because it can't see in the daytime, but because it has achieved completely silent flight at the expense of speed and manoeuvrability. This works well at night when the owl can strike its prey unseen and unheard, but in the daytime most intended prey could see the owl coming and get out of the way with no difficulty.

An even bigger problem is that the supply of mice is highly variable — even on a typical Barred Owl territory of about one square mile. Often mice are so



scarce in fact, that Barred Owls are hard-pressed just to keep themselves alive, and raising young is out of the question. When they do breed, a pair of Barred Owls have to feed their 1–3 young long after they leave the hollow tree nest in early June. At that time, the baby owls still can't fly, and their one talent is climbing tree trunks by using their bill and claws. Even now, in the middle of the summer and with the ability to fly, the youngsters are still totally dependent on their parents for food. They fly after the old birds uttering a hoarse, whistled "sheeeeip" which lets the adults know where they are and that they want more mice — fast. The hardworking parents have to put up with this constant

harassment right into October or November because it is only then that the instinct and finely tuned skills necessary for hunting begin to appear in the young.

With the extreme demands placed on them by the young owls it is a wonder the adults find the time and energy to indulge in their marathon hooting sessions. May we suggest that if they wake you up, you should enjoy the entertainment provided by such truly remarkable birds. You can, after all, sleep in the next morning. You can be sure the owls will.

Reprinted from the 28 July 1988 issue of *The Raven*, courtesy of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

THE HOT SPRINGS OF THE KANUTI

Always wanted to soak in one in a wilderness environment. A hot springs without fences or boardwalks surrounding them. A hot springs without warning signs that say 'hot steam can burn you.' A hot springs that you find yourself.

The hot springs on the Kanuti River were hard to find. Not marked on the map. A game warden back in Fairbanks, Alaska, told us that he had found them several years ago while doing duck population surveys. Showed us on our map about where the hot springs were. Two hundred metres up a creek flowing in on river left.

According to our calculations we arrived at that spot yesterday afternoon. Early enough in the day that we could have made some more kilometres, but we wanted to find the hot springs. Searched till late in the evening without success. Every once in a while you could catch a whiff of sulphur. If you have ever soaked in a hot springs you know that smell. The sulphur smell. Unmistakable.

Next morning took a poll of the buddies. Final tally was two for pushing on and two for searching some more today. Arbitration gave us the morning to search. Good negotiation skills are a valuable asset for wilderness canoeists.

Back into the bush. Thick undergrowth. Lots of downed timber. Having to ease over big log and feel for a place to put the feet on the other side. The buddy crossed the creek to search over there. No luck. Now way past 200 metres from the river. Must be closer to a kilometre. The buddy saying we should give it up and then we both caught another whiff of sulphur.

Encouragement enough for us to push further up the creek. And within another 100 metres we broke out into a meadow. This was it. Looked like all the hot springs of my dreams have looked.

Probably a kilometre across the meadow. Steam rising from the middle of it. We discovered three hot pools two to three metres in diameter and one to one-and-a-half metres deep. Together we circumnavigated the meadow and then went back for the two

buddies on the river bank.

Later. We were all back in the meadow. Cold streamlet running next to one hot springs pool. Using some rocks we were able to divert enough cold water into the pool to make sitting in it possible. And enjoyable.

While sitting there noticed a grassy patch next to the pool that had been flattened down. A bear or a moose slept here last night. Can see why. Such warmth is a rarity in this land. They would like to come here. Just searching for a little bit of comfort in their everyday struggles. Like us.

We spent the day soaking at the hot springs. As fine a day as I have ever spent in the wilderness. Later in the evening the doubt came. Deep in my heart I knew that we would pay for taking a rest day so early in the trip. Days without travel are to be treasured on wilderness trips. Usually they are consumed by bad weather that cuts the mileage made on travel days and forces the travellers to use up the precious rest days. If only one or two rest days are built into the trip itinerary, then none may be left once the payment for bad weather is made. Need somehow to expand the number of days spent on wilderness canoe trips. If only time were not a factor.

That night had the winter dream. Usually only have it during the dark months. And then only after spending some time looking at maps. To have the time. To be able to spend every day of every summer somewhere up there. Where there are no roads and no options other than the ground that you can cover by muscle power. To just travel from lake to lake, or follow a river to the sea. To go and spend days at a waterfall. To explore small bays and high points of land. To watch the sun rise and set. To listen to water lapping the shore and a fire crackling. To do a thousand other things too basic and pleasurable to list. To do it every summer. Treasure beyond measure.

In the end, it's the only kind worth collecting.

Greg Went

The Fate of Public Wilderness to be Decided in:

LANDS FOR LIFE

Lands for Life will be our last chance to create new parks in Ontario for the next sixty to ninety-nine years. Forty million hectares, an area twice the size of NB, NS, PEI, and NFLD combined, is at stake and land that is not protected during this process will be logged and/or mined. Round tables with representatives of various interests will make recommendations to the Ministry of Natural Resources on 30 June, with the help of public input, concerning how public lands should be allocated for logging, protected areas and tourism.

World Wildlife Fund Canada, The Federation of Ontario Naturalists, and Wildlands League have combined resources as the *Partnership for Public Lands* to participate in this process initiated by the Ontario government.

We are at a very critical stage in the process. The rounds of public consultation meetings are over and the round tables are currently deciding on a preferred land use option.

Right now, only 5.9% of the forests in the Lands for Life planning area are protected, while the vast majority is dedicated to forestry. However, scientific research tells us that 15–20% is the minimum needed to maintain Ontario's ecological and economic growth. The *Partnership for Public Lands* wants to see more protected areas where industrial activities are excluded, especially logging, mining, hydroelectric, and oil and gas development.

Do we really need protected areas?

Absolutely! If Ontario does not complete its protected areas network, our economic and ecological future is at risk. Wildlife populations, old-growth for-

ests, and wetlands will be lost. Tourism and other uses of the forests are growing in economic importance and are crucial to economic diversification in Northern communities. Finally, protected areas are "benchmark" areas for sustainable-forestry research. By looking at how wild forests work, the forest industry can work to minimize the impact of forestry.

People all over Ontario have a stake in what happens on our public lands. Our forests are an important part of Ontario's cultural, social, ecological, and economic future. The outcome of Lands for Life will affect us all.

The most important things you can do to protect wilderness in Ontario is to contact the Minister of Natural Resources, John Snobelen, and your MPP. For the name and phone number of your MPP, please call Elections Ontario at 1-800-668-2727 or visit their website at www.electionsontario.on.ca

Stay informed! You can keep up with the latest news, events, and important meetings by visiting the Partnership website www.web.net/wild or by calling the Partnership hotline at 1-888-371-LAND.

Raise awareness! Inform the people in your community, in the workplace, and at school about Lands for Life and what the people of Ontario could potentially lose. We have slide shows, reading materials, and posters to publicize this important issue.

The message is simple: *If you want to see more wilderness protected in Ontario speak up to the round tables, Minister John Snobelen, and your MPP, and support the Partnership for Public Lands.*

Every summer....

When I go to Temagami.
I see big fat furry animals and small skinny animals.
Birds with leaf-like wings and
eyes as colourful as spring itself.
I watch all this from my canoe.

When the wind is coldest
my oak paddle slithers through the water,
causing a ripple, like a tornado from overhead.

And when I'm portaging on the hardest portage,
or when the pack is stinging the most,
like a thousand bees,
I look down at my feet clomping in the soft brown mud,
while a mosquito takes blood from my leg,
like someone withdrawing money from a bank machine,

I say THANKS to my big, strong dad,
and to Somebody who's even stronger.

by Drew Meerveld, Age 9, John Calvin Christian School, Guelph

REVIEWS

THE COMPLETE CANOE TRIP PLANNER by Wayne Gignac and John Rudolph, published by Magnetic North Wilderness Adventures (RR 2, Ancaster, Ont., L9G 3L1; e-mail canoing@istar.ca), 1998, softcover, 150 pages, \$19.95 (incl. tax and shipping).

Reviewed by Toni Harting.

This self-published book is a handy and well-thought-out addition to the rapidly increasing paddling library. To copy from their promotional blurb: "This indispensable workbook for canoeists has over 50 forms and will guide you through the risk-management process of canoe trip planning, be your daily log while on the canoe trip, evaluate your canoe trip when you are finished, and provide crisis management forms to help you deal with an emergency. It is vital for novice trippers learning the ropes, and a time-saver for veteran canoe trippers and leaders in developing trip plans." Indeed, the authors, both canoeists with decades of experience between the gunwales, have managed to produce a most useful tool to make tripping even more enjoyable for paddlers of all skill levels. A nice touch is the use of spiral-binding to make the book lie flat when photocopying several of the forms (as advised by the authors). Highly recommended to anyone eager to learn from the pros.

OTTAWA RIVER WHITEWATER by Jim Hargreaves, distributed by Cascade Press (840 Cité des Jeunes, Suite

5, Hull, PQ, J8Z 2E5; e-mail team@canada-outdoors.com), 1998, softcover, 206 pages, \$25.00 (incl. shipping and handling).

Reviewed by Toni Harting.

Another self-published book that hits the nail on the head, and how. The popular and beautiful Middle and Main Channels of the Ottawa River offer the adventurous paddler a wealth of opportunities to play in some wild and woolly water or just enjoy a very scenic waterway. And now Hargreaves has produced a comprehensive and unique book to help the daring souls find their way to and on these internationally famous channels. I am quite impressed by the amount of information the author has researched and collected in the book, such as detailed descriptions of the various rapids, places to stay, boat and equipment preparation, info on water levels, and much more. Many of the black-and-white photographs are excellent and vividly convey the rush of excitement one feels when running the rapids. A minor criticism that unfortunately applies to too many self-published books: the use of a strict and knowledgeable editor might have avoided several unfortunate shortcomings, such as the rather awkward punctuation sometimes marring the text. But that does not really diminish the value of the book as a marvelous guide to one of Ontario's great stretches of whitewater.

GET-TOGETHERS

CANADIAN CANOE SYMPOSIUM

On 14, 15, and 16 August 1998, the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association presents for the first time this family event, which focusses on paddling safety, camp craft, and historical interpretation. Experience the love of canoeing, attend seminars, listen to guest speakers, participate in Voyageur canoe events, make your own paddle, watch cedar canvas canoe-building displays, see on-water canoe demonstrations by paddling experts, and trade stories about your canoe trips. Hosted by the CRCA in Merrickville on the Rideau River, 45 minutes south of Ottawa. Open to the public, camping available. Info hotline for this and other special events: (613) 269-2910 or toll-free 1-888-252-6292. Website: www.crc.ca

WINTER CAMPING/TRAVEL CONFERENCE

The focus is on travel by snowshoe and toboggan, utilizing wall tents and wood stoves for camping. Dates: 23 and 24 October 1998. Cost: \$85 (\$65 for students), covering registration and meals (Friday supper, three meals Saturday, and snacks). Application deadline is 2 October. Accommodation is free if you wish to sleep in a tent in our gym; otherwise, you're on your own. Featured speakers are Garrett and Alexandra Conover, authors of *Snow Walkers Companion*. Other noted speakers: Craig Macdonald, Bob Henderson, and others. Location: Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario (just outside of Hamilton). Contact: Allan Brown, Redeemer College, (905) 648-2131 ext. 221; or Betty or Frances at ext. 267.

NIKON CANADIAN CANOE PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST is again waiting for your entries. Ten categories, many fine prizes, winners to be published in *Kanawa*. Contact Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association, PO Box 398, 446 Main Street, Merrickville, Ontario, K0G 1N0.

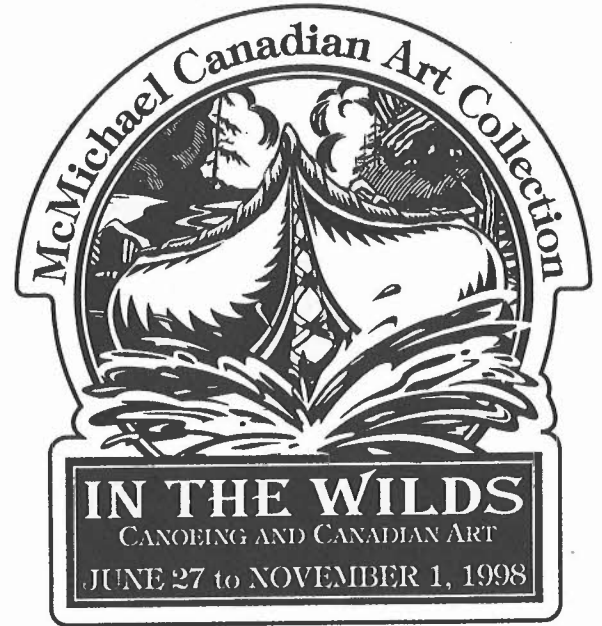


McMichael goes canoeing ...

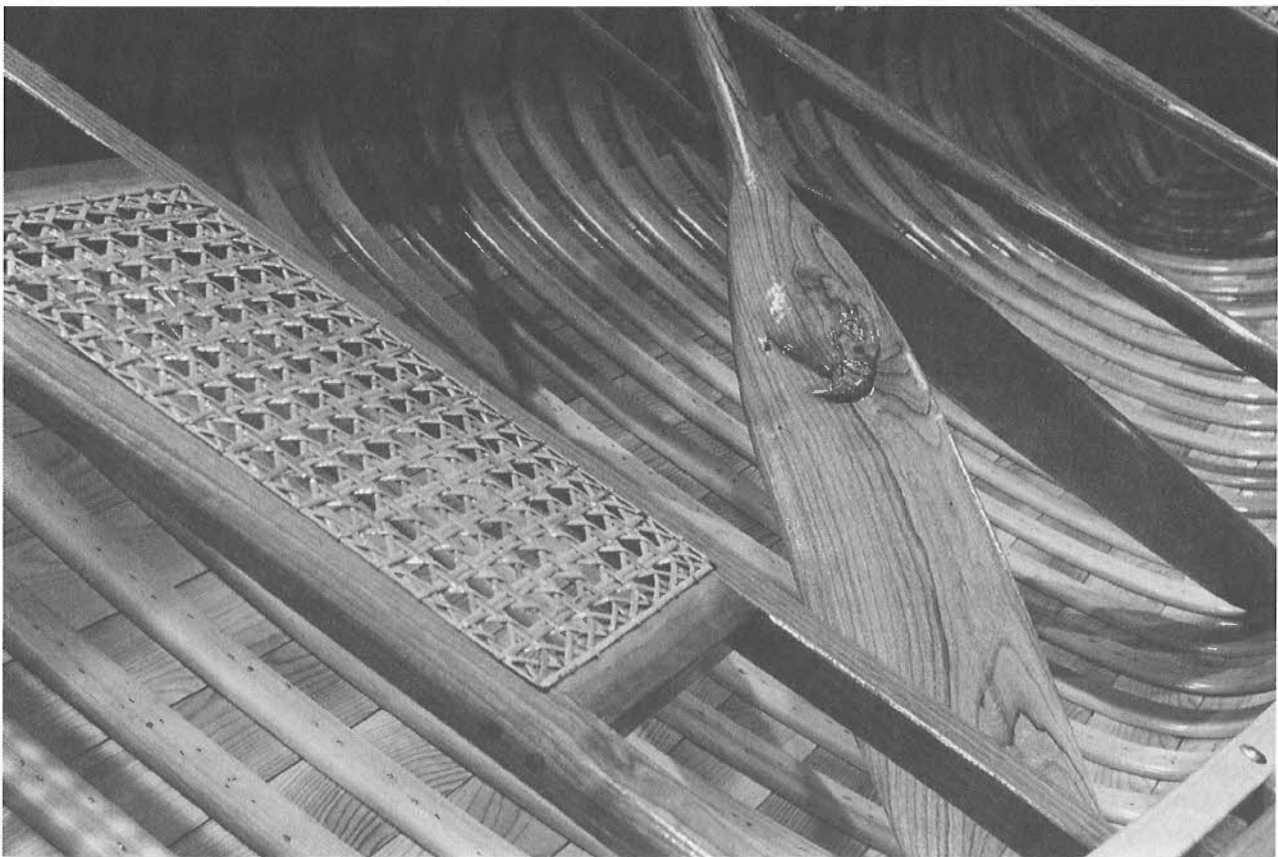
In the Wilds: Canoeing and Canadian Art, explores the theme of the canoe as part of Canadian art history with a selection of over 70 historical and contemporary art works and canoes. The exhibition is open from 27 June until 1 November 1998.

Admission will be free on Wednesday, 1 July, only, so take the kids to the McMichael on Canada Day. Great fun for the whole family.

On two dates you can view the exhibition before relaxing over canoeing-related presentations, co-hosted by the Wilderness Canoe Association and Northern Books: Sunday, 4 October, paddler and painter Becky Mason shares her legendary family tales; and as part of the closing night celebrations on Sunday, 1 November, author Jamie Benidickson will explore the canoe as Canadian cultural phenomenon, and adventurers and photojournalists Gary and Joanie McGuffin will share their wildest tales from their popular publications.



10365 Islington Avenue, Kleinburg, Ontario
(905) 893-1121
www.mcmichael.on.ca



Toni Harting

WCA TRIPS

For questions, suggestions, proposals to organize trips, 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) 769-0210, Peter DeVries, (905) 477-6424, Gisela Curwen (416) 484-1471.

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

All summer long **FOREVER WHITEWATER**

Harrison Jolly (905) 689-1733, Barry Godden (416) 440-4208, Steve Bernet (519) 837-8774; call anytime.

Ride with the three amigos wherever good whitewater is found. If you want to join us where the action is, just call. Advanced paddlers.

13-14 June **WHITEWATER COURSE AT PALMER RAPIDS**

Hugh Valliant and Jim Morris. Contact Hugh at (416) 726-5355; e-mail: valliant@micomtech.com (preferred); book immediately.

NOW FOR THE 15th SEASON!! Due to the difficulties with the post office delivering Nastawgan promptly, and in order for all WCA members to have an equal opportunity to sign up for this course, *registrations will only be accepted beginning 8 April at 9 a.m. Due to its immense popularity, the course has filled up within the first week for the past several years!* Under NO circumstances will registrations be accepted prior to that date and time. There is a possibility, as in previous years, that a second course will be arranged.

We will meet at Palmer Rapids on the Madawaska River for an exciting and instructional weekend. The emphasis of the course is on the strokes, techniques, and judgement necessary to safely negotiate a set of rapids. Palmer Rapids is considered a class 2 set. In this controlled and structured environment where the pace is slow, there will be plenty of time to practise and perfect our strokes. You will learn how to control a canoe in moving water so that you can go where you want to go (most of the time). The river will no longer control your canoe (all of the time).

To feed your hungry appetites after a day of paddling there will be a group BBQ on Saturday night featuring a real salad, a real steak, and real potatoes using real charcoal. A deposit of \$25 is required to secure your spot at the table.

Open to experienced flatwater, novice, or beginning whitewater paddlers. Preference will be given to those who need it. Friends are more than welcome to the Saturday night's festivities. Limit eight canoes.

27-29 June **FRENCH RIVER OR LOWER MADAWASKA RIVER**

Hugh Valliant and Jim Morris, contact Hugh at (416) 726-5355; e-mail: valliant@micomtech.com (preferred). Book immediately.

Due to the uncertainty of what dates companies will be assigning as the holiday period, we are unsure of whether it will be from 27 to 30 June or from 27 June to 1 July.

This is a continuation of the Palmer Rapids weekend. This is an excellent opportunity to practise and further refine and hone your whitewater skills in more challenging rapids. The location of the course will depend upon summer water levels. Suitable for novice or beginning whitewater paddlers. Preference will be given to those who attended the Palmer Rapids weekend. Limit ten canoes.

3-5 July **PALMER RAPIDS WEEKEND**

Dave Sharp, (519) 846-2586, book immediately.

A relaxing summer weekend at Palmer's. A great opportunity for those who participated in the whitewater clinics here in June to return for some practice. Bring the family. The bugs will be gone, and the water warm for swimming. There's a good beach for the kids. Limit eight canoes.

3-5 July **ROUGE, GATINEAU, OTTAWA RIVERS**

Barry Godden, (416) 440-4208, book immediately.

A potpourri of whitewater for adventurous intermediate or better paddlers. Fully outfitted whitewater boats essential. Limit six canoes.

25-26 July **PALMER RAPIDS**

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book after 12 July.

See description 3-5 July; fun for the family.

25-31 July **UPPER MAGNETAWAN RIVER**

Fred Lum, (416) 482-3774, book immediately.

This trip will be a short three- or four-day paddle from Ahmic Lake to Wawashkesh Lake which will take place sometime in this period. Most rapids can be run, but there are two definite portages. The Magnetawan is a scenic river and we probably won't see any people except on a couple of lakes. The organizer will be paddling solo, so this will be a leisurely paced trip with late starts. Suitable for intermediates who are ready for a challenge. Limit five canoes.

1-3 August **OTTAWA RIVER**

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 28 July.

We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful private campsite on the river, right where we take out. On Saturday we will paddle the Middle Channel, on Sunday the Main Channel, and Monday the Middle again. Suitable for paddlers with intermediate whitewater skills who are prepared to portage if they choose to. We will scout most rapids. Boat floatation and helmets required. Limit six canoes.

15-16 August **MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE**

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 8 August.

The Gull at Minden is a man-made whitewater course that can challenge the most experienced canoeist (if there is any water left this year). If there is high water this is a serious test of skill. However, those who wish to practise basic moving-water manoeuvres can paddle in the run-off at the bottom of the course. Limit six abrasion-resistant canoes. Helmets are required.

8-13 August **GEORGIAN BAY**

Richard Todd, (819) 459-1179, e-mail richard@magi.com

This will be an easy outing mostly in sheltered waters. I will be bringing my family on this trip, so anyone participating must be willing to keep to an easy pace or be prepared to venture off on their own from time to time, by arrangement with the group.

13-17 August **KILLARNEY PARK**

Richard Todd, (819) 459-1179, e-mail richard@magi.com

A visit to Killarney where the accent will be on soaking up the amazing scenery. Subject to availability, the focus of this trip will be David Lake and the hills and trails to the south. This will be a relatively easy trip with possibilities for all kinds of activities.

17-23 August TEMAGAMI

Richard Todd, (819) 459-1179, e-mail richard@magi.com

By no means a difficult venture, this trip will not be quite so easy as those on Georgian Bay and in Killarney, see above. There will be some moderately long days and the portages, while not extensive, are a little rougher than those in Killarney. Lakes involved include Temagami, Obabika, Diamond, and Kokomo. Veterans of my previous Temagami trips will find this one easy by comparison.

5-7 September OTTAWA RIVER

John and Sharon Hackert, (416) 438-7672, book before 25 August.

See previous description 1-3 August.

13 September BURNT RIVER

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 6 September.

Between Kinmount and the village of Burnt River, the Burnt is 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.

19 September MISSISSAGUA RIVER

Bill Ness, (416) 321-3005, book before 12 September.

The Mississagua River is a classic pool-and-drop run. The river is a series of class 1 to class 3 rapids separated by flat sections, and some scenic falls (class 4-5). All major rapids can be easily portaged, making the trip suitable for intermediates. The fall colors should be at their peak so bring a camera. Limit six canoes.

20 September ELORA GORGE

Dave Sharp, (519) 846-2586, book before 12 September.

Join us for a day of playing in easy class 1 and 2 rapids. This is an excellent outing for novices or intermediate paddlers who would like the opportunity to sharpen their skills before the season ends. Limit six canoes.

10-11 October OXTONGUE RIVER

Larry Durst, (905) 415-1152, book before 3 October.

We will paddle from Tea Lake to Ragged Falls, camping over for one night. The river varies from meandering to swifts and the scenery from marsh to rocky outcrops with two spectacular falls. Autumn colors are a bonus on this trip that should suit all levels as there are only a few rapids and they can all be easily portaged. Limit five canoes.

10-12 October PETAWAWA THANKSGIVING WEEKEND

Peter DeVries (905) 477-6424, book before 3 October.

The classic fall trip from Lake Traverse to McManus. There are some rapids but all can be portaged and most can be run by intermediates or better. Limit six boats.

**WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND
HAVE IT PRESENTED IN THE AUTUMN
ISSUE? Contact the Outings
Committee before 2 August!**

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., Hepworth, Ont.
- Smoothwater Outfitters, Temagami (Hwy. 11), Ont.

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

CANOE FOR SALE Dagger Impulse solo open canoe, fully outfitted with floatation bags, Bob Foote Grand Canyon saddle, vinyl gunwales. Excellent condition, perfect for beginner to advanced intermediate

or big water. (I took this boat down the Grand Canyon.) Contact Howie Abrams, tel. (416) 787-9823 evenings or weekends, e-mail: howie.abrams@utoronto.ca

WEST GREENLAND SEA KAYAK FOR SALE Wood frame and canvas skin, built April '96 at workshop, length 19'4", width 24", designed for weight over 225 lbs., canvas sea sock, air bags, cover, skirts, paddles, paddle float, Beckson pump. Investment \$1800, price negotiable. Contact: Box 430, Lucknow, Ontario, N0G 2H0.

CANOES FOR SALE Three cedar-canvas canoes and one cedar-canvas Y-stern canoe. Original canvas. All need some work. Contact Don Smith, tel: (613) 584-2577; fax 584-9016; e-mail: vent@intranet.ca

SAILING SET FOR SALE Complete sailing set for kayak: mast, boom, gaff, sails, cordage. Make an offer. Peter Verbeek, tel. (416) 757-3814, e-mail: pverbeek@torfree.net

KAYAK FOR SALE Perception Mirage, yellow, good condition, \$300. Bill Ness at (416) 321-3995.

WANTED 1:50,000 maps of the North Shore of Lake Superior, Sault Ste. Marie to Thunder Bay. *FOR SALE:* Back issues of *Nastawgan* 1974 -1998, or will exchange for above maps. Contact Noel Lewis-Watts, tel. (613) 394-1776.

NORTHERN LIGHTS CANOE AND KAYAK As one of the newest members of the Barrie community, Northern Lights Canoe and Kayak would like to invite everyone to come and see the brand-new store located at Molson Park Drive and Highway 400. Found at 110 Saunders Road, Units 13 & 14, we offer a complete line of camping and paddling accessories for both whitewater and flatwater, along with an excellent selection of recreational, whitewater, and touring canoes and kayaks. We offer fun paddle nights as well as a complete rental program. Please feel free to drop by and say hello to us, or to reach us by phone at (705) 735-0079 or e-mail: northern@bconnex.net

ECONOMICAL HIKING ECOTRIPS *July:* Saguenay / St. Lawrence basecamp hikes, whale watching; minivan from Toronto: \$549. *August:* Cape Breton / Newfoundland, spectacular day hiking, Cabot Trail, Gros Morne: \$699. *September:* Utah, basecamps, Zion, Bryce, Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, Mesa Verde, Arches, Canyonlands: C\$699. *October:* Shenandoah, Virginia, hikes from hillbilly cabins; van from Toronto: C\$599. Costa Rica ecotour, cloud forests, jungles, remote beach camps, river trips: C\$789. Contact: Natural Outings, Box 100, Mansfield, ON, L0N 1M0, tel./fax (705) 434-0848, e-mail: info@naturaloutings.com website: www.naturaloutings.com

O.R.C.A. CANOE TRIPPING LEVEL II Recognized by many as the provincial guiding certification, this course is imperative for school teachers, scout leaders, and all others leading canoe trips. Course topics include: trip planning, reporting, and assessment, leadership, risk management, crisis management, wilderness first aid, weather interpretation, food and menu planning, wilderness navigation, knots, hitches, and lashes, and much more. The course also includes a three-day canoe trip where crisis management scenarios are practised. As a bonus, O.R.C.A. Lakewater I — Tandem certification is available. Dates: 22-27 August, 1998. Location: Algonquin Park. Cost: \$425. For more information, please contact: MAGNETIC NORTH WILDERNESS ADVENTURES, R.R. #2, Ancaster, ON, L9G 3L1, tel. (905) 648-3343.

CLASSIC SOLO CANOEING Two lessons of basic or advanced classic solo canoeing totalling four hours, instructed by Becky Mason at Meech Lake, PQ. All equipment provided, fee \$65. Box 126, RR #1, Chelsea, Quebec, J0X 1N0, tel. (819) 827-4159, e-mail: redcanoe@istar.ca website: www.wilds.mb.ca/redcanoe

NEW MASON WEBSITE A new website entitled CANOEING & VISUAL ART features Becky Mason's art and canoeing plus an extensive behind-the-scenes section on Bill Mason's films, books, and paintings. Website address: www.wilds.mb.ca/redcanoe

CAMPFIRE MEALS The goal of Campfire Meals is to provide tasty and healthy meals for you to take on your next canoe, backpacking, or sailing

trip. We offer a variety of meals suitable for a weekend to a 14-day trip. Vegetarian and/or low-fat meals are available. Organic foods can also be provided. We strive to prepare delicious home-made-type meals, which are lightweight and easy to prepare. Let Campfire Meals prepare your custom food packs when you're too busy to do it yourself. For more information, contact Gail White in Barrie at (705) 727-1858 or e-mail: gwhite@planeteeer.com

SMOOTHWATER WORKSHOPS Medicinal Plants of Northeastern Ontario with Mary Katt, 13-14 June. Painting the Element of Surprise with David Alexander, 2-6 July. Cottage Portraiture with Bill Band, 10-12 July. Story Photography with Katherine Knight, 16-19 July. Painting the Colour of Light with Pat Fairhead, 24-28 Sept. Earthworks for Temagami with Don Holman, 2-8 Oct. Figurative Portrait Painting with Lynn Donoghue, 12-16 Oct. For full details contact Caryn Colman, Smoothwater Outfitters, Box 40, Temagami, Ont. P0H 2H0; tel: (705) 569-3539; fax: (705) 569-2710; e-mail: temagami@onlink.net website: www.smoothwater.com

PADDLING COURSES Adventure Paddling Inc. offers ORCA accredited moving and flat water canoe courses, OWWA accredited kayak courses, canoe/kayak rolling clinics, river rescue training, and wilderness whitewater canoe trips on the Petawawa River. Most courses are held in the Guelph/Elora area, just one hour from Toronto. Contact us at 17A-218 Silvercreek Parkway N, Suite 101, Guelph, Ontario, N1H 8E8; tel: (519) 763-9496; e-mail: adventure@sentex.net website: <http://www.sentex.net/~adventure>

VALLEY VENTURES offers complete and partial outfitting including shuttle service and accommodation for trips on the Petawawa, Noire, Coulange, and Dumoine Rivers. Accredited ORCA courses in tripping and moving water are also available. We are central to Achray, Brent, and the Kiosk access points to Algonquin Park. Contacts: Box 1115, RR#1, Deep River, Ontario, K0J 1P0; tel: (613) 584-2577; fax: 584-9016; e-mail: vent@intranet.ca



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 Rob Butler
 Toronto, Ontario
 (416) 487-2282

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: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov. _____

New member Member # if renewal: _____

Single Family

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

(____) _____ (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.