



Lake Temagami – the first night

A NOVICE IN TEMAGAMI

Randy Cunningham

We had been wind-bound since noon. It was August 1997 and I had been looking forward all summer to my first canoe trip, just wanted to get going on this nine-day loop that would introduce me to the joys of paddling. So I paced around the large parking lot on the banks of Lake Temagami and glared at the whitecaps as if they had deliberately decided to screw up my day.

I knew right away that I was amongst people who gave all appearance of having been both conceived and born in canoes. Junior high school classes of kids who whipped canoes onto their shoulders as they would their book bags. Then there were the brave parties coming into the dock in waves and water conditions that horrified me. I was especially impressed by the family party who lashed two of their canoes to-

gether, and using their paddles and a tarp sailed to the dock as if it were nothing more unusual than a drive to the market.

Mark, our guide, decided I was one of the more experienced of our party of four, and thus I got the assignment as the stern paddler in one of our two canoes. He had a confidence in me that I appreciated but did not totally share. The wind was starting to die down. Mark left it up to me. Go, or no go and find a campsite nearby. I looked at the still scary lake, once, twice, then three times. Finally I said, "Let's go!" We would take a run to the south and go for the first suitable campsite. We loaded the canoes as they heaved and rolled at the dock, took our places, and my initiation began.

If you have never canoe tripped before, you are in for a new experience. It is sort of like going from your weekly exercise class directly into the triathlon. The first day or two was spent getting accustomed to paddling with someone who has a completely different paddling history and skill level than you do. It was also getting used to the physical challenge of paddling six to seven hours a day.

On the morning of the third day we reached our first portage. The walk from Lake Temagami to Lake Obabika was an important learning experience. I had never portaged before. In fact, I had never done an overhead carry of a canoe before. We unloaded our canoes and hauled them onto the bank, careful to put all our gear and the canoes together on one side before we started to relay packs and canoes up the trail. Carelessness at this point on a well-travelled trail can lead to an unintended gear exchange between two parties who may be miles apart before they realize their mistake.

While the first two days of paddling introduced me to exhaustion, the portage introduced me to pain. First I was amazed I could even stumble forward with ninety-pound canoe packs. Second, I was introduced to the tumpine. Its use should only be attempted by football linemen who have necks the width of an average person's thigh. Otherwise a lifetime of physical therapy, or being slowly strangled on a lonely trail by a slipped tumpine, are definite possibilities. After the canoe packs, I was ready for a chance to carry a canoe. Mark showed me the teepee method of getting under the boat. I worked my way back to the shoulder yoke and off I went down the trail.

All was well until I encountered a rock whose sole purpose was to trip up people carrying canoes. At the Obabika end of the portage, the parties putting in heard a muffled cry followed by the hollow boom of a canoe crashing down on a hapless portager. Fortunately Mark only heard a groan coming from under the boat, not a scream that would have denoted serious injury. He helped me up, I shook off the dust, and finished the

portage, demanding from the rest of the party that they take my picture with the canoe on my shoulders, so I could prove to the folks back home that I had really done it.

Lake Obabika takes you away from busy Lake Temagami with its motor boats and cottages. It is pristine and canoes rule the waves. Big and beautiful, when you get to Obabika you know that your trip has really begun. It is not only a haven for canoes but loons as well. As we began our trip up the lake in search of campsites, we noticed a large flotilla of birds in the centre of the lake. A vigorous debate ensued over whether they were cormorants or loons. We decided to settle the issue and approached the flotilla. Loons, about 200 of them. None in our party had ever seen

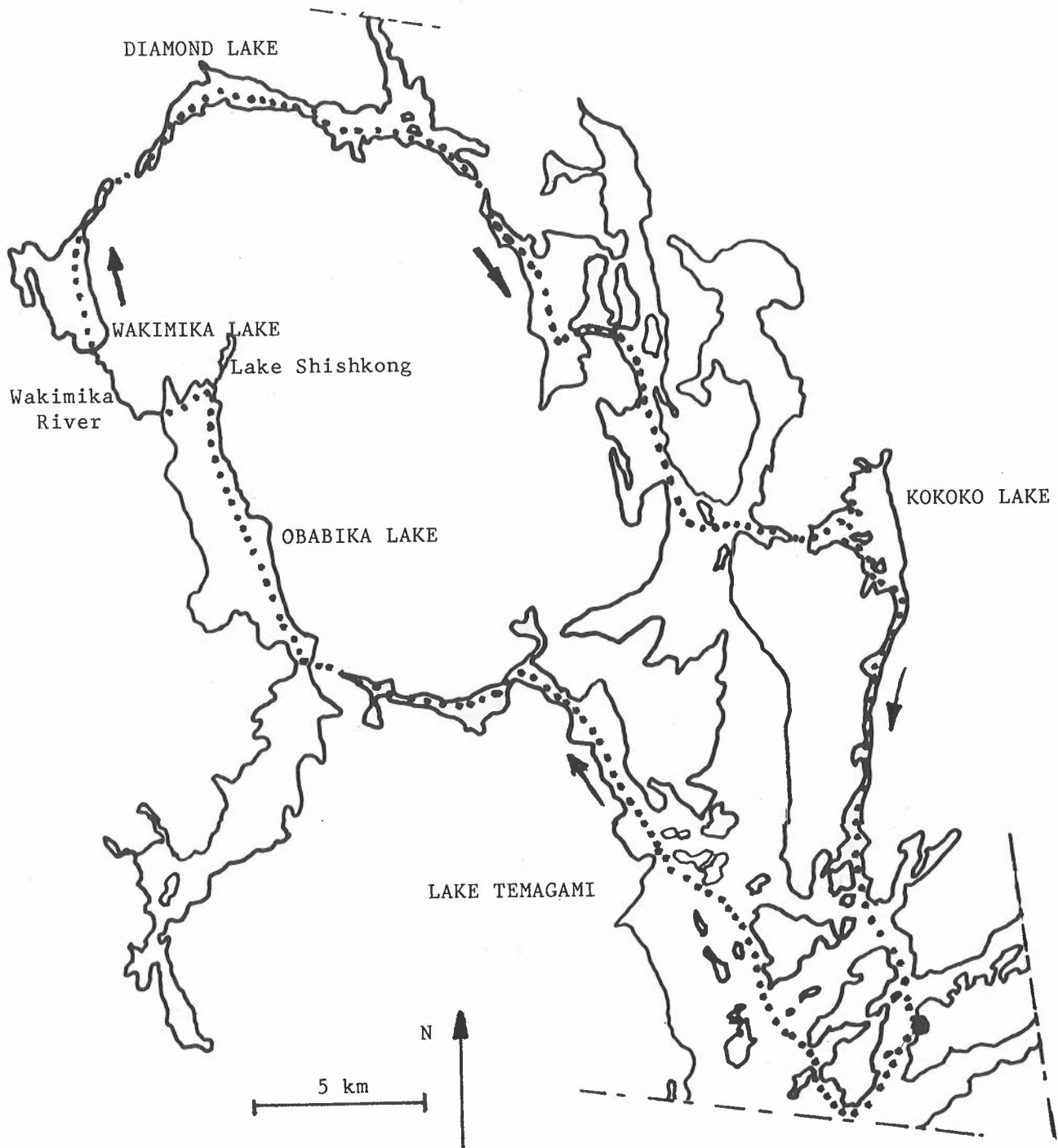
such a sight, though on consulting a bird guide we found it was a common late-summer pre-migration ritual.

Lake Obabika borders one of the finest stands of old growth forest in Ontario, known as the Wakimika Triangle. This stand of white and red pine is best appreciated if you take the trail from the north end of Lake Obabika to Lake Shishkong. The Triangle inspires passion in many as witnessed in the blockades of logging roads in the late 1980s, when the provincial government ok'd logging in the area. A visit will make you understand that passion. If you're a fan of the white pine you'll be in state of continuous rapture during this walk. Every time you thought that you had seen the largest or most magnificent specimen, another bend in the trail would introduce you to a new candidate.

The trail to Shishkong offers numerous opportunities to view another prominent feature of the locale — a fault line that runs through the Triangle and forms a sheer stone face bordering the lake. It's a striking sight, as if someone sliced the landscape with a knife. Lake Shishkong is a lovely little lake, and one of its most interesting features is the bog at the north end of the lake. The variety of plant species in this bog could keep a botanist busy for a week. The forest as well changes its character as you enter the bog, with many more cedars and hemlocks. A special treat for us were the plentiful blueberries to be had within an easy arms reach from the trail.



My first portage!



Part of my education in canoe tripping was my indoctrination into the gospel of low-impact camping. It reminded me of the old mantra of cave explorers: "Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints." One central issue of low-impact camping is personal hygiene. The ideal is to use ferns as toilet paper. But if you must use real toilet paper, burn it in

the campfire. The prospect of transporting your little bundle back to the fire may be disgusting to some. It is no more disgusting than the spectacle of the forest floor around a well-used campsite, strewn with toilet paper and worse. You pack in all your food and pack out all your garbage. When you gather wood, you gather it away from your or any other well-used campsite to



Lake Shishkong



Crossing a beaverdam on the Wakimika River

keep the locale from being stripped bare. You go swimming to wash off the sweat, but you do not soap up and dive in the water.

In order to get from Lake Obabika to Lake Wakimika you take the tortuously winding Wakimika River. As much as I like lake canoeing, you need rivers to keep things interesting. The easy stretches allow you to enjoy the riverine landscape of reeds, black spruce, and tamarack. The sections that are so winding that you meet yourself coming test your skills at manoeuvring your canoe in tight quarters.

Out on the lake we camped that night on a sand beach at the north end. I thought this would be great, but I will never hold sand beaches in such high repute again. Sleeping on a sand beach, even with a pad, is like sleeping on a cement sidewalk. Then for the rest of the trip you are dealing with sand in your canoes, tents, sleeping bags, cooking utensils, and clothing. Give me boulders, rocks, and preferably a forest floor any day.

We awoke the next morning to a light rain that was to be the central fact of our lives for the next three days. After a short portage we attempted to start down Diamond Lake, which was churned up by a howling tempest the moment we put in. We made an emergency camp we christened Camp Necessity and waited out the weather.

The wind finally subsided the next morning and we were able to resume our journey. Diamond Lake is a

deep, long lake, broken up by numerous islets and a rugged coast of large hills. After losing so much time to the weather, the scenery was secondary. The top goal was to cover territory. The weather seemed to be satisfied with the soaking we had received the previous two days, and decided to give us a break for most of the day. It allowed us to travel the length of Diamond Lake, then down Sharp Rock Inlet, and finally to camp that night at the head of Ferguson Bay.

The weather was not finished with us yet as we made camp. More rain, and with the front passing overhead the temperature dipped until we could see our breath. Pure misery. Everything we had was at best damp and at worst wet. We huddled together to eat our dinner, thankful that we had brought dry fire wood and birchbark with us. After cleaning up the dishes we retired, hopeful that the next day would bring some relief from the wet. Even the nightly readings from *Marked by the Wild* were cancelled. As I shivered in my tent that night I meditated on the stupidity of men who will not listen to their wives. My wife is a city girl but she did go on a rafting expedition on the Four Corners area of Utah a few years back. I brushed off her advice of more warm clothes and an extra tarp. What did she know of canoe tripping? What did I know, was a better question!

The morning at Ferguson Bay brought hope. An occasional spot of blue began to show through the clouds. We took a chance and began to hang out our

soaked belongings to dry. The weather continued to improve and by the time we broke camp our obligatory period of misery was ended. The lake came to life, with weekend parties of canoeists and an occasional house boat making an appearance. A short paddle to our next portage brought us to one of the prettiest lakes in the area — and our last stop before returning to Temagami — Lake Kokoko.

If there is any place I visited on this trip that I want to be sure to return to it is Lake Kokoko. It is not as grand as Lake Obabika. It does not have the interesting shoreline of Lake Wakimika with its marshes and it is not as dramatic as Diamond Lake. What it has is a simple charming beauty that can be observed in one panoramic view from one of its island campsites. Lake Kokoko was like going home.

We sat up camp on the island and I took one of the canoes on a solo trip across the lake to gather firewood. Though no one was grading me, in my mind it was my final exam. I no sooner rounded the leeward side of the island than an approaching thunderhead decided to make the test a good one. I had intended to land on one particular cove I had spotted, but a micro burst of wind changed all my plans. Forget the cove. All I wanted to do now was avoid capsizing, and then make it to any point of land on the opposite shore. I hunkered down in the canoe and kept the bow quartered into the wind. Correction strokes be damned. I wanted powerful forward strokes only and switch-paddled with everything I had until I came into the shadow of the tree line on shore. Then the wind ended as suddenly as it

had come up. The test was over. I had passed.

By the time we reached Lake Kokoko, I had become a different paddler. When I started this trip, I would make the “ker-plunk” noise with each dip of the paddle. Now, I quietly knifed the blade in the water. I was pacing myself and no longer attacking the water. What I had always considered the barbaric torture of kneeling was now one of my preferred positions — especially after hours of paddling where sitting wears out your arms and back. After a few embarrassing dunkings, I perfected the art of getting into and out of a canoe whatever the nature of the shore. I had learned how to get over beaver dams and could now crawl around on canoe packs while on the water. When we were taking a break, I would sprawl out on the packs and take a nap. I learned the pleasures of bow paddling — great views, little responsibility for steering. I even got used to paddling on both sides of the canoe. I still have my preferred side, but find switching is now restful and I’m just about as good in doing a J stroke or sweep with either side. Best of all, I now felt perfectly at home in a canoe.

One can learn all the basics of canoeing by taking lessons in the civilized lakes and streams within reach of many urban areas. However there is nothing like canoe tripping to set those lessons into your mind and body, and make a canoe and paddle an extension of yourself. So if you’re a novice at canoeing, and have never done any canoe tripping — make reservations with an outfitter to do so. You will never regret it.



Lake Kokoko

JOURNAL ENTRIES

Winter now. Looking at the notes from the trip last summer. Six words written for July 17:

- the takeout
- alder bushes
- **LONG CARRY.**

Only six words written to describe a day in the wilderness. Not enough words to tell what that day was really like. The six words won't mean much to my children or to anyone else who reads the journal if the events behind them are not described in more detail.

Trying to remember what July 17 was like. Looked at the maps of the trip to see where we camped that night. A point halfway down the lake. I remember we were sitting by the fire. The tents were up and the dishes were washed. The canoes and gear already secured for the night. A good day lived well in the wilderness.

I remember being pretty tired, but the weather and the bugs were co-operating so it was a good time to make journal entries. Have learned from previous trips that even if just a few sentences are written down about the day's travels it will bring overwhelming waves of satisfaction and gratitude when those sentences are reread during the winter. But only six words made the journal pages on 17 July. The sleeping bag must have been tough competition.

First two words in the journal are "the takeout." If you have been on the river before or know where the portage trail starts, ordinary practice is to canoe right to the take-out. However, if this is your first trip down the river, and the drop is a major one such as a waterfall, then the paddle to the take-out is scary. During high water, very scary. A white-knuckle endeavor. Sometimes haven't been able to justify the risk. Canoeing skills don't balance out the risk of an upset. Experts and repeat travellers who know exactly where the take-out is can canoe right to the lip of the waterfall. We often can't. We haven't been down this river before, it's wild country, and our motto "be careful" is flashing warning signs as we approach the waterfall. Because our fear quotient is high, we sometimes take out above the expert take-out point. Then it's portaging to the portage trail. As you are ferrying canoes and duffle to the point where the experts take out, you can see other routes join the one that you are on. Interesting to see where the "be careful" alarms for other travellers kick in.

The second two words written down are "alder bushes." There was a sunny place on the portage trail overgrown with them. The alder bushes were head-high in height. You physically had to push through them when you were moving gear. The alder bushes reacted to that intrusion by trying to pick loose items from the load that you were carrying. You countered by putting a vise-like hold on all the gear. The alder bushes next tried distraction by slapping at the face and

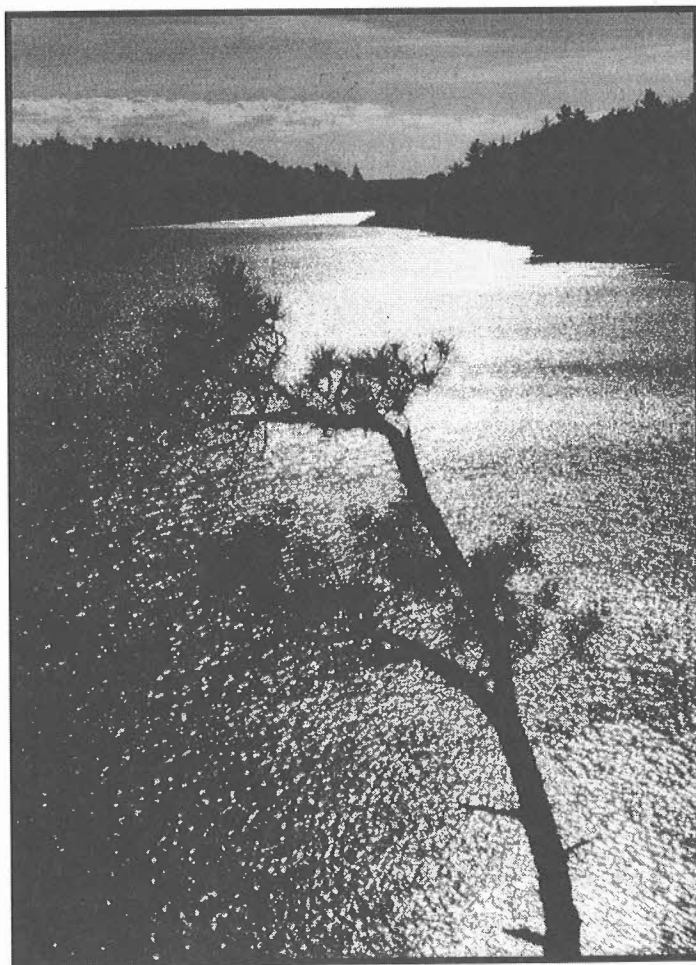
arms with branches as you pushed through them. You replied by using the bag carried in front to run interference. The bag shielding your face from taking a full blow. A lot like a chess game. Move and countermove by opposing sides on the portage trail.

The last two words in the journal are "LONG CARRY." Most wilderness travellers do not look forward to portages. All the gear and canoes have to be carried around the obstacle. Tough on the neck, the back, and the arms. The two words written in the journal are capitalized and printed in bold letters. Obviously, didn't want to forget this one. Took up half the day.

Trying to recall all the thoughts that I had on the portage trail. Remember it being a mean one. July 17 was day three in this year's trip. Each of the four of us had to make two trips to get all the gear and canoes over. The keeper came at the end when all the gear and canoes were over. The realization hit all of us that time had passed, a great deal of time, and not much ground had been covered. So it was back to the canoes and stroke for mileage.

July 17. Not a bad day now that I've read the journal in more detail.

Greg Went





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

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

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

NEWS BRIEFS

NASTAWGAN MATERIAL AND DEADLINE Articles, trip reports, book reviews, photographs, sketches, technical tips, or anything else that you think might be of interest to other readers, are needed for future issues. Try to submit your contributions by e-mail, on 3½ 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:

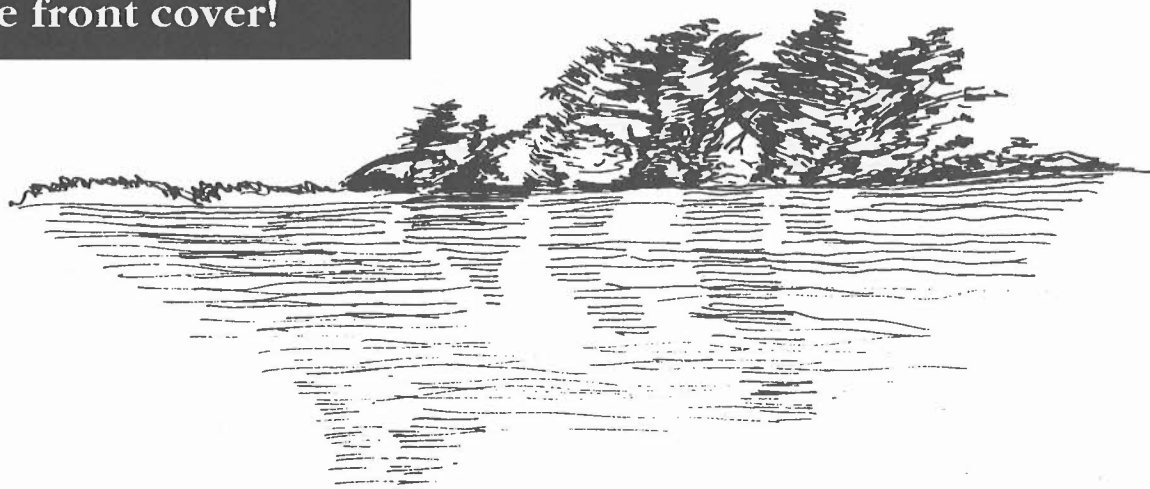
issue: Spring 1999 *deadline date:* 24 January
 Summer 1999 25 April

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 3½ 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).

BRAIN BUCKETS REQUIRED IN GORGE The Elora Gorge Conservation Area has decreed that all persons floating down the Grand River through the Gorge must now wear a PFD and helmet. The town of Elora, in which the river access is located, has given the C.A. the right to control the access point to make sure this ruling is complied with. During the warm weather, they have staff on hand to rent the equipment to those who don't come prepared. While this action was taken out of liability concerns with tubers (people floating on inflated inner tubes), it will affect all paddlers. However, we do sympathize with the frustration of the staff, who in the past have had to deal with inebriated people without PFD's floating down the river. Consequently, we would ask you to co-operate with them on club trips by wearing a helmet, as requested. Since this is only a Class 1 run at low to moderate water levels, a hockey or bicycle helmet should meet the regulation for open boaters who don't have a whitewater helmet. (Bill Ness for the Outings Committee.)

CRCA 1998/1999 SLIDE SHOW AND SEMINAR SCHEDULE is available from the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association by calling 1-888-252 6292.

Please note the important
 AGM information on the
 inside front cover!



SYMPOSIUM AND SHOWS

WILDERNESS & CANOEING SYMPOSIUM

The upcoming 14th annual Wilderness & Canoeing Symposium will take place on Friday 5 and Saturday 6 February 1999. (Please note that this is a week later than most years.) The theme is a continuation of last year's, namely "Part II of **Arctic Travels and Arctic Cultures**". The format stays the same and the location again is Monarch Park Collegiate auditorium, One Hanson Street in Toronto.

As in the past, all registration must be done via the designated registration form and cheque payment. (Sorry, we cannot cope with telephone or fax calls for special requests.) WCA members, as well as all past attendees on our list from prior years, should have received the separate Symposium mailing in November. If there are others who wish to receive the Symposium announcement mailing, please send us an email with name, address, telephone number, and email address to: norbooks@interlog.com or via fax at (416) 531-8873. Or via snail mail to: WCA Symposium, Box 211, Station P, Toronto, ON, M5S 2S7.

Symposium and registration information is now also available at the Northern Books website: <http://members.tripod.com/northernbooks> The Symposium registration form is added to the webpage information at about the same time as the regular mailing takes place. This ensures that a web connection does not result in earlier access to the registration form and so seat selection. (Since we sell out, this is an issue.)

Your email address is important to us. Last year's registration form requested your email address, as does this year's. We are in the process of organizing this information. The hope is to send out future Symposium announcements via email, with a pointer to the appropriate webpage, wherever possible. We think this will simplify the mailing and communications process, as well as reduce costs. If you wish to pass on your email address to us, please send a blank email to norbooks@interlog.com with the Subject as "Symposium Emailing."

George Luste

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SPORTS SHOW

This show features more than 30 sports-related categories (including paddle sports), over 200 exhibitors, three days of free seminars, and several interactive features such as a 50-foot demonstration pool. It will take place on 19, 20, and 21 February 1999 at the Toronto International Centre, 6900 Airport Road, Mississauga, Ontario (corner of Airport Road and Derry Road). For more information contact: John Giroux, National Event Management, 115 Apple Creek Blvd., Suite 12, Markham, Ontario, L3R 6C9; tel. (905) 477-2677 or 1-800-891-4859; fax (905) 477-7872; e-mail: jgiroux@nationalevent.com
website: www.nationalevent.com

The WCA is again going to be participating/exhibiting in this show. Anyone wishing to help (wo)man the booth, especially on Friday the 19th, please contact Bill Stevenson at (416) 925-0017 as soon as possible.

CANOE EXPO 1999

The world is two-thirds water... experience it! Join us on 5-6-7 March 1999 for CANOE EXPO, Canada's first and most established canoe/kayak and educational trade show. Location: Metro East Trade Centre, 1899 Brock Rd. North (Highway 401 and Brock Rd). Features include portage trail and camping exhibits, canoe builders, manufacturers, outfitters, retailers, raffle, silent auction, wilderness artists, and author's tables. Also featured: seminar and workshop series by North America's paddling experts.

For more information contact: Christine Connelly, Communications and Event Director, Canoe Ontario, 1185 Eglinton Ave. E, North York, ON, M3C 3C6; tel.: (416) 426-7170; fax: (416) 426-7363; e-mail: canoeont2@osrc.com

website: www.canoeontario.on.ca

The WCA is again going to be participating/exhibiting in this show. Anyone wishing to help (wo)man the booth, especially on Friday the 5th, please contact Bill Stevenson at (416) 925-0017 as soon as possible.

OTTAWA PADDLESport AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SHOW

This year's show will take place on 12, 13, and 14 March 1999 at the Aberdeen Pavilion of the Ottawa Civic Centre, 1015 Bank Street in Ottawa. It will highlight the latest and greatest in canoe- and kayak-related gear as well as adventure sports activities such as whitewater rafting, rock climbing, mountain biking, backpacking, scuba diving, parachuting, and adventure travel. Visitors will have a chance to scale the indoor climbing wall, sharpen camping and outdoor skills in the Expert's Corner, and experience the excitement of the mountain bike showcase. The demonstration pool area will feature high angle and river rescue techniques, test paddling opportunities, paddling skill workshops, and scuba diving. Participants will also be eligible to win outdoor equipment and door prizes.

Some of the top-rated speakers featured at the show include Arctic adventurer and author Richard Weber, as well as award-winning authors and adventurers Gary and Joanie McGuffin. In all, there are over 45 presentations, seminars, and demonstrations to choose from.

Tickets are available in advance from the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association or at the door on 12-14 March 1999. For more information on the show contact the CRCA at (613) 269-2910 or 1-888-252-6292, or visit our website at: www.crc.ca As always, there is free parking at the show.

KOOTENAY RIVER

Graham McCallum

My canoe partner, Lee deSoto, after trying to instill a love of calculus into high school students for more than thirty years (with varying degrees of success), retired and moved to the Rocky Mountains. He assured our canoe group that he had found a river close to his home in Canmore, Alberta, which we could paddle for a five-day trip. Sure, it was running at a speed of over 10 km/h, had standing waves a metre and a half high on the bends, was glacier fed, used by rafting companies, and was famous for sweepers. But other than that, it should be just fine. We had our doubts but took up his invitation anyway.

So there we were in the splendid mountains of British Columbia, all eight of us, standing beside the river with our open canoes, on a hot morning last July. Sure enough, the river was racing by and freezing cold. The waves looked big on the next bend downriver and there were sweepers galore. Our fellow campers in the Kootenay National Park campground, at McLeod Meadows, assembled on the bank to watch this multi-colored armada launch itself into certain destruction.

The first canoe shot out 100 metres, struck an almost hidden log, overturned, and swamped. One paddler, clad in a T-shirt and shorts, started swimming to shore for his life with a remarkable turn of speed, while the other held on to the bow rope, pulling the canoe to the same bank. The river had other ideas and

slammed the canoe into the roots of an upturned pine lying near the shore. A second canoe hit the same log but further along, wobbled, took on half a boatload of water, and luckily made it to the bank, just missing another sweeper.

The assembled campers on shore, with their opinions now confirmed, were, I am sure, admonishing their offspring on the evils of canoes and warning them that they would be well advised to give them a wide berth.

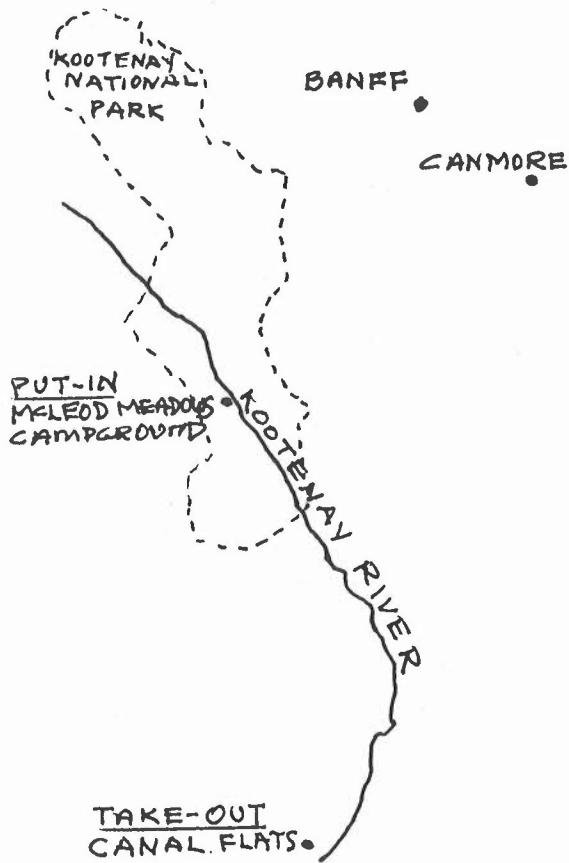
The rescue went well, no gear was lost, being firmly tied in. Anything cast adrift in that current would be well on the way to Idaho by the time it was found to be missing. The hot sun soon warmed the swimmers and we were ready to sally forth once again. The campers had all left the shore by this time. They must have had enough excitement for one day.

Before we headed out onto the river, we felt we needed a conference. It looked as if the river tactics that had served us so well in Ontario and Quebec were not entirely suitable for fast-moving rivers like the Kootenay. Unless we wanted a swim at regular intervals we needed to review them.

On our arrival in Canmore, we had gathered on the patio of one of its noted watering holes, The Sherwood House, and over a few flagons of lager we were introduced by my partner to his friend Jim Kievet, Canmore's

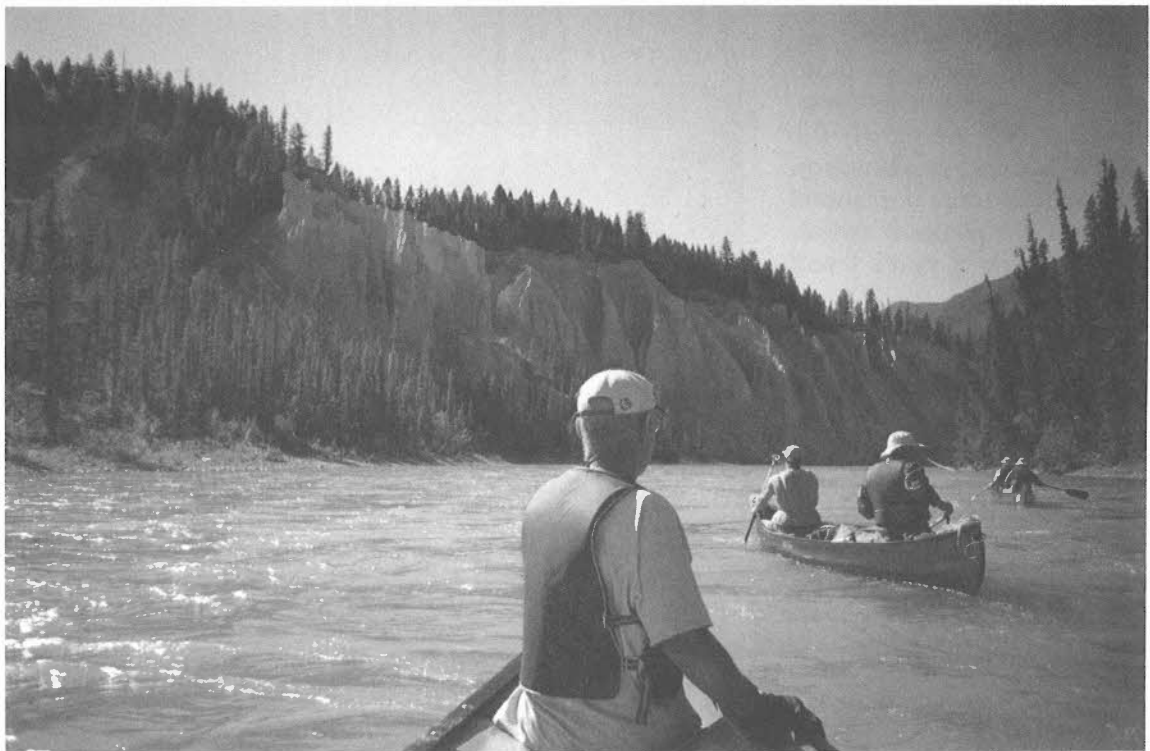


The canoe got swept into the roots of the sweeper on the left

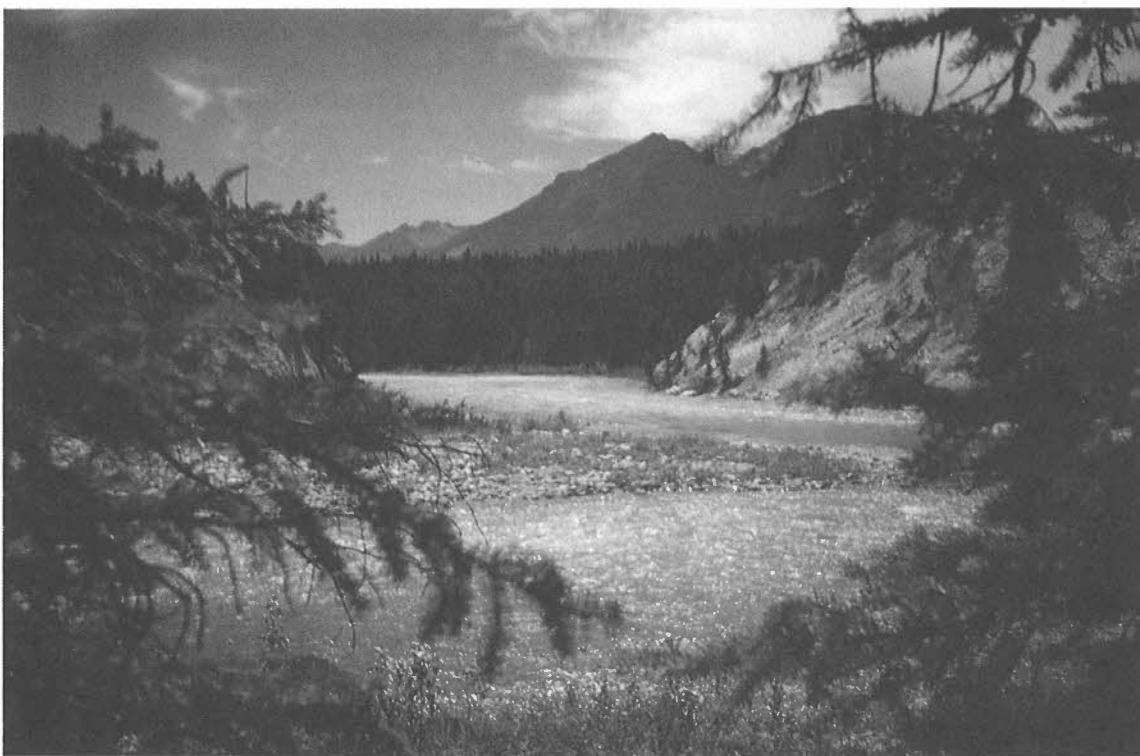


Guru of open-boat canoeing on mountain rivers. From the conversations that followed, sifting out the stories, jokes, and lies, certain pointers on how to stay dry on these rivers emerged. As we stood on the bank, pondering our next move, these tips came drifting back from the fog of the day before. It is amazing how the threat of swimming in icy water aids one's memory. With the river having virtually no rocks to dodge, one should stick to the middle wherever possible, and move to one side or the other by either a quick spin and an upstream ferry, or what Jim calls a "point and shoot." This is a fast paddle downstream at a 45-degree angle towards the side of the river you need to be on.

The use of one or the other of these two options depends on how much clear river you have left. Being in the right place, in plenty of time, means planning ahead, way, way ahead, 400 metres or more, if possible. This is probably the biggest contrast between the small, shallow, rocky rivers in Quebec and the more open, faster Kootenay. The tip to handle the bends was to ride the eddy line, just a metre towards the standing waves. This keeps you out of the whirlpools that form along the inner side of the turns. These whirlpools are not dangerous but they can spin the canoe if you get too close. Backpaddling is rarely used but can be effective, if you are forced into the standing waves, to slow the canoe down and reduce the slop coming in. If the bow paddler hops behind his seat in these situations, the canoe will stay even drier.



Some banks are sculpted by wind and rain into hoodos

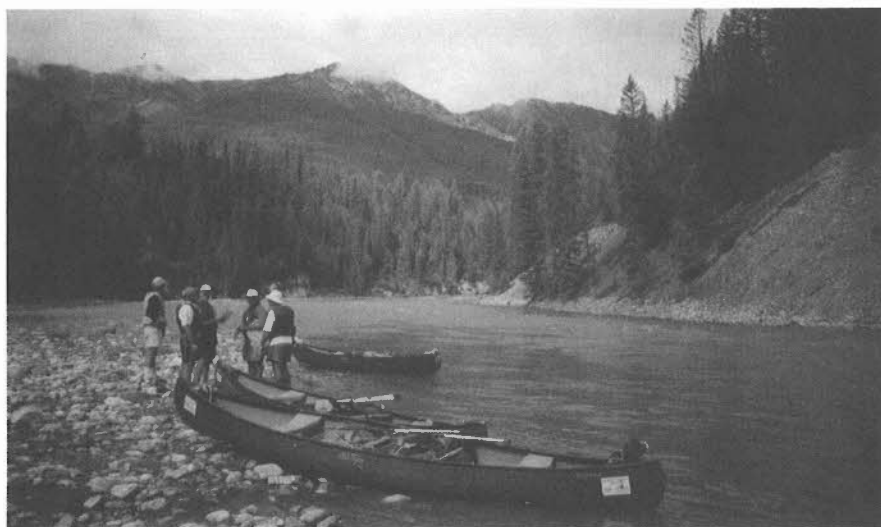


The Cross River joins the Kootenay at a scenic campsite

Since we are not blessed with total recall, the above tips were all that we could remember and as it turned out, were all we needed. However, we were on the river during medium water levels. In high water levels, with open canoes, all bets are off. By the end of the first day, we felt at home on the river and had no more unplanned swims. We had no planned swims, either. The rust from a year's layoff was gone.

Over the next four days, every bend in this milkish, pale-green river brought a panoramic delight. The background was the Rocky Mountains, while closer-in the multicolored mini-canyon walls were punctuated by cascading streams, magnificent campsites, grassy terraces, and hoodos (heavily eroded walls of rock-hard sediment). There were no portages, no bugs, no grizzlies, no rain, no rafts, and other than the bald eagles and a few jet boats on the last day we were all alone on the river. Hiking could be tackled at any campsite but using the game trails beside a stream provided the easiest access to the mountains.

Toasting our host, Lee, after the trip, at the Lussier National Park Hot Springs, we hoped that he could find another river, just like this one. He now has our complete confidence.



With beautiful mountain scenery it's nice not to be in a rush

If you go:

Trip length: 110 km, three to five days.

Elevation drop: 360 m.

Canoe rental: Univ. of Calgary, (403) 220-5038, approx. \$20 per day, incl. trailer.

River map: Kootenay National Park, Radium Hot Springs BC, (604) 347-9615.

Skill level: Good intermediate.

A New Column: PADDLERS' TALK

It's truly amazing how much expert knowledge on canoe tripping lies hidden among the hundreds of WCA members regularly going on short or long trips. Many of these avid paddlers have solved numerous technical and other problems that always seem to come up when trips are being prepared or when they're actually taking place. And many of these solutions are often quite ingenious and could be useful to other canoeists.

Unfortunately much of this creativity remains hidden to the majority because the problems and their possible solutions are generally only talked about in freewheeling discussions when the trippers get together around the campfire, at club meetings, paddling down a lake, etc. Most of us never learn about the clever answers found by others to problems that all of us have met or surely will encounter one day.

To remedy that situation we are now opening in Nastawgan a regular column, PADDLER'S TALK, where you, the unheralded discoverer of clever technical tidbits, can freely talk about what you've invented, presenting for everybody to see and judge the amazing fruits of your mental labor. It's also a place where readers can give feedback and comment upon the ideas presented.

You can also submit questions about problems you have when you're designing something. Maybe somebody out there can help you find a useful solution to what's bothering you. The extensive and very informative discussion that developed over the Pee Bottle a few years back in our journal makes it clear that there is a place for such a forum.

Contact us any way you want, names and addresses etc. are on the back page. Anything (almost) will do, from a few hundred words to just a short sentence. Drawings and photos are of course welcome. It's all very informal so don't hesitate to throw in your two cent's worth.

The following first instalment of PADDLERS' TALK presents three items. The first two are the kind of tips we expect to receive from you in great and varied abundance. The third one is quite lengthy, not your typical short blurb, but that's fine because it presents lots of useful information that you can't find anywhere else. Now, please collect your ideas and show them to us. Thanks.

Bill Ness and Toni Harting

PADDLER'S TALK

TENT LANTERN

When we're camping we like to use the UCO candle lanterns in the tent for ambient light and a bit of warmth. We hung ours from a loop on the tent ceiling and would have to get out of our bags to blow out the candle before going to sleep. No more! To make life easy for us when we're comfy in our bags, I now attach my lantern to a retractable key caddy, like the ones security guards use. Just reach up and pull down the lantern and blow out the flame. Just remember to let the cord retract gently or else the lantern will go flying up and possibly spill wax everywhere.

ATTACHING A WHISTLE

Along the same idea, I also use a "zinger" to attach my whistle to my pfd. The zinger is a retractable line used by fly-fishermen to hang their forceps, clippers, etc. It's out of the way and the cord is short enough that I don't have to worry about wrapping around anything vital. I've swum in rapids with it and it stays put until needed.

Fred Lum

BUYING A CANOE? Some Money-Saving Hints

Canoes represent a sizable financial investment, with new boats going from between \$1500 and \$2500. Here are a few hints to help stretch your hard-earned dollars, and avoid making some costly mistakes when buying used boats.

- Take advantage of dealer sales. Look for reductions of about \$100 at the spring outdoor sales as retailers vie for customers. Waiting for fall clearances can save you \$150-\$200.
- Suggest the retailer throw in an accessory to motivate you to buy from their shop. See if they'll include a complementary yoke, bang plates, air bag, paddle, etc.
- Ask about seconds or blemished hulls. Boats with minor cosmetic imperfections can save you several hundred of dollars.

- Renting to try out different models can be a good idea, but potentially expensive. Discuss with the outfitters how much of the rental fees they would be willing to knock off the purchase price if you decide to later buy from them.
- Ontario outfitters have rental fleet sales in September. Discount levels vary among the shops for boats of comparable condition. Some are good buys. Others are more expensive than you could get on the private resale market. Shop carefully. Ask if there are pre-sale viewings or price lists. To get the best boats, expect to stand in line several hours before opening and wear your running shoes.
- Think twice before buying canoes stored outdoors under the sun for several seasons. UV radiation deteriorates plastic hulls, reducing their strength and impact resistance.
- Check used wooden-gunwaled Royalex canoes carefully for hairline cracks running out from the deck and gunwale screws. These cracks, caused by cold weather storage without removing the screws, can split.
- Some older flat-bottomed tandem Royalex canoes develop soft, mushy bottoms. Always check such boats for excessive oilcanning before buying.
- Be suspicious of used boats with repairs of structural damage. It is difficult to assess the quality or adequacy of the repair job. Was the canoe patched with the finest marine epoxy, or with cheap polyester? You'll only find out later when you hit a rock.

These hints for canoe buyers are taken from my workshop held at the WCA Fall Meeting. I would be pleased to e-mail a copy of the full eight-page guide to anyone who wants it. Send your request to me at rabbit1@globalserve.net or phone (416) 321-3005.

Bill Ness

VOLUNTEERING FOR FUN AND PROFIT

Have you ever seen a North canoe, moving carefully step by careful step over the pinkish-grey Canadian Shield rock, going around a rapid on 42 legs? You could have if you were present at Little Pine Rapid of the French River that sunny day in June this year. You would have seen a large group of young (and a few not-so-young) Torontonians working hard together to move their heavy boat over the rocky northwest shore of the almost-dried-out rapid.

This curious happening took place on a three-day trip organized by the Inner City Outtripping Centre for young people (13 to 21 years of age) who otherwise would probably never had the chance to get to see this part of the world, and learn some essentials about teamwork and leadership in the outdoors at the same time. I had been asked to volunteer and guide the group because of my experience as a wilderness canoe tripper and my knowledge of the French River. In the end I was glad to have participated, because it turned out to be a fine trip with lots of things to learn and enjoy, not only by the young people but also by me.

We put in at Pine Cove Lodge on Wolseley Bay and paddled our three North canoes and three standard 17-footers to a spot on the north shore of the bay about one kilometre south of the Fiver Finger Rapids where I know three interconnected campsites. This splitting-up was necessary because of the large number of people in the party, 27 in all.

During the second day of the trip we visited the scenic Five Finger Rapids area where, after a tortuous hike to visit the main rapids, we had an extensive lunch on a collection of flat rocks below the outflow of the Little French River.

The high point of the trip probably was the visit that afternoon to Big Pine Rapid on the Main Channel, which carried relatively little water because of insufficient rainfall that season. It was therefore possible to don a pfd and float down the length of the rapid without running too much risk. Almost everybody joined in with great gusto and lots of happy yelling, and truly remarkable feats of rolling-to-get-out-of-the-current were shown to those of us standing on the shore.

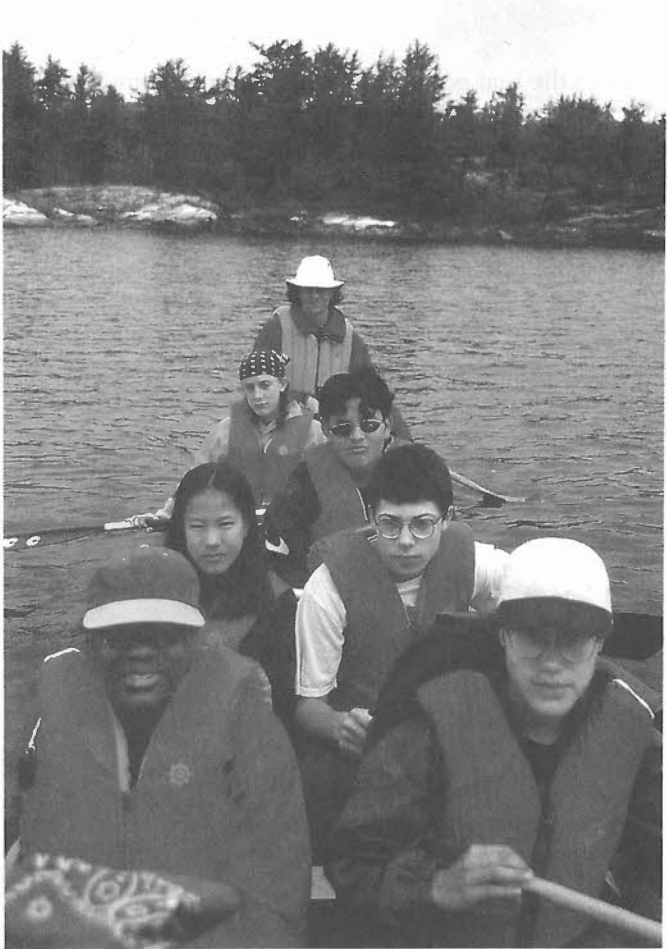
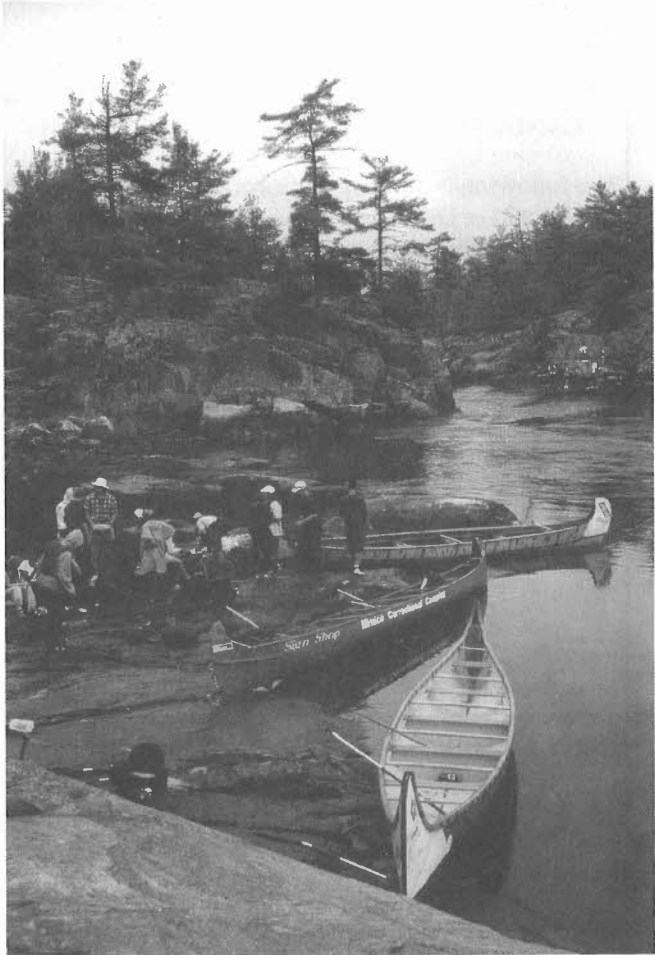
What the organizers need is qualified volunteers to take similar groups out to interesting spots where the young people can learn to live for a few days in the outdoors and work as a team to get valuable experience. I therefore ask the many WCA members who have the time (retirees!?) and capability to be a tripping guide to contact the following organization and offer to volunteer their time: Inner City Outtripping Centre, Masaryk-Cowan Community Recreation Centre, Attn. Allan Crawford, 220 Cowan Ave., Toronto, M6K 2N6; tel. (416) 392-6928; e-mail allancrawford@sprint.ca

The ICOC is an umbrella organization for youth with a focus on outdoor recreation programs including leadership training, special events/excursions, and related economic initiatives. It is sponsored by, among others, the Toronto Parks and Recreation Department and its Community Partners.

Let's show the people that the WCA knows how to share our love and knowledge of canoe tripping with those less fortunate. Be a volunteer. Everyone will profit.

Toni Harting





Letter to the Editor

I will try to send you some pieces from time to time from the North. It may be interesting for some of the southern members (I was one of 'those' until my move to the Yukon in July 1997) to read a resident's viewpoint instead of the visitors'.

This summer, the paddling season was in full bloom under the midnight sun. Because of low snow-fall this past winter (and record mild temperatures — locals say I've still not had a real Yukon winter yet) and a very dry May, the nearby rivers were low at the start of the season. What many outsiders may not realize is that rivers up here do not just experience a spring (snow melt) run-off and flood; they awaken slowly and as the milder temperatures reach into the alpine areas and melt the winter's accumulation of frozen water, then we get our rivers gradually rising and flooding.

We paddled on the Takini River, about an hour's drive from Whitehorse, in mid-May and were constantly watching for gravel shoals — not unlike many of the James Bay rivers in August. I have been fortunate enough to see this same river now five times since then and each time the water has been noticeably higher. I understand it was at its summer peak in July and remained there until sometime in mid-August when it calmed down for the coming winter. A river that grows to flood was certainly something I wasn't used to from Ontario.

Now to the real point of this letter. In the Summer 1998 *Nastawgan* on page 18 there is a little piece of poetry about black flies submitted by Douglas Read, and credited to someone called "Fowke." Now I have nothing against this "Fowke" person but in 1984, all they were doing was reciting a forty-odd-year-old verse from Wade Hemsworth's "Black Fly Song." This catchy tune was later, I think in the early 1990s, made into a National Film Board short with the same Wade Hemsworth as a consultant, and I think as the musician. I have included the song in its entirety and encourage *Nastawgan* readers to rent the N.F.B. Animation video to see and hear this wonderful Canadian tune.

Thanks from the Yukon.

Stephen Reynolds

BLACK FLY SONG

*'Twas early in the Spring, when I decide to go
To work up in the woods in North Ontario
And the unemployment office said they'd send me thru
To the Little Abitibi with the survey crew*

*But the black flies, the little black flies
Always the black fly no matter where you go!
I'll die with the black fly a-picking my bones
In North Ontario-i-o
In North Ontario-i-o*

*Now the man Black Toby was the captain of the crew
And he said "I'm gonna tell you boys what we're gonna do
They want to build a power dam and we must find a way
For to make the Little Ab flow around the other way"
So we surveyed to the east and surveyed to the west
And we couldn't make our minds up how to do it best
Little Ab, Little Ab, what shall I do?
For I'm all but going crazy on the survey crew*

*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
O the devil take the black fly and let me be*

*Black Toby fell to swearin' cuz the work was gettin' slow
And the state of our morale was a-gettin' pretty low
And the flies swarmed heavy, it was hard to catch a breath
As you staggered up and down the trail talkin' to yourself*

*Now the bull cook's name was Blind River Joe
If it hadn't been for him we'd've never pulled thru
For he bound up our bruises and he kidded us for fun
And he lathered us with bacon grease and balsam gum*

*At last the job was over, Black Toby said "We're thru
With the Little Abitibi and the survey crew"
'Twas a wonderful experience and this I know
I'll never go again to North Ontario!*

Wade Hemsworth (1949),
as found in "Rise Up Singing"

CANDIDATES FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The following is the only platform for candidates for the 1999 Board of Directors received before our publication date. Any other members who wish to run for the Board may do so by letting the Board of Directors know, or by placing their name in nomination from the floor at the AGM on 13 February 1999.

MARTIN D. HEPPNER

I am a three-year member of the W.C.A. and a paddler since 1954. I have enjoyed the W.C.A.'s activities, participating in a number of weekends, fall meetings, symposiums, and annual meetings. Also, I have been organizing our website, which became operational by November 1998.

As a W.C.A. director, I would be particularly interested in enhancing our tripping program both by organizing some trips and by operating the W.C.A. website as a convenient means for all W.C.A. members to keep in touch: announcing their trip plans, obtaining information from fellow members, and registering for trips and other events. I am also interested in organizing an annual event which would particularly appeal to members who have young families.

When I am not paddling, I am a husband (of one) and father (of two), owner and "chief cook and bottle washer" of my own securities dealer and (small) computer business in Toronto.

THE PRICE OF PROGRESS

Viki Mather

My third day out on my third annual solo canoe trip, I came to the road crossing. I can't help but remember my first trip through this area fifteen years ago — long before anyone even thought of putting in a road....

Then, I remember coming upon this beautiful, magical place. Halfway across the portage, I found a lovely pool of clear, blue water. The gently sloping rock was warmed by the autumn sun. I just had to stop and spend some time here.

I took off my clothes and slipped into the cool, pure water. Floating, I looked up at the forest all around. The quiet was immense. The feeling of wilderness — pure and simple — was complete.

I felt I was a lifetime away from civilization; that Earth, sky, and water were pure and clean and perfect. I felt at peace. I felt at home.

Now, a pristine, green bridge bisects the portage. I can stand upon it and look down where I swam not too many years ago.

I spent some time there while out on my solo trip. Tried to get the feeling again. Tried to feel that I was still in the wilderness.

I had been living by the water, under the trees, in the great out-of-doors — in the "wilderness" — for two days by the time I reached that bridge. I had enjoyed the warmth of the days, the sound of the wind in the trees, and the sight and touch of those huge old white pines on the lake to the north.

Then ... something was lost as I came near the portage. Even the approach from the North — which is incredibly beautiful country — was diminished in my heart, as I knew what lay ahead.

When I got to the portage, it was as beautiful as ever. Lovely sounds coming from the creek — same whites, greens, blues,

and browns as have always been there.

Though the road is only a stone's throw away from the lakes on either side, no illegal access has been built to either shore. Both lakes are dead — no fish. No reason to want to put in a motorboat.

Now I am glad of this. As what beauty remains at a distance from the road will not be spoilt by stinky, noisy boats.

I carried the pack across the portage to the next lake, then ambled back along the creek. It still flows, cool and clear. Still tumbles noisily over rocks and boulders.

The pool is still there, and the rock still slopes gently in the sun. I wanted to swim there again — but no. Not with that fancy bridge looking over my shoulder.

Back on the portage trail — it hadn't changed. It's still just a narrow little trail, winding through the woods. Narrow and rough. Branches brushed my legs as I walked along. The trail fits the landscape. It follows the contours of the earth, has not been moulded by man.

I picked up the canoe to carry it along this centuries-old pathway. Nearing the road crossing, I could hear a truck coming. Rumble, rumble, rumble — louder and louder as it got closer. Then crunch, crackle, roar — it sped up the next hill.

I was left in the dust, as I sadly crossed the road.

Author's note: This article was written to bring some awareness to the price we pay for "progress." It is not a comment on the virtues or evils of logging, roads, or wilderness travel. Simply, it is a statement to reinforce the need to be aware that with every modern thing we gain, something of the old, spiritual world is lost.

UPDATE: SPANISH RIVER

The Spanish River being one of my favorites, I have worked through the details of the proposed Crown Land changes (Lands for Life). It's discouraging:

East Branch (Duke Lake to Forks) and *West Branch* (Lake Biscotasi to Forks) are designated as "Heritage Waterway" surrounded by "General Use Area" and are afforded no protection at all. This whole this area can be logged and mined, the woods will be carved up by roads, and ATV trails will be everywhere. Only the building of new cottages along the river is curtailed.

Forks to Agnew Lake: As a commendable first step, there are park designations that protect the immediate shores of the lower river from encroachment by roads, cottages, lumber operations, mining and hydro development. Less protection is given to the five conservation areas as mining will be permitted. But most of the area has no meaningful protection at all.

I have put up a webpage that shows a map with the area designations: <http://www.interlog.com/~erhard/lfl1.htm>

Erhard Kraus

PARTNERS AND INFORMATION WANTED

SUMMER CANOEING I would like to join a group to canoe with, summer 1999. Preferably 3-6 weeks. Experienced, have food expertise, competent whitewater. Tom Elliott, (905) 648-1560. e-mail: elliottp@mcmaster.ca

CANOE RENTAL I would like to rent a 17-18-foot, large-volume tripping canoe out of Yellowknife from 20 June to 5 August 1999. Call Bob Dion (416) 481-1347.

SHARED FLYING Looking to share the cost of a Twin Otter flight from Bathurst Inlet to Yellowknife in the first week of August 1999. Call Bob Dion (416) 481-1347.

AN EPISODE IN NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

Lac Joncas, Rivière de l'Original

Bill Scott

After fighting the wind on the larger lakes for the preceding two days and hauling my gear over some short but exceedingly muddy portages, the quiet paddle south down the ancient, glacier-scoured fault line containing Lac à la Croix was a pleasant change. It was so straight in places as to appear man-made.

Evening shadows were gathering as I made for shore after a day's paddle of 40 km and quickly set up camp. With the abnormally high water levels, the bugs were plentiful and a nuisance, but I was getting bush-hardened and was beginning to be able to ignore them. This site represented about the mid-point of a June 1984, two-week, solo canoe trip linking the headwaters of the Capitachouane River and the lakes of La Vérendrye Park with an old favorite, the Dumoine River.

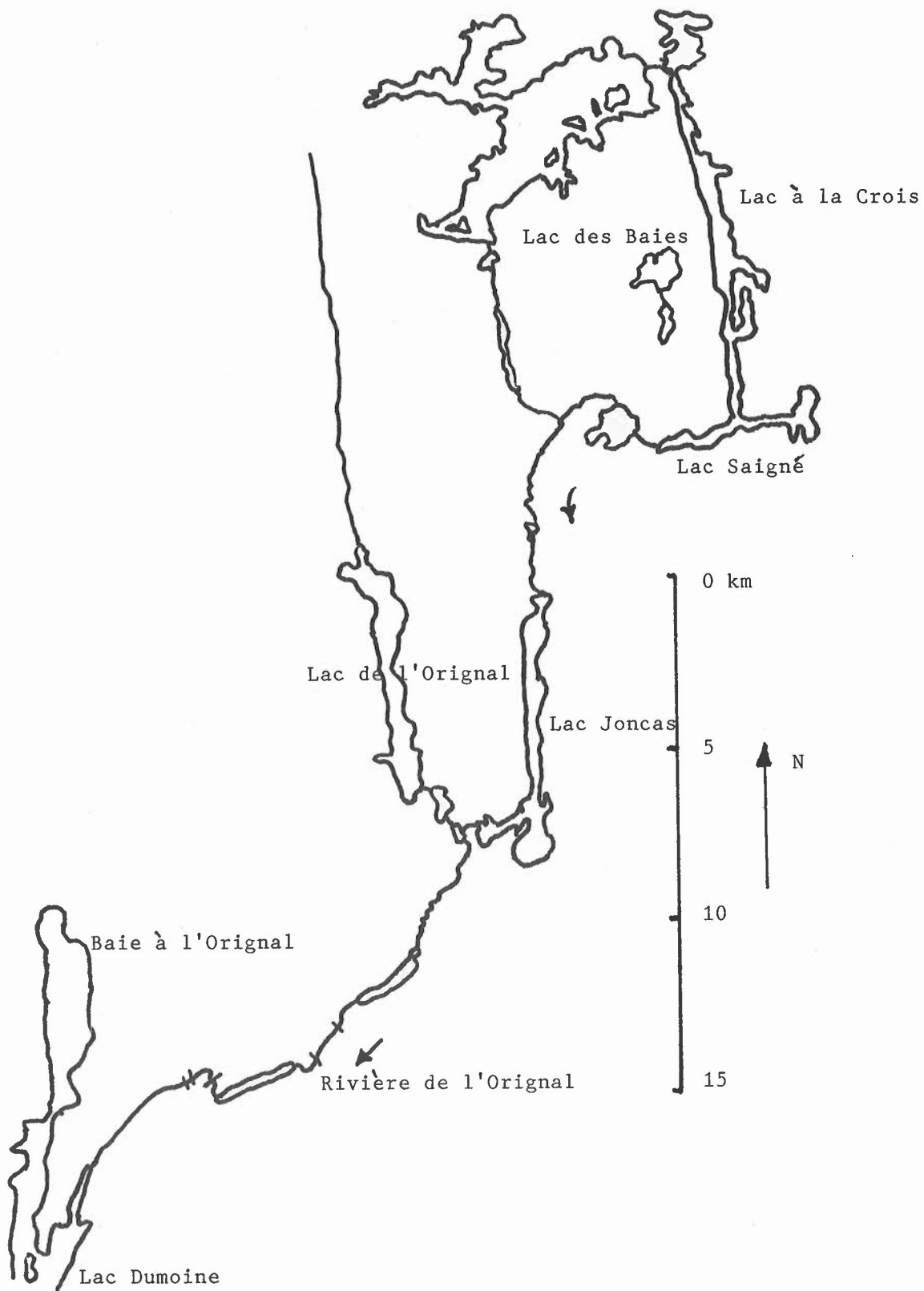
The morning promised some interesting travel down the narrow upper reaches of Rivière de l'Original, and I looked forward to the prospect of a decent

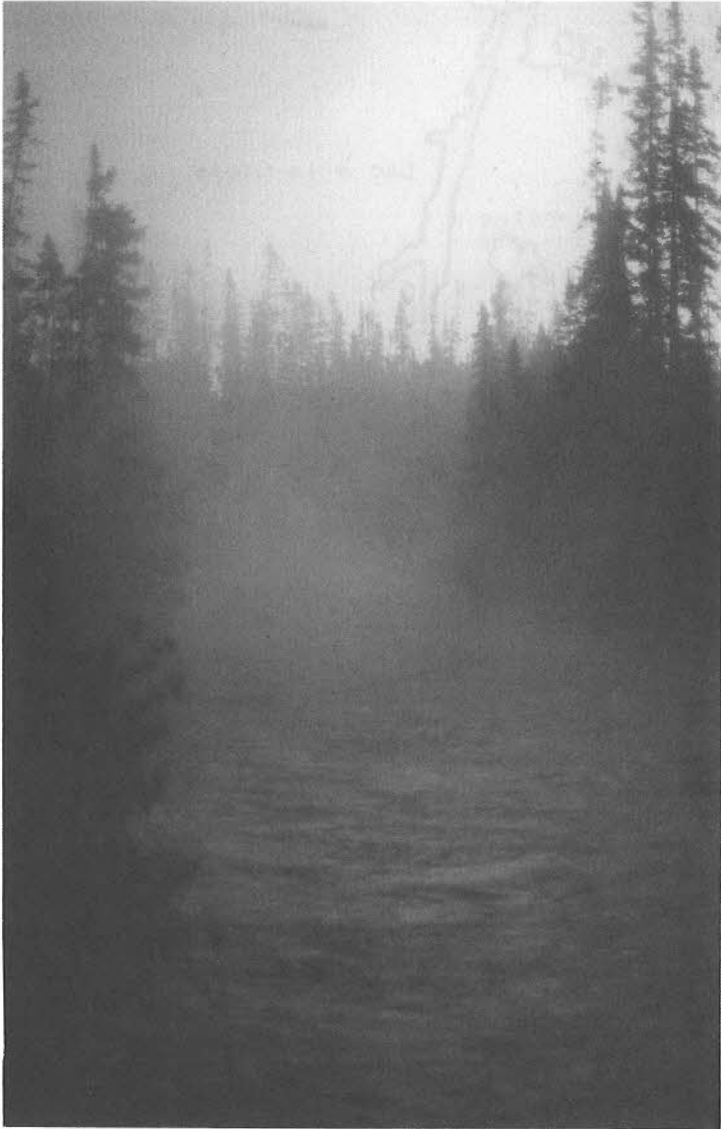
close-range photograph of a moose. Thus far on the trip, while game had been fairly plentiful, rain and wind had necessitated keeping camera equipment under cover. Every reasonable nature photo-op until now had resulted in me capturing nothing more than the personal cloud of black flies trailing the hind end of an animal fast disappearing into the bush as I scrambled to bring a camera to bear. Tomorrow would be different — I would be better prepared.

I was up early to find a low-lying mist on the lake. While it soon cleared off, the gear still got packed wet, one of the minor nuisances of long-distance canoeing. After a few kilometres, the straight and narrow lake comes to an abrupt T-junction so well formed it looks badly in need of a stop or yield sign. It was hard to avoid the instinct to check both ways for oncoming traffic.

Turning sharply west, my course now took me via the Rivière de l'Original, a delightful little river. It was perfect moose country, low and swampy, yet I saw







has cut a deep channel through glacial debris, with a canyon-like result in places. A large number of sweepers, under-cut banks, rapids, and ledges add to the difficulty. The rapids in themselves would not have been much of a challenge but for the numerous tight blind corners, sweepers, and blockages of uprooted tree trunks and tangled debris. Together, they made it a bit treacherous. It would be a foolish person who ran some of the corners blind. Scouting from the canoe was often impossible with the swift current, sharp bends, and steep sand banks. Scouting from shore was equally difficult.

Consequently, I was very cautious, pausing to check out every blind corner where conditions did not present a safe take-out within view. There were several portages, all poorly marked and very poorly cut out. The take-outs and put-ins would have to be seen to be believed. Usually, they were on a cut bank which required hauling canoe and gear up and later down near-vertical embankments, perhaps 15 to 20 metres in height, in loose sand and wet clay that often caused mini avalanches threatening to deposit canoe and owner back in the river.

The oxbows are numerous beyond counting, many more than shown on the map, which meant slow and awkward travel due to the constant turning, acceleration, deceleration, and manoeuvring. Despite the delightful scenery, it was good to see Lac Joncas at last. All the while, the sun had been beating down from a clear sky. An insatiable thirst drained my energy, and previously rain-soaked hands soon became sunburnt.

After paddling a little ways down the lake, I thought I could see some movement and splashing shimmering through the mirage effect on the horizon near a point of land along the left shore. Aha, I said to myself. At last I would have a decent chance to get a good, close-up picture of a moose! The wind, although light, was against me and I could cover my approach by keeping close to shore. Thus far in the trip, conditions had always been unfavorable for photography whenever I had spied big game. Out came the camera, on went the telephoto lens, and all was made ready for instant action. Paddling with my best stealth technique, I approached silently along the shore without a ripple or sound to betray my presence. Nearing the peninsula, I quietly put down my paddle and drifted motionlessly around the point, camera poised, ready to catch nature at first hand.

Nature was exactly what I caught, although in a somewhat different form than expected. In an instant, the intrepid nature photographer was turned into a voyeur! My moose had transformed itself into a young couple ... aah, let's say "cavorting" ... in the nude! This turn of events evoked several responses — a strong desire to somehow "fade into the woodwork," a difficult trick in the middle of a large lake, followed quickly by an even stronger compulsion to break out in hilari-

nothing but an abundance of birds — hawks, herons, and ducks. I took a few photographs of harried mother ducks trying to shepherd panicky ducklings to safety but it was bigger game that really interested me — say a moose, a bear, or even an elusive wolf — wouldn't that be a treat!

The section between Lac Saigné and Lac Joncas is long, scenic, but difficult. The current was strong and the oxbows seemed endless. Over the years the river

ous laughter, hard to contain even with the growing welts on my tongue. On shore there was a minor amount of hustle to cover up, while I tried to press on down the lake as if everything was perfectly normal, without collapsing in laughter and falling out of the canoe.

The young couple then called out several times in French asking if I had a map. It was such a strange request that it took a while for the question to fully register in my mind, being somewhat preoccupied in the first instance by the whole bizarre affair. Who in their right mind would be in the middle of the boonies without a map? Nude on a beach in the middle of the boonies without a map? Turning around, I put into shore and heard their story — still having a hard time keeping a straight face.

Words tumbled out and the situation quickly took on a more serious tone. They had capsized two days ago in the little river I had just descended. Running a rapid around a blind corner without scouting, they found the river blocked shore to shore by a tangle of driftwood. Hitting broadside, the canoe filled with water and wrapped itself around a tree. Fortunately, both made it to shore without becoming entangled in the sweeper, although it was a close call. Unable to dislodge the canoe, they had spent a night in the bush — wet, barefoot, and badly scratched-up with nothing more than bathing suits for protection from the bugs and cold. These had been the only clothes they were wearing when the accident occurred.

It was the second day before the damaged canoe

and half of the gear were finally retrieved. Their packs were not tied in and one was lost with maps, cooking pots, personal and camera gear. In trying to free the canoe, it finally came off only to turn over again and wrap itself around another tree. The canoe was badly holed in one side when it was eventually freed. Remarkably, the gunnels were intact. This trip had been its first time in the water. The young fellow was evidently quite handy with his hands and had repaired the worst damage with a fibreglass repair kit salvaged from the packs. Fortunately, neither he nor his girlfriend were seriously injured.

I showed them my map and suggested they make a paper copy which they did after some time. I also offered them some food, which they declined, and suggested they accompany me as far as Lac Dumoine if they wished. The man had already canoed the Dumoine three times, so, once on that river, the route would be familiar. I then headed down the lake several kilometres to find a campsite and reflect on the day's strange events. The camera was put back in its case.

The couple had a second brush with death two days later when they capsized on Lac Dumoine during the passage of a cold front. Once they were on the river proper and could reasonably no longer get lost, I did not stay any further in their company to see how many more times they would tempt fate.

But, you ask, what about that bit of "nature" photography? Sorry, isn't this supposed to be a family publication..!?



REVIEWS

SUPERIOR ILLUSIONS by Richard Pope, illustrations by Neil Broadfoot, published by Natural Heritage / Natural History Inc., (P.O.Box 95, Sta. O, Toronto, ON, M4A 2M8), 1998, softcover, 126 pages, \$29.95. Reviewed by Toni Harting.

At first read this compelling book, written in the form of a verse epic, seems a bit odd because of the unusual rhythm of the language, the staccato use of words, the chopping-up of sentences. But after awhile, especially when reading it out loud, the story begins to come alive and shows its true value: a gripping fictional account of the trip from Montreal to Grand Portage by a birch-bark canot du maître (and not canot de maître as the author writes) as part of a fur-trade canoe brigade in the 1790s.

The book is obviously based on thorough historical research as well as on actual experiences gathered during several trips by the author and his friends following the old fur-trade route. It's an engrossing narrative, showing in uncommon detail what the brutal, dangerous, but ultimately fascinating life of the voyageur really was in those days. The many illustrations in color and black-and-white are among the best and most life-like I've seen about the old fur trade days. Although they contain a few artistic liberties (such as unequal-sized bow and stern, and some distorted perspective), they breathe a wonderful feeling of authenticity and clearly show the intimate knowledge the artist has of his subject matter. A marvellous book that gives us a much better understanding of the days these early wilderness canoeists paddled the waterways we now visit at leisure.

TAHQAMENON TALES, Experiences of an Early French Trader and His Native Family by Timothy J. Kent, published by Silver Fox Enterprises (P.O. Box 176, 11504 U.S. 23 South, Ossineke, MI 49766, USA), 1998, softcover, 209 pages, prepaid US\$19.95 or C\$27.95 plus US\$4.00 or C\$6.00 for shipping. Reviewed by Toni Harting.

This is another self-published book by Kent (see the Reviews in the last issue of *Nastawgan*) and, as his earlier one on birchbark canoes, this is a gem. Through extensive research and by recreating — with the help of his family — the daily life as it was 300 to 400 years ago, the author gives us an admirably detailed insight into the life of a fur trader of that period. From the promotional flyer: "Paddle and sleep beneath a birch-bark canoe, kindle fires with flint and steel, harvest woodland foods, compare native and French wood-working tools, produce cord from basswood bark, and brain-tan a deer hide. Join the family as they compare traditional native cooking containers to trade kettles of copper and brass, set snares and deadfall traps, mold lead gun balls, and contrast a bone awl with an iron needle and elk sinew threads with linen thread. Inside a cozy birchbark shelter, absorb with them the magic of ancient stories told beside the fire."

This profusely illustrated book is an absorbing study of a way of life long gone. Reading it will make you richer.

HOW MANY ...?

The Minimum Number Of Boats That People Need

If you're like me you live in a family of three and enjoy playboating as well as just plain scenic paddling. What would be the minimum number of boats for a family like mine to have? Well let's see.

You'd need a big tripping boat for long canoe trips.

You'd need something a little lighter for just mucking around in tandem or for shorter canoe trips.

You'd need a solo open boat for when you're in the mood to run over smaller boats and those damn tubers (black, inflatable, doughnut-shaped, nasty things); but you don't want to do it in a tandem boat, because if each of you paddles your own boat you can cause more damage.

You'd need at least one closed boat (C-1 or kayak) for doing fancy rodeo moves and whatnot.

You'd need, in addition to the one rodeo boat, a closed solo boat that is suitable for a daytrip. One of these per family member would be fine,

Now let's count all these and find the minimum:

- 2 tandem boats
- 1 solo open boat
- 1 solo playboat
- 1 solo closed boat for each family member

So when we tally them all up we see that the bare-bones-minimum number of boats for a family of three to have is seven. Each is a necessity.

In conclusion all I have to say is: Who the hell wants to have the minimum? Buy as many as you want...!

James Ness

Chanted at the CANOE PORTAGE to the Ontario Legislative Assembly buildings at Queen's Park in Toronto on 24 October:

**THE LAND IS ALIVE
WE NEED IT TO SURVIVE ...!!**

WCA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, 13 February 1999

Goodrich Loomis Outdoor Centre

All members and friends of the Wilderness Canoe Association are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the association. It was considered most appropriate to celebrate the event in an outdoor setting which allows ample time for socializing and physical activities besides attending the business part of the meeting. The latter includes the election of three directors to the Board for a two-year term to attend to the business of the association. Any member in good standing is eligible to stand for election. Interested individuals are urged to contact the secretary of the WCA or any member of the Board if they have questions regarding the responsibilities of Board members.

The meeting takes place in a brand-new building located on the Goodrich Loomis Conservation Area just north of Brighton (95 km east of Toronto down Highway 401). A detailed description on how to get there is shown on the inside of the disposable front cover of this *Nastawgan*, together with the agenda for the day and the registration form. Please note the registration deadline — a stricture needed by the caterer.

The Conservation Area is located in a region of rolling hills — old glacial deposits, including a prominent esker — and contains several trails which total 15 km in length. It is our hope that these trails will be covered with a good quantity of the white stuff which failed us so badly last winter. In order to help members get a proper grip on things we have included a short demonstration on the waxing of skis in the program. It

will cover topics more of interest to the back-country skier than the racer.

The after-dinner program starts with a presentation by Craig MacDonald. Craig is a longtime WCA member and contributor to *Nastawgan* (indeed it was he who suggested the name). He is particularly well-known for going on extended winter wilderness trips. An internationally recognized authority on native travel techniques and equipment, Craig spent many years documenting old native travel routes in the Temagami region, which culminated in the production of a detailed map. At the present time he is on the staff of Algonquin Park and responsible for the development and maintenance of trails, portages, campsites, and new routes. In his talk he will expand on the latest additions to such facilities in the Park.

Just like his good friend Craig MacDonald, Bob Davis is a traditionalist who travels summer and winter using tin stove and prospector tent, and prefers his homemade pemmican to the freeze-dried fare of the modern tripper. Bob has travelled in all seasons throughout the North for many years. He is as comfortable travelling alone as in company and among his trips are many which others would call remarkable. In the process he has been exposed to a wide spectrum of experiences and emotions, some of which he will share with us.

Anyone needing additional information about the event can contact Glenn Spence at (613) 475-4176.

REPORT FROM KANDALORE

The annual Fall get-together of the WCA, which took place on 25 to 27 September at Camp Kandalore in Haliburton, this year attracted over 80 people. A few of the early arrivals took advantage of the glorious weather on Friday to sample the colorful sights in the neighborhood. The rest of the crowd drifted in gradually during the afternoon and evening. It was a time of making acquaintances for new members and renewing contacts for others (which always seems to include: "... and where did you go *this* summer?"). The evening was rounded out with presentations on the Moisie and Mountain Rivers.

The outings program on Saturday included flatwater or whitewater paddling as well as hiking. In spite of deteriorating weather conditions, virtually everyone signed on for one of the outings. As it turned out, the weather held out better than some of the participants. In consequence of an extremely dry summer, water

levels in some of the lakes were very low, and the upper Black River had in fact literally dried up. It seems, not everyone was happy with the increased energy expenditure required to overcome these obstacles.

Bill Ness and Doug Ashton closed out the afternoon with a very entertaining presentation, which focused on camping equipment and offered a number of 'how-to' tips. While these proceedings were taking place, the weather outside had turned decidedly ugly, in line with the broadcast tornado watch, and just before dinner was to be served the lights went out. We discovered later that a falling tree had severed the main feeder line some distance from the camp. With it, supper became a candle-light dinner and prospects for the rest of the evening's presentation rather dim.

Fortunately, the staff managed to scare up a small portable generator, just powerful enough to satisfy the demand of the slide projector and one 60-watt light (but

not the coffee maker). In spite of the restriction these conditions imposed on them, Pat and Bryan Buttigieg gave an illuminating presentation on food preparation for long wilderness trips as they practise it. It relies to a large extent on drying their own vegetables, fruits, and precooked meals, samples of which they freely distributed. It was followed by a discussion chaired by Mr. Carnivore, John Winters, which acquainted the audience with several less palatable alternatives.

The last scheduled event of the day was a slide talk by Suzanne and Greg Brown, who, just weeks earlier, had returned from the final stage of their circumnavigation of the Labrador Peninsula. Starting in 1992 at their home near the Beaver River, they spent the first summer travelling north to James Bay and finished the first stage at Great Whale River (Kuujuuarapik). A detailed account of this journey was published in the Fall 1993 issue of *Kanawa Magazine*. In subsequent years they continued northward and eventually reached Kuujuaq. At this point they decided to switch gears. They traded their 17-foot cedarstrip for a 22-foot freighter canoe and, again starting from Georgian Bay, proceeded counterclockwise to the St. Lawrence, along the shores of Quebec and Labrador into Hudson Strait to finish at the settlement at the mouth of the George River. In spite of the fact that they underplayed the difficulties of their (frequently perilous) odyssey, the audience had no problem recognizing that their's was no ordinary journey.

With the power still out and the sky gloomy on Sunday morning, a large number of people left early, some no doubt because they didn't know that the camp kitchen runs on propane. This left a mountain of scrambled eggs and other goodies unattended. The hardier types were rewarded not only with a belly full of food, but with gradually improving conditions which made the Sunday outings better than those on Saturday. Perseverance always wins the day.

Herb Pohl

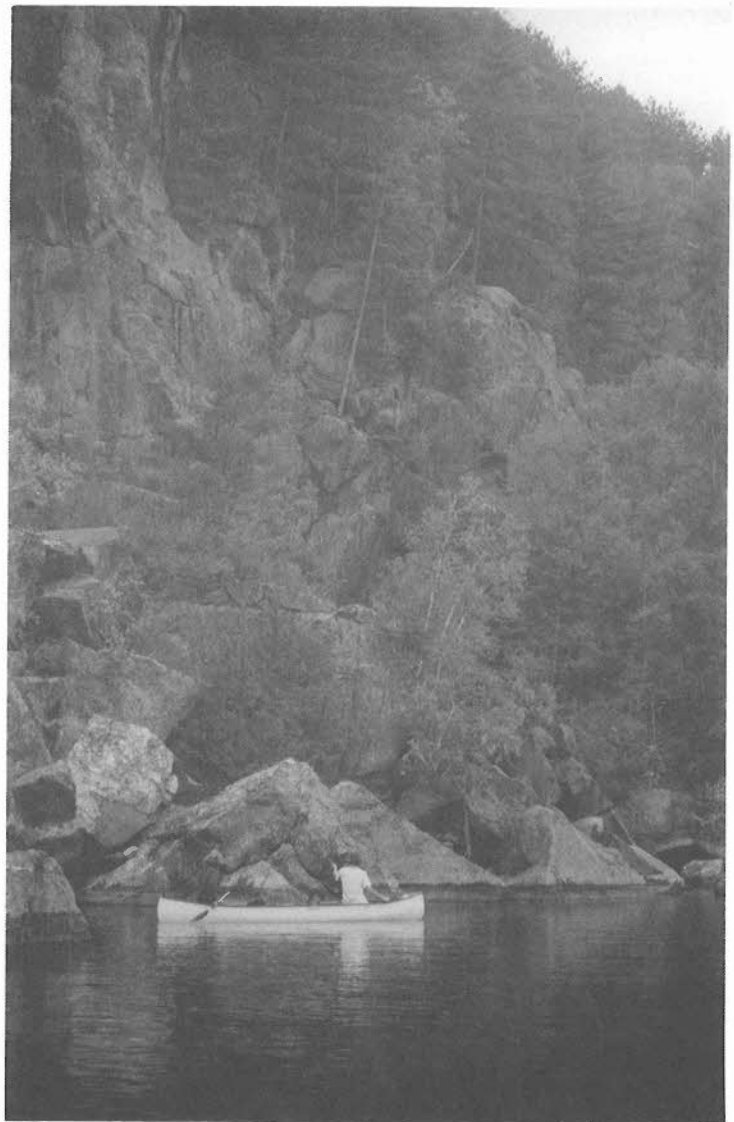


photo: Glenn Spence

AN INSIDE STORY

Don't know about you, but we have always held beaver lodges in a rather special awe. After all, here are huge structures, often weighing well over a tonne, but built by only medium-sized animals from such mundane material as mud and sticks. And, however simple they may appear externally, beaver lodges provide a remarkably sophisticated haven of warmth and security for their builders, winter and summer, out in the middle of thousands upon thousands of ponds in Algonquin.

Still, we do have to admit, in a lifetime of seeing beaver lodges almost every day, we never thought of actually crawling into one for a first-hand look. In fact, it never crossed our minds that anyone could, or would want to, perform such a feat.

Well, as you have probably guessed by now, some-

one has indeed done the trick. Not long ago we came across an account by Mr. Robert J. McNamara of Cleveland, New York, of what he found when he squirmed into a dry beaver lodge, equipped with a flashlight and a small pruning saw. "An Inside Story" first appeared in the Jan.-Feb. 1987 issue of *The Conservationist*, a magazine published by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and we present a slightly edited version here. As you read along, refer to the two sketches also based on the originals by Mr. McNamara.

"My flashlight beam slices through the vapor from my breath, illuminating a polished stick barring my progress. I take a break from my pruning saw, my outstretched arms tingling as the blood re-enters the capillaries. I lay wrapped tightly in a

crisscrossed cocoon of sticks. A pointed stick jabs into my side. The stick was sharpened when a beaver cut an aspen sapling to become part of its lodge. I am wedging my way through the underwater passageway that leads into the heart of this moated fortress. The beaver dam had washed out, leaving the lodge high and dry and offering me this unique opportunity to explore its details from the beaver's perspective.

"I finish cutting through the wooden barricade, one stout shaft extending through the middle of the tunnel from top to bottom, the only stick I have cut so far. Being small has some advantages when one's curiosity motivates such strange pastimes. It is a very tight fit, but I manage to inch my way past the sawn-off obstacle. The beavers could easily have cut it. I am sure it was left there by design, not by accident.

"If the point at which I entered is 12 o'clock, I have inched my body around the perimeter of the circular dome to six o'clock. The barricade was at four o'clock. Another minor entrance to the corridor is located at three o'clock.

"Now I am at the terminus of the corridor. A ramp slopes up at a 45 degree angle to a cozy domed room at the center of the lodge. The vertical distance between the top and the bottom of the ramp represents the fluctuation of the pond level. The beaver dam is designed and maintained to keep the level of the pond so that the tunnel is always under water, but the floor of the nest is safely above even spring flood levels. The slope that I am lying on will accommodate about two feet of fluctuation.

"I pull myself up to the living quarters. It is not luxuriously spacious, but I am finally able to put my arms down to my sides and gain a partial sitting position.

"I am sitting in a bowl-shaped depression about four feet in diameter covered with a warm dry layer of wood fibers and chips. The ceiling is a neatly trimmed vault of sticks that no light or direct wind penetrates, although there seems to be plenty of ventilation. I sit crosslegged in the cozy and comfortable space and ponder the technical details of the lodge.

"The solid core upon which the nest sits is mostly mud to maintain a conductive connection to the 50 F subsoil. The insulating outer shell traps the latent heat of the earth and keeps the underwater passages from freezing. The mud-cemented tangle of sticks effectively bars entry by predators and even stubbornly resists destruction by humans and machinery. "I notice a small twisted tunnel behind me. Later, I verify that it con-

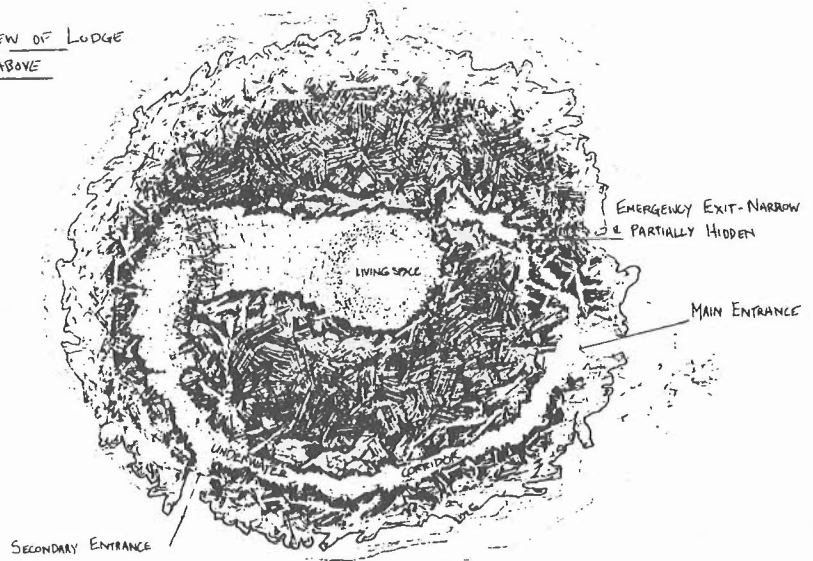
nects to the main corridor at the main entrance. It is an escape route to be used in the unlikely event that a predator makes its way through the underwater passage to the front door of this inner room. The occupants would be surprised to see my dripping head poke out of the water gasping for air. They would simply slip out the back door and be halfway across the pond before I caught my breath.

"The orange tinge of my flashlight tells me that my batteries are getting low and that it is time to slither back to my own reality. I squeeze my way past the side door, past the emergency exit and into the blinding brightness of a sunny day."

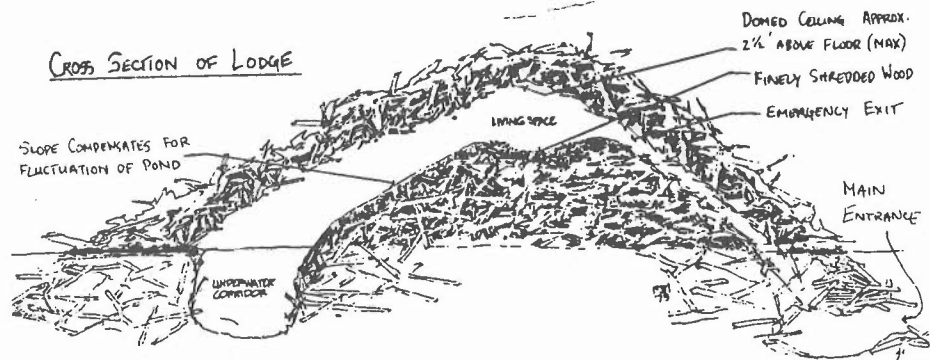
Thus ends Mr. McNamara's remarkable account. Personally, we will never be able to look at a beaver lodge again without trying to imagine what it would be like squeezing along inside with a flashlight and a pruning saw. This is not to say we are about to try it ourselves. However fascinating and ingenious the internal layout of a beaver lodge may be, we are quite content to stay out in the fresh air, thank you very much! We will leave the first-hand investigations to more daring and less claustrophobic souls like Mr. McNamara. Wonder what he will do for an encore?

Reprinted from the 25 August 1988 edition of *The Raven*, courtesy of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

CUTAWAY VIEW OF LODGE
SEEN FROM ABOVE



CROSS SECTION OF LODGE



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) 275-4371, 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.

23 Dec. **BACK-COUNTRY SKIING ON THE FIVE WINDS TRAIL**

Rob Butler, (416) 487-2282, book before 20 December.
Back-country trails in the Gibson River area/Highway 400. Phone organizer for time and details.

16 Jan. **CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING ON THE FIVE WINDS SKI TRAIL**

Karl Schimek, (705) 487-0172, book before 10 January, phone before 9 pm.
These trails are not groomed. For advanced or good intermediate skiers. Location will depend on snow conditions of the day. Limit five skiers.

23 Jan. **WCA OUTINGS WORKSHOP FOR TRIP ORGANIZERS AND PARTICIPANTS**

At last spring's Outings Committee Focus Group, a number of participants told us they felt our club outings guidelines on trip organization and safety should be reviewed and updated. Based on those suggestions, the Outings Committee has asked two very experienced and knowledgeable paddlers, Barry Godden and Michael Kerwin, to have a look at them and indicate areas in which they could be improved and brought into line with what is currently considered best practices in the sport. We invite interested trip organizers and participants to attend this workshop to hear their comments and have an opportunity to provide us with the benefit of their own experience and opinions. The workshop will be from 2:00 to 5:00 pm at a location in Toronto. Please call Barry at (416) 440-4208 before 15 January to register.

23 Jan. **MONO CLIFFS PROVINCIAL PARK CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING**

Dave Sharp, (519) 846-2586, book before 15 January.
Mono Cliffs has a wide selection of fine ski trails in a scenic natural setting north of Orangeville. Suitable for intermediates capable of skiing for a full day. Limit eight participants.

6 Feb. **CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING IN GREY COUNTY**

Dave Sharp, (519) 846-2586, Book before 24 January.
Join us for a day of skiing on some of the excellent ski trails in Grey County. The exact location will be determined later based on snow conditions. Suitable for intermediates. Limit eight participants.



20-21 Feb. **ALGONQUIN SKI TOUR**

Karl Schimek, (705) 487-0172, book before 14 Feb., phone before 9 pm.

An overnight ski trip over lakes and trails in Algonquin Park. Total distance is about 30 km. Participants should be in condition to ski two full days with a backpack on. Limit four fit skiers.

20-21 Feb. **WINTER CAMPING IN ALGONQUIN PARK**

Herb Pohl, (905) 637-7632, book before 4 February.
The focus of this outing will be on short back-country day trips from a base camp. The organizer's heated tent will serve as a kitchen and dining room for communal meals. The latter will be provided and prepared by pre-arranged schedule by the participants, who are also expected to help with the sledging of the organizer's equipment from the parking lot to the camp site. A sleeping bag is absolutely essential; a modicum of fitness is highly useful. Limit four participants.

28 March **LOWER CREDIT RIVER**

Barry Godden, (416) 440-4208, book before 21 March.
The classic spring run from Streetsville to the golf course. This time of year, participants have to be prepared for fast-moving, cold water with the risk of sweepers on the tight turns. Wetsuits or drysuits are required. The Credit can provide some exciting challenges for intermediates. Limit six boats.

11 April **ELORA GORGE**

Dave Sharp, (519) 846-2586, book before 4 April.
The Gorge can be an exciting run at this time of year. Given that the water will still be pretty cold, a good wetsuit or drysuit is a necessity. Suitable for intermediates. Limit eight boats.

17-18 Apr. **SALMON AND MOIRA RIVERS**

Glenn Spence, (613) 475-4176, book before 10 April.
Just north of Belleville these two rivers offer exciting whitewater and fine scenery. The Salmon is the more gentle one but has some ledges to practise your skills. The Moira has larger rapids possibly up to Class 3.

This is one of Southern Ontario's finest spring rivers. Intermediate paddlers welcome. Limit six canoes.

(This is the 22nd year that Glenn has organized this popular outing. Thanks! OC)

18 April **UPPER AND LOWER BLACK RIVERS**

Del Dako and Steve Lukasko, call Del (416) 421-2108, book before 4 April.

From Cooper to Hwy. 7 (south of Queensborough), the Black River offers strenuous paddling through a series of demanding rapids. As much scouting as possible will be done from the boats. A challenging trip for boaters comfortable in Class 3 whitewater. Open canoes must be fully outfitted with floatation. Limit five boats.

24 April **SKOOTAMATTA RIVER**

David Young, (905) 457-7937, call between 6-10 pm, book before 17 April.

This section of the Skoot below Flinton has beautiful scenery, a few portages, and some interesting drops. Helmets and wetsuits or drysuits recommended. Suitable for intermediate paddlers. Limit six boats.

WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND HAVE IT PRESENTED IN THE SPRING ISSUE? Contact the Outings Committee before 20 January!

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.

SOLO CANOE FOR SALE Mad River Guide, Royalex, teal, 14' 6". New in 1996, in excellent shape. Comfortable seat, knee pads, thigh braces, removable yoke, and air bags (2x48 inches) included. Good for river tripping, carries heavy loads and is VERY fast — I can keep up with most tandem boats. Will sell all for \$1,000. Alejandro Marangoni, tel. (519) 824-4120 X4340.

ABS SWIFT MADAWASKA CANOE FOR SALE This canoe is in good shape and is outfitted with knee pads and a Teal Yoke. \$1,200 or best offer. Please call (416) 440-4208.

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@planeteer.com

KUKAGAMI LODGE A little log cabin by the lake ... *cross-country skiing* at your doorstep ... freshly baked, organic whole-grain bread on the table ... a place to relax away from the crowds. Enjoy 28 km cross-country ski trails in the heart of the Northern Ontario forest. Our lodge has no direct road access; you must ski seven kilometres to get here! We bring in your luggage. All packages include three meals daily. Lots of skiing and snowshoeing. Stay in our warm and comfy cabins for \$70 to \$80 per person per night. Five hours north of Toronto. Kukagami Lodge, RR.1, Wahnapiatae, Ontario, P0M 3C0, phone (705) 853-4929 or leave message at (705) 853-4742.

VOYAGEURS SKI CLUB Do you love to ski, or would you love to learn how to ski? Have you always found yourself skiing less because: you don't like to drive, you don't like to organize trips, you can't find enough friends to go with, or you can't find anyone in your ability level to ski with? If so, consider the Voyageurs Ski Club, an adult, downhill, travelling ski and snowboard club, based in Toronto. We offer a great combination of day, weekend, and weeklong trips in a casual social environment to premier ski destinations. We also offer our own Ski-School, designed to improve anyone's skiing abilities, regardless of your current ski level. Our many skiing outings and numerous social events offer the perfect opportunity to ski and to make new friends. For more information, please call (416) 422-3214 and select membership information.

FROM THE CRCA ...

HERITAGE RIVERS CALENDAR Plan your next adventure with the full-color, large-format 1999 Canadian Heritage Rivers Calendar — produced by the Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association in co-operation with the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. Thirteen of Canada's most spectacular Heritage Rivers are featured with a short description of each river. Cost \$12.95 plus \$2.00 p&h and 7% GST + 8% PST.

NEW BOOK: WILDERNESS RIVERS OF MANITOBA Hap Wilson and Stephanie Ackroyd have recently completed a three-year project where they have documented over 19 wilderness rivers in Manitoba. More than just a guidebook, their extensively illustrated book offers a journey through time and place, rich with history, culture, and magic. This is the first Manitoba guide to bring to life earth science features with cultural history and story. It is published and distributed by the CRCA and costs \$24.95 plus \$2.50 p/h and 7% GST.

WATERWALKER FILM FESTIVAL This popular film and video festival — the largest festival of its kind in the world — will take place on 26 and 27 February 1999 in the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa. The material shown is all about various paddling activities including canoe tripping, kayaking, and sea kayaking. Over 100 films from around the world will be entered into this year's Festival to win prizes in 10 categories: Adventure/Action, Environment, Heritage, Instruction/Safety, Just for Fun, Traditional Paddling, Music Video, Amateur Home Video, Nature/Interpretation, People's Choice, Best of the Festival.

The *Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association* can be reached at: CRCA, P.O. Box 398, 446 Main Street W., Merrickville, ON, K0G 1N0; tel. (613) 269-2910; fax (613) 269-2908; e-mail staff@crca.ca website www.crc.ca

Where it is ...



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Wilderness Canoe Association

membership application

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

PRINT CLEARLY! Date: _____

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.