



Caroline Kay drying fish

ALONE THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS **Up the Rat and down the Porcupine**

Kate Krabel

The lines left by an age of laughter and living deepened as the man squinted at the back of an old envelope. Loosely he sketched a map. "So, the Peel River is here and this is the Husky Channel. Here is Caroline Kay's cabin—be sure to visit, as she is lonely after her husband died. And then here is the proper entrance to the Rat. Caroline's fish camp is just inside."

There is a lot of miss-information regarding the Rat River. Originally I had read one should go in June, up a long branch of the Rat which flows into the Peel. Through the help of supportive WCA members I received the better advice of travelling during lower water and using the

Husky Channel entrance. This was confirmed by local knowledge.

So, after my Mackenzie River warm-up trip earlier that summer of 1996 (see the note at the end of this article), I spent a week enjoying the annual Northern Arts Festival in Inuvik, thus setting off no sooner than mid-July. From the Dempster Hwy. ferry landing at Arctic Red River/Tsiigehtchic, I launched my heavily-laden canoe, Skookum, under brilliant sunshine. The flat-calm water mirrored the clear summer-blue sky. I couldn't decide if I was excited or scared about the approaching journey over the mountains. Repeatedly I glanced back at the settlement

as the glassy water whisked me away. Hurrying along to Point Separation, I worried about the water being too high, or would it be too low? And what about the hundreds of grizzlies everyone—I mean everyone—said I would meet?

Suddenly, before I was quite ready, there was the Peel River. The paddle upstream proved remarkably easy. I took one long last look at the mighty Mackenzie, a river whose company I had enjoyed for so long, and felt the pang of leaving a friend. To my surprise and admiration I discovered the map Johnnie Charlie had sketched to be exact in every detail.

I paused by the shore of a cabin to ask two girls if the shortcut was navigable. They blushed and nodded, giggling. So, despite the lack of current, I nosed my way in. I did run aground but a simple push over the sand dropped me into the Husky Channel. I pressed on, tired, with sore hands; but the mountains, now visible ahead, gave me a thrill of excitement. They appeared rounded and low, giving me confidence.

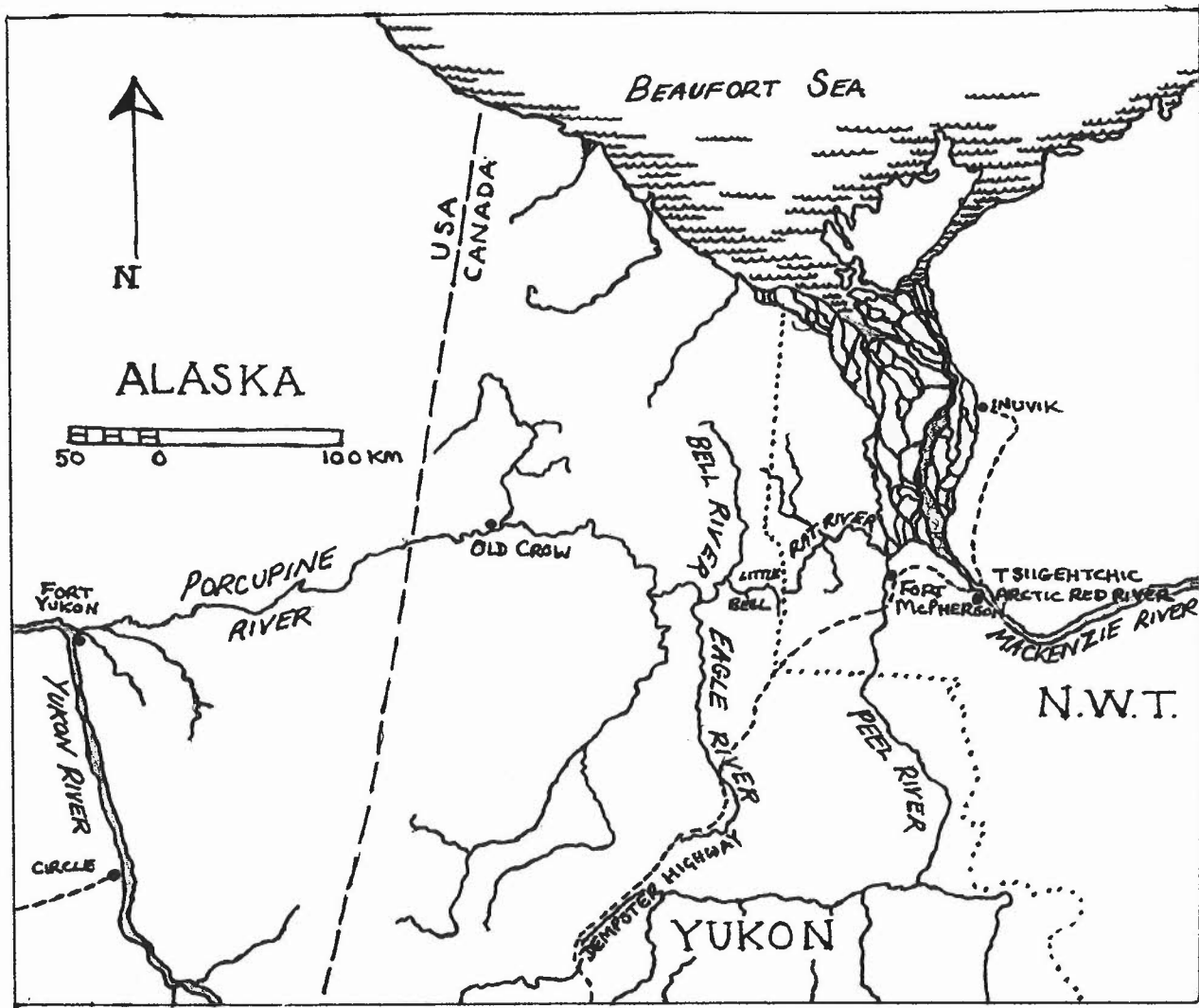
Sweat bathed my body in the hot, humid evening. With relief I rounded the bend to see Caroline Kay's cabin

high atop a steep bank. Children swam alongside motor boats below. Far from lonely, Caroline was surrounded by a happy menagerie of her children, grandchildren, and possibly even great-grandchildren.

The remarkable woman was dressed traditionally in moccasins, leggings, and a long flower-print dress. She had first camped at the spot in 1934 and now she contentedly gutted fish beside her son, amongst her numerous progeny. With exceptional skill she sliced the fish, using flickers of movement wasting no energy. The fish-net lay strung out from the far shore. Once filleted, the fish were draped over a drying-pole before being transferred to the smoke house. I ate with them, impressed by their harmony and respectful behavior. Caroline herself was so friendly and wise, similar to my own Grandmother and equally loveable.

On the river late the next morning after a fortifying bacon-and-egg breakfast, I carried along a parting gift of two dried fish. They adorned my cargo while I savored them over the days to come.

Quickly I reached the Rat River entrance. The beginning was not promising. The river shot out deep and fast,





Rat River — distant mountains

too narrow to harbor slower currents in the curves to aid upstream travel. The burning sun beat down while the high banks sheltered clouds of mosquitoes. An occasional gift of a little breeze wafted down and brought some respite. Eventually mosquitoes attacking my eyes—the only Deet-free patch of my whole body—forced me to don my headnet.

Finally the river widened a touch and the previous toil and annoyances were forgotten. The scenery improved, the curves rewarding me with tantalizing glimpses of approaching mountains. I could now make out colors and small details. Also I could take advantage of the weak inside currents. Moose, grizzly, and lynx tracks marked the beaches. Yes, grizzly already! Probably all the bears for 30 km around were following my progress by the tang of dried fish.

A bull moose and I had a river race; incredibly he won despite swimming against the strongest current while I paddled furiously inside the bends. Ducks floated past with their ducklings, seagulls with their fledglings. I passed a huge brown owl. An immature eagle eyed me from a tree while numerous dragonflies darted about, busy catching dinner.

Caroline's fish camp approached and I decided to camp there myself. As I pulled Skookum up the beach, a wild cry of an eagle split the air. Flying around the eagle's head, a couple of small birds bravely defended their young. Back from the bank, the weathered cabin stood facing a yard on the verge of being swamped by fireweed, the pink flowers frothing over the fence, luminous in the sun.

Fur traders used the Rat River route, then stampedeers in the late 1890s to gain the Klondike gold fields. The cabin is apparently on the site of "Destruction City" where the Klondikers prepared for the haul upriver. Like them, I cut a pole here to punt my craft upriver. Possibly also like them, I spent the rest of my uphill journey trying to keep the pole shod. On my first attempt I nailed an old ham can

over the end, which fitted perfectly until the mud sucked it off the next day. I ran out of nails then. As the wet end of the pole became too worn and rounded to grip the river bottom, I would saw it flat again. I could monitor my progress by the length of the pole as it shortened over time.

The next day the river widened into a charming, wooded valley, the water tumbled and danced, sparkling in the sun. The only paddling I could do was during hectic dashes across the bends to catch eddies. Otherwise I slowly dragged, lined, and poled my way up against wind and current. My sandals kept being pulled off in the mud. Every time I jumped into the canoe, it would fly mud, and water too.

I became frustrated and ate during a spell of the lunchtime blues. However, progress was steady and as the day wore on I relaxed and began to enjoy myself. With a last spurt of energy, I set up camp beating a thunderstorm by seconds. Of course the changing wind blew smoke straight under my tarp, but the peaceful view downriver was more than enough to satisfy my tired soul.

After a long rest I started out late the following morning. By midday the water level had leapt and the going began to get tough. All the sandbars were flooded, forcing



Rat River — the wooded valley

me to take side channels. Water, too deep to pole in, raced along right up amongst thick tangles of willows which hung down from the banks. Squadrons of mosquitoes took full advantage of the situation and feasted liberally on my blood. With luck on my side, I managed to haul myself up, hand over hand, using fistfuls of willow branches.

Finally I reached better ground. The Rat wove on, butting against a cliff. While being aesthetically pleasing, it also meant steep climbs in the river. I had trouble rounding one particularly huge boulder, which jutted out into the current. I should have portaged but took a risk that paid off. Instantly I cursed myself for stupidity. Acutely aware that I was alone, I took each step with care. If I lost grip of the canoe, or it tipped and disappeared in the strong current, there was no one to bring it back. Risks were not an option.

I pitched my fourth campsite on the only available sandbar I could find. Less than a metre higher than the river, I was nervous of being flooded. Placing stick markers at the water level, I checked them with neurotic frequency. The sky clouded over. After a prayer to the rain and river gods, I suffered a restless night's sleep.

I decided on a half-day lay-over to let the water subside, which it did dramatically. Once the gravel bars had reappeared, I set off refreshed and full of energy, eager for the next section. As I climbed, the slippery rocks in the riffles became larger with deeper water in-between, making them hard to negotiate.

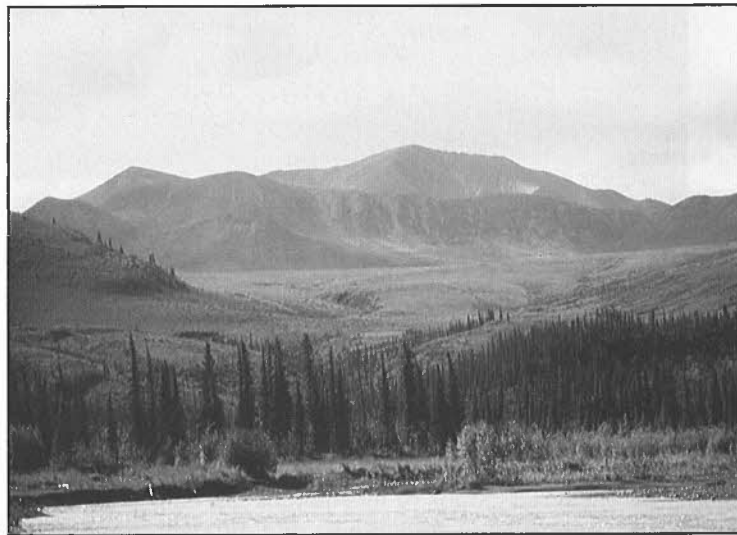
Lining was impossible, so I had to wade carefully up the sharp inclines. I arrived at the foot of one particularly steep riffle, rising about 1.5 metres over 10 metres. Decent-sized standing waves rolled in midstream. For the second and last time I acted rashly. Too lazy to portage, I began pulling the heavy canoe up the edge of the riffle. Halfway up I leaned into the current—and slipped. By pure luck I landed safely with my feet bracing my body against the flow. I remained locked to my canoe with a death grip.

I glanced back. With horror I saw Skookum being sucked into the nearest standing wave. The canoe rocked and the gunnel dipped, clearing the water only just. With a surge of adrenaline I rose to me feet and jerked



Rat River — my fourth campsite

Skookum clear. Straining against the current I splashed safely to the head of the riffle. A hundred metres further on at the next riffle I stopped, portaged, and had a bite to eat while calming my trembling nerves. I had learnt my lesson.



Rat River — thrilling view of mountains

The valley captivated me. Round, bald hills climbed from the river. Ahead lay the thrilling view of close mountains soaring up to the clearing sky. I felt happy. Really happy—perhaps the happiest I'd ever been. I was at home here amongst nature. Exalted by the space, in the peace of solitude. The unknown route through the mountains excited me, I imagined myself an explorer.

But I was not. I tried hard to ignore the fact that I followed another canoe group by about a week. This was a challenge, as I frequently came across footprints and rocks with telltale scrapings of canoe paint. I swore on my next trip I would choose a more remote location.

The evening was spent trying to mend my hard-soled wetsuit booties with a cobweb of sewing and string. I'd given up on the sandals a long time ago. In hindsight one needs booties against the icy water and tough boots over the top. From now on I spent every evening attempting repairs on the booties, only for them to disintegrate within hours of use.

A storm passed overhead during the night and the day broke cold and damp, blanketed by clouds. The river now flowed through a low canyon with cliffs sheer down into the water. I was compelled to wade thigh-deep for an interminable period. My progress became slower and slower. There were few gravel bars or camp spots and I snatched lunch dispirited.

Lining up the inside of a small bend I suddenly noticed how turgid the water had become. As I paused to watch, some sticks flashed by, then a green branch. Alarm bells rang in my head and I immediately hunted for a safe campsite. The beach I stood on was too low so I climbed up the vertical two-metres bank. A perfect clearing waited



Rat Creek — trees begin to give way to tall grass

for me, covered in a soft mattress of moss and blueberries. Imprinted in the sand below were the tracks of a wolf and those of a grizzly with her cub. I couldn't help thinking that camping in a berry-patch wasn't ideal, but there was no choice.

Wearily I hauled all my gear up the bank. Finally only the canoe remained. I debated leaving it tied up high on the beach, but in the end hoisted it up too, wrapping the bow-line around a tree for leverage.

Depressed, I cooked dinner sitting on damp moss, the whine of excited mosquitoes almost drowning out the patter of rain against the tarp. I was exhausted, wet, and cold. My ripped booties lay waiting to be repaired. How long would it be until the valley opened up again? The view over the river was good. I watched the beach below slowly disappear under the roaring torrent of water.

Next morning I saw with incredulity that the river now thundered past right under my bank. Thank God I'd mustered the energy to haul up Skookum. I braved the black-flies and drizzle to pick blueberries before retreating once more to my tent where I spent the day sleeping and playing numerous cribb games, all of which I won.

Ah! Day 8 was filled with heartening sunshine, and the water dropped a little. Restless and still tired, I set off. By noon I felt giddy and nauseous with diarrhoea.

I struggled out of the canyon and made an early camp on a particularly delightful part of the river. The Rat was smaller here and wide open. A breeze blew away most of the bugs. The hot sun quickly dried my freshly washed body and clothes. I spent a wonderful day just sitting, contentedly seeping in the beauty of my surroundings. The

mountains were clearly visible, closer than ever. On a distant slope a solitary bull caribou high-stepped over the tundra.

My enthusiasm and energy returned. Awaking in the morning to only slight giddiness, I resumed my journey into the heart of the mountains. On every curve the view appeared more spectacular than the last. The rows of rounded mountains, seemingly impenetrable, were cloaked in a fresh spring green. Occasional clumps of dark spruce streaked their slopes.

Down the valley dwarf spruce, willows, and aspen grew. There were very few birds but I spotted some caribou. In the afternoon the wind began to howl in from the west, escorting black clouds, chasing away the deep-blue sky.

The day was spent in intense happiness.

After an uneasy night being buffeted by high winds, the morning brought calm sunshine. My joy was marred only by the annoying discovery that my period had started unexpectedly, two weeks early. The goal for the day was the forks where Rat Creek flows in from river-right. Having heard a horror story of a young man who missed this critical left turn and continued up the main river, I carefully monitored my progress on the map.

Abruptly the river became diamond clear. An amazing phenomenon. With the water practically invisible, Skookum seemed to float on air. Depth perception was next to impossible. My wetsuit pants made life comfortable despite the temperature drop to glacial, like wading in liquid ice.

By keeping a sharp look-out, I found the entrance to Rat Creek obvious—and daunting. In every account I had read at least one canoe in the party had dumped right here and I could see why. The creek gushed out deep and swift over a low ledge. The sides were formed by smooth, solid rock rising sheer up to a jungle of willows.



Rat Creek — campsite on a decent-sized grassy patch

I could see no way around (later I learnt that there is a portage starting further downriver). In the canoe I edged forward, pulling myself in rock by rock. I saw no alternative but to tackle the ledge head-on. Sliding gingerly over the gunnel into the fast water, my feet managed to find a tenuous purchase on the slippery wall. Standing waist-deep, I began to inch the canoe hand over hand up the ramp of water. As I watched Skookum, I realized why this was such an accident-prone section. In the middle of the ledge stood a large boulder whose eddy sucked the unwary under the mini waterfall. By keeping a firm grip on my canoe I angled her stern well to the side, preventing the same fate befalling us.

I flopped, squelching, into the canoe and a brisk paddle freed me from the ledge. Beneath flowed the miniature river, a pleasant soft dark green. Arching from the banks a thick lattice of willows hung overhead, occasionally meeting to form secret tunnels.

Then the trees began to give way to tall grass, letting the sun shine down unhindered. The current slackened, freeing me to paddle properly for the first time since Destruction City. Worn out, I searched for a campsite but the high banks gave no relief. Portaging over a logjam, I kept on.

There it was! At last, a decent-sized, flat grassy patch in the bend. After a satisfying dinner, I climbed the bank. And gasped at the stunning view. Having been held cap-

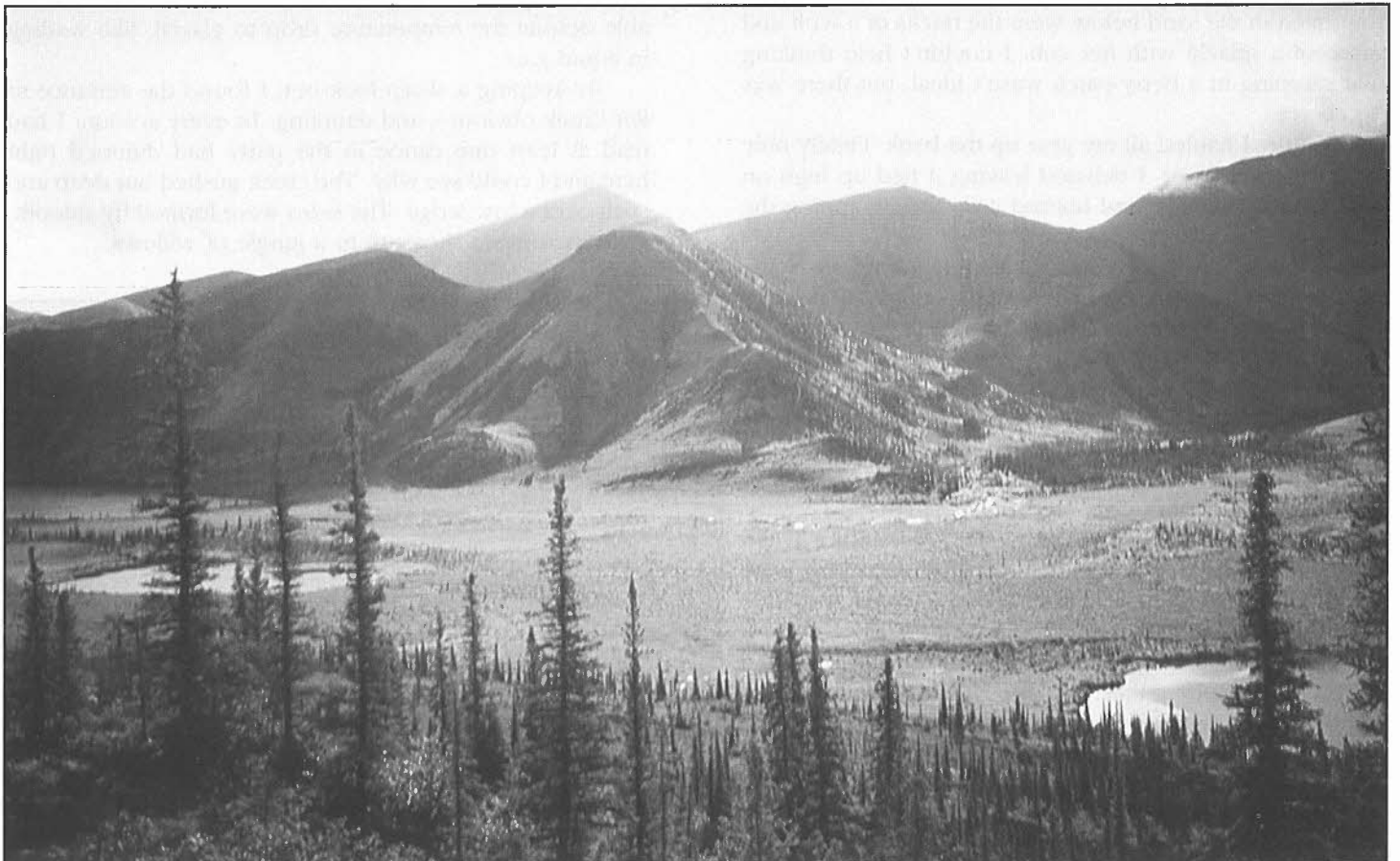
tive by the creek for so long, I'd had little idea of what lay beyond.

The expansive valley swept up to majestic sunbathed mountains. The creek cut deep into the valley floor, only the tree tops were visible above the tundra, snaking across the plain while the water lay hidden below. A gentle wind lifted my hair. My body tingled. I felt vividly alive. An exquisite feeling of wild remoteness filled my soul.

Overnight rain raised the water level and paddling the next day proved fatiguing. After negotiating some fallen trees I glided into a small lake. Twin Lakes, I guessed, although they bore little resemblance to the map. Paddling up the rivulet on the far side, it narrowed until I was pulling myself up by the undergrowth on either side. A series of beaver dams slowed me down, but soon I found myself at MacDougal Pass, floating in the beaver pond called Ogilvie Lake.

I mistakenly thought I now had to portage all the way to Summit Lake. Afterwards I realized I could have canoed closer by pushing further along small streams. I followed a game trail through the wet tundra until it veered off. Cross-country, the footing was bad over big hummocks and I could only carry light loads, meaning more trips. The canoe I dragged across the spongy ground.

Trudging up to the crest of the high bank that overlooked Summit Lake, I pulled up and stared. Wow! The long valley stretched up to an amphitheater of rugged



Summit Lake — looking back to Ogilvie Lake



Summit Lake — looking at the writhing Little Bell River

mountains, the lake their stage. Looking for a way down to the lake shore, I was startled to hear guitars and singing. I was not alone.

I unloaded where I stood and set up camp on the windswept plain. The site was totally exposed but the unobstructed views breathtaking. I also needed time to come to terms with my crushing disappointment at encountering people. I had sweated and toiled for eleven days to find this remote corner; only to discover it wasn't remote at all. Not any more. If only I had taken more rest days, "They" might have gone before I arrived.

Drizzle turned to rain. Two of Them walked by, shocked to find me. They invited me down to their camp in the trees. I accepted; a good warm fire on a rainy day has a definite appeal. So we talked, drank hot chocolate, and enjoyed guitar music.

The cloud cover began to tear and sunlight struck down through the ragged holes, spot-lighting saw-toothed peaks and ridges. Strange shadows raced up the valley and across the lake water. Clouds clung dramatically to the jagged pinnacles.

After a cold night I woke to see the highest crests sprinkled with fresh snow. A fantastic day awaited me with clear blue skies and sparkling sun. I hiked halfway up a nearby mountain while spitting out blackflies. I met

a second canoe party up there—two Austrians who had flown in. We watched the Canadian guitarists crossing the lake and portaging to the writhing Little Bell River and beyond. Far below the canoes were minute specks in the vastness of nature.

I received a supper invitation and, never one to turn down food, I again accepted. Later I paddled over to share their delicious dinner of curried rice, bacon, and wild mushrooms. Both trippers were good company and we spent a pleasant evening storytelling, huddled under their tarp while the rain did its best to extinguish the fire.

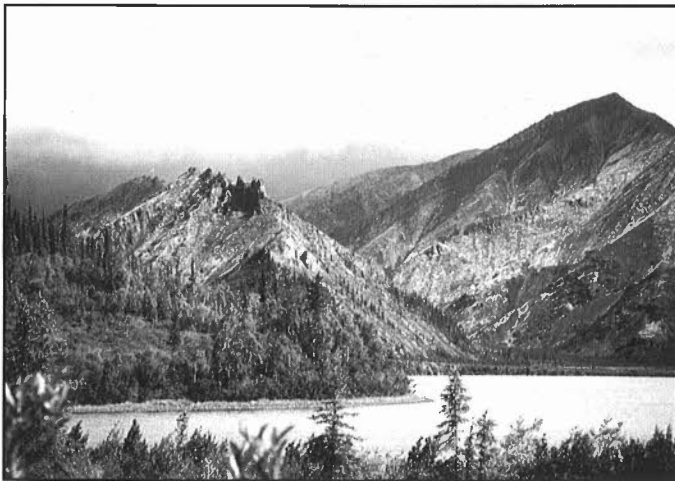
I spent a day of lazing and reading, listening to the loons, watching a moose on the far shore, and sunbathing between clouds. Early on Day 14 I launched off once more, gently drifting across the lake. Lingered, gazing at everything, savoring, recording it all to memory. The Rat was a wild and exhilarating river, Summit Lake the climax. Sure, there had been some tough moments, but I had found the journey extremely rewarding. I knew that now, as I headed downstream to Alaska, the best was over.

An easy 500-metre portage brought me to the Little Bell where I lowered my gear down the high vertical slope. Before sliding down myself, I nibbled a snack on the rim so as to look back at the pass one last time.

The small river flowed with deceptive speed, winding beneath the mountains. A ridge rose up from the river, broken pillars against the sky, its black walls decorated with fluorescent green lichen. The water was low and for some riffles I had to jump out and walk.

I also encountered some petite but bona fide rapids. One set turned out to be faster than expected and I found myself in midstream comically jammed into a clump of willows. Rocking the canoe freed me and I accelerated on to the next bend. Another rapid looked fun with some standing waves but no obstructions—or so I thought until BANG! I slammed into a massive hidden boulder which luckily I bounced off unscathed.

Then I swung into the larger Bell River, more peaceful with no unpleasant surprises. The softly wooded, deep-green hills were reflected in the glassy emerald water. The mountains began to diminish astern. The only campsite available was on a small grassy patch. The grass had been flattened by a large animal—moose or grizzly? Despite fish rising all around, I didn't even get a nibble on my hook. A large beaver watched me with friendly interest.



Summit Lake — view from campsite

Early the next morning a moose walked past on the beach, waking me to another balmy, sunbathed day. There wasn't a breath of wind, the wilderness was hushed and tranquil, crisp too at -40C. I crouched in the tent throwing gear out into the tall grass. Then I heard a loud snort of fear and, from the far bank, a mad scrambling as a heavy animal fled up the scree slope. I peaked out to see my first grizzly of the trip. The bear wore a striking coat of yellow smearing down to his dark-brown feet.

With the day so still, I paddled gently, hoping to see more wildlife. With the trees came more birds: ducks, eagles, and hawks. Lots of fresh grizzly tracks dotted the beaches.

I came across another solo canoeist who beckoned me over. We chatted a bit but, wanting to be alone, I soon launched off again ever onwards. The mountains were long gone and now even the hills were flattening. Due to

the infrequency of camp spots, I jumped at the chance of a good one when I saw it, despite it being early. The aspen and willow leaves were tinged with fall colors. Some were performing their last ballet, fluttering, twirling, resting, dying.

Morning drizzle kept me in bed. I worried about the other canoeist. He had camped only 15 centimetres above the water level with all his food stashed in his untied canoe some twenty metres off. I should have tried to say something. Maybe the Austrians would paddle by and tell him? Later I learnt that they did indeed stop but also declined to say anything. I never did hear if he got out safely.

The drizzle lightened so, what the hell, I headed off anyway. Actually I quite like canoeing in mizzle: the coolness on one's face, the way sounds are muted. I power-paddled to the Eagle River junction, the current slow and the scenery uninspiring. A previous canoeist whom I had met at Arctic Red River and I had arranged to make some kind of tepee with a message at this junction. He (who, as yet unknown to us, was to become my husband) had descended the Eagle River from the Dempster Highway.

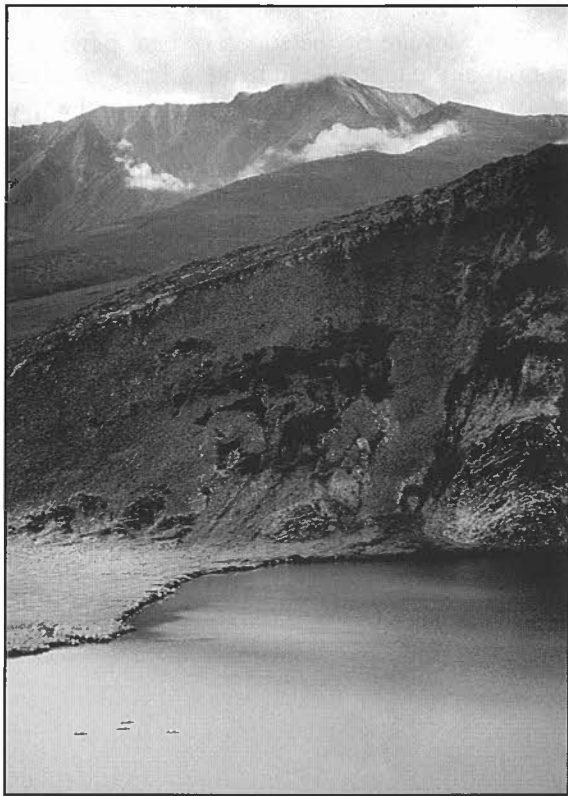
I camped high up on top of the mud bank next to his branch tripod. Sheltered by my tent from the now heavy rain, I savored my first letter for almost a month. In searching the mud for tracks I saw those of many caribou, a wolf, but no bear.

My tent was slowly falling apart. The first thing to go was the zipper which became irreparable, then the drip from the roof began. Now finally the floor leaked so badly that I crouched on my Thermarest mattress as if on an island. Outside the cold wind howled and further battered the poor tent.

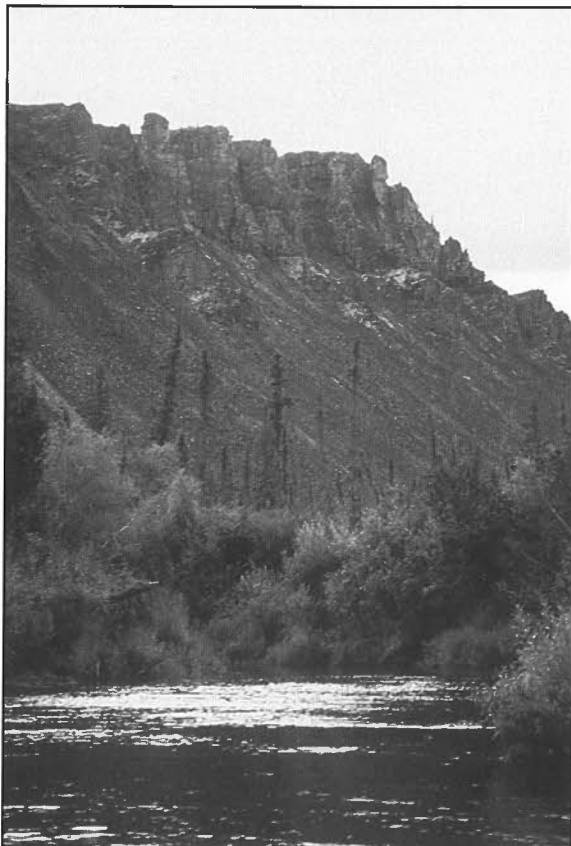
With delight I monitored the steady rise in water level. An astonishing vertical 1.2 m overnight. The Bell became so swollen that it actually began to flow up the Eagle River. The morning was cold and cloudy but—no rain. I rode the flood, flashing by a cow moose, then later a bull to within a few metres.



Summit Lake — me and my self-timer



Summit Lake — canoes are minute specks



Little Bell River — broken pillars against the sky

I was spat out into the much broader Porcupine River. Only 630 km now lay between me and my take-out at Fort Yukon. I bowled past an extensive camp with a generator—goodbye wilderness. Aspen dusted the hills in gold. Some trees drooped low as if under the weight of their jewelry. Five caribou forded the river behind me and geese flew overhead.

The following day I passed by increasing numbers of cabins and caches, both new and old, all tagged by tell-tale orange tarps. I rafted up to a homemade scow filled with locals from the settlement of Old Crow, now only just downstream. They were so friendly and with great thoughtfulness gave me some hot, sweet coffee and an orange. The gift was exactly what I needed: coffee to keep me going and a fresh orange, exotic after 20 days.

During the last morning before Old Crow I felt irritable and depressed. It was too soon. Navigating in mist didn't make life any easier. From a couple of bends away I saw a plane land and could hear ATV traffic polluting the air. Noise.



Bell River — wooded hills reflected in the water

Then the town itself swept into view, perched atop a high gravel bank. I pulled in amongst the dozens of boats that lined the water's edge and pitched my tent across from an old church. The people of Old Crow were the most welcoming I'd come across in two summers of canoeing. I spent several days enjoying their wonderful hospitality, eating moose-nose soup, looking askance at lethal-looking hooch (it was a dry town). I showered and did laundry in a machine that used river water and therefore my clothes (with greatly improved odor) came out appearing dirtier than when they went in. All that time my tent and belongings remained unmolested, even when I took to sleeping indoors.

A local sketched me a map of the Porcupine and when the Austrians arrived I photocopied their map as well. I couldn't stay forever. I dragged myself back onto the river for the last leg down to Fort Yukon, Alaska.

It drizzled nearly every day with varying wind chill. On that first day the attractive multi-colored cliffs, 50

metres high, of the Upper Ramparts lifted my mood despite the oppressive cloud. I passed burnt hills to the north, with fading fireweed and amber brush daubed like paint on a black canvas. Amongst the aspen, some scattered groves glowed with full crimson splendor. I camped early, my tent damp and draughty now that only two safety-pins held the door shut.

more frequent—and my sleep less restful. One morning I was jerked awake by the sound of bear paws on gravel. I leapt out of the tent, rifle in hand. A huge grizzly sow with her two cubs snorted and jogged up the bank. She paused, standing erect. Her massive square head held high to sniff and watch. Then, regaining all fours, she lumbered away.



Porcupine River — camping at Red Gate

On the second day I entered the United States of America—equally dark clouds and hard rain. Before I had a chance to land, I shot past New Ramparts House, an old border post that had been abandoned during a smallpox epidemic. Looking back I could see an imposing two-storied house still standing proudly amongst red and gold grasses.

The nights grew colder and ice lined the bottom of Skookum. I stopped at a cabin for coffee and a chat. The two sons, happy and excited about my visit, arrived from exploring in the bush. The eldest, about 13, wore a holster loaded with a heavy-duty pistol for bear protection. Yup, this was the States alright.

The Porcupine slowed, meandering widely. The bugs became bad. The winds in the flats whipped the waves into whitecaps and I began to struggle. But when the sun peaked out, life was good. Bear encounters also became

Another morning a clatter of hooves woke me, and through the tent flap I watched a moose and her calf walk right into camp. An exceptional sight, although I was relieved when they wandered off again with nothing damaged.

The sun shone properly at long last and the wind died down to chilling little gusts. Water froze on clean dishes before I had a chance to dry them. I canoed on past wide gravel bars, graveyards of old washed-up trees, greying like ancient dinosaur bones. Numerous flocks of geese circled. A bald eagle stood, ripping the flesh off some animal while two ravens politely waited for the scraps.

Smoke! I saw the unmistakable sign of an infant forest fire. I beached and scrambled up into the trees. A campfire at the end of a trapline was out of control. The bush crackled and the fire grew before my eyes. In a feeble effort I tried to dig a trench around the area with my

trowel, but the handle broke. I tried to ferry water up in my tiny pail, but my pathetic attempts were useless. The fire had a deep hold in some fallen logs which burned too hot to even approach. I reported it later at Ft. Yukon, but being wild land no-one was interested, the only human to suffer would be the trapper.

I pitched camp on a gravel bar marked by yet more grizzly tracks. Over dinner I watched a sow with her three cubs gamboling along the opposite shore. Suddenly an extraordinary yowling pierced the air. I saw something swimming across directly to the camp. I yelled and waved my arms. Totally ignoring me, it walked up the beach barely eight metres away. Even then it took me a moment to realize it was a lynx, a weird shape with his fur matted down. He trotted past as if I didn't exist.

That night I went virtually sleepless. A bear persisted in grazing in the bushes right behind my tent. At first I crouched outside in the dark, gun ready, and shouted. The bear snorted in alarm or aggression and continued munching. Eventually I grew tired and bedded down with ears peaked.

By 5:30 he had gone but I gave up all pretense of sleep and ate breakfast beneath a fantastic dawn. The wind-driven clouds raced across a wild, flame-red sky. Skookum and I sailed on a tail wind most of the day. We drifted under a bank where two grizzly yearlings crouched on the lip, as startled to see me as I them. Ravens played

in the high wind, floating, gliding, dancing.

There was the mighty Yukon River! An easy line up the shore past a fish wheel and that was it, Fort Yukon. Someone in Old Crow had told me of a person safe to camp with, as the town was notorious for its crime.

And so, Day 28, the end. And yet it had ended already; at Old Crow, or was it Summit Lake? I hitched a ride with a man and his river boat up to Circle City and its road during a night so black that I couldn't even see the shore line. Leaving my gear in Circle, I hitchhiked back to the Liard Highway and my patient van.

In two summers of canoeing, Skookum had brought me about 4,200 km from Northern Manitoba to Alaska (although we skipped the rapids at Ft. Smith and also Great Slave Lake). And now the journey was over.

But already further remote rivers were weaving into my dreams.

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Note from the editor: This is the third and final article by Kate Allcard/Krabel about her impressive three-part solo canoe trip across northwestern North America, which took place during the summers of 1995 and 1996. Her earlier adventures are described in: "Westward Bound" by Kate Allcard, *Nastawgan* (summer 1996) and "The Mackenzie, River of Life" by Kate Krabel; *Nastawgan* (spring 2002).



Porcupine River — just above Old Crow



CPM # 40015547
ISSN 1828-1327

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.

NEWS BRIEFS

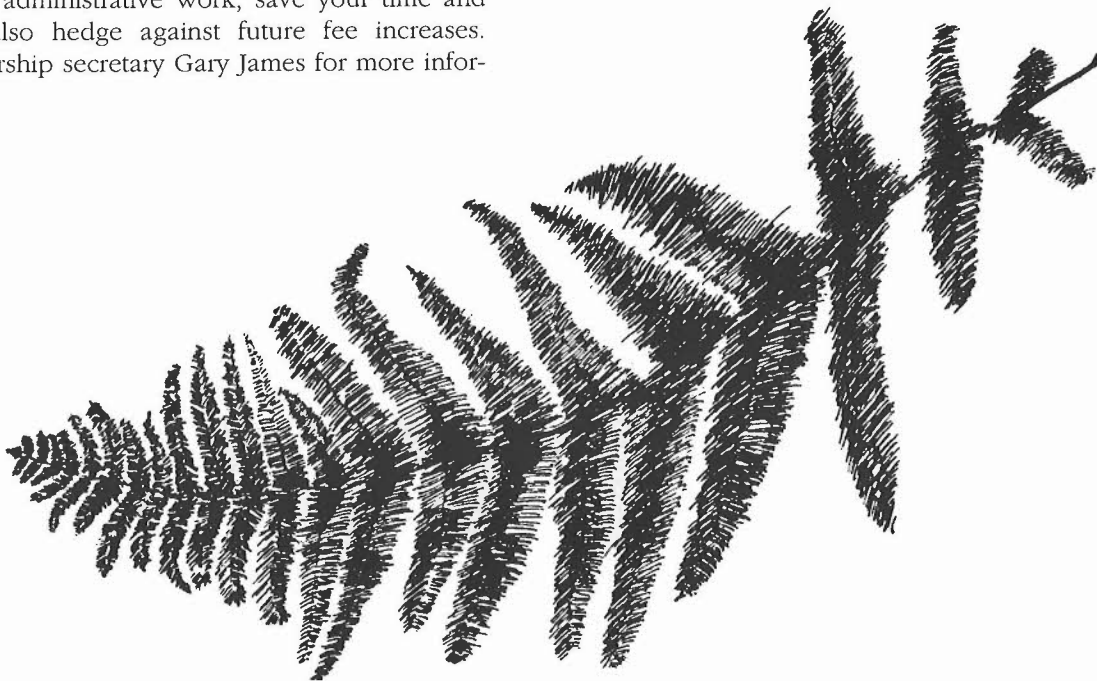
NASTAWGAN MATERIAL AND DEADLINE Articles, trip reports, book reviews, photographs, sketches, technical tips, or anything else that you think might be of interest to other readers, are needed for future issues. Try to submit your contributions by e-mail, on computer disk (WordPerfect or MS Word or text files preferred, but any format is welcome), or in typewritten form, but legibly handwritten material will also be accepted. 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:	Autumn 2003	deadline date:	3 August
	Winter 2003		2 November

MULTIPLE-YEAR WCA MEMBERSHIPS are now possible, albeit with no discount. This will help alleviate much of the (volunteer) administrative work, save your time and postage, and also hedge against future fee increases. Contact membership secretary Gary James for more information.

SEE YOU AT THE FALL MEETING

The WCA Fall Meeting is a great time to get together with fellow WCA members to share stories of summer paddling adventures and to wind down the paddling season. This year the Fall Meeting will take place on 26–28 September at the Minden Wild Water Preserve. A registration form with more information is printed on the inside back of the cover wrapped around this issue of *Nastawgan*.



ROB BUTLER RETIRES – AGAIN

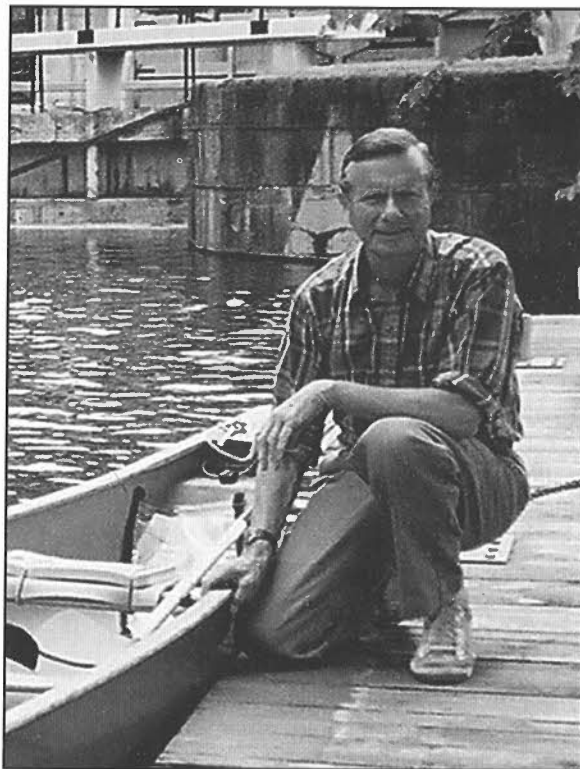
Eleven years ago, Rob Butler decided it was time to retire. The job of chief financial officer of De Havilland left him little spare time to do the many activities he loved to pursue. As the years went by, the private persona of Rob—the cyclist, hiker, paddler, X-country skier—felt evermore constrained. Always the dreamer, he thought giving up his day job was going to be the blow which would unravel the Gordian knot of conflicting demands. It seemed to work for a while as he plunged into a series of adventures in various parts of the globe.

What tripped him up in the end was his own genetic makeup. The genes which produced five little Butlers began to assert themselves in the second generation. As the head of the clan, grandpa Butler was intensely interested in participating in the proper education of his young charges and bit by bit his calendar became as crowded as ever. With eleven grandchildren to date, and the promise of a further increase in numbers, Rob realized he had to cut back on other commitments.

And so, after 23 years of service, during which time he studiously avoided the limelight, the Treasurer of the WCA has stepped down. All the old-timers in the Association are well aware that the contribution of this man to the operation of the enterprise went far beyond that of Treasurer and was instrumental in the growth and vitality of this organization.

For all this ... thanks, Rob!

Herb Pohl



NEW TREASURER

Now that Rob Butler has gone to pasture, we welcome Howard Sayles as the new Treasurer to administer the WCA finances. Howard has been our Auditor for many years and knows all the tricks of the trade, so we are confident he will continue the tradition of excellence established by his predecessor.



NEW WCA ADDRESSES

Thanks to the praiseworthy activities of our very own Gary James, the WCA now has two new addresses:

mailing:

Wilderness Canoe Association
 P.O.Box 91068
 2901 Bayview Ave.
 Toronto, Ontario
 Canada, M2K 2Y6

membership e-mail: wca@sympatico.ca

Please discontinue: wca@email.com and
wca@canoemail.com.

THIS IS A PORTAGE?

Viki Mather

It takes at least 20 years to forget how bad a portage can be. Well, I didn't actually forget—muskeg never does leaves one's memory after carrying a 60-pound pack through it. Allan's family first ventured this way some 40 years ago. Allan took me through 20 years later, on one of our first canoe trips together.

His brothers found the portage in the early '60s. Their destination was Doon Lake (or was it Doom Lake?). They came back from that early canoe trip raving about the beauty—the high cliffs, the sandy beaches, the clear blue water, the leaping fish, and the soaring eagles. Truly a place worth visiting.

Allan told me stories of his family following the boys' advice, and the film that was made to mark the event. His dad ran the Super 8 camera while his mum wallowed through the bog, huge canoe pack on her back. He panned across the landscape, and when he panned back, she wasn't there. She had disappeared into the unknown.... Actually, she'd fallen over, and couldn't get back up, much like a turtle on its back.

When Allan suggested we go there in 1982, I said sure! Young love follows anywhere... I remember the muskeg, lots of it. I remember wandering, what seemed to be aimlessly, through the Labrador tea and laurels. Eventually we came to the forest, but I don't remember going across an actual trail. Allan has always been very good at bushwhacking. After what seemed a very long time, he came back to find me and announce he had located the tiny pond we were looking for, mid-point along the portage. A five-minute paddle brought us to the far shore, and a real path that led to the next lake.

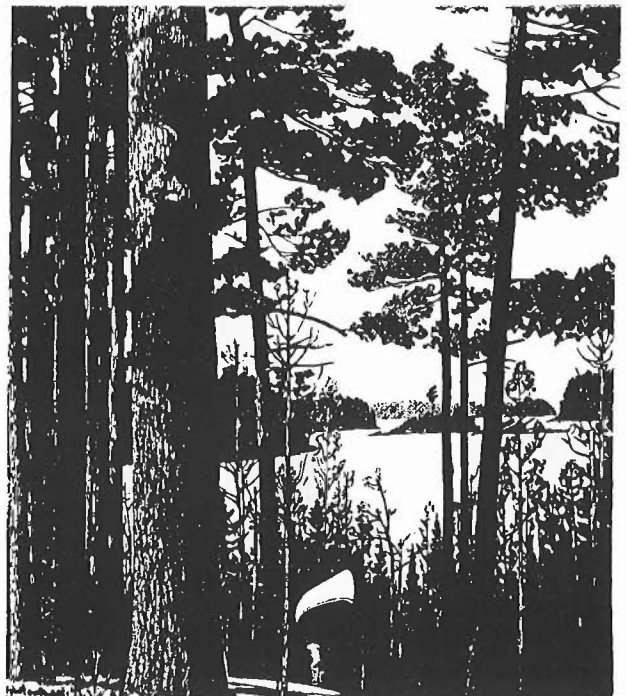
Now, in the summer of 2002, I decided to take a little solo canoe trip. On the third day I would make my way through the Doon portages. I travelled in the opposite direction from our trip 20 years ago, thinking it might be easier to find my way if I approached it from the side with the trail. The trail was good, if a bit wet, from the west to the same little pond. I just had to paddle across, find the forest trail, then follow the muskeg through to Doon. The little pond is not deep, but with an active beaver in residence, I was able to paddle within a hundred yards of the forest edge. I dragged the canoe through mucky stuff to the trees. Ah! A trail at last!

It wasn't much of a trail, to my great disappointment. Lots of sphagnum underfoot. But at least I was in the shade for a while. The Labrador tea poked fragrantly out between the cedars and the spruce. This was nice while it lasted. But it didn't last long enough. The last 500 yards was all bog. The water was higher than it had been 20 years ago, and I discovered that my memory of muskeg had indeed lapsed. I remembered the idea, but not the difficulty of trudging though. And this time I didn't have Allan to carry the canoe.

The flies were amazing—serval hundred swarmed my upper body. They liked that spot just behind the back of my shoulder that I could barely reach. My thin cotton shirt was soaked with sweat. The walking started out fairly well, I only sank to my knees every tenth step, or so. After a while, I decided it might be easier to throw my packs into the canoe and drag it. After all, this was only sphagnum and shrubs. So what if this was the maiden trip for the Kevlar canoe? This worked for a hundred yards or so, until I hit the floating bog. Then I decided to carry the packs, and come back for the canoe, looking for a better path.

I made the return trip by way of a peninsula, a little out of the way. Oh what a beautiful forest! But no place to try to carry a canoe. I waded back into the bog and began to drag the canoe across the floating moss. It was incredibly hard. I learned how much endurance I have. When I thought I couldn't go any further, I stopped to take a breath—and filled my lungs with the sweet smell of Labrador tea and laurel. I paused for a while beside a spindly tamarack to admire its beauty—and its endurance. Tiny buds of rose-colored cones rose sparsely along the twigs.

At the lake an hour later, it felt wonderful to be afloat again. Even though I knew from experience that the cliffs weren't high, there were no sandy beaches or clear water, I had arrived. I paddled the entire 2.5-mile circumference of the lake. I then took the final portage of the trip, across solid land, into a clear, beautiful lake... and set up camp for the night.



Cloudy Blue Adagio

The land is a quiet of cloudy blue
 hushed by the kiss of moonlight.
 Lovelorn cicadas pine in adagio,
 chilled by the turning of earth.
 The little brook giggles a soft hello,
 then wanders away with a trickle.
 No wind dares to rattle the leaves;
 it is a perfect night for listening.

It is a perfect night for seeing
 beyond the boundaries of me.
 I see line, not form.
 I see contrast, not conformity.
 I see whirls and whorls, not points,
 I see infinite imaginings of pale lace
 in silent silhouette with the night sky.
 I walk in wonder in a world of shadows.

Mike Van Winkle



FIRE

End of a cold day. Cold rain, cold wind, and now cold ground as we are setting up camp for the night. Told myself to just grin and bear it. That this was just a tough day. Another fee that you have to pay if you want to travel in the wilderness.

Still feeling chilly, even though the fire is going now and it is throwing out lots of light and heat. Hunkered down close to it for a few minutes to let the heat soak in. The thought came to mind that dealing with cold is not helped by having thin blood. That comes as a direct result of living in a climate too far south.

Had one other thought. One that I didn't want to talk about with the buddies. Maybe I'm getting too old. Have read that elderly people are more affected by the cold. They often have circulation problems and thus feel colder in their extremities.

Looked at the buddies. Decided to not mention the cold. They may get the idea that I'm not able to deal with the physical requirements of wilderness travel any more. Don't want to plant that thought in their minds. Not being allowed to go on wilderness canoe trips is worse than not wanting to go on wilderness canoe trips.

Later, after supper. Sitting around the fire. The buddies have already turned in for the night. I told them that I was

going to stay up for a while to look at the fire and to write in the journal. The fire has warmed up the ground around it enough so that if you wanted to, you could even lie down and stretch out along one side of it. A union of the two forces that have had the greatest impact on the wilderness—fire and man.

As I sat there watching the fire, I thought that I could understand the great bond that exists between man and fire. We have a long history together. It goes all the way back to the first time when another traveller stumbled upon a lightning-struck tree and looked at the embers. How good it felt. How warm. How much better food tasted when cooked on it. How it provided light in the dark night. How other predators were afraid of it.

The big discovery. Maybe the biggest of all. Bigger even than the discovery of the toolmaker that lies hidden deep in all of us. Warmth, light, and safety. All in one discovery.

Maybe that's one of the reasons why we travel in the wilderness. We are looking for the next discovery.

When I find it, I hope it's just as good.

Greg Went

NINE ON THE FRENCH

text: Barb Maughan

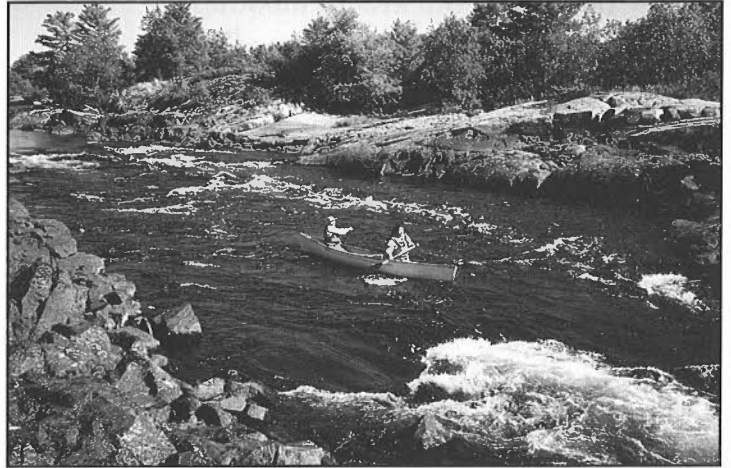
photos: Barb Maughan, Jim Couch, Derek Lancaster

It was over lunch at the 2001 WCA Symposium that a group of WCA members started planning a fall canoe trip. Memories of a previous trip on the historical French River lured us to contemplate a more extended trip experience in this area. Initially, Anne Bradley did the majority of the trip planning and organizing. However, in August Anne had the opportunity to work for a construction company in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, so we missed her on our 16–21 September 2002 trip. The participants were: Jim Couch and Bill Welch, Jim Greenacre paddling solo, Derek Lancaster and Gillian Mason, Tricia Nunan and Ray Laughlen, Hong Zao and Barb Maughan.

The group met at Wolseley Lodge off Hwy. 528 on Wolseley Bay on Sunday afternoon and got acquainted over dinner. Because it was “off season,” we were able to get overnight accommodation with breakfast there. Don, the owner, facilitated the car shuttle for us to Hartley Bay House and Marina on Sunday evening after the restaurant had closed.



Heading out into Wolseley Bay

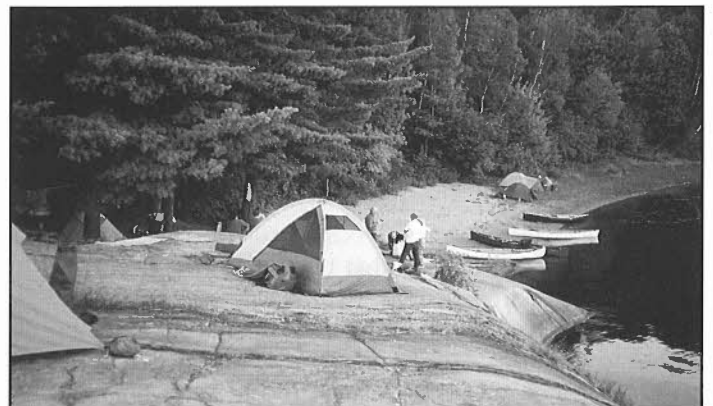


Upper (Little) Parisien Rapids

as The Ladder, which are rapids only when the water is high enough. With two feet of dry bedrock visible, Jim Greenacre commented that he had never seen this area so dry.

We paddled around Double Rapids Island to Blue Chute, which carries most of the river's water. After portaging our gear, it was a good straight run through the Chute. Again going downriver, we portaged our gear at Upper (or Little) Parisien Rapids and then enjoyed the run through the rapids avoiding the rocky area in the center. Jim was an excellent role model as he soloed throughout.

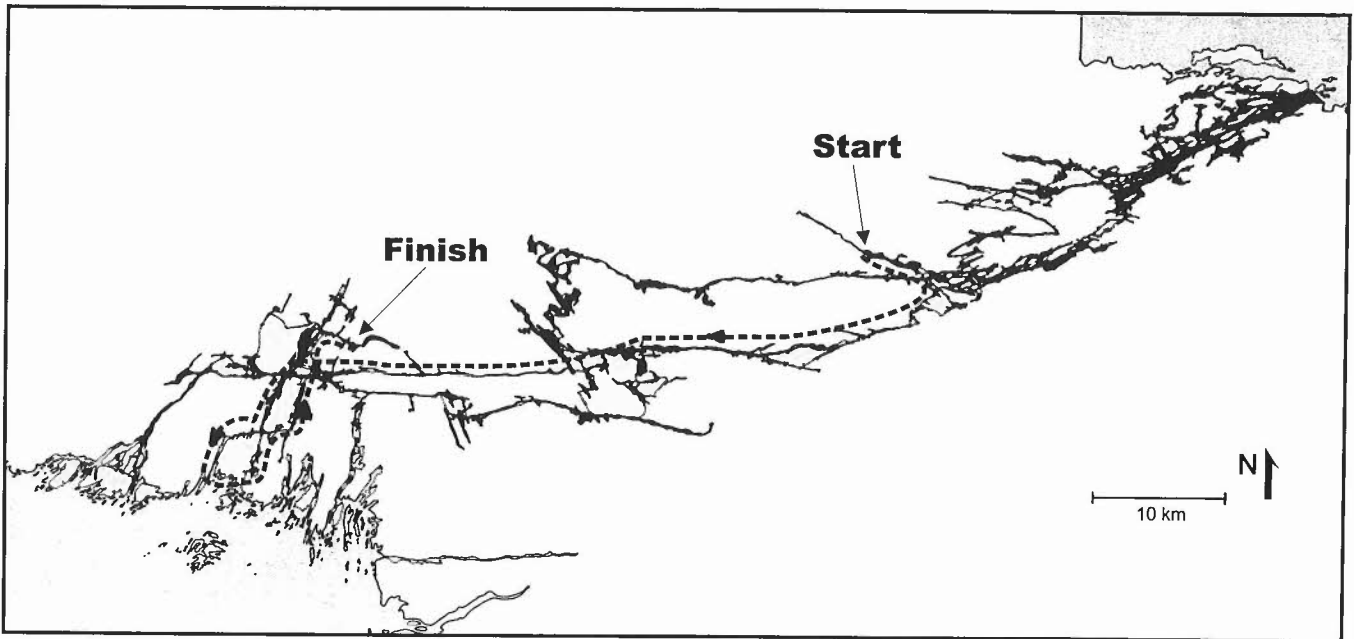
The winds picked up later in the afternoon. We decided against a campsite on the bluff at Hammerhead Bay and moved on to a spacious sheltered campsite by Crooked Rapids. Jim and Bill cooked our first tasty camp dinner. While the others crawled into bed early, Ray took a moonlit paddle to the top of Hammerhead Bay.



Campsite at Lost Child Bend

Day 1 We welcomed warm tea/coffee and breakfast after spending a very chilly night in our cabins. When we ate we witnessed a spectacular sunrise as the sun broke through the intense fog over the bay. Following a group picture we paddled the loaded canoes off into the mist down Wolseley Bay. By the time we reached the end of the bay, the fog had lifted and we were blessed with warm sunshine.

As we reached the northern side of Commanda Island, we entered the stretch of water known collectively as Five Mile Rapids. The first of these, Little Pine Rapid, was very shallow so we did a short portage. The next one, Big Pine Rapid, had some deeper water in it, but since most of us had Kevlar canoes we decided on another portage. Tricia and Ray did run Big Pine without problems in their Royalex canoe. Our first lunch stop was just short of Double Rapids Island. We hiked over to the area known



Day 2 The group set off about 9 am with the morning mist rising from the river and the sun shining overhead. As we paddled downriver, the gorgeous reflections on the still water delighted us. There was a multitude of artistic lines as the rock patterns appeared in the shimmering water. Our morning stop was at Cross Island where Jesuit missionaries in the 17th century were supposedly buried after being massacred or having drowned. The fact that there is neither hardly any soil, nor any obvious rock burial grounds, makes it hard to imagine that there is any interment on this island. There is a cross there to honor a particular missionary.

This is also an area where jack pine trees flourish. Some of the group poked around the mainland near Haystack Islands looking for the remains of an old abandoned sawmill, but nothing was found. A large campsite further downriver on the south shore turned out to be an excellent lunch /rest spot. In the afternoon we paddled on under intense sunshine.

The campsite on the north shore near Lost Child Bend was not suitable for group camping. So, we paddled further west on the north shore and decided on the campsite opposite Four Mile Island. We found huge rocks for resting and camping, a sandy beach, and shade. It wasn't long after setting up tents that splashes were heard, as people were enticed into the refreshing water. After a tasty dinner prepared by Derek and Gillian, we enjoyed a reading around the campfire. Through the night air came the hooting of a horned owl, as we crawled into our tents ready for sleep. Inspired by a bright moon, Ray again paddled off into the night. He returned hours later after circumventing Four Mile Island.

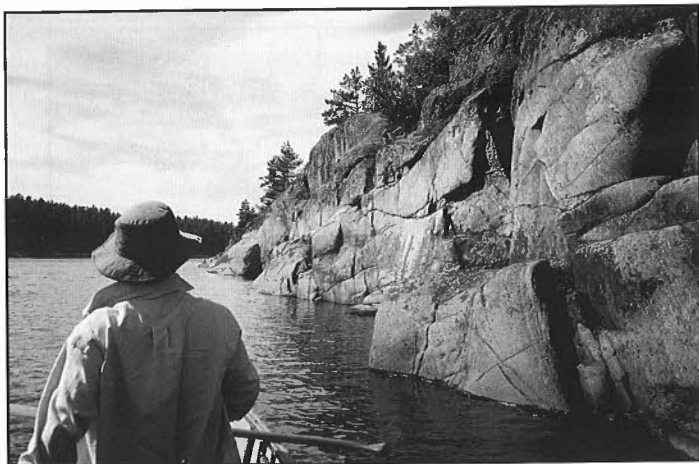
Day 3 I woke to the call of loons and a crackling fire. There was less mist over the water, but some clouds in the midst of the morning sunrise. This morning we paddled

on the Main Channel around the south shore of Four Mile Island. None of the marked campsites seemed suitable for large group camping. We continued on through the narrows, under the CP Railway Bridge, past a marina, under Highway 69, and down the steep-walled canyon adorned with cedars, ferns, and moss. We approached Recollet Falls, named after some priests who drowned here on their journey down the river. Again water levels being low, the falls did not appear as some photos we had seen of the area. After taking time to wander around the falls, we took the short boardwalk portage that has a narrow rocky exit.

We continued down the canyon to First Rapids. These were rocky but could be run on the right. After lunch we paddled downriver past Flowerpot Bay and came to the Second Rapids with a short portage marked on the south shore. Fortunately we were able to run them left of center, avoiding the extremely rocky portage. Canoes could also be lined along the right shore if necessary. As we proceeded downriver we paddled under the CN Railway



Portage at Recollet Falls



Downstream from First Rapids

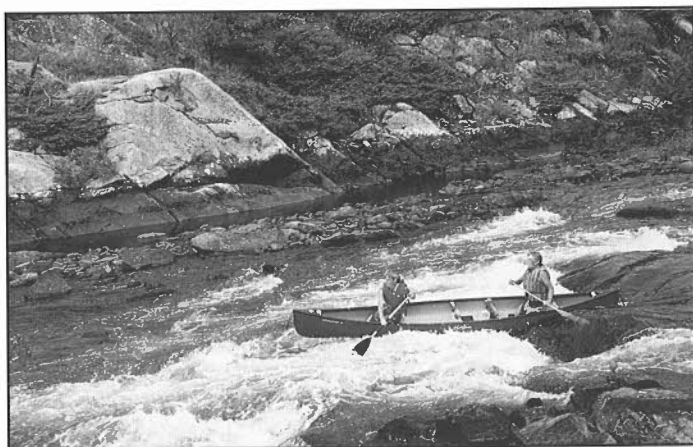
Bridge and down the north side of Ox Island. We did not find any appealing campsites on the island, so we stopped at a generously large campsite on the mainland opposite the island. Jim Couch recalled having stayed here on a previous trip. There was a great breeze to dry the condensation out of our damp tents. Tonight Tricia and Ray were in charge of dinner; those homemade chocolate brownies were a special treat! At night the peaceful sleep was disturbed by trains passing and a brief thunderstorm.

Day 4 Today the winds picked up as we paddled across Ox Bay and headed down the Main Outlet. Ray, out in front of the group and trying to avoid the headwind, led us on a little rendezvous behind some islands that resulted in most of us doing a liftover rather than retracing our path. At the Elbow, we turned right to follow the Main Outlet. Along the way we saw different pieces of rusty

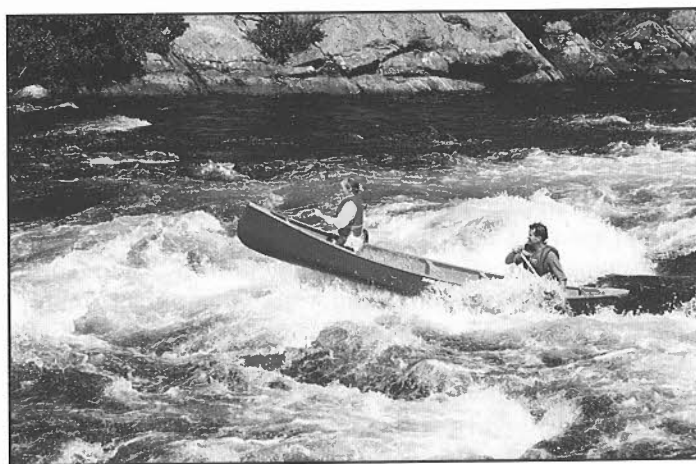
boilers, winches etc. that must have been part of logging operations during the late 1800s. Lunch was enjoyed at Dalles Rapids. Water levels were much lower than depicted in a picture Jim Couch had from a previous trip. We took the 180-m relatively flat portage on the south shore. After careful scouting and a lot of consultation, Tricia and Ray decided to run the rapid. There were shouts of delight from Tricia when they successfully bobbed through the large standing waves at the bottom.

We pushed on in the gentle rain since a Brampton school group with eight canoes was behind us. A black bear on the right shore carefully watched us as we paddled by. We stopped at Sabine Island to scout around for the campsite. Folks were not impressed as we tramped over the boggy, rough terrain in the rain looking for the designated camp area. We finally found the sheltered fire pit and kitchen area nestled in the trees. Seven of the group set up tents on the island. Hong and I paddled back to Bluff Point and set up on the small rocky campsite there. The afternoon ended well with sunshine to dry us out and with an opportunity for bathing in the river. Hong and I paddled back to Sabine Island with dinner for the group. Butter tarts provided a delightful ending to the meal. This night, snug in our tents, we were entertained with thunderstorms, heavy rains, and strong winds.

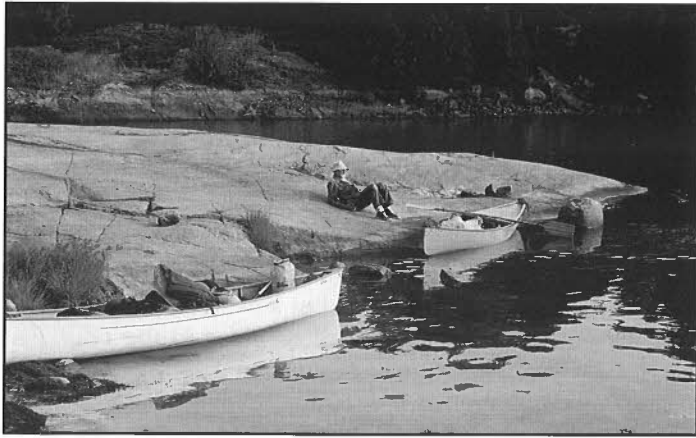
Day 5 We woke to cloudy skies. Jim Greenacre provided the group with a hearty breakfast to start the day. Then we paddled off in search of Obstacle Island. Although we had several maps, we ended up off course going too far southeast among the rocky islands and felt somewhat lost. We definitely can all use some practice in our navigation/orienteering skills! The interesting part was that Jim Greenacre paddled off following a white canoe that he thought was part of our group, but in fact wasn't. We followed Jim, so we wouldn't lose him. Then, behold, we



Running Dalles Rapids in 2002 ...



... and in 1996



Leaving camp, morning of Day 4

ended up in narrow Bass Creek with its rocky walls. We all met at the boardwalk portage, laughed, and carried on into Bass Lake.

The group did not linger to look at the abandoned fishing camp, but paddled north up the Eastern Outlet. We stopped for lunch under cloudy skies at a large campsite on the east shore at the Elbow. After passing through the narrows at Whale's Mouth we headed north up the Eastern Outlet. A strong wind was at our backs and we talked about rigging a sail, but no one felt like stopping to dig out a tarp. Because this was a Friday we passed several canoe groups paddling in for a weekend experience on the French River.

Under sprinkles of rain, we crossed the Main Channel and up the east side of Canal Island into Canoe Bay Channel. After making our way through the channel, we started looking for a campsite on the east shore of Wanapitiei Bay. We did not find any campsite dry or large

enough for our group, so we decided to paddle across the bay to the west shore. There on Boom Island we discovered a VERY large campsite that accommodated all of us within shouting distance of one another! Gillian and Derek were the only two that went for a serious swim this afternoon. Tonight, we each cooked our own dinner, then gathered around the campfire for stories. Raindrops sent us to bed at 9:30 pm.

Day 6 After another night of thunderstorms and heavy rain, we woke to cloudy skies. Later there was a delightful view of the sun rising over a nearby island which created a serene breakfast period. After loading our canoes, we gathered on shore for our final group pictures. Everyone was feeling sad that this was our last day on the French River system, but we were leaving with memories of fascinating shorelines rich with history of early trippers and of new friendships developed over the week. Our gathering concluded by singing Happy Birthday to the amazing Jim Greenacre, who was going to be celebrating his 82nd birthday in three days.

After paddling to the take-out at Hartley Bay House and Marina, we loaded the cars with canoes and gear and later met at the Hungry Bear restaurant for coffee.

Notes:

- Wolseley Lodge: hosts are Don and Liz Dumont; wolseleylodge@on.aibn.com or 1-800-488-4964.

- Hartley Bay House and Marina (open 7:00 am to 9:00 pm); 705-857-2038; \$5.00/day to store a vehicle and a \$5.00 canoe docking fee.



Nine on the French

A WORLD SO FOREIGN

We aren't sure about the rest of the world, but here in North America we live in a culture that strongly blurs the lines between humans and animals. As children we are surrounded by animals on TV or in books that walk, talk, and wear clothes. Even modern documentaries about real animals often ascribe human thoughts and emotions to their subjects, making a strong, implicit suggestion that animals think and feel pretty much the way we do.

Such confusion between animal fact and fiction will no doubt be with us for many years to come, and maybe it doesn't matter. Still, we personally can't help feeling that it colors the way we think and act towards the natural world. To take one example, many people seem to think that if only wild animals were left alone they would live out their lives "normally and happily" (just the way we humans for the most part also do). And how many times are we told that wild animals are "born free," and who wouldn't want to be "happy as a lark"?

These things came to mind just a couple of weeks ago when we were lucky enough to see a family of Ermines (also called Shorttailed Weasels) moving along the shore of Peck Lake. The adult female was in the lead and three youngsters were close behind, sniffing in every nook and cranny, but never straying very far from their mother. They were almost certainly making a move from one temporary living area to a new one where the female had found the mouse hunting to be better. The chances are quite good, if we had waited for a while, that we would have seen her come back once or twice to get the rest of her litter and lead them to the new hunting grounds as well.

A mother weasel typically raises six to eight youngsters every spring. She nurses them in the nest for a while and then, until they are about 10 weeks old (and with no assistance from the longgone father), she hunts all the food required by herself and the young. Towards the end of this period, her daughters will each weigh as much as she does and her sons up to 50% more. Needless to say, feeding them all is a remarkable accomplishment.

Now, this seems as devoted as anything we humans could ever do, and it probably reinforces the hazy notion we all have that animals—at least the "higher" ones like mammals and birds—somehow are quite similar to us.

If we could watch an Ermine for more than one of these rare encounters, however, we might realize that things are not all innocent bliss in their world. We aren't referring here to the fact that weasels are killers of awesome efficiency. As a matter of fact, we think most people nowadays are perfectly ready to accept and appreciate the role of predators in the natural world.

No, what we have in mind are a couple of features of weasel existence—ones that are partly imposed on them by their mousehunting way of life, but which are seldom appreciated by many people who otherwise have a pretty good idea of how weasels operate.

The first is that weasels lead a fast-paced, demanding life that can be kept up for only so long. Being long and slinky is great for following mice down their tunnels but not good for conserving heat in a cold climate. A weasel will starve to death in just 48 hours and must kill at a high rate just to stay alive.

By the age of two (if it makes it even that far) a weasel is starting to burn out. It lives so close to the edge that even the slightest infirmity means that a weasel will fail to keep up. Starvation is indeed the leading cause of death among weasels, followed by predation by larger animals like foxes and owls. Needless to say, a full life span that lasts just two years is very different from the human experience, but this is just one way that the lives of weasels are almost unimaginably different from our own.

Take for instance the way they reproduce. We often talk about "survival of the fittest," but what really counts in the natural world is how many living descendants an animal produces. Suppose, for example, there were two female weasels, Weasel A and Weasel B. Weasel A takes things easy, producing just two young per year and she lives for two years, thus achieving a total lifetime production of four offspring. Weasel B, on the other hand, only lives for one year—partly because she wears herself completely out by raising eight youngsters in her one breeding season.

In the big picture, it doesn't matter that Weasel A survived twice as long as Weasel B. Nor does it matter that many of the young weasels die before they become breeders themselves. Other things being equal, in the following generation there will be twice as many new weasels mothered by Weasel B than by Weasel A. And, if this tendency to live a shorter life but produce more offspring is inherited, then the offspring of Weasel B will similarly out-produce the offspring of Weasel A. After just two generations, Weasel B will have not twice, but four times as many grand-offspring as Weasel A, and after 10 generations (only 20 years), there will be more than 1,000 times as many B type weasels as there are of the A type.

By this time, of course, both original weasels are long since dead, and the fact that one survived longer than the other is utterly insignificant. All that matters is that Weasel B had an advantage over Weasel A in reproduction, and now her descendants completely dominate the population.

Advantages of one strain over another are seldom so onesided as in this example, but it is easy to see that even a slight advantage will lead to eventual success over more slowly reproducing, rival strains. To be sure, raising a large family all at once is very hard on a mother (humans and weasels would agree on this), and in some species (like ours) it may be a better "strategy" to reproduce slowly so as to live longer and leave more offspring over the long haul. But, if an animal has a short or uncertain future ahead of it, the victorious, "more fit" strains will be those

that throw everything they have into the current year's reproduction. Female weasels certainly seem to have this strategy. Even though the cost must be enormous, the kinds of weasels that have left the most descendants (the ones we see today) are the ones that go for broke each year.

Female weasels have evolved another trait that gives them a slight edge in their unwitting race to leave the greatest possible number of descendants. They mate in the spring, while still nursing their current babies, but the newly fertilized eggs stop developing very soon and are retained in the womb in a sort of suspended animation for a full 10 months. Only late the following winter do the eggs implant themselves in the wall of the mother's womb and start the true, two-month-long pregnancy. The advantage of this arrangement is that the female can time the birth of her young to best suit her own nutritional needs. No need to have the young born even a little bit too late or too soon as a result of a male not coming by at exactly the right time. Thanks to the delayed implantation of her eggs, she can "turn on" her pregnancy, albeit involuntarily, at the best possible moment to maximize the health and survival prospects of her babies.

Males have an entirely different set of tricks for maximizing their own individual offspring—which they do by mating with as many females as possible. The older males, the ones that have made it to the age of two, achieve the best results by roaming widely, finding and staying with successive females for a day or two until they come into heat, and then moving on. Younger, one-year-old males can't compete with old males in their "roaming strategy" so they usually stay close to just one or two females. If they get to mate at all, it is because no two-year-old happens along when the females are receptive.

Young or old, the males make the most of their opportunities. You will recall that, thanks to the phenomenon of delayed implantation, mating takes place a full year before the resulting young are born. This means that not only are mother weasels fertile during the spring nursing period but so are their baby daughters. That is why male weasels, after mating with the mothers, drag the

helpless, still blind female babies out of the nest and mate with them as well—before going on to look for more.

A human mother would object to this in the strongest way, but mother weasels are not human. As a matter of fact, they offer no resistance at all to the male and why should they? It is in the mother's reproductive "interest" that the daughters have young when they are one year old (it may be their only chance), and that means they must be impregnated when they are still babies. Besides, if a male is good enough to father the mother's next litter why would she object to the same male fathering her grand-offspring as well?

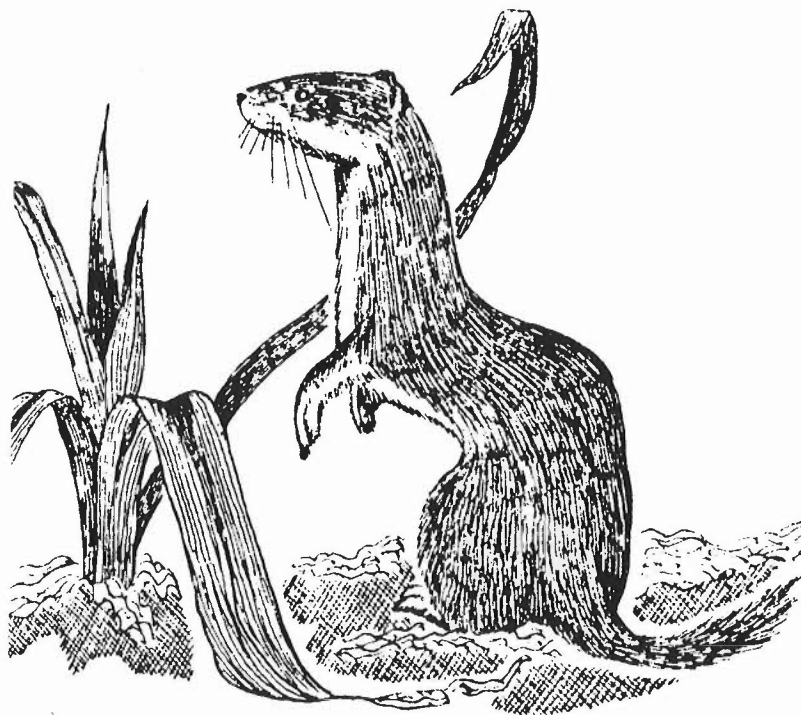
We will admit that this behavior, in our terms, appears unspeakably inhuman and brutish. Still, it has not been our intention here to shock or disturb anyone, much less

to pass judgement on the worth of weasels. Our only point is that the lives of wild animals are almost unimaginably remote from our own. Their existence is neither "good" nor "bad," neither "loving" nor "cruel." They do not know or understand that they live on a planet. They do not know or understand what delayed implantation is. They do not know or understand what death is. They do not know or understand that they are slaves to the evolutionary imperative of maximum lifetime reproduction.

They live lives that, to our eyes, are fascinating, breathtaking in their finely tuned intricacy, and often wildly beautiful—but they are most definitely not human lives.

It wouldn't hurt any of us to remember this the next time we see a weasel talking and wearing clothes on TV, or even when we are lucky enough, as we were last week, to see a real one in the wild leading her young to new hunting grounds. It is only too easy to ascribe human feelings and emotions to animals, especially given our limited and often artificial exposure to them. The truth is, animals live in a world so foreign to ours that, even with the greatest of efforts, we can barely begin to imagine what their lives would really be like.

Reprinted from the 4 July 1991 issue of Algonquin Park's The Raven, courtesy of the Ministry of Natural Resources.



FOOD FOR PADDLERS

VIEW FROM THE KITCHEN

John Yip

We all have to take our turn with kitchen duties. Fortunately there are advantages to being around the campsite. There are many things about nature both large and small to observe from the kitchen. While the others are out hiking to seek out the sights, those that remain in camp allow the sights to come to them.

It was the summer of 2002. Christine and I were on our own and camped on the west shore of the Thomsen River in the northeast corner of Banks Island, NWT. Most of the river flows through Aulavik ("place where people travel") National Park. The Thomsen River runs through a broad, lush valley and is a major wildlife corridor. Twenty-five percent of Banks Island's 70,000 muskox reside within Aulavik National park and many of these graze along the banks of the Thomsen River. We saw muskox every day of our 18-day trip.

We had just finished dinner, which consisted of Chickpea and Onion Stew over Hard Tack Biscuits, a flavorful dish (recipe see below) with a bold aroma, enough to attract interested parties from kilometres around. For clean-up Christine had elected to do the washing. In the cool evening air of the Arctic (2C) the favorable task is in having your hands in the hot dish water.

I was just drying the last pot when I looked upriver. There, staring back at me were 12 eyes accentuated by 12 ears: six Arctic wolves on our side of the river and not more than 75 metres away. All of them were white. I called out softly to Christine while visualizing their viewpoint and imagining what the wolves were looking at: two overdressed figures moving about around a blue kitchen fly set up beside a sand-colored tent and a red canoe securely pegged into the tundra. While wolves are color blind, I'm convinced that the stark colors of modern canoe equipment offer them some superb shades.



Christine crawled over to the back door of the tent to retrieve the camera. Meanwhile the largest wolf (perhaps the alpha male) lay down. While most of the others in the pack remained behind, one juvenile advanced as if he was encouraged by the alpha male. Perhaps this juvenile was in training. He advanced directly towards us a few steps, then hesitated, inspected something in the tundra, and then advanced again. A number of times he sniffed the air trying to catch our scent but fortunately there was a crosswind. This curious wolf came to within three canoe lengths of the tent that Christine was hiding behind. But that was close enough for both the wolf and us. He gave us one last curious stare, then loped back to rejoin the pack. They headed to a rise behind our camp and, after a last look in our direction, ran up a large hill and disappeared over the horizon.

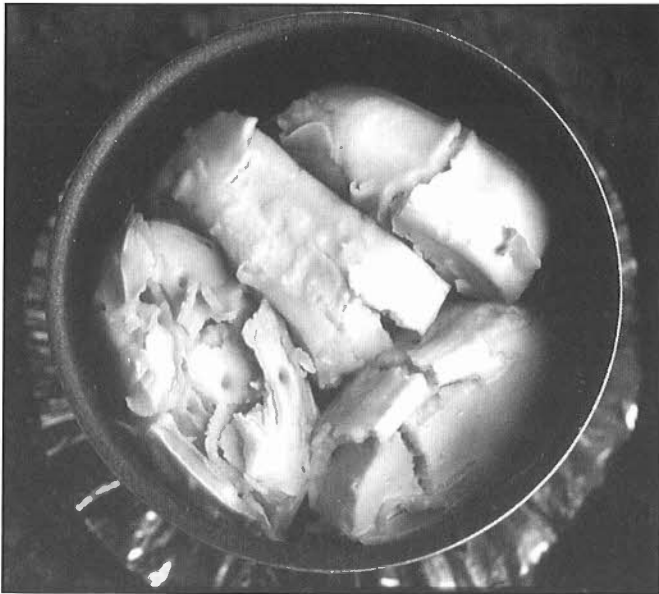
Wow, this is what we came to the Thomsen River for! This is the wilderness. And we didn't even have to leave the kitchen to experience it.



CHICKPEA AND ONION STEW OVER HARD TACK BISCUITS

This recipe comes from Tajikistan (a former republic in the USSR). Developed for the harsh winters in Tajikistan, this dish makes the perfect dinner for northern canoe trips. The chickpeas rehydrate quickly and give body to the stew, while the onions are sweet and the tomatoes add color. The spice blend of saffron, coriander, cumin, chili, and a hint of cinnamon not only tints the dish a golden yellow, but also adds a complex, bold flavor that may provide an increased opportunity for wildlife viewing.

For the starch we used Purity Hard Tack (hard bread). I remember hearing, at a past WCA Symposium, about a group of east-coast canoeist describing their "fish and brewis" meal and thought that hard tack would be a wonderful canoe tripping food item. Since then, hard tack and pilot biscuits have been discussed in this food forum. Simply soak the hard tack all day and then, using the same water and adding salt to taste, bring it to a near boil. Drain just before serving so that the hard tack will remain warm. We use a ziplock bag full of water to soak the hard tack. The hard tack has the consistency and taste of a cross between lasagne noodles and potato; it is a distinctive starch that soaks up the huge flavor of this delicious Tajik stew. Recreated on the shores of an Arctic river, this cultural combination is the ultimate in the modern technique of "fusion" cooking.



Hard tack biscuits



Chickpea and onion stew

- 1 cup of dehydrated chickpeas (rehydrate for 30 minutes)
- 3 cups of stock (hint: use salt-free beef bouillon available from a bulk store)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 medium to large onion (fresh) thinly sliced
- 2 dehydrated Roma tomatoes
- some tomato sauce dehydrated into a leather
- Spice pack:
 - 1/4 tsp saffron threads crushed
 - 1/2 tsp chili flakes or more if you like chili heat
 - 1/4 tsp coriander powder
 - 1/4 tsp ground cumin
 - 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
 - 2 tsp salt
 - 1/2 tsp sugar

Optionally you can add some of your favorite rehydrated jerky or dried meat.

You can dehydrate the chickpeas in a food dehydrator or low oven. For the most convenience, use canned chickpeas as they are pre-cooked and already very soft; they readily rehydrate. Saute the onions in the oil over medium heat for five minutes. Add chickpeas, dried tomatoes, and tomato sauce. Add spice pack. Add stock (water and bouillon powder). Simmer until chickpeas soften and flavors blend. Serve over warm hard tack.

If you would like to share your favourite tripping recipes, please contact Barb Young, 12 Erindale Crescent, Brampton, Ontario, L6W 1B5; youngj david@rogers.com.

(Recipe for two adapted from "Flatbreads and Flavors" by Jeffrey Alford and Naomi Duguid.):

-hard tack, 1 to 1.5 per person (each hard tack weighs about 60 grams)

WCA OUTINGS

WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND HAVE IT PRESENTED IN THE AUTUMN ISSUE? Contact the Outings Committee before 10 Aug.

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, bness@look.ca; Barry Godden, 416-440-4208; Ann Dixie, 416-512-0292, adixie0405@rogers.com; Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca

WCA trips and other activities may have an element of danger of serious personal injury. You are ultimately responsible for your own safety and well-being when participating in club events.

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All Season **HAVE PADDLE WILL TRAVEL**
 Barry Godden, 416-440-4208; Steve Bernet, 519-837-8774.; Harrison Jolly, 905-689-1733. ----- We paddle wherever the good whitewater is from ice-out to freeze-up. Usual locations (depending upon the season) are such rivers as the Upper Black, Gatineau, Ottawa, Petawawa, and Beaver. We also go south as far as West Virginia to rivers such as the Gauley. While some rivers we visit require advanced skills, many of these rivers can be paddled by reasonably skilled intermediates with some coaching and judicious portaging. We're friendly people who like to help newer paddlers develop their skills. Give one of us a call to find out where we are going.

All Season **HALIBURTON COUNTY/FROST CENTRE**
 Ray Laughlen, 705-754-9479 ----- Seasoned tripper living in Haliburton willing to help organize leisurely paced trips in this area. At participants' request may become involved with some equipment, logistics, 'base camp' meals, etc. Willing to share information on tripping and camping techniques. Not limited to weekends; I am often free during the week. Suitable for entry or novice level but all others welcome.

July-August; date to be determined. **LAKEWATER INSTRUCTIONAL WEEKEND**
 Barry Godden, 416-440-4208, book immediately ----- Here's a great opportunity to refine your lakewater canoeing skills. Participants may earn their ORCA Lakewater Certification. You are required to provide your own canoe, PFD and paddle. Maximum eight participants.

July-September **MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE**
 Bill Ness, 416-321-3005 ----- I'm frequently at the Gull on weekends through the summer, so if you would like some paddling companionship at Minden, give me a call. I'm sure that you can persuade me that paddling is more important than staying home to paint or mow the lawn. You need to be at least a strong intermediate to run the lower course, but the bottom can be played by novices. Happy to provide informal instruction for novices needing some moving-water practice or give you help in rolling your canoe or kayak.

14-15 June **PALMER RAPIDS BEGINNER TANDEM WHITEWATER CLINIC**
 Al and Debbie Sutton, 905-985-0261, book before 1 June ----- Build your moving-water skills and confidence. ABS canoes with proper outfitting required. Helmets highly recommended. Limit six boats.

28-29 June **OXTONGUE RIVER**
 Ray Laughlen , 705-754 - 9479, book immediately-----We'll paddle from Canoe Lake downstream to Hwy 60. There should be some runnable rapids if the water is still up. Mosquitoes unconditionally part of the attraction. Suitable for novices.

5-6 July **PALMER RAPIDS PLAY WEEKEND**
 Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, book by 27 June ----- The best park-and-play whitewater boating for novice to intermediate paddlers in southern Ontario is found at Palmer Rapids. There's a little sand beach for the kids, making this a great family location for a summer weekend. If you took one of the instructional courses here earlier in the season, why not come back for some more practice. No limit to either the participants or the fun.

12-13 July **PALMER RAPIDS - LOWER MADAWASKA RIVER**
 Roger and Sandy Harris, 416-489-8980 ----- We will make an early start on Saturday and run the Lower Madawaska from Buck Bay to just before Slate Falls. If the water is low we'll watch the scenery and have a gentle paddle. Sunday we'll play at Palmer until we

feel like going home. Saturday evening will be spent around a campfire chez Jessop's Campground where we will tell tale tales of trips done or planned. Limited only by your imagination.

28 July - 3 Aug

KILLARNEY INTERIOR

Glenn & Carlene Croucher, 416-283-4335 or glenn@olympic.on.ca, book immediately ----- We are planning a leisurely paddle across the north section of the park for six nights. The route starts at the Willisville access point on Monday, 28 July, and ends at the Bell Lake access point on Sunday, 3 August. This will take advantage of any prevailing westerlies. There are two fairly demanding portages but most are short and easy. We plan on using the George Lake campground as an initial base during 26-27 July to meet up with the group. Suitable for novices or better. Limit three to four canoes.

31 July - 6 August

GEORGIAN BAY

Don Andersen, dhandersen@aol.com, 716-873-4476, book before 1 June ----- Exploring the islands and inlets between Byng Inlet and Snug Harbour. Camping on islands including Head Island, Pointe au Baril Islands, and McCoy Islands. Sheltered waters used whenever conditions require it. Suitable for competent novices who can manage windy conditions and waves. Limit seven canoes.

2-4 August

OTTAWA RIVER

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, book before 26 July ----- We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practise your skills before attempting this river. Helmets and properly outfitted boats are a must. Limit six boats.

11-15 August

EASTERN ALGONQUIN PARK FAMILY TRIP

Roger Townshend, 416-425-4706 or 416-981-9454 or rtownshend@oktlaw.com, book by 15 July ----- Eastern Algonquin Park is quite distinctive, with long lakes, sandy beaches, and the spectacular Barron Canyon. It's a beautiful spot to spend an August week. Please join us on this leisurely flatwater trip designed for families with children. Our entry point will be Achray (via Pembroke). You don't have to bring children, as long as you enjoy a slow-paced outing that will have assorted activities interspersed with paddling. The relaxed itinerary is perfect for those who like to mix swimming, photography, painting, nature studies, or ??? with their paddling.

15-17 August

ALBION HILLS CONSERVATION AREA

Gary & Geri James, 416-512-6690 or gmjames@attcanada.ca, book immediately ----- This is a standing family camp weekend where we will gather in a large group-camping area. There are a shelter and washrooms on-site. Good place to try canoeing in a small lake and marsh. Great beach and swimming area, hiking, horse-back riding, bike riding. Good place to compare equipment and food ideas. To stay cool there is always a waterfight going on. The cost is \$21.50 per family per night. A large deposit is required to book a site and we will need one night's deposit from you ASAP. Please send cheque and call to confirm. It is located on Hwy 50 (or Peel Road 50), eight kilometers north of Bolton, about an hour's drive northwest of Toronto. Great for day tripping. More info at: http://www.trca.on.ca/parks_and_attractions/places_to_visit/albion_hills/

25-31 August

SPANISH RIVER EAST BRANCH

Barbara Maughan, 519-893-0380 or bmaughan@rogers.com, book no later than 28 July ----- From Duke Lake to Agnew Lake the Spanish River cuts its way for some 145 km through Pre-Cambrian rock in an ever-changing landscape. The route has few portages and some fun easy whitewater. A car shuttle to be arranged for return to our vehicles. ABS canoe recommended. Suitable for novices with moving-water experience. Limit five canoes.

30 August-1 September

OTTAWA RIVER

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, book before 16 August ----- Please see 2-4 August for details.

7 September

BURNT RIVER

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, book before 1 September ----- Between Kinmount and the village of Burnt River, the Burnt is a placid stretch of water with a few small riffles and a couple of larger scenic drops, which are easily portaged. This leisurely Sunday paddle makes an excellent family outing or a gentle introduction to canoeing for non-paddling friends. Limit six boats.

25-28 September

FALL IN KILLARNEY--CANOE/HIKE COMBO

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, book before 5 September ----- Killarney is at its best at this time of the year with gorgeous fall colors, white quartzite rocks, and sparkling blue lakes. We will spend Thursday night at George Lake campground and stay Friday and Saturday night in Norway Lake. Friday morning, part of the group will canoe from George through Killarney Lake to Norway Lake, while the others hike on the Silhouette Trail to take in the incredible views from The Crack, and then meet the canoeists at our Norway Lake campsite. We will have time to share stories of our trip there, and explore this area by canoe and on foot. There is an option to stay at Heaven Lake hiking campsite on Saturday night. On our way back on Sunday, those who canoed in can hike out, and vice versa - this way we can all get the most out of Killarney in the Fall. Suitable for novices or better. Limit eight people.

3-5 October

ALGONQUIN FALL COLORS

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, book before 5 September ----- We will access Algonquin Park from Shall Lake north of Madawaska and make our way to McKaskill Lake ranger cabin, which will be our base for two nights. This is a leisurely trip to enjoy the Fall colors, which should be at their best on this weekend, and to explore the lakes in that area. Suitable for novices or better. Maximum four canoes.

4-5 October

FRONTENAC PROVINCIAL PARK

Barbara Maughan, 519-893-0380 or bmaughan@rogers.com, book by 22 September ----- Canoe and hike in Frontenac Provincial Park just north of Kingston. Granite outcrops, extensive wetlands, and forests encircle deep-blue lakes. Camping fees required. Suitable for novices or better. Limit four tents.

5 October

LONG LAKE AREA

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, book before 29 September ----- There is a group of small lakes in the rugged Kawartha countryside north of Peterborough and just west of Apsley that make a wonderful fall paddle. Multiple routes are possible depending on the weather and participants' interests. There are a number of portages, so you will get a bit of exercise on this trip. However, the carries are not particularly difficult and we're more interested in taking in the colors than getting anywhere fast. Don't forget your camera! Suitable for novices. Limit six boats.

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FOR SHORT-NOTICE TRIPS, CHECK THE WCA WEBSITE BULLETIN BOARD

Suddenly find yourself with a free weekend and want to go paddling? Need a partner for an upcoming trip? Take advantage of our website bulletin board (<http://wildernesscanoe.ca>) to post notices for impromptu trips or partners required. Also, bookmark this page to regularly check for new posted outings. This service is a valuable addition to our regularly published quarterly outings list. We encourage members to use it. However, please note that only members may post notices. As these activities are not pre-screened by the Outings Committee, they are considered privately organized affairs and we can take no responsibility for them.

OUTINGS ORGANIZERS RECOGNITION PROGRAM

The WCA is grateful for the contribution that our outings organizers make to the success of our club. These dedicated volunteers generously share with us their time, knowledge, and enthusiasm to enable the rest of us to enjoy our outstanding outings program. Through them, we experience new places to paddle, learn new skills, and meet new friends.

In recognition of the personal commitment of members who have made the effort to organize outings for the club consistently over an extended period of time, the WCA will reimburse these organizers for fees to complete outdoors- and paddling-related courses that improve their outdoors capabilities and the outings program in general.

Examples of courses that would be eligible for reimbursement are:

1. Basic First Aid
2. Wilderness First Aid
3. River Rescue Course
4. Re-certification of above courses

Outings organizers would be eligible for reimbursement on the following basis:

- An organizer who has organized a minimum of three outings in the previous calendar year can qualify for a single flat payment of \$50.00 as reimbursement towards fees paid for any approved course passed.
- For a minimum of three outings per year in each of the past two years, the payment is increased to \$100.00.
- For a minimum of three outings per year in each of the past three years, the organizer can qualify for the plan maximum of

a \$200.00 fee repayment.

The program is for reimbursement of course fees only and the payment amount cannot exceed the cost of fees paid. Should the applicant choose a course with fees exceeding the reimbursement amount for which the member qualifies, then the payment is a partial fee reimbursement.

There is a limit of one course per member per year, with the exception of re-certifications. As an example, one could qualify for reimbursement for a first-aid re-certification, plus a first-time river rescue course.

For this first year, the club has allotted a budget of \$1500 for the incentive program, and payments are on a first-come, first-served basis. However, to avoid disappointments, applicants who apply after the allocated annual budget has been used up can apply for payment in the following calendar year.

Applicants should apply to the Outings Committee for reimbursement approval. They need to provide the receipt for proof of payment of fees along with a copy of the certificate showing the course has been successfully completed. Members considering taking courses other than those on the above list are requested to contact the Outings Committee to verify course eligibility.

This incentive plan is being provided to recognize the commitment of those organizers who are regular contributors to the success of our outings program, while at the same time encouraging these individuals to pursue accreditation in recognized outdoors skills courses that will make our club trips a safer and more enjoyable experience for all.

WCA Outings Committee: Gisela Curwen, Barry Godden, Ann Dixie, Bill Ness (Chair)

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 nonsale times at:

- Algonquin Outfitters, RR#1, Oxtongue Lake, Dwight, 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.

CANOES FOR SALE Two Montreal canoes, one North canoe, with trailers, pfd's, and paddles, all in excellent condition. Also six used teepees of various sizes. Contact Rick at Coureur De Bois Adventures, 705-272-3273 or www.coureurdebois.com

CANOES FOR SALE

- One 16' 6" Blue Hole Cumberland (Starburst). In reasonable shape and equipped with yoke, thigh straps, and end air bags. Asking \$695.00.
 - One 16' 6" Blue Hole Cumberland (Starburst). In terrible shape (heavily patched) but equipped with yoke, thigh straps, and end air bags. Asking \$100.00.
 - One 16' Mad River Explorer. In reasonable shape and equipped with yoke, thigh straps, and end air bags. Asking \$395.00.
- Contact George Drought: 905-528-0059;
gdrought@wildernessbound.com

FRENCH RIVER BOOK This indispensable guide to canoeists who want expert information on past and present of Ontario's famous French River is available directly from its author for the original price of CDN\$34.95 (US\$23.00), which includes applicable tax and postage. Please contact: Toni Harting, 7 Walmer Road, Apt. 902, Toronto, Canada, M5R 2W8; 416-964-2495; aharting@attcanada.ca

BIKEHIKE ADVENTURES offers multi-sport adventures for earthlings addicted to the outdoor life. We specialize in small-group worldwide adventures including rafting, rock climbing, mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding, and sea kayaking in exotic destinations in South and Central America, Canada, the Pacific, and Africa. We are committed to sustainable/eco tourism practices and we never run adventures exceeding 12 passengers in order to leave minimal ecological impact upon the places we visit. Trips can be customized with a minimum of two travellers. Trips are

graded at three levels: easy, moderate, and challenging, which suits the needs of all adventurers. For more information, contact our main office at 1-888-805-0061 or rachel@bikehike.com

SPRAY DECKS AND TARPS If you are planing a white-water or Lake Superior trip or a remote expedition, this may be the year you may decide to order a spray deck from Outdoor Solutions for your canoe, or a top-of-the-line tarp. We make expedition-grade spray covers in PVC nylon or lightweight marine polyester. And for the first time this year for those WCA members who wish to sew their own spray cover or Buckley's Dryfly or other tarp designs, we offer these products in a kit form. We will supply the plans, instructions, and PU Nylon 420D or 210D and all other materials needed to complete the project. Or you may just wish to order the plan and instructions for a small charge. We offer 7.5% discount for WCA members until further notice for all our products. You can contact Thomas Benian at: tbenianosworks@sympatico.ca or check out: www.outdoorsolutions.ca or call: 705-461-9668.

WOMEN IN THE WILDERNESS Adventure travel, usually by canoe, for women of all ages. Coming canoe trips: Clarke and Thelon rivers, Lake Superior. Also planned: trip in Amazon rain forest. Get your free e-newsletter. Contact: Women in the Wilderness, 566 Ottawa Ave., St. Paul, MN 55107, USA; 651-227-2284; judithniemi@lakevermilion.com

WRITER'S WORKSHOP IN ICELAND This is the fourth annual workshop for experienced or new writers: travel writing, creative nonfiction, fiction, poetry. With writers David Arnason, Bill Hulm, Judith Niemi. In Hofsos, North Iceland, with visits from Icelandic singers and writers. Included are boat tours, Icelandic ponies, and a total eclipse of the midnight sun. Contact Judith Niemi, see item above.

THE LODGE AT PINE COVE is the ideal starting point for a short or long visit to the heart of the French River east and west of Wolseley Bay. The completely renovated lodge has a number of rustic cottages nestled on the heavily forested shore of the serene cove. The facilities further include: restaurant and pub, showers, canoe rental and launch, guided trips, swimming, fishing, complete outfitting, interest tours (astronomy, birding, flora, etc.). The Lodge at Pine Cove, Box 91, Noelville, Ontario, Canada, P0M 2N0; 705-898-2500; info@frenchriver.com; www.frenchriver.com; www.frenchriveroutfitters.com



Where it is ...



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