

Evening at Camp 6

CENSUS ON THE SACHIGO

S.R. Gage

Have you ever settled yourself down among the familiar objects of a well-loved campsite, then turned away from the water, and dared to wonder what it's like back there in the bush? You may have reconnoitered with toilet paper, and perhaps with axe and saw. But those were cautious trips, paced out just far enough to get the job done.

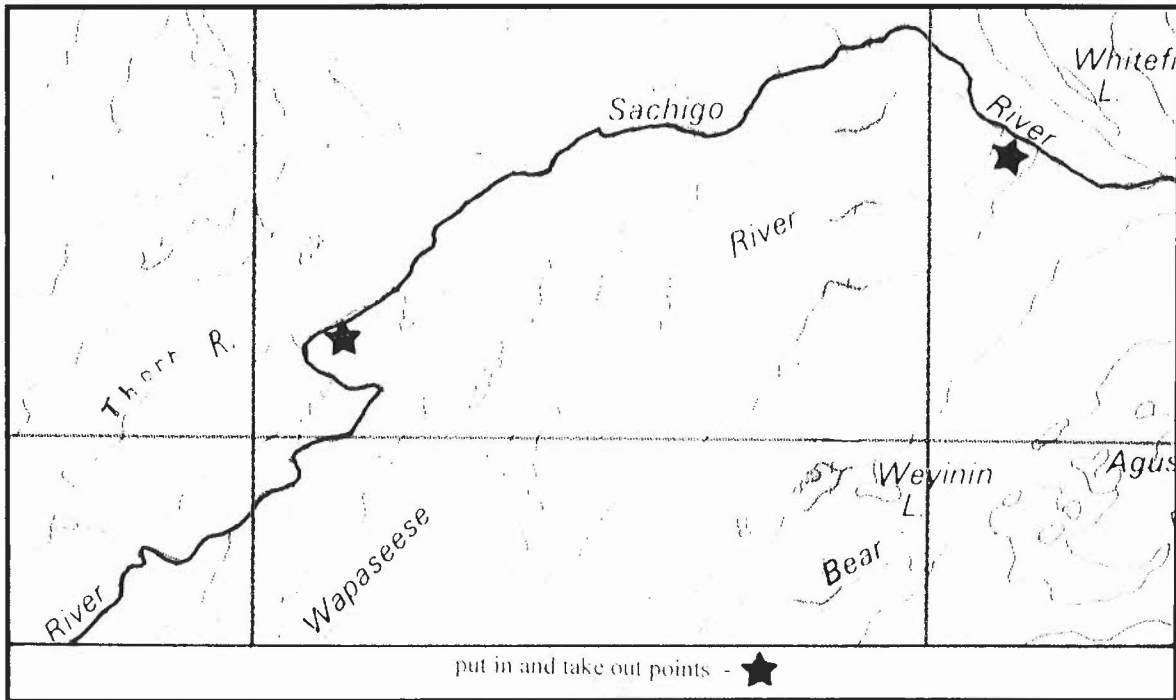
If you would like to probe deeper, say, one or two kilometres in, if you'd like to put the canoeist's riparian world in context, have I got a deal for you.

In a few months the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas will begin their fourth year of field work. Canoe trips to the most remote corners of the province will again be part of the project. And again, experienced birders will be paired

with willing and knowledgeable paddlers to get the data collected.

What follows are some highlights of my two weeks on the Sachigo River last June as part of a Breeding Bird Atlas field team. The Sachigo is located in the far northwest of Ontario, close to the Manitoba border.

We were a good hour northwest of Pickle Lake when the North Star Air pilot banked sharply and began considering a landing spot on the Sachigo River. There isn't a lot of demand for flights to this flat wilderness area, so the pilot took plenty of time staring straight down out the side windows into the tan waters of the river. The sight of a moose swimming the main channel gave encouragement as

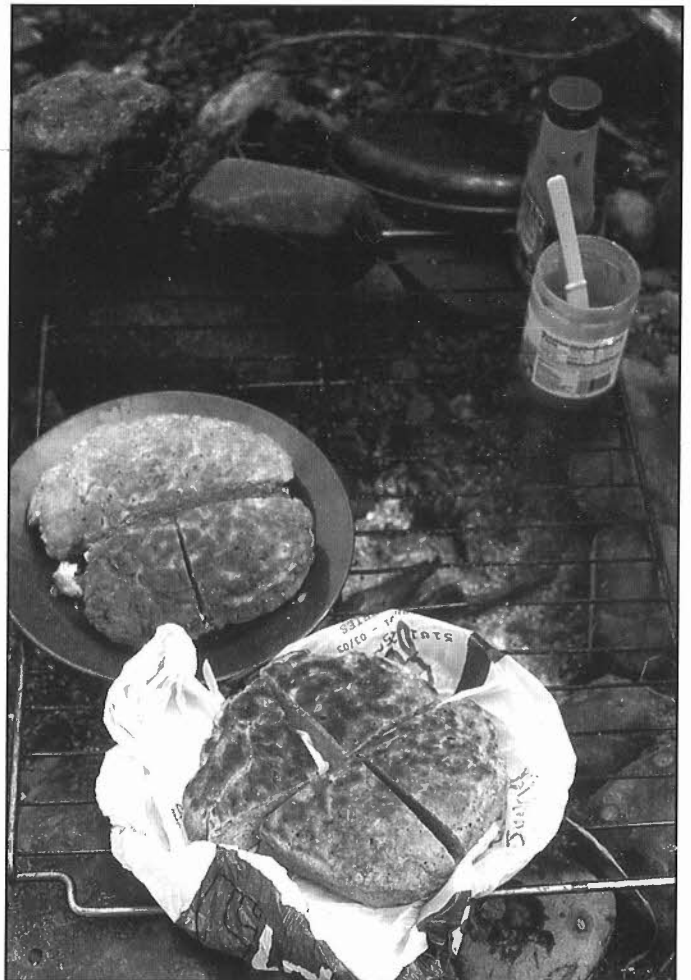


to the river's depth. Bucking a strong wind, the Cessna Caravan dropped lightly down to the Sachigo, its wings seeming to barely miss the trees on either bank.

We landed at a deserted First Nations camp, used seasonally for trapping and hunting. From that point, just down river from the confluence with the Thorn River, until our pick-up at another native camp near the Wapaseese River, we were in very unspoiled country. We saw no established campsites, no orange flagging tape, not even a spent shotgun shell during our trip on and around the river.

By our second camp, our daily procedure was starting to form a pattern. We were up between 3:30 and 4:00, with morning light already breaking over the spruce forest. Bug control preparations were essential before leaving the tent. At breakfast we agreed on the general routes to be taken by both our two-person teams. Jude Amesbury, an ecology graduate with extensive "point count" experience in the Timmins area, was paired with Gary Worthington, a consummate birder from upstate New York, who had done various kinds of bird counts across North America. I worked with Paul Shaw, a river rafting guide and artist from southern West Virginia, who matched Gary in birding skills. My seat-of-the-pants birding knowledge meant my main task was working with a GPS unit to get the exact locations of our data collection points.

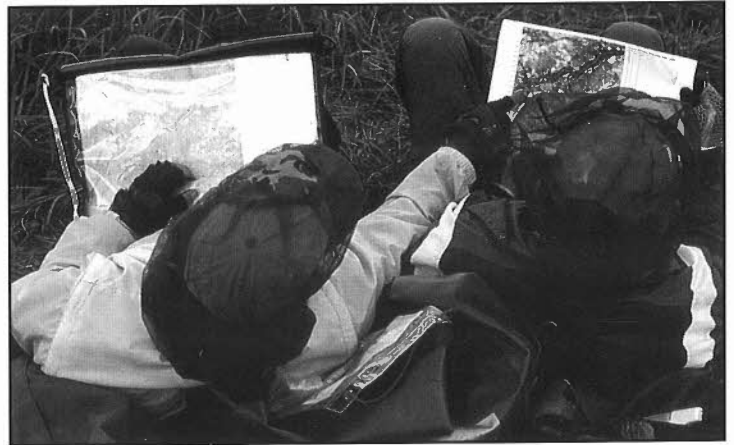
Our main tabulation method was to stop at a point at least 400 m from the previous one, and listen and watch for birds for five minutes. The two teams had to make a total of 25 of these stops in each designated square of land we were studying. And, as our instruction sheet said, we had to get inland: "The dense coniferous forests along the river banks (due to better drainage) make up only a few percent



Lunchtime bannock

of the cover of each square. To do most of your point counts, you have to get through that riparian habitat and onto the muskeg proper.” (Muskeg walking made this the only canoe trip of my life where my legs got more of a workout than my upper body.)

By 10:00 a.m. the sun was high and the birds were quieting down. Our morning routes were circular or U-shaped, so it was usually a short walk or paddle back to camp. Then we would rest a bit, have lunch, rest a bit more, read, get some of our data onto the proper forms, and do the usual camp chores. Every second or third day we had to pack up after lunch and head down the river to a new location. We only had 75 km of river to cover, so Paul and Gary set the example by floating most of the way and continuing to bird.



Comparing topo map to satellite photo



Ghetto blaster calls in the warblers



Rental canoe on the Sachigo



Listening and counting

Everyone knows the raven is the trickster of woodland native mythology. Sometimes it seemed that he had sent his feathered and furred comrades to tweak our scientific noses. There at camp two, Gary pulled out his compact ghetto-blasters and started spinning an owl CD, about 10:30 in the evening. We were all in bed, with a 3:30 wake-up looming. A pint-sized Boreal Owl picked up on Gary's electronic challenge and started to picket our campsite, calling in protest until midnight.

Three nights later at camp 3, a beaver started slapping its tail on the river about 12:30 a.m.. We had camped on the only strip of gravel beach that broke the dense willow banks of the middle Sachigo. This was probably the beaver's favourite picnic area. Soon it was joined by a Great Gray Owl cranking out a long series of deep, single hoots. An American Bittern followed with its pump imitation, and then a moose splashed down our beach, across the river, and up the far bank. 3:30 brought a definite need for a caffeine fix.

It happened again at camp 5, where we had drawn a day of rest. About 4:00 a.m. a Swainson's Thrush started its fluty call very close to our tents. The bird was persistent and never missed a note.

On the way to camp 5 we had heard a strange owl call that could not be identified. On our rest day the three good birders set off on foot with the ghetto-blasters to bag that mystery owl. We had not seen a Great Gray Owl yet, so interest was high. In the afternoon the big guy decided to pay me a visit, slowly pumping its wings across the river,

like a giant dark brown moth. The overland birders saw nothing. Fortunately, they would view the Great Gray later, as it carried a small rodent to a nest somewhere near our camp.

I expected that our point-count hikes would cover vast stretches of muskeg, beyond the river banks. In fact, the open wet ground with raised tussocks of vegetation was frequently broken by patches of spruce and willow. Slight changes in elevation marked abrupt changes in habitat. One morning we walked through a dry jack pine forest with almost no bird life. On another day, we crossed a birch forest with what looked like a moose mating area. There was a well-worn wallow and we saw antler slashes about two metres up on many of the trees.

Among the birding highlights for me was the discovery of nests. Paul's vast ornithological knowledge enabled him to push back the ground vegetation on two occasions and reveal tiny, cupped nests. Once there were seven naked newborn White-throated Sparrows; on the second occasion it was a cluster of six Wilson's Warbler eggs. We also found a Spruce Grouse nest when we almost stepped on the female, who sat tight until the last moment. We shared our last campsite with three or four fat young Northern Flickers who were constantly calling, "feed me, feed me!" from their hollow tree home.

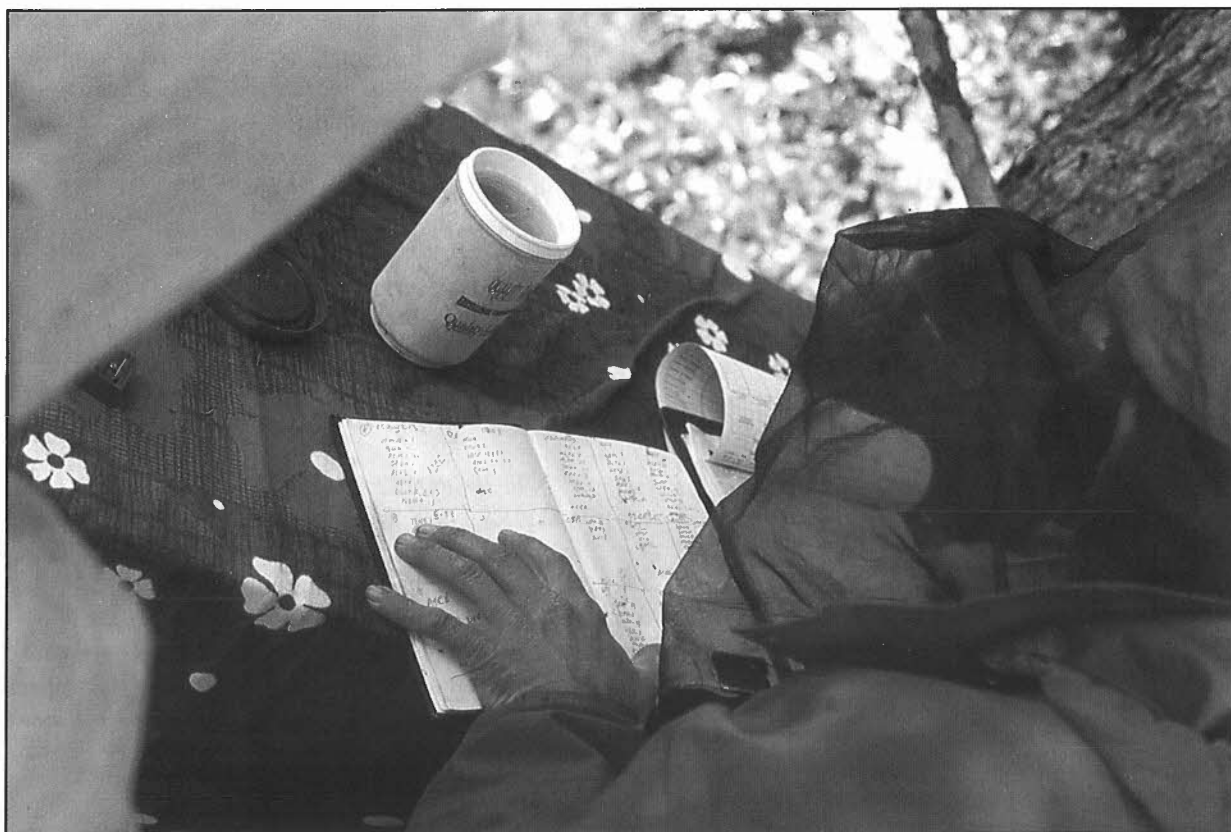
Early in the trip I had made a satellite phone linkup with a CBC radio morning show in Toronto. The patchy

connection brought some needed publicity to the Bird Atlas, but was strangely surreal to me. Sitting on a muddy bank of the Sachigo, geography and circumstance had put us way beyond the reach of electronic media and their world. We were living a cycle of nature at a high point of intensity, far beyond the interpretation of Disney, National Geographic, or even David Suzuki.

At the end of our two weeks we lifted off the river in a turbo single Otter, and watched the patchwork of green form below us. Most of the birds we had counted would follow our route south within a matter of weeks. We left behind, among others, the Blackpoll Warblers who were fueling up for a run well beyond Pickle Lake, to Argentina.

Planning for 2004 and 2005

The Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas is planning canoe trips on the upper Sachigo, Winisk, Sutton, Attawapiskat, Ekwan, Moose, and Little Current rivers and possibly other routes. The Atlas covers the cost of bush plane rides and canoe rentals. Participants have to arrange their own camping equipment, food, and transportation to meeting points. We were well served by North Star Air and the outfitters at Canoe Frontier. For more information on the Atlas, call 519-826-2092 or toll-free 866-900-7100 or visit www.bird-ontario.org



Completing paper work



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

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

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

NEWS BRIEFS

NASTAWGAN MATERIAL AND DEADLINE

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

<i>issue:</i> Spring 2004	<i>deadline date:</i>	1 February
Summer 2004		2 May

CALL FOR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Are you interested in helping to shape the future of the WCA?

Did you ever wonder about the inner workings of the WCA? How do we organize our annual events, keep in touch with over 700 members, track our finances, budget for events, evaluate requests for funding canoe-related projects, determine website content, and ensure that the WCA remains relevant to current members and attracts new members? If you have, then why not find out more by becoming a WCA Board member?

The WCA Board consists of six Directors, each serving a two-year term. Each year we ask for interested candidates to put their names forward at the Annual General Meeting as potential new Board members. If we have more candidates than openings, the membership votes to select the new Board members.

If you are interested in contributing to the continuing success of the WCA by becoming a Board member, please contact George Drought, the current Board Chair, before 31 January 2004. For contact information, see the back page.

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.

A NOTE FROM GARY JAMES RE. E-MAILS I have send out e-mails to promote WCA events to everyone with an address listed. You will receive group e-mails from my personal e-mail address gary.james@sympatico.ca and personal ones from the WCA address wca@sympatico.ca . Recently I e-mailed everyone (over 700) about the Fall Meeting and again for the Wine and Cheese Party. I had a lot of e-mails bounce back, stating my e-mails have been blocked as spam or blacklisted. Please adjust your e-mail setting to allow my addresses to go through. If you did not get an e-mail about the above events, please e-mail me and I will add you to the data base.

NEW WCA WEBSITE Our website is now www.wildernesscanoe.ca. The old address, wildernesscanoe.ca is still valid, so older links will still go to our new site. Members using the IP address <http://63.249.181.190> will be directed to a notification page that will allow them to manually link to our new site.

WINTER POOL SESSIONS FOR CANOES AND KAYAKS We have rented our usual swimming pool in Scarborough on Sundays from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. starting on 11 January and going through to 29 February for people with whitewater canoes or kayaks who want practice or need instruction in rolling. The rental cost per participant is an incredibly cheap \$80 for the whole winter. Space is limited. To take advantage of this opportunity, contact Bill Ness at 416-321-3005.



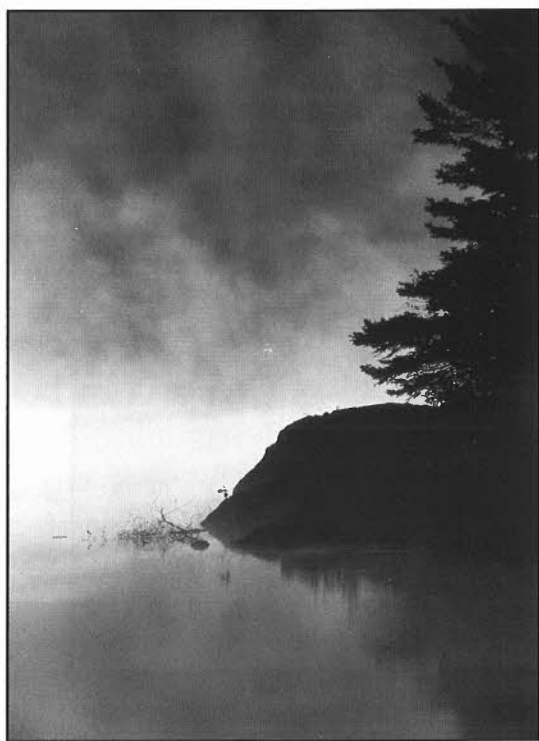
SYMPOSIUM, MEETING, SHOW

WILDERNESS & CANOEING SYMPOSIUM

The upcoming 19th annual Wilderness & Canoeing Symposium, organized by George Luste and sponsored by the WCA, will take place on Friday 30 January (evening) and Saturday 31 January (all day) 2004. The theme this year is Northern Travels and Perspectives, Part 3, a celebration of wild places and notable travellers from the past and the present. The format stays the same and the location again is Monarch Park Collegiate auditorium, One Hanson Street in Toronto.

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

Please register early and bring your friends as we again celebrate our northern heritage and the values of a close kinship with the northern landscape.



**Wings OF
Paradise**[®]
BUTTERFLY CONSERVATORY

WCA Annual General Meeting

Saturday February 7th, 2004

Cambridge, Ontario

Join us this year for our AGM at the
Wings of Paradise Conservatory in Cambridge.
Details and registration are printed
on the inside back cover of this issue of *Nastawgan*.

TORONTO OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SPORTS SHOW

This extensive show will take place at the International Centre by the airport (6900 Airport Road, Mississauga, Ontario; corner of Airport Road and Derry Road) on 20–22 February 2004. Highlights this year are the action sports zone, the water sports zone, and the adventure travel show.

The WCA will, as usual, have a booth for which we will need volunteers. If interested, contact Evan Wood at 416-690-9472.

MUSEUM IN TROUBLE

Citing sagging attendance and a lack of funding, the Canadian Canoe Museum—located in Peterborough, Ontario—closed its doors to the public on 15 October to allow for a restructuring of its finances.

FALL MEETING 2003 AT THE MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE

On the weekend of 27 to 29 September, 50 brave WCA'ers gathered in the rain for the annual WCA Fall Meeting, held in the beautiful forests of the Minden Wild Water Preserve. People arrived throughout the afternoon and evening of the 27th to be greeted by a roaring fire (built by inextinguishable Ray Laughlen) and the cheerful camaraderie of fellow voyageurs.

The following morning, despite the rain, canoeists and hikers set out on several expeditions bravely led by Mike Jones and Ray. Mike skillfully guided a small band through the upland forests of the Frost Centre while Ray tackled the headwinds and driving rain of the Herb – Gunn lakes loop. The rain-averse were treated in the MWWP Clubhouse to award-winning films on the Back, Hood, and Petawawa rivers, courtesy of George Drought.

After a satisfying evening meal, Scott MacGregor, editor of Rapid Magazine, gave an animated and much-appreciated talk aimed at all of us WCA would-be article contributors. There's an art to turning our trips notes into compelling pieces suitable for publication and Scott encouraged everyone to master the skill and give it a go (contributor guidelines are found at www.rapidmag.com).

The high-spirited conversation generated by the talk continued around the fire on Saturday night until the wee small hours. For those stirring before dawn on Sunday morning, a hot cup of coffee was available in the cavernous



living room of George's Tundra Tunnel. That day, undeterred by the torrential rains of the day before, Ray again led a band of intrepid stalwarts down the Burnt River, while others tested their mettle in the whitewater of the Gull River under the watchful eye of Bill Ness, or just enjoyed the sunny view.

We thank the members—old and new—who made it such a memorable weekend. We look forward to seeing you at future WCA events.

Gillian Mason



THE LAST FLIGHT

Viki Mather

It looked like the lake had frozen over on the morning of the 7th. After weeks of waiting and watching the lake, it appeared to have frozen over completely in the night when the temperature dipped to -16 C.

On that cold, cold morning, I hiked out to the end of the bay, wandered up the highest hill, and climbed the small tree that gave me a good view of the main body of the lake. The last big hole had been more than 500 yards across, perhaps even a full 1,000 yards long. Through the binoculars I could see that it had all solidified in the night. All except a pressure crack that ran a jagged line across the width of the hole.

Normally, a crack like that would heal itself in the course of a day. There was only a remote chance that it would open wider, wide enough to weaken the adjoining ice and reopen the hole with the next big wind. But then normally, there wouldn't be a duck swimming in that thin patch of water.

I wondered, could I really say that the lake had finally frozen over if there was still enough water for a duck to swim?

I watched it for a long time through the binoculars, trying to figure out what sort of bird it might be. I was too far away to see it clearly enough. Once, it reached up to stretch its wings much in the way that the loons do in summer. Was this a loon that forgot to fly south?

The next morning I hiked out the mile from my house to find out what I could see. This time I stayed on the lake, and was able to walk safely on four inches of clear, strong ice right up to the edge of the new ice from the day before. I knew it was safe because I carried a ten-foot pole and an axe along with me. I checked the ice thickness every now and then, just to be sure.

When I got to the edge of the new ice, I found it was barely an inch thick. I chopped the end off my pole, and stuck it in the ice to mark this spot.

The weather had turned mild, and the pressure crack had not frozen over. The duck still swam happily about. I watched for a long time, trying to figure out what it was. I still couldn't get close enough for a good look. Through the binoculars it seemed to have ruffled feathers like a merganser. But it dove like a loon.

Over the course of a week, I made a daily trek out to the middle of the lake to find out what happened. The weather stayed mild, the pressure crack slowly closed in. The bird kept on swimming. On the Friday morning it had a hole about five by fifteen feet that it swam freely within. I watched as it dove and popped up, dove and rose again. This hole just happened to be located right at the edge of a shoal. Chances were that my friend was eating well.

I still couldn't get close enough to make a positive iden-

tification. The ice remained thin. I knew it would be one of this year's young. It seemed to have the browns of a merganser, and its head feathers were definitely ruffled. Whatever it was, I knew it didn't have much longer to live.

Why hadn't it migrated? Did it lack the instinct required to send it away before the lake froze? Or did it have a deformity that prevented it from flying? Or did it simply procrastinate to the point where there just wasn't enough water left to flap its way free of the water?

Saturday night a storm blew through. The temperature dropped, the north wind came along with new snow. I thought that Sunday would be my last trek to check on the ice, and on a sad little bird that I had come to know.

But no, Sunday wasn't my last look at the lake. The bird had left the hole and sat calmly on the ice about a hundred yards away. The wee bit of water still rippled.

Monday morning I skied on the new snow to the end of our bay. As I came into sight of the bird I could see through the binoculars that it was still alive, still curled up on the ice.

I kept my distance, so as not to create additional stress on this poor creature of the summer lake. I skied instead to the edge of the hole where it had been swimming just a few days before. The ice around the hole finally had thickened enough for safe travel. The hole itself was covered with two inches of clear, new ice.

From there I watched my friend through the binoculars. It looked up at me, then tucked its head back into its wing to rest.

Did it know it was dying? Did it feel the quiet, calm, peacefulness that people speak of when they nearly freeze to death? How long could it survive in the now frigid temperature, without food, without water? I wanted to go to it and cuddle it in my arms, to share my warmth, to feel its soft feathers, to understand why it had to die in this way. Instead, I skied away—to the freedom of travel I now had on the surface of the lake.

Tuesday morning was the last time I had anything to check. From a distance I could see the dark spot where it had died. There was movement, a pair of ravens. The death of the loon meant life for them. For now I could get close enough to see that indeed, it was a young loon. I knelt beside it, and brushed my fingers on the soft, downy white and brown feathers of its breast.



DANCERS, NOT ELECTRONS

Damir Kusec

Just got back from the North. From the clear water, the green-blue giver of life, descending over ancient boulders, transforming itself into white, dancing froth below. From soft, spongy caribou moss, innumerable backbones of hills, unrelenting black guardians of the north, and never-ceasing winds. And of course, the Aurora!

Robert woke us up, as agreed, from peaceful slumber: "The Northern Lights are out!" The chill of the Gulf night took the edge off the sleeping bag warmth, as I worked my way through the old Hudson's Bay Post church building that was our temporary abode. The sky was alive, high above the beach and the dark silhouettes of islands beyond.

For a moment...silence...as we gazed up. Then the analysis started, the attempt to explain. The physics class was in session, so it felt.

Then, all of the sudden, it was over. The link was broken. We must have the right scientific view! We must know! But not for me! Not here! Not on this beach! Not among these hills!

The night sky talked to me in different tongues, ones not made of protons, magnetosphere, or rockets fired from Churchill, high into the sky, measuring it. My connectedness to the land is nurtured by a different mind set. The fuel is spiritual, romantic, and most of all, historic. It is of the people that were here before us and how they envisioned this land. Their view is enough for me.

I did not want to analyse the load on the rafters of the church building roof. I did not want to assess the thermal value of the building walls or if the floor was secured with the correct size nails. It did not matter!

I listened to the walls, the floor and the window views to hear the stories of former inhabitants, of moments that were the life of this place. The smell of old logs, musty cupboards and rows of nail-hooks that carry stories of those before me. The creaks of wood, the peeling paint, the door knob. To touch things of this place. To be absorbed, to wander, imagine, fully, totally, or just a bit. It would be enough.

To "feel" the Aurora is the same, for me.

I dug into my pile of "North Stuff" and came across an old issue of Beaver magazine that talked about the physics class explanation of the Aurora. But more importantly for me, it talked about The Merry Dancers and different interpretations of what is the Aurora.

The Cree believe that the Aurora is the spirits of their departed friends dancing in the clouds. And if it is remarkably bright, at which time they vary most in color, form, and position, their deceased friends are very merry, they say.

The Chipewyans say that deer is plentiful in that part of the sky. Experience has shown them, that when a hairy

deer-skin is briskly stroked with the hand in a dark night, it will emit many sparks of electrical fire.

The Timiskaming Algonquin believe that the Northern Lights are caused by the waves splashing against the rocky shores of northern seas (James Bay), which produce a sort of reflected glow. The seething noise which is sometimes heard when the aurora is visible is attributed to the grinding of the rocks and gravel along the shore of the sea driven by the action of water and wind in the North.

The Inuit of Labrador believe the highest heaven is located in the Aurora. The sky is a great dome of hard material arched over the earth. There is a hole in it through which the spirits pass to the true heavens. Only the spirits of those who have died a voluntary or violent death and women who die in childbirth, and the raven, have been over this pathway. The spirits who live there light torches to guide the feet of new arrivals. This is the light of the Aurora. They can be seen there feasting and playing football with a walrus skull. The whistling, crackling noise which sometimes accompanies the Aurora is the voices of these spirits trying to communicate with the people of the earth. They should always be answered in a whispering voice. Youths and small boys dance to the aurora.

That is my kind of dance!

* * * * *

From *The Ballad of Northern Lights*, by Robert Service:

Oh, it was wild and weird and wan, and ever in camp o' nights

We would watch and watch the silver dance of the mystic Northern Lights.

And soft they danced from the Polar sky and swept in primrose haze;

And swift they pranced with their silver feet, and pierced with a blinding blaze.

They danced a cotillion in the sky; they were rose and silver shod;

It was not good for the eyes of man — 'twas a sight for the eyes of God.

It made us mad and strange and sad, and the gold whereof we dreamed

Was all forgot, and our only thought was of the lights that gleamed.

They rolled around with a soundless sound like softly bruised silk;

They poured into the bowl of the sky with the gentle flow of milk.

In eager, pulsing violet their wheeling chariots came,

*Or they poised above the Polar rim like a coronal of flame.
From depths of darkness fathomless their lancing rays were
hurled,
Like the all-combining search-lights of the navies of the
world.
There on the roof-pole of the world as one bewitched I gazed,
And howled and grovelled like a beast as the awful splendors
blazed.
My eyes were seared, yet thralled I peered through the parka
hood nigh blind;
But I staggered on to the lights that shone, and never I looked
behind.*



WINTER WARMTH

Judith Wolfe

In February last winter, I had the opportunity to go winter camping in Algonquin Park. Herb Pohl was the trip organizer and there were to be four of us: Herb, Brian Corcoran, Roger Nelles, and myself.

I could tell you about how far we hauled the loaded toboggans but I didn't measure the distance and really it probably wasn't that far.

I could tell you about how heavy the load was but I forgot to weigh it before I left home. The heaviness was my own fault anyway, since Herb had the tent and stove already in and set up. He described the tent as a "snug" fit for four. He certainly thought I took way too much stuff and he was right, of course. But how do you ever learn what you can live without until you've hauled it around a bit!

I could tell you about the thrill of surviving at temperatures I didn't think possible.

I could tell you about the wonderful generosity of heart of those fellows who pulled their own heavier sleds and then pulled mine, and the beautiful lies they told: "Oh, I'll only give you a hand just over the steep hill part and then it's all yours again." Right—I do know the difference between a hill and a flat stretch and they pulled it farther than just those hills. Roger and Brian, thank you.

I could also tell you about the skill and strength and stamina of Herb and how he does it all with wit. But many of you have travelled with him, winter and summer, and know him better than I do.

What I really like to tell you about is a bird, the white-winged crossbill. They were alive and singing in the tops of the evergreens from the minute I arrived at the Track and Tower parking lot on Friday morning until I got back on Sunday afternoon. All day, they were everywhere and always at the most incredible minus temperatures. Their song accompanied me over the trail into the camp when I was so tired I thought my legs would break off at the knees. They sang on each exploration "hike."

The singing that I will always remember, though, was Saturday morning about 6:30 at -29 C. I was very, very cold. The night had been way too long in a claustrophobic, panic-inducing, first-ever try-out of a mummy bag; a sleeping bag / blanket arrangement that was

barely adequate. And the forecast was for lower temperatures for the night yet to come. I wanted to wimp out.

Brian had said that he might bring a cell phone. I decided that I would ask to borrow it; I would phone my husband, John, to meet me a day earlier than planned and I would pull that darn-blasted toboggan back out.

However, there were two sounds that changed my mind. The sweetest sound I think I've ever heard was the sound of Roger scrunching newspaper for a morning fire. And then those birds! Such cheerful, vigorous song so very early in the morning, even before the sun rose, to give me heart when I was feeling discouraged about how cold the past night had been and the night to come would perhaps be even colder.

If those birds could not only survive but thrive and sing and if they didn't have the advantage of what was by now a crackling, snapping fire, then I certainly could stay. So I did.

Later that day, after a good breakfast and when we were out and about on snowshoes, there were more crossbills. This time, they were not up in the very tops of the evergreens to catch the morning sun but up close on bushes at eye level. How sweet to have the birds so close. In a misguided attempt to lighten the toboggan load, I had left the binoculars at home. But I could still see their details and their identification marks. They were a bird brand new to me.

Later in the day, the same thing happened with a small flock of Boreal chickadees. They cheerfully called their way through a stand of short evergreens and landed all around me. Such a gift for the birds to come within inches, that I might see them up close. I had thought that I might see moose tracks or perhaps be lucky to find a shed antler, but the gifts were more subtle — two beautiful birds and each came close and each sang about vitality and a way of living.

On Sunday afternoon near the end of the hauling-out part of the trip, I told Herb that the whole experience was perhaps a bit like having babies! It might cause even a strong woman to weep, but when it was over, all you remembered was the joy.

I'm glad I had the chance to go.

TWO RIVERS, TWO KIDS

Robert Herendeen

At last we were free of whitewater and I could let up. We bounced down the last of the seven drops in Four-Mile Rapids, stopping once to bail, and were cast out on smoothwater under etched, high, sandy banks. It was surprisingly abrupt. There was still some water sloshing in the boat but we were free and the word “deliverance” echoed in my head.

The Missinaibi turned right. It was placid, but had a sweep and impetus, a long-range view and agenda that I had not felt on the Shield. There the bedrock had told the river what to do. Thunderhouse Falls was a geologic gauntlet, the water being thrashed by the terrain, forced to drop, slam right, drop, drop, and slam left—beaten till it had no memory of the 200 miles upriver. Now on the James Bay Lowlands the river could do what it wanted, mostly, to the glacial sand and gravel.

We camped on a boulder bar and made a fire in an ancient white man’s fireplace that had no charcoal. The water ran still and friendly. Breathing freer, I saw more. The reddish veins in a streamside rock flashed; the air was soft and glowing. Later, in slanting light, things previously invisible threw shadows and jumped out of the background. We noticed three even older fire rings close to the water.

Though the average gradient was only 3.5 feet per mile from now on, the river ran fast, perhaps three miles per hour at this high water. A big river gets more speed out of a given drop than a small one. The sun, the sweep, my giddy expansiveness—I had felt them before, 25 years before, on another river, the Dubawnt.

On the Dubawnt I was a late-recruited novice, a bow-paddler burning for wilderness and totally inexperienced in fast water. Only on the last real rapids, below Marjorie Lake, had I acted on my own rather than waiting for commands—sometimes anguished—from the stern (like Dick’s “relax! relax!” as I almost fell out of the narrow, varnish-smooth bow of his Prospector when we swept down from Nicholson to Dubawnt Lake two weeks before). Now there was our bright red Grumman, dazzling sun, and silver-peaked waves over luminous light-brown rocks. The others were lining right, and we were running left. My body, from knees to shoulders, remembered the fluid swing from draw to cross-draw, and I remembered pulling the bow where I decided we should go. It worked, and George complimented me. I relaxed into the comfort of “no more rapids.”

On the Missinaibi I was the titular leader of our four-person party—my son Paul, 13, my daughter Laurel, 17, and Dan Gavrilovic, recruited late but a terrific, easy-going, and competent companion who made the trip work. With my kids I had been talking up the Missinaibi

during a decade of trips to Quetico and to easy Ozark and Montana rivers. I wanted one below the tree line, recalling how the screaming Arctic winter always stalked us out under the sky on the Barrens (in our heads, that is; it never materialized). One pretty easy river, a stepping stone, perhaps, to something farther north some day, Missinaibi: 360 miles, 25 portages, ca. 50 rapids and swifts. Rail access at both ends.

It was tough enough. I knew I would be too serious and worrying that the kids would push the limits every day, and that I would often say “no.” But I vowed to lighten up, and I did—some—and we ran a few things. The Missinaibi was high and it was hard to hit rocks but there were big waves and a current that could not be overpowered.



In whitewater, even easy stuff, I savored Faulkner’s taste of brass. I remembered the Dubawnt, where we could first hear, then see the spitting, jumping water far ahead. Looking tentatively back to the stern I would always see a bright and eager face that said “Hell, it’s runnable,” but I rued rapids and welcomed portaging. On day 5 on the Missinaibi, we portaged our gear past Wavy Rapids and I insisted, my mouth so dry that my tongue stuck to the roof, that Paul and I run empty. I figured we would dump but that was OK; maybe that would cool Paul’s knee-jerk affinity for whitewater. And I needed to face the dragon. So Laurel sculled attentively in the pool below, Dan got positioned with a camera, and Paul and I lined up and drifted down. As we sped up I felt a certain release and said, “We’re gonna make it, Paul” and I believed it. Then the waves were big and brown and we purposely hit a curl just right of the heavy stuff at centre. Bad idea with all that flotation: the bow went up and the boat tilted left and our

braces were too weak. Paul was falling out and I slanted into the water, which whipped off my glasses, in spite of their hook temple pieces. I caught them before I resurfaced but couldn't put them back on for 10 seconds as the streaming water jerked me into a calmer place. Paul was bobbing and laughing.

One later time I felt a brief, similar freedom, in Albany Rapids. We were weaving down and having fun. Dan and Laurel had stopped just before rapids' end. Due to crossed visual signals (it is hard to admit this), Paul and I ran past them down to an unexpected two-foot ledge. We were caught and for a few seconds I was again free as I realized we had no choice. So... let's see what happens. Straighten it out and "Hit it, Paul, and brace!" and we scraped over, shipping no water at all.

Except for these moments I was where I had been 25 years before, wanting dependability instead of unpredictability, preferring to plod instead of fly. My kids will tell you that none of this was very difficult, that I am uptight and that this concern is my problem. They want to run, swim in, and rock-climb above whitewater. Laurel breaststroked up and down the river at Alice Island; both swam madly below Thunder Falls. Paul played in the standing waves below St. Peter's Rapids. He had dragged the canoe halfway up, intending to run down solo, when I intervened because (I said) of a potential wraparound, but I also envisioned a pinning. Laurel was just starting solo up an easy class 5 rock pitch over the third drop at Thunderhouse Falls when my scream from across river, barely detectable above the roar, stopped her.

My children: At the end of the last portage, into Nym Lake, on the 12th day of their first Quetico trip together in 1987, they had "stolen" the canoe while I went back for a second load. As I returned Gail said, "The boat is missing!" I thought to myself that it was possible: Nym is a motorboat lake and accessible to all kinds of people. And then Paul (bow, 6 years) and Laurel (stern, 10 years) came around the point singing "Roll My Ball" wearing their life jackets rakishly unzipped.

Now, seven years after Quetico and 2 1/2 months after Paul wanted to solo St. Peter's Rapids and Laurel want-

ed to swim below the third drop at Thunderhouse, the kids are engaged otherwise with life. Paul is a cross-country runner and Laurel is in Australia doing photosynthesis research. As for me, I have just returned from five days on the Current River in Missouri, a class 1+ float through golden, scintillating fall, with my lady love. I dream of easy northern rivers, knowing that my kids will likely not be interested or available. They will be pushing limits somewhere without my scrutiny or approval, dancing in the risk zone between acquiring physical skills and developing the judgement to accompany them.

It's OK. My parents never rappelled, rock-climbed, spelunked, or winter camped. I had done all of these by age 18; each time I told them afterwards. I likely will never run class 4. My kids may be doing that right now.

When we reached Baker Lake, NWT, on 10 August 1969, I felt deliverance—from the threat of an Arctic blow which did not happen, from 12 days dealing with ice (Boyd through Dubawnt lakes), from squabbles about how hard to push at the end (I had really wanted to linger, and had been a moralistic snit about it). We were graciously put up in the Anglican Mission, sextoned by Thomas Tapiti, who had known the explorers Freuchen and Rasmussen. The next day a Hudson Bay storm smacked Baker Lake. We had just beaten it. The others were touring the town and I was alone in the Sunday School. The rain staccatoed the wall, and outside the wind was three sounds—a buzz, a roar, and a swish. Inside, under the white Jesus on the wall, I felt relief and peace.

On the morning of 6 August 1994, Laurel and I sat in a sunny spot next to the office cabin at Tidewater Provincial Park, cooking up a last bannock. This was trip's end, seven kilometres from Hudson Bay, across river from Moosonee. It was quite a contrast to the previous night near the Abitibi junction, where we were blown ashore by a blast off the Bay and made a chaotic, hypothermic camp in dripping, unbroken bush within distant earshot of the warm Polar Bear Express heading back to Cochrane. As at Baker Lake a quarter-century before, I felt relief, completion, and peace. We had done it, I had done it, and my kids—my kids—were already burning for the next chapter.





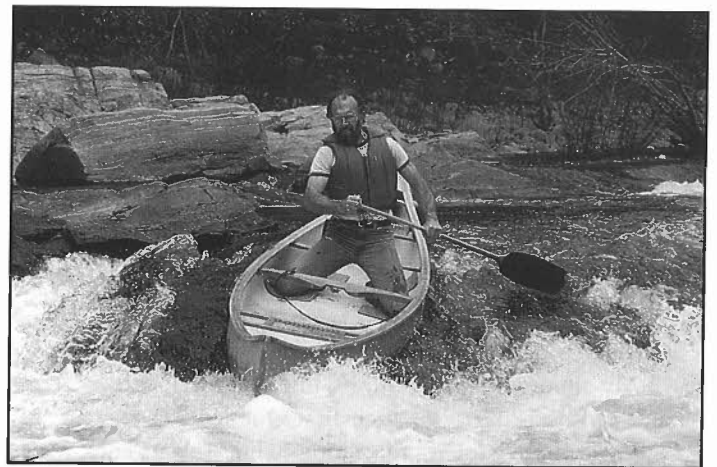
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A few words regarding the Wakwayowkastic River Canoe Guide put out by the Ontario Recreational Canoeing Association. This summer I did a trip down the Wakwayowkastic using this guide, and I found that I was better off to just follow the topographic map and disregard the guide. The guide was based on a trip done in 1985 and as such it was only possible to camp at three of the ten sites marked in the guide. As well, I found that many of the rapids were more difficult than the guide would lead you to believe. Also, there were rapids on the river which were not described in the guide, and were only shown as hash marks, even though they were sometimes significant enough to need to be scouted and/or lined. If anyone is planning to paddle this river I would suggest that they not bother with this guide, or if they do they should ensure that they do not rely on it in any way.

Brett Hodnett

PARTNERS WANTED

Anyone need and experienced tripper for a long summer 2004 trip? Tom Elliott: 905-648-1560.



THE MARK ON THE MAP

Sitting around the campfire. Pulled out the map to mark it up with the significant events of the day's travels. Which side of the river the portage was on, how to run the rapids, possible campsites that we passed. I also mark landmarks noticed from canoe level—interesting cliffs, prominent hills, rock shelves, cabins. Lastly, I mark where we are camping tonight and whether the campsite's a good one.

Seems like a lot of marking on the map. However, making notes is the best way to tie the place and the memory. Before we started marking maps we had lots of problems putting the two together. Especially when the canoeing buddies got together to talk about old trips. There seemed to be gaps in pinpointing where we camped, where we fished, where we ran the rapid.

I wonder if the early explorers and fur traders did the same thing. Marked the significant landmarks of their journey on the maps that they had. Ours are 1 to 250:000. Their maps lacked a lot of detail and were on a much larger scale

than ours. They would have fewer landmarks on their maps. But the landmarks that they did have would be memorable—Methye Portage, the falls at Sault Ste. Marie, the left turn to get into the Mattawa River from the Ottawa River, Lachine Rapids.

When they came to a landmark it must have brought great waves of excitement. They now knew where they were. They now knew where they were going. They now knew how far it was.

Still though, they were doing the same thing that we are now doing. Making their mark on a map. The mark on the map becomes a record of the journey. A piece of history. Hopefully, by passing my collection of maps to my sons, I will be passing some of my history to them as well.

It's what I have to give them.

Greg Went

THREE STORIES ON COLD CAMPING

text: Tom Elliott

participants and photos: Tom Elliott and Peter Quelch

HIKING FROM MILE 42 TO GOGAMA, 1- 9 March 2003

Mode of travel: Snowshoes, ski poles, each person pulling two plastic sleds (\$9 kids' type). An eight-day outfit weighs 75 lbs per person. Sled line attached to a quick-release dive belt around hips.



Tent: Not heated, well ventilated. Tepee design made by Tom, clear fabrene tarp material, one pole, no fly.

Hiking distance: 25 miles

Maps: 41 P/12, MNR Provincial Series 41 P/NW

Logistics: VIA Rail train Toronto to Mile 42. After the trip, Ontario Northland bus, Gogama to Toronto. Return by VIA Rail was an option, but the train was running very late.

Route: Started at the CN Rail line Mile 42 south of Gogama. (It would have been better to start further north, at the power line which goes to Pembroke Creek. However, with no obvious landmarks, the train crew had difficulty interpreting our map and we were let off too far south.) We hiked to Gogama via several lakes and creeks including Pembroke, Little Shuller, Londonderry lakes, and the Nobel River.

Weather: Mainly calm and sunny, some light snow, nights -25 C to -47 C, day highs -15 C to -5 C.

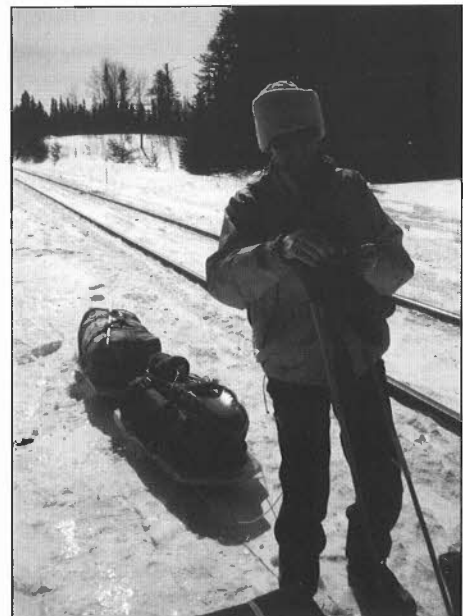
Hiking conditions: Some areas had no trails or the trails were unmarked and rarely used. More frequently used canoe routes had MNR portage signs and good portage trails. Creeks and swamps: snow deep, ice weak. Most lakes: very little slush and good crust for easy walking. What is

most unique about this general area is that the forest, swamps, and alders are open enough to allow one to walk almost anywhere, at least in winter.

Trip data: MNR Gogama, Bill McCord 705-894-3025 or 1-800-667-1940

Hot tip: Most mukluks, including the Canadian Army type, are very heavy. Kamik Outdoor Series mukluks, \$80 at Canadian Tire, are much lighter than any mukluks sold at Mountain Equipment Co-op, Marks Work Warehouse, and other stores, and are warm and easy to use with a well-placed velcro strap. Don't confuse this mukluk with the \$100 Kamik version with a zipper down the back.

Further information: contact Tom 905-648-1560, elliottp@mcmaster.ca



Trip started on the CN tracks

New WCA member Peter Quelch is one of those guys who seems to be able to do anything. Nearing retirement, with an extensive background in sailing, he is anxious to get into serious wilderness tripping and to learn. I met Peter for the first time about two weeks before the trip. He responded to my WCA e-mail ad, which Gary James had sent out, looking for partners. (Thank you Gary.) With my supervision, Peter equipped himself well and on the trip he used vapour barrier systems, adhered to the many rules, and utilized the numerous techniques necessary to live in the cold for an extended period of time. He had great success. I couldn't have had a better partner!



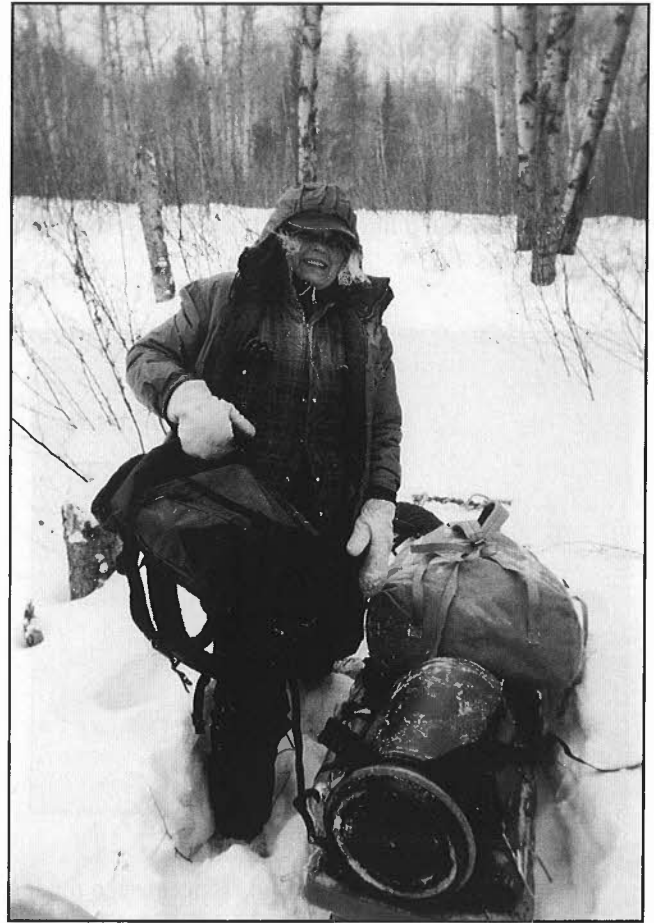
Rough terrain between lakes

For winter trips I consult the MNR for an update on geography, snow and ice conditions, the presence of buildings, logging areas, snowmachines, etc. Bill McCord and Dave, the MNR biologist at the Gogama office, were most helpful and encourage travel in their area. Bill said that there are four townships southeast of Gogama, north of Hwy 144, which are—at least for now—undeveloped and not logged. Intended use is fishing and wilderness tripping. It is a very scenic area, quite pristine, and obviously rarely travelled.



We also owe thanks to Lise's Lakeview Retreat and Spa at Gogama for providing a place to stay at the end of the trip, gratis. Mike and Lise are most hospitable and gave us rides to town as well.

WCA member Jay Nielsen, a most adventuresome lady, got on the train at Capreol and joined us for the first night at Mile 42. The next day she started walking the 14-mile rail line to Gogama and fortunately got a ride with a track repair crew. In Gogama she enjoyed three days of cross-country skiing.



Jay Neilson leaving for Gogama

COLD CAMPING: WHAT TO CALL IT

Apparently, everyone knows what this term means. However, "cold camping" is a misnomer. It is actually warm camping. One can't be cold for an extended period of time. Our bodies generate the heat we need. Except for campfires—a rarity on my trips—there is no external heat source. Our clothing and sleeping bag retain the heat we generate. We live in a cocoon. It is, in fact, warm camping.

What to call it? How about "internally generated heat camping?" This is too wordy. Any suggestions?

Hot tips: For maximum comfort, stay out more than two or three days. The body needs time to adjust to the cold. Metabolism increases and exposed skin toughens.

To avoid rain (most problematic even with rain gear), trip north of Sudbury and North Bay.

VAPOUR BARRIER LINERS

The vapour barrier (VB) concept has been used in the construction industry for decades. But, like using helmets for whitewater canoeing, it is a good idea which is slow to catch on. The outdoor clothing industry brainwashes us with wicking and breathability, easy concepts to understand. They don't produce much vapour barrier clothing and would probably have difficulty getting sales people and the public to understand it.

A vapour barrier liner prevents body moisture from making insulating layers wet. Dry insulation keeps us warmer. It also reduces dehydration, most important for physical activity and keeping warm.

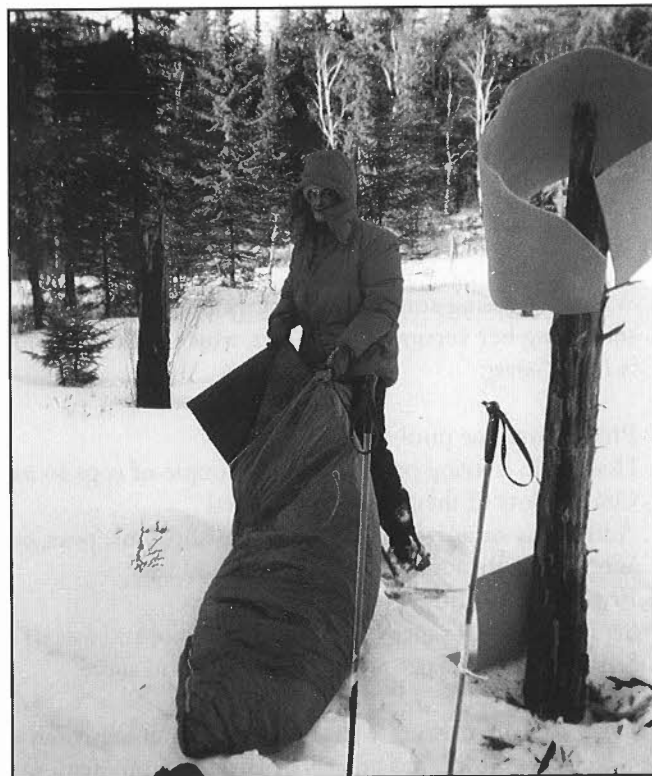
Waterproof materials are required for VB clothing. To make sure a material is waterproof, wet your lips and suck on the material. No air should come through. Coated nylon is most common. Essential VB items are a sac inside the sleeping bag (the most important VB item), socks, shirt, and mittens.

In rain and snow, it is important to wear a waterproof outer layer to protect insulating layers from the outside. For more comfort, wear thin synthetic liner socks under VB socks and a light-weight synthetic shirt (Lifa) under the VB shirt. Inside the VB sleeping bag liner, you can wear the VB shirt with all your underwear. Coated nylon wind shells make good VB shirts.

Instead of mittens, rubber gloves could be used, but separating fingers in a glove could make them cold. VB mittens must be hand-made as they are not available commercially. Much of the work requiring the use of bare hands can be done wearing VB mittens alone. They trap warm air, and being very thin, fingers can be used readily.



Tom wearing Stevenson VB shirt



Putting mats into mat pocket of Stevenson bag

Neoprene canoe socks are excellent as VB socks: They are warm and fit snug without the wrinkles of nylon VB socks, which could make feet sore. In Mukluks, all that is needed are thin synthetic liner socks, 3mm neoprene socks, and felt liners. Take VB socks off at night to let feet air out!

You should not get too wet. Avoid sweating by removing insulating layers if you get too warm. When down to one garment over the VB shirt, remove the VB shirt. VB clothing is useful for any cold weather activity including running and canoeing. Any moisture accumulating in the sleeping bag VB liner will dissipate in a few seconds.

Clothing will dry inside a VB sleeping bag liner. Enough air goes in and out during the long winter nights to permit drying. Put felt mukluk liners and most clothing worn during the day in the bag overnight. It dries, is warm to put on in the morning, and doesn't freeze hard if quite wet the day before.

VB products are sold by Jack Stevenson, Gilford NH. whs@cyberportal.net 603-293-8526. His sleeping bags are lined with VB aluminized nylon. VB shirts have a fuzzy inner surface for a soft, warm feel.

Campmor in NJ sells VB nylon socks, US \$20: www.campmor.com 1-800-226-7667.

Mountain Equipment Co-Op sells VB sleeping bag liners \$40-\$45, and 3 mm neoprene canoe socks.

Textile Outfitters, Calgary, sell by mail-order: coated nylon, light and medium weight and coated ripstop. 403-543-7676, fax 403-543-7677.

FOOD FOR PADDLERS

Number 4 in a series of recipes/ideas from the **2002 Food Seminar**
hosted by Doug and Lisa Ashton

When discussing some typical meals that we would have on a canoe trip, **FRIED RICE** came up. Elisabeth La Fontaine sent along her version of fried rice which sounds wonderful. According to Elisabeth the correct Malay name for fried rice is *Nasi Goreng*.

Prepare the rice until it is "al dente"

Heat oil in a frying pan and cook a couple of eggs to make an omelette, put on the side and cut into strips

Onions, lots of them, cut up and fried

Add in any or all of the following: mushrooms, peas, corn, peppers, shrimp, tuna, ham

When cooked, add the rice and more oil

Fry together lightly

Season with soy sauce, a touch of Tabasco, and lots of crushed garlic

Stir the omelette strips through the rice and serve.

Some tips if you don't want to pack in fresh ingredients:

- use egg powder as an egg replacement, mix with water, add to the hot rice mixture, and stir
- mushrooms, peas, corn, peppers can all be dehydrated and then rehydrated while cooking the rice
- bring along curry powder as an optional spice

Gisela Curwin had lots of suggestions for adding an **INTERNATIONAL FLAVOUR** to your canoe trip:

Miso paste—use one tablespoon for 4 cups of soup

Ghee—clarified butter, keeps well, found in many Indian stores

Whey Cheese—good for long travel, source: Ski Queen Brand Gjetost Whey Cheese, 500 g pack, made by TINE

Norwegian Dairies BA, Oslo, Norway

Biltong—South African beef jerky, available at Florence Meat Supplies, 81 Florence Drive, Oakville, 905-842-2066. Also available at Baxter's Fine Foods, 789 Sheppard Ave East, 416-223-7011 (according to Gary James)

Bread—dark pumpernickel, tortillas—pack nicely and travel well

Rice—Calrose Japanese rice, round-corn, has lots of starch and kernels stick together more than other rice; available in any Chinese/Japanese store

Nori-dried seaweed—comes in flat sheets and can be cut like paper or shredded to any size to sprinkle over food

We get mail: Aleksander Gusev wrote inquiring about the source for Hard Tack included in the recipe Chickpea and Onion Stew in the Summer 2003 issue of *Nastawgan*. The Purity Company of Newfoundland makes a product called Hard Bread. This is available in Loblaws and Dominion stores in Ontario. If you can't find it call Purity's toll-free number 1-800-563-3411. As well, Purity is on the Internet at www.purity.nf.ca.

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



Upper Parisien Rapids, French River

photo: Toni Harting

WCA OUTINGS

**WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND HAVE IT
PRESENTED IN THE SPRING ISSUE?
Contact the Outings Committee before 8 Feb.**

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 outings 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.

+++++

28 December

ROUGE RIVER --- FAMILY HIKE

Gary & Geri James, 416-512-6690 or wca@sympatico.ca, book anytime ---- Join us for a fun day of hiking in the Rouge River area at this beautiful time of year. This is a great way to work off that festive dinner and start on that New Year's resolution. The last two years we have had beautiful snowy days and outstanding scenery. Look at our trip report in the last issue of Nastawgan. Bring a camera, warm cloths and trail snacks. We will meet at 10:00 am at the Pearse House on Twyn River Drive off Meadowvale Road near the Toronto Zoo. Check out <http://www.rivernen.htm> for a map of the area and trails.

31 January

SKI & DINE

Harrison Jolly, 905-689-1733, book by 24 January ---- Meet for a day of cross-country skiing at Bronte Creek Provincial Park. Then enjoy a hardy and delicious dinner.

7 February

KOLAPORE UPLANDS SKI TRAILS

Dave Sharp, 519-846-2586, book before 1 February ---- Join us and ski on a complex network of trails through the beautiful winter woods near Collingwood on an outlying part of the Niagara Escarpment, along the eastern edge of the Beaver Valley. Suitable for strong intermediate to advanced skiers. Limit of eight.

13-15 February

ALGONQUIN CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING AND SNOWSHOEING

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, book by 31 January ---- If you love Algonquin, why not experience it during winter, with no bugs, crowds or portages? We will head out for a full day's skiing on the beautiful Leaf Lake Trail system, which has a cozy heated lunch shelter with an awesome view over frozen lakes and snowy hills. Depending on snow conditions, we plan to spend the rest of our stay discovering other trails skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and/or tubing. Our base will be a heated yurt at Mew Lake campground. Limit five intermediate skiers.

21 February

EQUIPMENT SHOW-AND-TELL FOR NEW AND NOT-SO-NEW PADDLERS

Jon McPhee and Dian Connors, 905-640-8819, book before 14 February ---- A late afternoon / evening to share your experiences with some of the paddling or camping equipment you have bought and liked or hated. If each person could bring one thing they really like and one thing that would not make the upset if it got left back at the last campsite, we can learn from each other's good fortune and dismal failures. Potluck supper. 13701 Ninth Line, Stouffville, Ontario, L4A 7X3. Limit of 16 participants or one fully outfitted canoe.

March-May

BLACK (WASHAGO), HEAD & MOIRA RIVERS

Fred Lum, 416-482-3774 ---- The Black near Washago and the Head a little farther southeast have some very interesting whitewater sections if you catch them at the right levels. Both are quite different despite their close proximity. The Head is a technical little creek with a number of small ledges that will test a good intermediate's route finding and precision boat-handling skills. The Black has some super surfing waves that make for a day full of fun even for experienced novices. Down Belleville way, the Moira has a very challenging upper section at Lost Channel, requiring solid intermediate skills to negotiate a series of ledges with large waves. There is also a roller-coaster-ride section farther down through long, easy rapids from Chisholm's Mill to the takeout at Latta that all paddlers from skilled novice up will enjoy. I keep my eyes on water levels and go when things look good. If you want to get on my call list for these trips, just send me an e-mail to roocnu@interog.com.

13 March

RIVER SAFETY WORKSHOP

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, book before 6 March ----- Spring thaw is fast approaching. Time to get the gear in shape to hit the water. What better time to sharpen up those river safety skills---before you actually need them. We'll get together at my place on Saturday afternoon for some fun and mutual learning focused on river safety and rescue skills. I have some suggestions for topics and activities: outfitting of open boats for safe paddling, rescue gear, outdoor practice setting up Z-drags and other recovery line systems, group discussion and analysis of situations that you have personally been in, discussion of how you would handle some hypothetical situations, and viewing of instructional videos. However, I'd like you to tell me what is of most interest to you, and we'll be sure to cover it. Highly recommended for new river paddlers; meet new friends and learn some invaluable skills. Dinner will be pot luck. Limit of 10 people

20 March

OAKVILLE CREEK

Steve Lukasko, 905-276-8285, book before 13 March ----- Oakville Creek is a smaller, more technical version of the Lower Credit to its west. It's pretty much continuous class 1-2, with some metre-high waves in spots. If the water is high, its tight turns and the risk of sweepers make it a challenging run for good intermediates. However, the watershed is small, and participants are required to pray for rain or run-off earlier in the week to ensure the trip goes. Limit six boats.

21 March

LOWER CREDIT RIVER

Barry Godden, 416-440-4208, book before 14 March ----- From Streetsville to the golf course, the Credit can provide some exciting challenges for intermediate paddlers. The fast-moving, icy water requires properly equipped boats, and wetsuits or drysuits. Limit six boats.

27 March

MOIRA RIVER

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, book before 20 March ----- A great early spring whitewater run for anyone who has a good wetsuit/drysuit and isn't adverse to a swim in cold water. We will only be an hour from our cars at most if the weather turns cold or you need and après-swim warm up. The technical difficulty is about a class 2. As long as you have protective clothing for swimming in cold water, the river isn't a problem. This is a good river to paddle to get experience for more difficult rivers. Tandem canoes must have full flotation bags. Limit six boats.

28 March

LOWER CREDIT RIVER

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, book before 21 March ----- A classic early spring trip for Toronto area paddlers. We'll catch the river in Streetsville and run down to the mouth at Port Credit. The river is a delightful continuous class 1 to 2 with lots of play spots. However, as sweepers can present a hazard and the water will be cold, participants should be at least intermediates, and wear a wetsuit or drysuit. Limit of six boats.

3 April

BEAVER CREEK

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, book before 28 March ----- This will be a challenging whitewater run suitable for advanced-level whitewater paddlers with fully outfitted canoes and proper cold-weather attire. Note: if the river isn't open yet, we could switch to the Moira. Limit five boats.

9 April

BEAVER CREEK ENCORE

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, book before 2 April ----- You had so much fun with us last week that you want to come back again; and besides, you have to pick up the Thermos that you left at the lunch spot.

16 April

BEAVER CREEK FINALE

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, book before 9 April ----- Just can't get enough of that Beaver Creek! Your final chance to do it again.

18 April

UPPER BLACK RIVER

Harrison Jolly, 905-689-1733, book by 11 April ----- This Black River near Madoc has two sections you can paddle. The Upper Black requires advanced paddling skills. Helmets, wetsuits, or drysuits, as well as full flotation are needed. Limit six boats.

24 April

UPPER MADAWASKA RIVER

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, book before 17 April ----- A day of whitewater excitement for advanced paddlers. The upper Madawaska is a fast-flowing pool-and-drop river with quiet stretches interspersed with some very serious rapids. All rapids can, and some must, be portaged. Wetsuits or drysuits, helmets, and fully outfitted whitewater boats with full flotation are a must. Limit six boats.

30 April – 2 May

ALGONQUIN SPRING HIKE AND CANOE

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, book by 10 April ----- Come and enjoy the Rain Lake area at the west end of Algonquin Park before the crowds and bugs arrive! Our base will be the cozy Rain Lake ranger cabin, which should keep us dry and warm at night this early in the season. (Let's hope the snow and ice are gone by then --- last year's outing had to be 'adjusted' at the last minute, as access roads and lakes were still covered with ice!) We have the choice of exploring the lakes and rivers by canoe, or hiking on the Western Uplands Backpacking Trail.

May

BRONTE CREEK

Harrison Jolly, 905-689-1733, book any time in May ----- Join us any weeknight for a scenic paddle down the Bronte Creek. This creek has easy access and the outing is suitable for beginners in any type of canoe. Limit six boats.

1 May

UPPER MADAWASKA AGAIN

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, book before 24 April ----- We're back on the Upper Mad one more time. Join us for a repeat of last week's exciting adventure.

1-2 May

MAGNETAWAN RIVER

Al Sutton, 905-985-0261, book before 24 April ----- The Magnetawan is an exciting whitewater river containing class 2-3 rapids, as well as some falls that must be portaged. We will paddle from Ahmic Lake to Maple Island both days, running one of the two outlets from Ahmic Lake for variety. This is a great trip for strong intermediate paddlers. Wetsuits or drysuits, helmets, and properly outfitted boats are a must. Limit six boats.

22-24 May

LOWER MADAWASKA RIVER

Larry Durst, 905-415-1152 or larry.g.durst@snapon.com , book early ----- Join us for the 4th annual spring paddle / wine-and-cheese party. We paddle from above Aumonds Bay to the take-out at Griffith, a distance of only 28 km. The pace is leisurely with only the Sunday being a full day of paddling and most of that is spent on the Snake Rapids section of the river. Rapids will range from grades 1 to 4 and there are a couple of short portages around falls. Water levels are likely to be quite high and the water cold. Last year was sunny but we have experienced snow on this trip, so participants will need to dress and pack appropriately. Suitable for intermediate paddlers. Limit six boats.

29-30 May

INTERMEDIATE WHITEWATER CLINIC

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, book before 15 May ----- Saturday will be spent on the Lower Madawaska, and Sunday the clinic will move to Palmer Rapids. Participants can camp overnight on Saturday at our cottage. This clinic will focus on refining the skills of intermediate moving-water paddlers, teaching them more advanced open boat skills. Limit six boats.

31 July-2 August

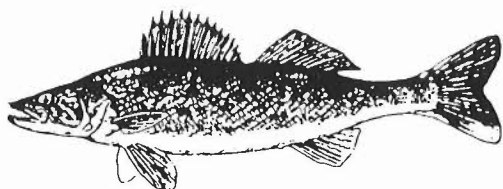
OTTAWA RIVER

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, book before 24 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. Limit six boats.

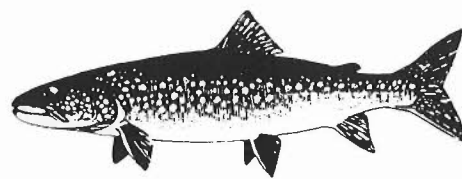
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FOR SHORT-NOTICE TRIPS, CHECK THE WCA WEBSITE BULLETIN BOARD

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://www.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.



Walleye



Lake Trout

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

This PRODUCTS AND SERVICES section is available, free of charge and on a first-come, first-served basis, to members as well as non-members for their announcements regarding items for sale, special products, discounts, services, courses, etc. Contact the editor if more information is required.

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

- Algonquin Outfitters, RR#1, Oxtongue Lake, Dwight, ON
- Suntrail Outfitters, 100 Spence Str., Hepworth, ON
- Smoothwater Outfitters, Temagami (Hwy. 11), ON

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

SKIING AT KUKAGAMI LODGE Kukagami Lodge, located halfway between Sudbury and Temagami as the raven flies, offers great wilderness cross-country skiing. Twenty eight kilometres of classic track, comfortable log cabin accommodation, wonderful food. This place is remote; you have to ski to get to the lodge! We will bring in your luggage. Check out our website, www.kukagamilodge.com, or give us a call: 705-853-4929.

SPRAY DECKS AND TARPS If you are planing a whitewater 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.

DUMOINE RIVER SHUTTLES Drive-in shuttles are available to the Dumoine River. Cut your costs and waiting time. Also full shuttle service for the Petawawa. Contact Valley Ventures in Deep River at 613-584-2577 and at vent@magma.ca

EDDY INN ACCOMMODATION Overnight at the Eddy Inn for your next trip on the Dumoine, Noire, Coulouge, and Petawawa rivers. Full-service accommodation for \$25.00 per night. Contact Valley Ventures in Deep River at 613-584-2577 and at vent@magma.ca

BLUE CANOE BARRELS Members of the Durham Outdoor Club buy 30-litre blue canoe barrels for \$7.00 from a man named Reg (last name not known or offered) at 718 Dundas Street West (opposite a Tim Horton's coffee shop) in Whitby, Ontario; 905-665-6132. Call him first to see if he has any or when he will get them. If you are driving by you can see the display on his front lawn. They are clean and seconds from a company he works for. Wall Mart sells a back-pack that fits the barrel nicely. These are made by Aero Luggage and carry the name Outdoor Gear on the pack; cost is \$19.96 plus tax. This pack also has side pockets and extra room at the top and straps for more gear if needed. This barrel+pack combination is much cheaper than buying them in camping stores. (Information supplied by Gary James.)

TOBOGGANS FOR SALE Modified: upswept front, tapered front-to-rear surface treated for easy glide on winter trails and snowshoe tracks. Hard maple slats, screwed (not stapled) to sturdy cross bars with tie-down cords attached. Two, six feet, \$50 each; one six feet with a four-foot detachable extension \$70. Jim Greenacre, 416-759-9956.

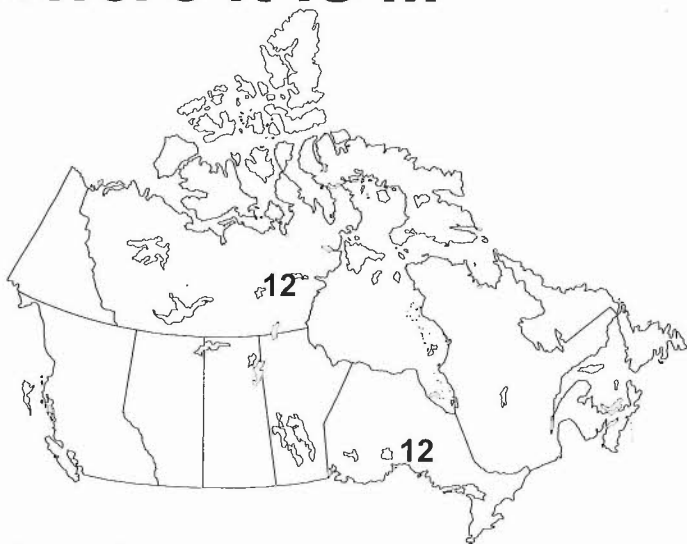
GEAR FOR SALE Whites Large Drysuit, \$100; Dagger Vengeance Kayak, \$450; Aquabound C-1 Carbon Paddle (57 inches long), \$100; Dagger Cascade C-1 (this boat has been beaten up), FREE! Contact Barry at 416-440-4208.

MEN'S BASKETBALL Would you like to get in shape for spring paddling? Get in shape and have fun on Tuesday nights in North Toronto. Contact Barry at 416-440-4208.



Demonstration at Canadian Canoe Museum

Where it is ...



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WCA Postal Address:

P.O.Box 91068
2901 Bayview Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
M2K 2Y6

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

George Drought (Chair)
43 Brodick Street
Hamilton, ON, L8S 3E3
905-528-0059
gdrought@wilderness
bound.com

Doug Ashton
Cambridge, Ont.
519-654-0336
doug.ashton@sympatico.ca

Gisela Curwen
Toronto, Ont.
416-484-1471
gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca

Leslie Dutton
Toronto, Ont.
416-424-1087
ladutton@ica.net

Gillian Mason
Toronto, Ont.
416-752-9596
wakimika@pathcom.com

Evan Wood
Toronto, Ont.
416-690-9472

WCA Contacts

SECRETARY
Bill King
45 Hi Mount Drive
Toronto, Ont. M2K 1X3
416-223-4646
lyonrcx@aol.com

WCA OUTINGS
Bill Ness
194 Placentia Blvd.
Toronto, Ont. M1S 4H4
416-321-3005
bness@look.ca

<http://www.wildernesscanoe.ca>

JOURNAL EDITOR
Toni Harting
7 Walmer Road, Apt. 902
Toronto, Ont. M5R 2W8
416-964-2495
aharting@sympatico.ca

TREASURER
Howard Sayles
Toronto, Ontario
416-921-5321

WEBMASTER
Jeff Haymer
Toronto, Ontario
416-635-5801
jhaymer@ionsys.com

**MEMBERSHIP and
COMPUTER RECORDS**
Gary James
27 Canary Cres.
North York, Ont. M2K 1Y9
416-512-6690
wca@sympatico.ca

CONSERVATION
Erhard Kraus
Scarborough, Ont.
416-293-3755
erhard@interlog.com

