

Willow Handle Lake looking southeast

MOUNTAIN RIVER

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photographs: Fred Argue and Penny King

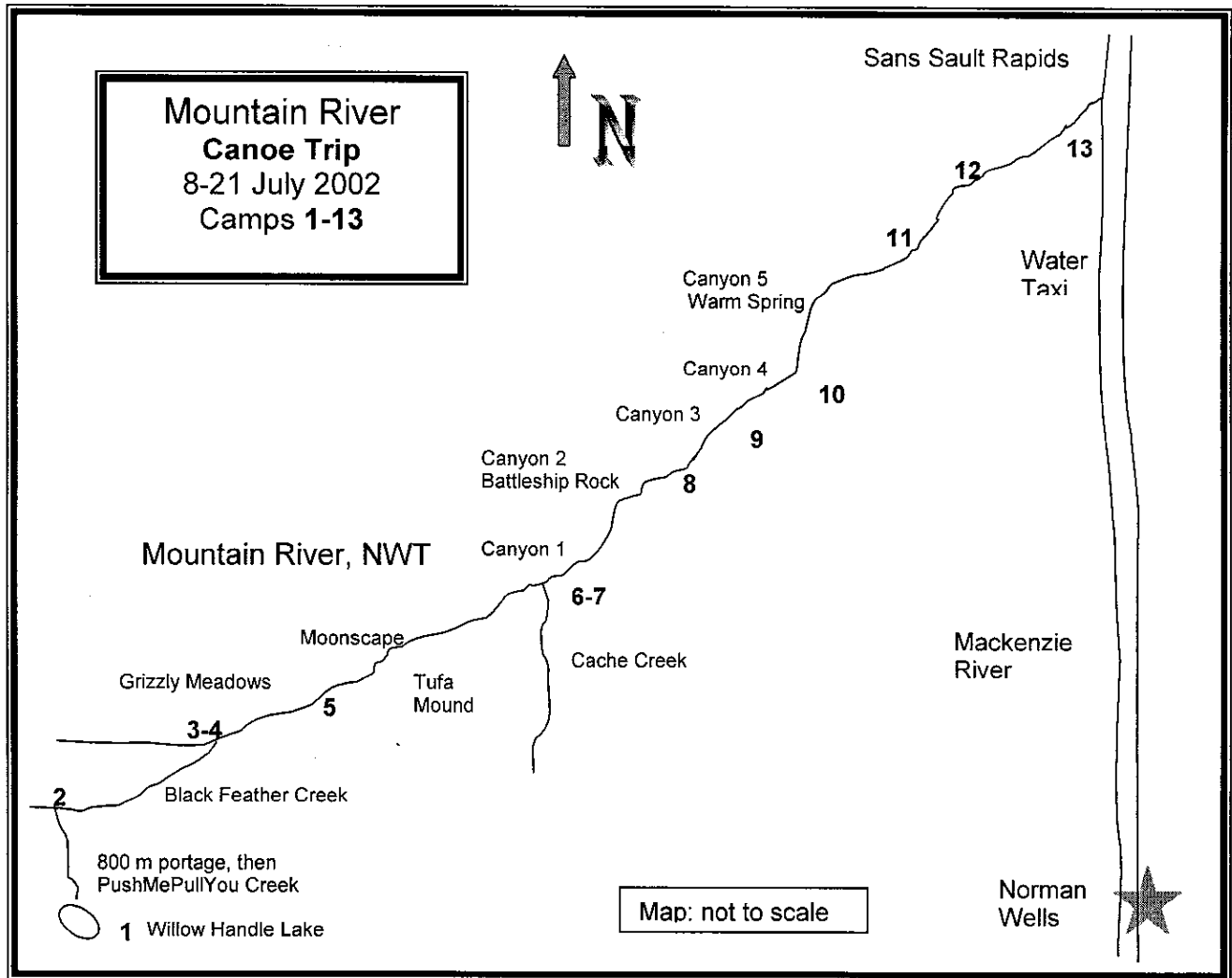
INTRODUCTION

In this report are recorded some events and thoughts surrounding a self-guided canoe trip on the Mountain River in the North West Territories, which took place from 8 to 21 July 2002. There were eight of us, two females and six males, with ages ranging from 45 to 60, a mature collection in age and experience. These paddlers collectively had a great number of years of paddling experience and many thousands of accumulated adventure kilometres. The success of our trip was almost guaranteed by the quality of

the river combined with the human and canoe skills within our group. Excellent support from people in Norman Wells and near-perfect weather and water levels certainly helped greatly.

PLANNING

The Mountain River is located some 240 km north of the Nahanni and flows from the Mackenzie Mountains in a northeast direction into the Mackenzie River at Sans Sault Rapids between the towns of Norman Wells (80 km



upstream) and Fort Good Hope (102 km downstream). In summer this region has daylight for 24 hours.

When Black Feather Wilderness Adventures lists the Mountain as their "Guides' Choice" it means something. On the Internet we found several trip logs that all pointed in the same direction: this is a spectacular but serious river. Paddling the right river can certainly make a big difference to the success of an expedition. The Mountain turned out to be perfectly suited to our group. Because of its remote location and serious water, we would suggest this river not be undertaken without a guide or considerable personal experience.

Initial planning started about one year prior to the event, and early 2002 we had eight people committed who would paddle in four boats: Allan Strader and Mark Alexander, Neil Alexander and Andy Blaine, Carol (Blaine) Aberdeen and Geoff Aberdeen, Penny King and Fred Argue.

We were also able to set the schedule: 7 July departure from Toronto by regular airline, overnight in Edmonton at a hotel, 8 July flight to Norman Wells, and then onwards by bush plane to the Mountain River the same day, followed by the actual canoe trip. Then we would be picked up on 21 July by water taxi, stay overnight at a hotel in

Norman Wells, departure for Edmonton on 22 July, and flights home on the 23rd.

With dates selected we made contact with two organizations in Norman Wells: Mountain River Outfitters and North-Wright Airways. We dealt with both companies almost exclusively via the Internet. Fred's credit card secured down payments for the rental of canoes (10%) and flights (25%). When e-mails were sent all participants received copies, so everyone was party to the information as it was exchanged. By February things were rather solid—flights to and from Norman Wells booked, reservations made for canoe rentals and water taxi return, and float planes booked from Norman Wells to Willow Handle Lake.

For camp equipment we followed the pattern of our regular trips. This meant that Penny took care of the kitchen wanigan and the GPS; Al the axe, saw, Chlorophyll 5-m-square tarp, and large kitchen grate; Mark the first-aid kit and the staples barrel; Fred the second axe and saw, Coleman stove, repair/rescue bag, and the maps.

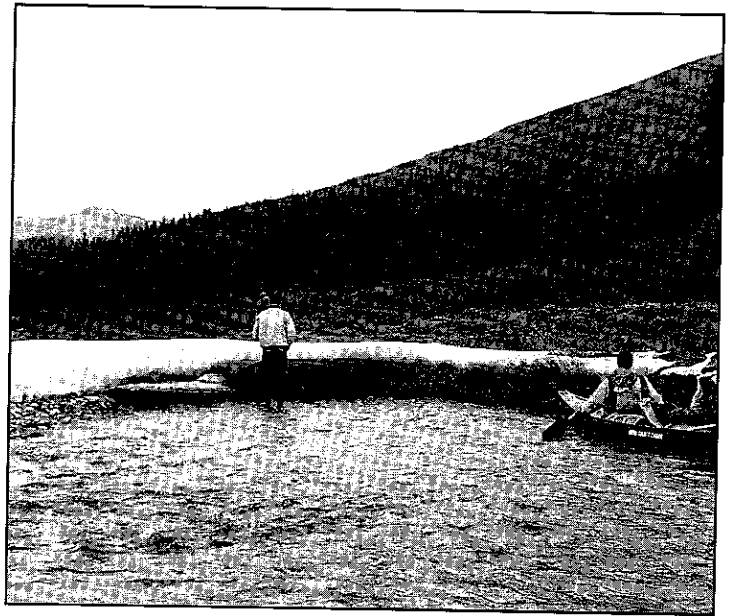
Each boat provided their own tent and all individuals their own sleeping, toiletry, cutlery, and clothing requirements. Penny's wanigan contained all the pots, pans, kitchen utensils, coffee pot, dish soap, matches, three

nesting wash basins (dish wash, dish rinse, hand wash), drying cloth, pan scrubbers, etc.

The total costs per person (\$2,990) consisted of the following (plus cost of about five meals to be consumed on the trip):

return flight Toronto – Norman Wells	\$1,500
canoe rental two weeks, some supplies, first meal	\$285
water taxi Sans Sault Rapids to Norman Wells	\$165
flight Norman Wells to Willow Handle Lake	\$640
maps, en-route meals, extra baggage charges, taxi, staples	\$200
accommodation: two nights in Edmonton, one in Norman Wells	\$200

Most of the group members were able to make flight arrangements to Norman Wells using air mile points (Air Canada to Edmonton and then Canadian North to Norman Wells).



Going under a snow bridge



PushMePullYou Creek where paddling becomes possible

SERVICES OF MOUNTAIN RIVER OUTFITTERS

Nick and Liz Dale, the MRO contacts, bought items for us that were considered hazardous on the regular flights: Coleman fuel (brought eight litres and used perhaps two), 12 bear bangers (fired one), and a small bottle of Coleman propane (not used). You need to give lead-time for the outfitter to get these items by barge to Norman Wells.

For canoes we selected 17 footers: two Trailhead Prospector and two Nova Craft. The Trailhead boats have spray-skirts that buckle down and give more latitude as to how high the boat is loaded. They have two centimetres more freeboard than the Nova Craft, so were used by our heavier crews. The Nova Crafts use a snap-down spray-cover that doesn't allow for any mounding of the cargo and this provides constraints on the packing of these boats. While the canoes were made by the same company from the same Royalex material, the guides we talked with reported the Trailhead canoes were more durable. Inasmuch as we had four barrels per boat plus another box of items (stove, wanigan, tents, tarp, grate, etc.), the added foot in our 17-foot boats over 16-foot models proved a wise choice. Each paddler could have one personal barrel and one for food. This seemed to provide the space needed to carry all our gear. Mark devised a small barrel for staples where he included such items as spices, oil, vinegar, flour, margarine, butter, hot sauce, baking powder, more matches, coffee, tea, creamer, juice crystals, powdered laundry soap, etc. All boats were very stable and handled the waves and water easily.

Included with the rental of the boats (\$450 per canoe for two weeks, i.e. \$225 per person) were: one throw bag, three paddles, two life jackets, bailer, painters, spray cover, and foam kneeling pads. With MRO permission we added, with vinyl glue, two d-rings in each boat that would allow

us to have thigh straps that we brought ourselves. Also, we brought four pairs of tandem-end air bags, one set tied into each boat. We brought and used some thin cord to make a woven mesh to constrain the flotation. Each boat was responsible for their air bags and thigh straps; Fred brought the glue, cord, and eight d-rings for the installation. There are differing schools of thought about tying-in baggage or letting it be free to float in case of a mishap, and we are of the tie-in school: when you save the boat you save all items, but when you lose the boat all is gone. We find with the air bags added, a tipped canoe is still manageable and is less likely to wrap due to its floating high on the water. Only if you tie everything in tightly will it act as flotation, so this is what we do.

Another service of MRO was the water taxi return from the mouth of the Mountain back to Norman Wells at \$1,320, i.e. \$165 per person (snacks and beer included!).

What made MRO special was the added service we received. It was wonderful being greeted at the Norman Wells airport by our e-mail friends, Liz, Nick, and their manager, Andy. Our bags were put into the school bus of North-Wright Airways and we were taken to their office to do the paper work needed for our afternoon bush flights. We then proceeded to the MRO office where we collected needed PFD's, paddles, painters, fuel, etc. In addition, Liz had made a special first-night dinner for us and had this surprise packed in a cardboard box. It turned out to be caribou steaks with all the trimmings—cranberries, etc.—which we thoroughly enjoyed at Willow Handle Lake. Upon our return to Norman Wells we were given the loan of the company van, a trusty and much-appreciated vehicle where we could all fit on the several benches, plus added space for gear in the back. We added \$30 of gas before departure, which was small payment for the day's use of the vehicle. This was handy for doing a "tour of the town" on Sunday evening and getting our baggage to the airport on Monday.



Black Feather Creek meets Mountain River



SERVICES OF NORTH-WRIGHT AIRWAYS

Our NWA contact, Carolyn Wright, helped us to rent two planes to move our eight passengers, four canoes, and gear to Willow Handle Lake. Six of us went in the Twin Otter with three canoes inside the plane, and the other two in the Pilatus Porter PC-6 and one canoe strapped on the pontoon. With carrying capacities of 1,090 kg and 773 kg respectively this meant we would have no constraints on what baggage we brought. Standard weights for men are calculated as 82 kg, 60 kg for women, and canoes 41 kg each. This would mean each person would be allowed to bring 135 kg of personal baggage and that was far in excess of our needs. The cost of the flight was \$5,104 for the two planes, i.e. \$638 per person.

As a matter of interest, North-Wright owns two of the three Swiss-made Porters in Canada, and of the 261 in service worldwide. We were surprised to find that our plane had been built in 1965 and had a 680-hp turboprop Pratt and Whitney engine. Due to recent overhauls, upgrades, and a paint job the model B2-H4 plane looked brand new, rather than having had 37 years of service.

THE MENU (not a time to diet!)

We looked at different meal configurations and decided that the best would be to have each canoe do one full day every fourth day. This meant preparing breakfast, lunch, and supper for eight people on one day, then having three days off. When we each did three rotations of this plan the twelve days of food were covered. Notice that Nick and Liz of MRO had done the 13th meal, in fact the first one of the series.

In the individual boats the workloads were further divided. For instance, in boat number four we broke down the division so Penny did three breakfasts, Fred did three lunches, and the two of us teamed to provide the three suppers. When it was your day to cook, you didn't have to do dishes.



Camp 5 — under the big tarp

The breakfasts included a good variety of pancakes, porridge, stewed fruits, cereals, different kinds of eggs and bacon, but no breakfast bars.

The lunches started off with more fresh foods, but at the end the wraps were still going strong. Food items were generally laid out on a flat rock and it was a do-it-yourself feed. Bagels, pitas, crackers, and wraps were most often used with different cold cuts, dried sausages, smoked meat, tuna/salmon/sardines, mustard, mayonnaise, Andy's beef jerky, pickles, fruit and candy bars, fresh fruits and veggies, jujubes, trail mix, Twizzlers, and nuts. Always lots—and a good variety served.

The evening meals were prepared with great style and pride. While one boat was in charge of the meal, the various tarp erectors, wood gatherers and splitters, vegetable cutters and peelers, and pot stirrers were always volunteering to help without being asked. The evening meals were organized as follows:

Day 1	Liz & Nick	Caribou Steaks and Wild Rice
Day 2	Carol & Geoff	Filet Mignon, Boiled Potatoes, Green Beans
Day 3	Mark & Allan	Lamb Stew and Dumplings
Day 4	Neil & Andy	Mexican Meat (home dehydrated), Burritos
Day 5	Penny & Fred	Roast Hams and Baked Potatoes
Day 6	Carol & Geoff	Cheese Tortellini
Day 7	Neil & Andy	Veggie Chili
Day 8	Mark & Allan	Lentil Currie Veggie Stew
Day 9	Penny & Fred	Spaghetti à la Carbonara
Day 10	Carol & Geoff	One-Pot Hodge Podge with Cajun Spices
Day 11	Neil & Andy	Grilled Vegetables on Pasta with Soya
Day 12	Mark & Allan	Salmon Risotto
Day 13	Penny & Fred	Spicy Chicken (home dehydrated) on Rice

USING MAPS AND GPS

We purchased topographical maps Mount Eduni 106A, and Sans Sault Rapids 106H in the scale of 1:250,000. Our outfitters did us the kind service of lending maps of scale 1:50,000 which proved to be very helpful and would be our preferred charts. To help with the matching of the GPS reading and the maps, it was helpful to put the map co-ordinates, in pencil, right along the river, so the route could be plotted kilometre by kilometre. Using a pale colored highlighter to mark the river also speeded map work.

Navigation was greatly aided by Andy, a professional surveyor, who was equipped with Penny's Garmin eTrex Legend GPS. While perhaps not every group can find an Andy, we would certainly suggest the assistance of a GPS that will give you accurate distances and speed (our moving average turned out to be 6.39 km/h). While people generally don't get lost on rivers, there may be several excellent hikes along the way, and when travelling inland this would be a most useful safety device.

On the Transverse Mercator Grid we made a record of forty significant locations. We were able to provide the exact GPS locations of all campsites, the starting points of canyons, and the co-ordinates of the portage, Tufa Mound, Moonscape, hot spring, and pick-up point. It can be noted the entire journey was in Sector 09 east of the International Date Line and Band W north of the South Pole. The start of the trip was at 459 722 (metres east into Sector 09) and 7 108 596 (metres north of the equator). The pick-up was at 509 123 (east) and 7 283 696 (north). This would indicate that while we twisted and turned our way close to 300 km down creeks and rivers, as the crow flies we went 49 km 401 m eastward and 175 km 100 m northward.



Cache Creek

THE CANOE TRIP

We won't do a day-by-day description, as the adventure of discovery is what will make your trip special. What you will see depends on your mood, the weather, water levels, and individual interests. Suffice it to say, the landscape on the Mountain River is varied and rich. You will go "Wow!" a hundred times.

There are different starting points, Dusty Lake and Palmer Lake being others, but we would certainly say that the Willow Handle Lake entry suited us well. There is a small makeshift dock that assists the unloading at the southern end of the lake—fine for the Porter plane to pull alongside, but too small for the Twin Otter. Close to the dock is a fire pit and good group meal clearing. Around are many suitable tent sites amongst the small bushes and boulder outcroppings. Groups needing basic instruction will find the lake suitable for a review of strokes and safety procedures.



Looking at Cache Creek

To stretch the legs a short walk may be made to an outfitter's log cabin clearly visible from the air as you land. It is a rather new and substantial log structure well boarded up for protection against intruders and the weather. One would wonder where such substantial logs might be found, but you would think they were somehow gathered nearby with the assistance of a helicopter; all the trunks of trees we saw in our travels were certainly much smaller. Horses were obviously used by cabin clients, as a small corral was present, plus one of those galvanized steel silos used for the storage of feed grain. Evidently the lake provided access for differing adventures—either with canoe and paddle or horse and gun. Dall sheep, moose, caribou, and bear would be in the vicinity.

Our outfitters had made an excellent selection of foods for our first evening's meal—caribou steaks, wild rice, cranberry sauce, apples, and brownies. Geoff had caught a few grayling that served as appetizers; all in all, a true feast to send us off. Penny brought a fancy cake and we celebrated Fred's birthday—a little early—and toasted success on the river with champagne.

On the second day, about one kilometre distance at the northern end of the lake, we found the almost 800-m portage to PushMePullYou Creek. At this point in the trip the food barrels were loaded to the top and it took a few carries to get all our gear to the small creek, which is about one metre wide at the start. Due to sharp bends the boats won't navigate the narrow creek, so you get much "me pushing and you pulling" of the boats, hence the name for the creek. After perhaps 30 minutes of lining the shores open up a bit and you can get safely into the canoes. There are still shallow spots and sharp turns along the way, but this is a good warm-up and team-building exercise.

We had lunch on a grassy bank and in the afternoon went under some snow bridges on our way to Black Feather Creek. A lone bull caribou had everyone excited and cameras came out. A source of drinking water was certainly the rain, but also melting snow was making a contribution. At these elevations the weather was cool; vests, gloves, and toques were appropriate. The cold water dictated the use of wetsuits as well as neoprene gloves and boots. We had received advice of having one drysuit in the group in case extended time was needed in the frigid water doing a rescue.

Our second camp was made around km 6 on river left where the PMPY Creek joins the much grander Black Feather Creek. This was not a long day with respect to distance, but a good workout involving breaking camp, doing a first loading of the boats, a portage, a creek lining, and further travel in a twisting creek.

The following day proved to be one of the best, due to the technical challenge of Black Feather Creek. This 14 km of water reminded us of eastern waters but then made more challenging with boulders, a box canyon, and strong currents. If you want good canoe photographs then take them in the first part of Black Feather Creek, as it is difficult to get good action shots on the Mountain River



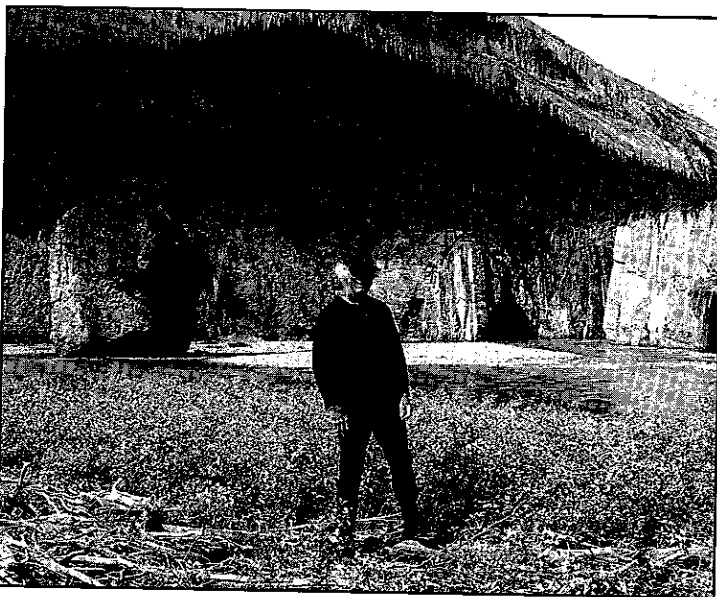
Entrance to First Canyon

itself—you will want to keep both hands on the paddle. The creek eventually slows and meanders at the end as it prepares to meet the Mountain. A guided group from Nahanni River Outfitters with two canoes and a raft were being helicopter-shuttled into the camp at the confluence on river right. After a short visit we proceeded downstream less than two kilometres to river left, on the upstream edge of Grizzly Meadows where we camped at a stream. We had our first of two layover days and made an excellent hike behind the meadows into a valley with good footing and filled with animal trails. A deep canyon was on our right as we headed inland. Some easy ascents were made up some hilltops, but equally challenging was walking the vegetation line deeper into the mountains.

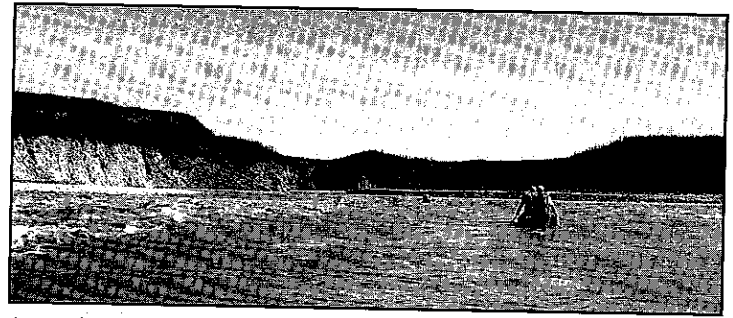
So after about 20 km of creek travel we were on the Mountain River—for a wonderful ride of some 260 km to the Mackenzie. Days 5 and 6, between Grizzly Meadows and Cache Creek, were fantastic due to the continuous class 2+ rapids. You travel at a high speed and need to watch for large wave trains, which you can ride or avoid.

We will now pay special attention to the canyons in the Mountain River as they form a major attraction of the trip. They are identified by number as you approach them coming downstream. This seems simple enough except people starting at different points will come to a different number of canyons. We will use the convention that people are accessing the Mountain River via Black Feather Creek and thus First Canyon is about 80 km downstream, where Cache Creek joins the Mountain River.

If you start at Dusty Lake you will find a canyon several kilometres above Black Feather. On the other hand, if you come down Black Feather, you will encounter a very pretty box canyon soon after you have left PushMePullYou Creek.



Battleship Rock



Approaching Canyon Four

Warning: the following canyon notes are not always reliable! They are written from memory, rather than as a trip journal. Water levels can seriously change the nature of the route, so our line of travel might or might not be appropriate for you. We reiterate: there are some tricky aspects to the Mountain waters. Experience and vigilance are needed. Take care of yourself and your companions!

The canyons deserve respect as many trip reports tell of problems here. Our group didn't find any particular danger, but definitely there are undercut banks and canyon walls to avoid, some wave trains that are of a good size, whirlpools, boils, a few ledges (sills), and some strong eddy lines. For escape there are few exit points. Because of the canyons' twisting nature, good lines of sight in the canyons are often hard to obtain, and getting up the cliffs to see into the distance didn't seem an obvious solution.

Some "canyon tips" might include:

- * the water is constantly pushing you quickly, so back-paddle to slow your boats down as much as possible,
- * get your boat into position way in advance as last-minute manoeuvres are difficult, or impossible,
- * keep a proper distance between the boats (100 to 200 m) to be close enough for the viewing of signals and far enough away for reaction time to re-route your course.

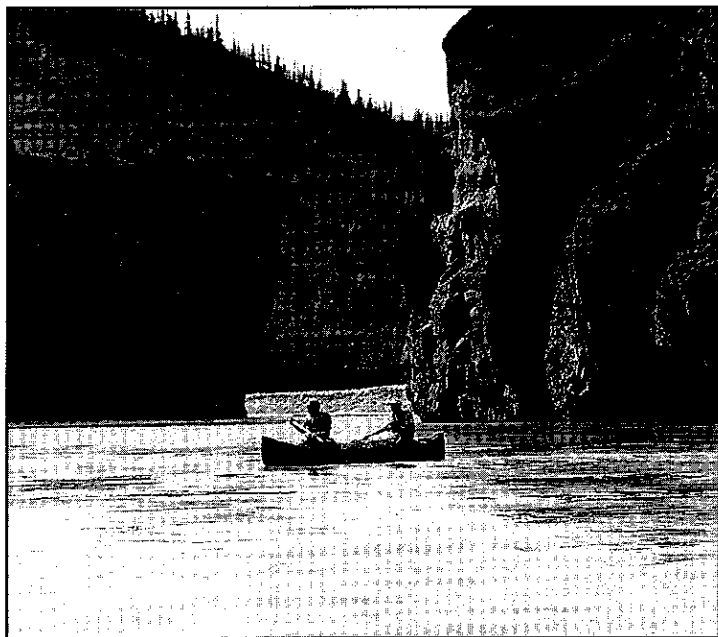
When we got into problems we often noted that we had ignored our own rules: some boats were racing ahead while others were falling behind. These rules are also true for the slower braided sections of the river, so people don't take different routes and "get lost" behind islands.

Distances between canyons: 1st to 2nd: 22 km; 2nd to 3rd: 40 km; 3rd to 4th: 21 km; 4th to Mackenzie: 53 km.

First Canyon

This is located just after the junction with Cache Creek. In times of heavy floods there could be some strong currents coming at you from the right. The river seems to hit a stone wall but in effect there is a narrow entrance that we found comfortable to navigate. The river soon swings to the left, then in a few hundred metres makes a 90-degree

turn to the right, then shortly a 90-degree turn to the left. By being alert, having the lead boat signal back adjustments, staying to the inside of bends, and using water-reading skills we navigated the water without problems. One caution: on some inside turns there are hidden ledges that need to be avoided. On the way to Second Canyon there are wonderful class 2 rapids that will pass Etagochile Creek and get you to Second Canyon in approximately 22 km. Camping is possible just before Etagochile on river right. Also watch that when the creek is running strongly, the currents don't push you against the left bank.



Canyon Four

Second Canyon

We found one of the hardest parts of this canyon a few hundred metres above the entrance where strong currents want to drive you onto river right cliffs. Therefore, on the approach stay to the inside corner (left)—this is above Battleship Rock, which is very visible at this point. We stopped on river left, just above Battleship Rock, and had lunch. Some people report room for camping at this point.

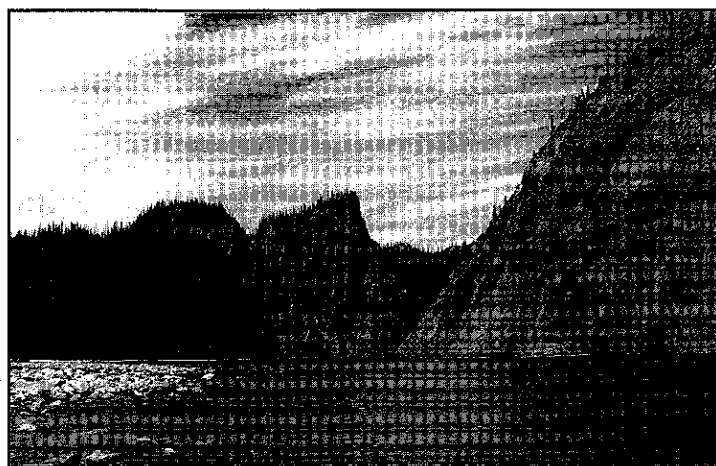
We entered the canyon to the right of Battleship Rock although Andy and Neil took a near-dry channel behind the rock on river left. The canyon is about two kilometres long and opens out halfway through, where you can stop river right and look at the tricky bend ahead that is heading to the left. On the left shore, at some water levels, there might even be a channel behind the gravel bar that would entirely avoid the bend. We stayed to the left of centre in the main channel and made it through safely. It is worth noting that after this left turn the exit to the canyon is visible. There was a section of standing waves on river right, followed about 100 m downstream by another section of standing waves on the left. We eddied out on river right

opposite the first set of standing waves and had to execute a challenging upstream ferry and mid-river turn in order to avoid the second set of standing waves. This was not a strategy we would recommend and we suggest that staying mid-river might be a better alternative. Not far out of the canyon we camped on river left, approximately a kilometre above where the Stone Knife River joins the Mountain.

So the next day, after being mindful of the current line of the joining river, we moved in haste as we noticed immediately the increased—almost double—volume of water.

Third Canyon

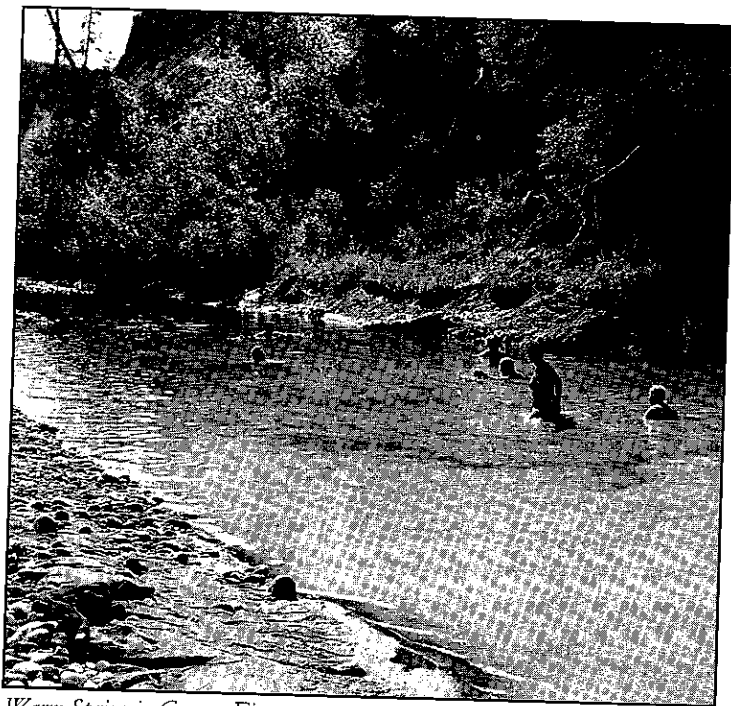
What really sticks out in this canyon is the optical illusion of the steepness of the water's surface at the entrance. Sedimentary rocks on the left tilting slightly upwards dramatically enhance the effect of the water heading downhill. This canyon is about three kilometres in length with a noticeable S-turn in the middle. There can be some big standing waves in this canyon. Staying slightly right of centre worked at our water levels, but it is good to get out and scout above the S-turn. It is possible to exit onto a gravel bar with rocks and see around the corner where a ledge is on river left. However, after the ledge you want to get to river left to go around the final left bend—there are boulders on the right and steep cliff walls with a waterfall if there has been rain recently. As we wanted to avoid a large wave train on river left, we stayed close to this wall, but not so close as to get swept into the undercuts that are ominously noticeable at several points. Don't relax as you leave the canyon. The water squeezes between two gravel bars and forms a nasty class-3 chute with some large rooster tails and haystacks at the bottom. We were able to pull into a large eddy on river right above these rapids and while this piece of water looked enticing to run, with loaded boats we took a more cautious line along the right bank. We stopped for the night a few kilometres above the next canyon.



Canyon Five

Fourth Canyon

This canyon seems to have the reputation of being the most difficult one although the shortest, not much more than one kilometre. The river separates into many channels as you approach the canyon, so watch the currents as they reunite at the entrance. When you approach the entry, there is a large back eddy on the right that can hold your boat, so stay in the centre. Some boils and a cliff guard the left shore. After a sharp right turn you can stop on a gravel bar on river right where you can get out and appreciate the splendor of the scenery. A few hundred metres ahead on river right is a stone beach area in a small bay (watch the back eddy on the right) and a reported camp, but we were unable to find suitable tent sites. Now the river heads left quickly and whirlpools, standing waves, and back eddies guard both shores, making the centre the best route out. Strong currents and boils, not waves, form the challenge in this canyon.



Warm Spring in Canyon Five

Fifth Canyon

The scenery on the way to the last canyon tells the story itself. The high peaked mountains have now become lower and flat. You are not yet in the Lowlands, but one can tell they are just over these hills. Even the weather seemed to change for the better and when we looked to the left there were often small dark clouds still showering over the now distant mountains. Although about four kilometres in length, the Fifth Canyon doesn't provide much challenge, other than for the paddlers to try and be the first one into the warm springs found halfway through on river left. You will smell sulphur from the rocks as you go along the left

shoreline. Bits of slime in the vegetation indicate different minerals in the area. Behind a grassy bank you will find the warm springs, which are really warm but not hot. After 10 days of cold Mountain waters this pond was fine for soaking tired bones. The bottom is mud and people shouldn't stir the waters more than necessary. Count on an hour to reap the benefits of this gift of nature. At the end of the canyon, on the left, the Ganya Creek enters. On the far side of the creek is an excellent campsite, probably one of the best on the whole river. Well-spaced baby poplar trees and soft turf make for excellent tent spots.

Thus end the canyons. After navigating One through Four, the Fifth is a gift: You now face the slower braided section on the Mackenzie Lowlands. As the small trees grow right to the water's edge, and much erosion is being done by the current, watch out for strainers, which are most prevalent in this stretch of water. Remember to keep your canoes grouped in this easier section.

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

What makes this river special is what gives it its name: mountains. You travel through spectacular ranges of the Mackenzie Mountains until you eventually come out in the Lowlands after Canyon Five. If you have extra time, spend it towards the beginning of the trip as the general beauty of the landscape decreases each day. Walks can be made up to some of the peaks although we found a route into one of the valleys near Grizzly Meadows on an animal track, which was equally pleasant as making an ascent on a shale-covered mountain in the Cache Creek area. There are many special attractions: walk over the Moonscape, climb the Tufa Mound and drink from the Fountain of Youth, at Cache Creek find the Stan Stevens cabins, walk over the Stone Bridge, and bath in the sulphur stream behind the campsite, picnic or camp above Battleship Rock, bath in the warm springs on river left halfway through the last canyon.

The water is very cold, so a wetsuit (or drysuit) should be used, especially until you are down to the Lowlands section. Should you need to be in the water for an extended rescue, the drysuit would be welcome. We saw considerable snow in July melting into the river that would account for the near-freezing conditions.

There is an almost constant, considerable flow to the water, so you must consider making moves well in advance of what you see ahead. The force of the river often renders moves like the back ferry almost useless. There are few (in fact, no) quiet places to stop and we saw one eddy line where the water on the other side was flowing upstream as fast as we were going downstream. Rocks are scarce in this river; it will be the currents, boils, strong eddy lines, whirlpools, holes, and sweepers that will cause you harm—plus a few sections where waves are big enough to give you a rocking-horse ride. We hit a top speed of 18

km/hr as measured on the GPS and we often had the sensation of flying down the river at great speed. Beware! The gradient drop is four metres per kilometre or almost 1,200 m in our 300-km journey. In very heavy rains the river has been known to rise close to one metre per hour. On the other hand, in times of drought the Lowlands section could be frustrating with shallow braids.

The water is very silt laden and at times we could hear our canoe's bottom being sandblasted. So, for drinking water, pay close attention to streams entering the river where you should stop and stockpile jugs. A filter would work, but we worried about the amount of clogging with sand.

Fishing was not great due to the silt in the river, but Willow Handle Lake and clear-water streams could be sources of fish. Do not count on fresh fish for food on this trip.

The five canyons are exciting, but not too dangerous if you watch yourself and scout ahead, unless you find extremely high water/flood conditions.

The camping ranges from good to excellent—some spots are more obvious than others. There is lots of firewood and we only used the gas stove once or twice to make coffee.

The weather varied with the wetter/cooler times higher in the mountains, but on the flats we were into shorts and T-shirts, which was a nice change from the vests and toques at the beginning.

Animals are scarcer than we had hoped although we saw a cow and calf moose, a lone wolf, several Dall sheep and one ram, one caribou, many eagles and hawks, and smaller birds. Other trips reported greater numbers—this is hunting country.

Bears were supposed to be a hazard, but we had to go the Norman Wells dump to find one. Liz and Dale must have been amused when we asked them to order 24 bear bangers for us, and we only used one as a test. At least we saw many tracks so we knew they were around—but our hearty laughs and cheers scared away most wild life, I think.

Water levels were reported to be high, but we found this ideal. It meant there was always a good current and the braided sections on the Lowlands (last 50 km below Canyon Five) still had enough water for us to float through. However, these levels also produced strong cross currents, sharp eddy lines, boils, strainers, cliff undercuts, and standing waves, which gave good challenges. For example, a group in front of us portaged the entrance to Canyon One and had a boat capsize further along.

Rescues should be considered most difficult due to the cold water and strong continuous currents. We kept all our boats afloat and didn't test the challenge of a rescue. We specifically held our boats in their designated order for safety reasons, Mark and Al being experienced leaders, and at the rear Fred and Penny having the rescue gear. Each boat had at least two throw lines and Fred kept the slings and pulleys at the back in case some more-serious installation was needed. Both paddle and whistle signals had been reviewed at the top of the river. The throw lines (two or three) were joined with a Fisherman's knot to make one longer throw line. In big water—both wide and fast-moving—a normal throw line runs out far too quickly and the angle and pull of any pendulum rescue would be too severe. Once you are out of Black Feather Creek there is little chance of wrapping on any rock in the Mountain River. What you need then are really long throw lines; because of the strong currents, any



Mountain meets Mackenzie



boat or body in trouble will quickly find themselves far downstream.

Bugs never seemed to be much of a problem although they were certainly around in different locations, times of day, and temperatures. We had good-quality bug shirts when needed and different sprays. As a rule at the higher elevations there were fewer bugs, also when it was colder, and on the river there were none, with evening in the woods being a possible bad time. There were a few black-and-horse- or deerflies, but the prevalent pest was the mosquito.

Cameras never do justice to the real thing. The majesty of the mountains, the height and speed of the waves, and the grandeur of the landscape just don't come across: that is why you need to visit this place in person. (It is easy to take photos of people because they are always smiling!)

RETURNING HOME

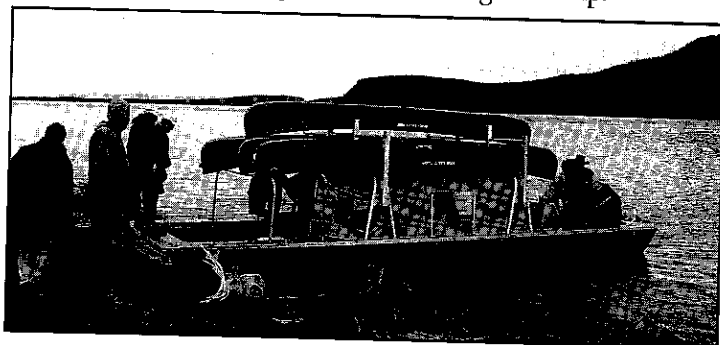
We had made arrangements with Frank Pope and son Stuart to collect us on the shores of the Mackenzie a kilometre above Sans Sault Rapids. There is a cabin nearby and a winter road to the interior. That evening we enjoyed a colorful sunset and had one of several motorboats passing by stop in to say hello when they saw our campfire.

On Day 14, shortly after 10:00 a.m., the Mountain River Outfitter's skiff landed on our shore. This was a new aluminum boat designed specifically for the taxi service. Our canoes fitted neatly on top, our baggage into a large cockpit in the front and passengers under a tarp in the central section. The 90-hp Mercury sped us along in light rains during the four-hour trip upstream to Norman Wells. A case of beer, chips, Cheezies, and sandwiches made us happy travellers. This was a fine new craft, but not one with a washroom on board. We can mention a jar and leave the rest to your imagination. This wasn't such a challenge for the men, but each of the three ladies on board gave it a shot and when the jar's yellow content was shot overboard a great cheer went up.

Liz, Nick, and Andy were there to greet us at the landing. We were ferried by van and truck to the Mackenzie

Valley Hotel where rooms were booked and showers—warm delicious showers!—were enjoyed. Mark arranged for a laundry to be done and a huge feast, complete with wine and many bottles of beer, delighted all. Fred and Penny joined the Nahanni River guides at the seaplane base for the night and found this free lodging to be dry and comfortable. But a bear came by in the night and slashed open Andy's bags that were outside in storage. At last some bear action, but in this case, most unwelcome. We presented Andy with a new barrel so he could get his gear back to Victoria. A tour of the town was made in the van loaned to us by Mountain River Outfitters. Visits were made to the Norman Wells museum and souvenirs were purchased to bring to loved ones back home. A last ride was made in the van to the Norman Wells airport where we caught the 727 Canadian North flight via Yellowknife to Edmonton.

The Mountain River trip became a dream come true. It turned out to be a canoeists' river made perfect with the components of excellent outfitting, flights, route, fellowship, weather, water levels, menu, and scenery. Without hesitation we would recommend the Mountain River to other experienced paddlers, or for a guided trip.



Water taxi

CONTACTS

GPS RECORDS of forty significant locations made on the Transverse Mercator Grid can be obtained by writing: fredargue@videotron.ca

MOUNTAIN RIVER OUTFITTERS: Box 398, Norman Wells, NT, Canada, X0E 0V0; phone/fax 867-587-2698; nick.liz@nt.sympatico.ca or info@mountainriver.nt.ca; www.mountainriver.nt.ca/

NORTH-WRIGHT AIRWAYS: Bag Service 2200, Norman Wells, NT, Canada, X0E 0V0; phone Charters/Administration: 867-587-2288, fax: (867) 587-2962; Carolyn Wright: carolyn@nt.sympatico.ca; www.north-wrightairways.com/index.html

* * * * *

Editor's note: in the Summer 2001 issue of *Nastawgan* another report is presented of a trip down the Mountain River.



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Published by the Wilderness Canoe Association—Editor: Toni Harting
Nastawgan is an Anishinabi word meaning 'the way or route'

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

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

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>	Summer 2004	<i>deadline date:</i>	2 May
	Autumn 2004		1 August

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.

NEW WCA WEBSITE Our website is now www.wildernesscanoe.ca. The old address, [wildernesscanoe.ca](http://www.wildernesscanoe.ca) is still valid, so that 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.

MEN'S BASKETBALL Get in shape for the spring paddling? Play basketball, Tuesday nights in North Toronto. Contact Barry at 416-440-4208.

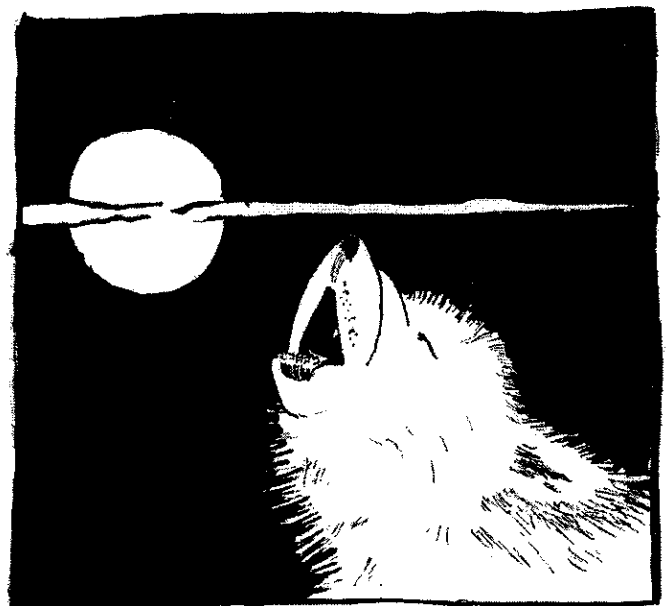
PADDLE THE DON! The popular annual Paddle the Don event in Toronto will take place on Sunday, 2 May. Participating canoes and kayaks will again launch from the E.T. Seton Park (Leslie Street and Eglinton Avenue). For further information, please contact Amy Thurston at the

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, 416-661-6600 ext. 5283.

TEMAGAMI FEES This summer, park fees will be implemented, marking the end of an era in Temagami, the unfettered wild land. Information: www.ottertooth.com/temagami/newsbriefs.htm

MAILING NASTAWGAN

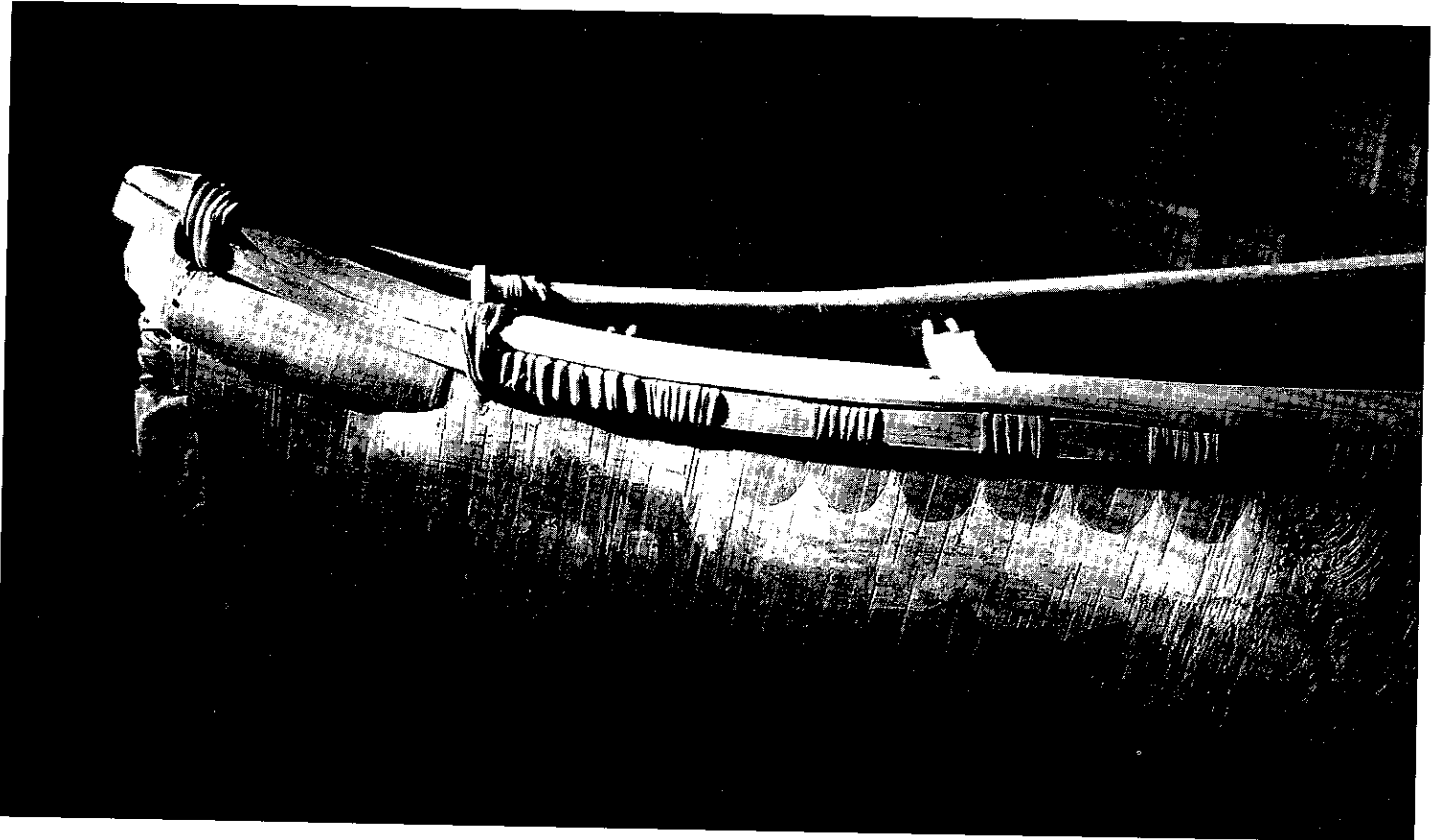
For a number of years I have been responsible for the quarterly mailing of *Nastawgan*. As I plan more extensive travel in the future, I am concerned that I may not always be available to perform this duty in a timely fashion. I am looking for volunteers willing to learn the rather complicated system of sorting and packaging, which Canada Post requires for publication mail. Anyone willing to attend a future mailing to "learn the ropes" should contact Bill King at 416-223-4646.



CANADIAN CANOE MUSEUM

In October 2003, the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough, Ontario, suffering from falling attendance last year, had to close its door for lack of operating funds. After several months of emergency fundraising, the CCM has decided to reopen on 1 May 2004, but hours will be

drastically reduced and the staff of seven will be reduced to two. For general information, see: www.canoemuseum.net To become a member (very important to help the museum NOW!), see: www.canoemuseum.net/get-involved/membership.asp



Birchbark canoe, one of the many treasures in the museum's vast collection

CONSERVATION

LAKE SUPERIOR SHORE TO BE SPOILT BY HUGE ROCK QUARRY

There is a quarry development in the works on some prime shore land of Lake Superior. It's located just five kilometres west of the mouth of the Michipicoten River, between Lake Superior Provincial Park and Pukaskwa National Park. It will mean blasting and crushing the rocks from a 400-acre site adjacent to the water over a period of several decades, and shipping of the gravel out south over the water. The creation of a handful of jobs in the quarry is considered enough justification for the pro-forces to go ahead with the project. That this is part of our heritage coast line, that hundreds of paddlers enjoy the nature

every summer, that wild caribou are present, and that some local kayak and canoe businesses make a living here because it's still unspoiled—all that seems of no concern. You can read in the *Globe and Mail* a pretty good analysis of the issues:

www.globeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20030801.urock0802/BNStory/National

Erhard Kraus
Environmental Rep. WCA

A MATTER OF GREAT IMPORT

On 7 February, the Annual General Meeting of the WCA was held at the Wings of Paradise Butterfly Conservatory in Cambridge, Ontario. This beautiful venue provided not only a good meeting place and restaurant, but also a wonderful collection of butterflies and other insects, including live butterflies fluttering about in the warm and humid hothouse that is fully accessible to the public. Thanks, Doug Ashton, for introducing many of us to this little paradise.

Of the many issues discussed at the meeting, one stood out in importance: the financial health of the WCA. The Board argued that, after 23 years of holding the line, the WCA needs to increase its revenues, which are no longer matching expenses. **Therefore, the members passed a motion to raise the single membership fee to \$35 and the family membership fee to \$45 as of 31 March 2004.** Prepaid memberships will be honored at the old rate and multi-year renewals are accepted.

The Board emphasizes that the WCA remains committed to providing the best possible value for the members and will endeavor to continue this tradition within the bounds of sound financial stewardship. It is felt that membership in the WCA provides significant benefits:

- Membership in one of the world's largest and most active canoe clubs;
- Opportunities to participate with like-minded paddlers in club-organized outings—the heart of the association;
- Four issues per year of the internationally respected newsletter/journal *Nastawgan*, an advertising-free publication noted for its general excellence and engaging reports on canoe trips and other outings as well as various outdoors-related issues.
- A well-maintained, regularly updated club website with access to the latest trips, bulletin board, and impressive links;
- Opportunities to participate at membership rates in WCA's annual events including the Fall Meeting, the Wine and Cheese Party, the Symposium, and the AGM, all of which give exposure to the most extraordinary canoe trippers of our time;
- Discounts at various vendors of canoeing-related items and services.

Three days after the decision to increase the membership fees was made and was made available by e-mail to those members whose membership was about to expire, the first reaction was received by e-mail (reproduced here un-edited):

Dear WCA Executive,

I have some concerns about the latest membership price increase, and I have some ideas and suggestions to reduce the costs, for the executive to consider:

Background:

The only product and service I receive as a WCA member are 4 issues per year of *Nastawgan*. It is now a glossy publication on better quality paper, and I understand that adds cost.

The other services, as noted in the header on the WCA page in *Nastawgan*, are perhaps an exaggeration of what the WCA actually does. The trips are organized by members. The occasional workshops are very occasional, and although I have not participated in one, I would imagine that you run them on a cost recovery basis, i.e. participants pay. Even if there is some subsidy to total event cost, the workshops are few and far between.

I don't buy the argument that the trips require club insurance. These trips could all have a waiver that participants must sign, to say they are on their own, and that the trip leader (private citizen), bears total responsibility, or no responsibility, etc. I.e. the legal types could easily ensure a waiver agreement that does not hold the WCA liable for anything on trips. The WCA only posts trip notices. Therefore, no insurance costs.

In any case, I live in Thunder Bay, and it costs at least \$400 for a round trip flight to get to Toronto, so I cannot participate in evening events or workshops. I should not be forced to subsidize these events for southern Ontario, or Toronto area members.

WCA has recently decided that it will not be meaningfully active in environmental issues, despite the fact that WCA advertises that it is active. Erhard Kraus was forced to start up Save Wilderness Canoeing on his own. The WCA chose not to take on an advocacy and lobbying role to protect wilderness canoeing. In addition, the WCA chose not to participate in developing a canoe routes data base. The data base is essential for monitoring the future of wilderness canoe route change, and for setting priorities for conservation and protection efforts.

Perhaps the WCA injected some seed money into SWC. If so, great. I support use of member funds for that. But I don't see any reference to this part of the business in the journal. I admit I don't pay close attention to the annual audit report, so maybe I missed it.

There are fees for attendance at wine and cheese parties, and Annual General Meetings. Again, participants pay, and hefty fees I might add, i.e. \$30 per person for the AGM.

The excellent annual WCA Symposium is also quite pricey, at \$45 to \$70.

Nastawgan does not pay authors for articles.

My conclusion, perhaps misinformed, but based on what I see, is that most of what WCA does for the membership fees is to publish a quarterly journal. The executive are volunteers, to the best of my knowledge. For \$35 dollars, most of what I get is *Nastawgan*, and it is a little thin on content.

Potential Solution to reduce membership costs:

We live in the electronic publishing age. There is no reason why *Nastawgan* cannot be published as a pdf (Adobe) file on the web, downloadable by members using a password. That would save a huge amount of paper and postage, and reduce costs.

I realize of course that the electronic age also requires a server. But advertising by canoe and outdoor gear manufacturers can offset that. We are already plagued by Tripod pop-up ads.

I realize that a hard copy, glossy journal is better than a down loadable format. People, including me, like to have copies of the journal on the shelf. But we could print our own copies since the entire journal is in black and white anyway. Maybe members who wanted the hard copy glossy, could pay for that plus postage, while members who are willing to download pdf files, can pay far less for a membership fee?

If you have a mailing list and print run for libraries and schools, then I can support that with my membership fee.

Overall, I am finding it difficult to rationalize renewing a membership for \$35 for a quarterly, thin, black and white publication, that does not pay its authors for articles.

I trust you will take this under advisement in your management of the WCA.

Yours truly,

Glen Hooper (member # 904)
134 Hemlock Place, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7C 1W6;
807-577-2612; ghooper@tbaytel.net

On 17 February, the Chairman of the WCA Board, George Drought, responded to the above letter with the following e-mail:

Glen Hooper has written a letter that addresses the concerns of many of our out-of-Toronto members, justifiable concerns which need addressing in detail. I therefore contacted Glen and requested his permission to publish his letter in this issue of *Nastawgan* with a response from myself as Chairman of the WCA.

It is appreciated that the only benefit for far-distance members seems to be the newsletter/journal, *Nastawgan*. But to say that the other services noted in the header of the journal's editorial page are an exaggeration does the volunteers who work on the Board and adjacent to the Board a disservice. A number of them put in long hours of work. For example, our Membership Chairman has, with the assistance of an outside programmer—an approved

cost to the WCA—been updating and modernizing our membership database. With a membership of some 800 folks, all renewing for different lengths of time and requiring different sorts of information, it has become of paramount importance that our database has a friendly user interface. This will make it easily transferable to another Membership Chairman when required.

Our courses, trips, and other outing events are put together by an Outings Chairman and, again, he meets frequently with a committee to try to arrange more events and interesting programs for members. Similarly our webmaster puts in long hours constantly trying to improve our web site. Naturally a monthly fee has to be paid to have it hosted by a server. And the editor spends numerous hours putting our journal together four times a year.

The insurance question has become a thorny problem for us. For our workshops we pay \$75 to the Ontario Recreational Canoeing Association (ORCA), which covers us if the instructor is a qualified ORCA instructor. However, our trips and other activities are not covered under that package. In this litigious day and age it is mandatory that our Board, trip leaders, and members be covered against any form of lawsuit that may be brought against us. It need not necessarily be an on-the-water accident. It could be a driving accident going to an event. It could be any situation arising out of any event. Unfortunately, waivers do not cut it. They are a first line of defence only. If a claimant states that they signed it without reading it, then it provides fairly useless evidence for a defendant. The insurance costs are looking to be in excess of \$1000 a year.

I am not quite certain where the understanding that WCA is not involved in a meaningful way with environmental issues has come from. Erhard Kraus was not forced to start Save Wilderness Canoeing (SWC), rather he did it on his own—with the support of the WCA—to try to promote a stronger lobby group from many other organizations and clubs. We gave the new organization \$1000 to start. Furthermore, Erhard does report to our Board whenever he needs to, doing so recently with regard to the environmental danger from ATV's. Though no longer a member of the Board, he is still very active as our Conservation Chairman. In fact, since Erhard has been with us, the WCA has been more involved with conservation and the environment than at any time in its history. Within SWC there is also a committee headed by Richard Munn that is developing a Canoe Routes Data Base.

It is always difficult finding a suitable location to hold our AGM. Business meetings do not generate a lot of interest among our membership unless we make them worth coming to. Last year we chose the Canoe Museum in Peterborough, this year the Butterfly Conservatory in Cambridge, and next year we hope to have the Raptor Centre at Mountsberg. The time of year often makes for difficult winter travel so in addition to an interesting location on fairly good driving routes we also try to attract speakers whose very name, history, or presence will

Nastawgan

encourage people to leave the comfort of their hearths and the making of their summer plans. This year our speaker, Tracy Perry, came from Montreal and his expenses had to be paid for. AV equipment had to be rented and the meals and location paid for. We lost \$18.00 on the event. Thirty dollars is a reality cost these days. It should be pointed out that if a person comes to just attend the business meeting and does not stay for the lunch and entertainment, then there is no charge.

There is a general misunderstanding that the Wilderness Canoe Symposium is run by the WCA. However, the Symposium is run privately by WCA member George Luste. The WCA gives some assistance but does not set the fee structure. When one considers that the expenses of every one of the speakers are covered, that space at the Monarch Park High School has to be rented for two days, that AV equipment has to be rented, and that the meals have to be paid for, it is a remarkably good deal for such a prominent event.

The final comment that I want to make is with regard to the downloading of *Nastawgan*, consisting of 24 to 32 pages with many photographs, on the Internet. There are

several things against it. The first is the amount of time it would take to scan and e-mail the journal. Second, not everyone is on the Internet, so that a volunteer would have to do the sorting for e-mail as well as regular post, let alone fulfill Canada Posts requirements for bulk magazine mailing. Finally, not everyone has cable or DSL high-speed download capabilities. Many of those same people also have limits set by their servers as to how much mail can be held on the server before being downloaded. Can you imagine what a 28-page magazine would do to peoples' digital mailboxes?

I have tried to address all of Glen's questions and comments, because I feel that his views probably represent those of a good number of our members. I appreciate how difficult it must be for members to understand how much it costs to run the WCA, but cost it does! This is the first membership increase in 23 years and it is clearly overdue. So please bear with us and continue not only to support but to enjoy the WCA.

George Drought
Chairman WCA

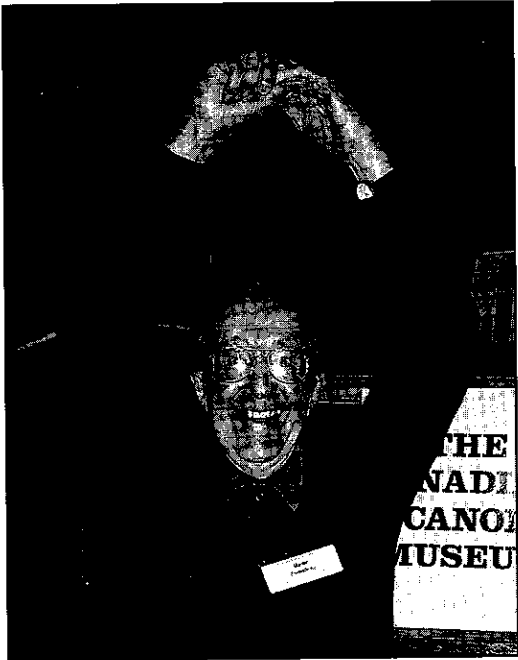


SYMPOSIUM: NORTHERN TRAVELS AND NORTHERN PERSPECTIVES III

More than 700 paddlers and other lovers of the outdoors listened attentively to the 17 presentations made at this annual symposium (the 19th in the series), organized by George Luste and sponsored by the WCA, which was held in Toronto on 30 and 31 January. The following presentations were made:

- Near Wilderness - VIA's Buddcar
- Far Wilderness - Arctic Islands
- Tales of the North
- Marrying into a Canoeing Family
- Youth in the Wilderness
- Canoeing with Children
- From Reindeer Lake to Arviat - 1981
- Travels in the Dene's Land of Little Sticks
- The 1912 Oberholtzer/Magee Nueltin Trip
- Caribou Kayak - a Documentary Film
- Franklin and the Hood River
- Boreal Wilderness - Berens River
- Esther Keyser - Algonquin Park Guide
- Top Ten Wilderness Canoe Tripping Skills
- Canoeist's Perspective - Inuit and Barrenlands
- Traces of the Past - Clearwater in Quebec
- Remembering the Back River, 1962

- Dave Hadfield
- Russ Taichman
- René Fumoleau
- Jeroen Dirks
- John Barker
- Rolf & Debra Kraiker
- Peter Kazaks
- Lynda Holland & Bill Layman
- David Tfeuer
- Michael Mitchell
- John Lentz
- Becky Mason
- Linda Leckie
- Annie Aggens
- Barabara Burton
- Bob Schaefer
- Austin Hoyt



LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S BOOK DRIVE FOR NORTHERN FIRST NATIONS SCHOOLS

Thank you to all those folks who responded to the WCA mass e-mailing and brought a book to the Wilderness & Canoeing Symposium. We collected 12 boxes of books, plus sets of The Canadian Encyclopedia and The Junior Canadian Encyclopedia, for the Lieutenant Governor's Book Program, a province-wide initiative to collect used books for school libraries serving First Nations in Ontario's North.

The first book shipments were made by the Canadian Rangers and the Ontario Provincial Police in February to communities whose only land links are winter ice roads.

Anyone who did not attend the Symposium may still help by dropping off used books (in good condition) at any OPP detachment in Ontario during regular business hours. Books can also be delivered to the mail trailer behind the Legislative Building at Queen's Park in Toronto from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, or they can be mailed to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario.

For more information about the Lieutenant Governor's Book Program, call 416-325-7780 or visit the Lieutenant Governor's website: www.lt.gov.on.ca.

Sandy Richardson

Go North

*Few venture north of the 49th,
Preferring more temperate zones.
They vacation with easy access
To faxes, computers, cell phones -
Needing to have their creature comforts
Available and just a stone's
Throw from shopping malls and fast food chains
For pop, burgers and ice-cream cones.
Others choose to leave routine behind
And escape from tedious drones
Of cars honking and sirens blaring,
To the call of animal groans,
Their voices carried across the land
By sounds of the wind as it moans
Through the vast expanse of the barrens
Where sun drips in loud dazzling tones,
Piercing its rays through wings of a hawk
That over doomed carrion hones-
Its prey to take on new shape and form
Transformed into well preserved bones.
Yes, venture north of the 49th,
Even if it means taking loans.
With global warming melting our dreams
This may be land nobody owns.*

Enid Weiner

SECOND WATERFALL ON THE NORTH KNIFE RIVER

There are three of them, you know. Waterfalls on the North Knife River. After portaging past all three during our trip down the river, I determined that the second one was my favorite. By far.

The approach to the second waterfall isn't hard. You just stay close to shore on river right and you can edge right up to the lip of it. Getting out of the canoes to look at the waterfall isn't too bad either. There is a rock shelf protruding out from shore that makes it very easy to get out and pull the canoes up. Then you can walk along the shelf for a look-see at the waterfall without having to work your way through brush.

Getting around it also isn't too tough. You just carry the canoes down on the big rocks to the base of the falls. You only have to watch slipping on wet rocks or falling into the spaces between them.

Very scenic waterfall. It is not hemmed in by trees or hidden deep in a narrow canyon. Wide open views. Water crashing down. It's a big waterfall, probably ten metres in height, with the whole river falling in one sheer drop. Standing close to it, I could feel the immense power that is in the waterfall.

Had lunch at the base of the falls. Couldn't do much talking with the buddies while we were eating. The deep roar of the falling water drowned out all other noises. We had to just sit and watch the waterfall. It wasn't too bad of an option, just sitting and watching and soaking up the energy and life force of the wilderness.

After lunch we packed up the bags and loaded the canoes. However, I could tell that no one wanted to leave. Looked at the buddies. They were still looking at the waterfall. The buddies had vacant looks in their eyes. As if mesmerized by the falling water. I had the same look too.

Couldn't quite place what it reminded me of, and then it struck me. It's the same look you have when you enter a place of worship, a church or a temple. There, your eyes and your heart tell you that you are on holy ground.

And we were.

Greg Went



SEA KAYAKING AT ANTICOSTI ISLAND

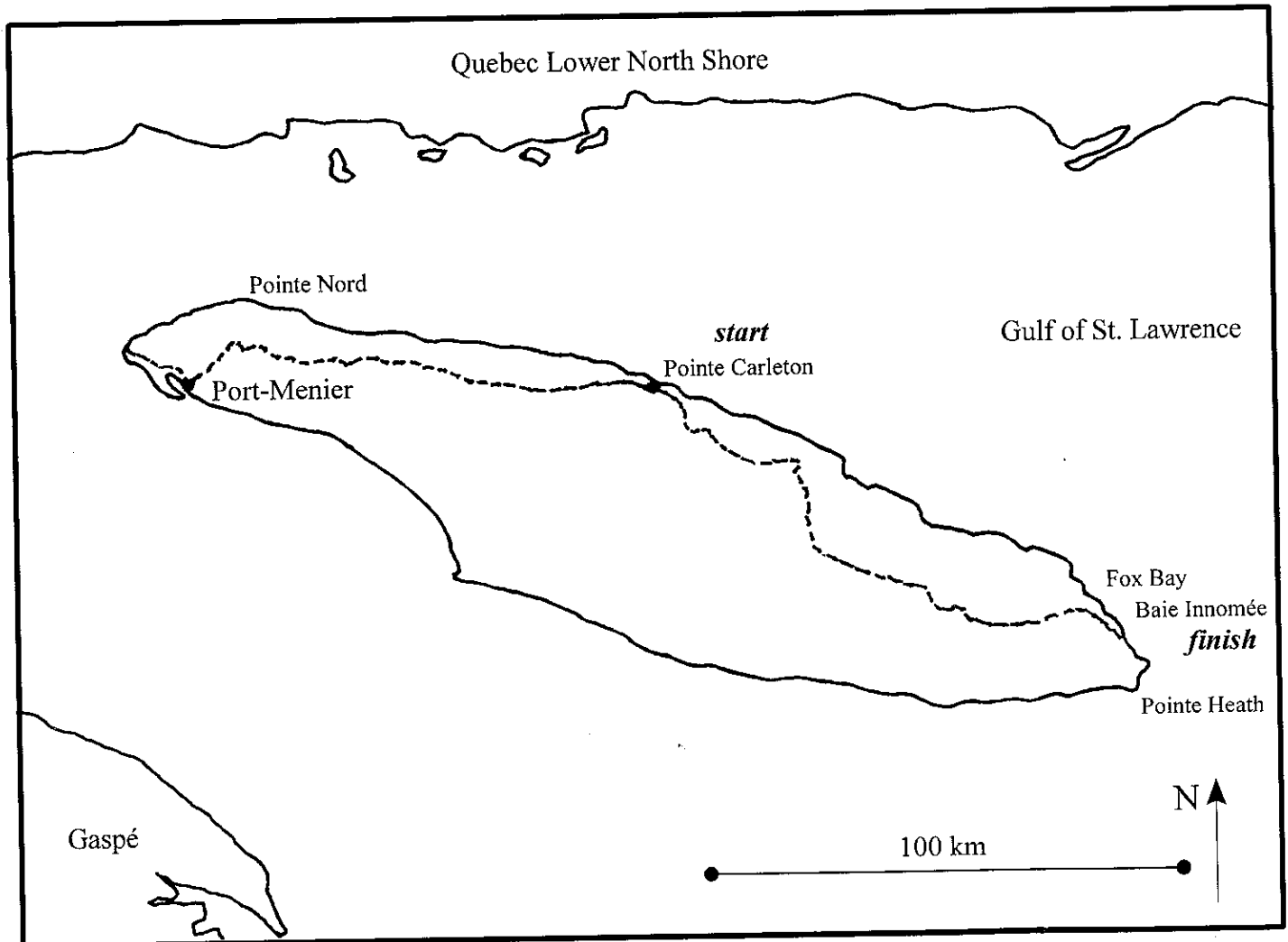
Bob Henderson

It was always the same; "You're going where? Oh hey, I've heard of it, where is it again?" In English Canada anyway, Anticosti Island seems to be an exotic, distant land. This made our planning more exciting. Now back from two weeks on the island including an eight-day sea kayaking trip, the feelings of an exotic, distant, and exciting land persist.

Even the possibility of travel there was initially in question. First, the maps reveal a strange reef or extended shoreline. As mapping symbols go, this one was completely new for me and suggested extreme caution depending on high or low tide, and from the maps I couldn't tell which tide. Then there were the contour lines. Beautiful towering sea capes abound. We would need to round about 10 of these over our eight days. Usually rounding one such cape per trip can serve as a trip's visual highlight. There would be no emergency landings for long sections of coastline. Around each cape, however, was a beach, which I'd heard would be of the lovely terraced-pebble style.

River outflows, and thus fresh water, were standard at each beach. So if we were to have wild weather, we might experience a daily routine of the sublime (delightful terror of rounding a cape with huge breaker waves) followed by the charmed picturesque, sheltered ocean beach-scape. In short, the maps were both puzzling and exciting. A good combination for a sea kayak tour. We decided not to plan long days.

The other issue in terms of planning for the possibility of travel on Anticosti Island were the logistics of a "specialized" nature. Anticosti is truly a unique place. The island is owned by the Government of Quebec. Sépaq (La Société des Établissements de Plein Air du Québec) is an administrative branch of Parcs Québec that oversees the tourism on the island. Sépaq controls the eastern end and a significant chunk of the central part of the island, including the new Parc d'Anticosti (572 sqkm of the island's 8,000 sqkm area). Safari Anticosti operate tourism initiatives for the north eastern section,



and the western end is operated by Pourvoirie du Lac Geneviève.

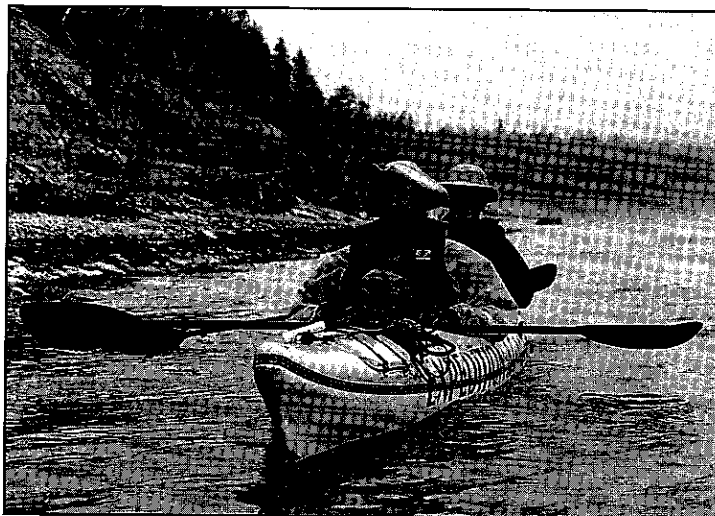
All this matters little to a beach-camping, free-spirit sea kayak party except that: (1) camping fees for sea kayakers are currently being established; (2) if you wish to plan a stay in a lighthouse or on one of the beach site chalets along the coast, you would have to contact the right administrative branch; (3) Sépaq would likely work out your road transportation needs and have a say in this, (the Trans-Anticosti gravel road is 266 km with many offshoots allowing for a variety of put-ins and take-outs; not important if you plan to circumnavigate the 600 km shoreline); and finally, (4) Sépaq will need to grant you permission to do your trip. They might wish to check your travel credentials and would likely recommend you contact the area outfitters, Expedition Agaguk, from Havre-Saint-Pierre on the Quebec Lower North Shore mainland.

I hope you do not find this list too daunting. We found the Sépaq staff very helpful and supportive of our trip initiative, which was, we learned, quite unusual because it was not connected to Agaguk's advertised package sea kayak tour. We planned our own July 2003 trip, then contacted Sépaq—unusual—then contacted Agaguk who typically did not use our decided-upon start and finish—unusual—then agreed to hire Agaguk to handle the details of our logistics—not unusual—then hired Agaguk to guide our trip on their wise suggestion.

We organized our own food and kitchen gear. Agaguk shared their wisdom in reading the ocean tides, currents, vetch, swells, coastal breakers, and strange reef, a phenomenon particular to Anticosti. Agaguk—which is the title and the central character in a classic northern novel by Yves Thériault—added two excellent double kayaks to our mix, and also provided local stories aplenty to keep us stimulated with each passing landmark. Most importantly, they helped as the local contact to make our logistical arrangements work.



Baie-Sainte-Claire



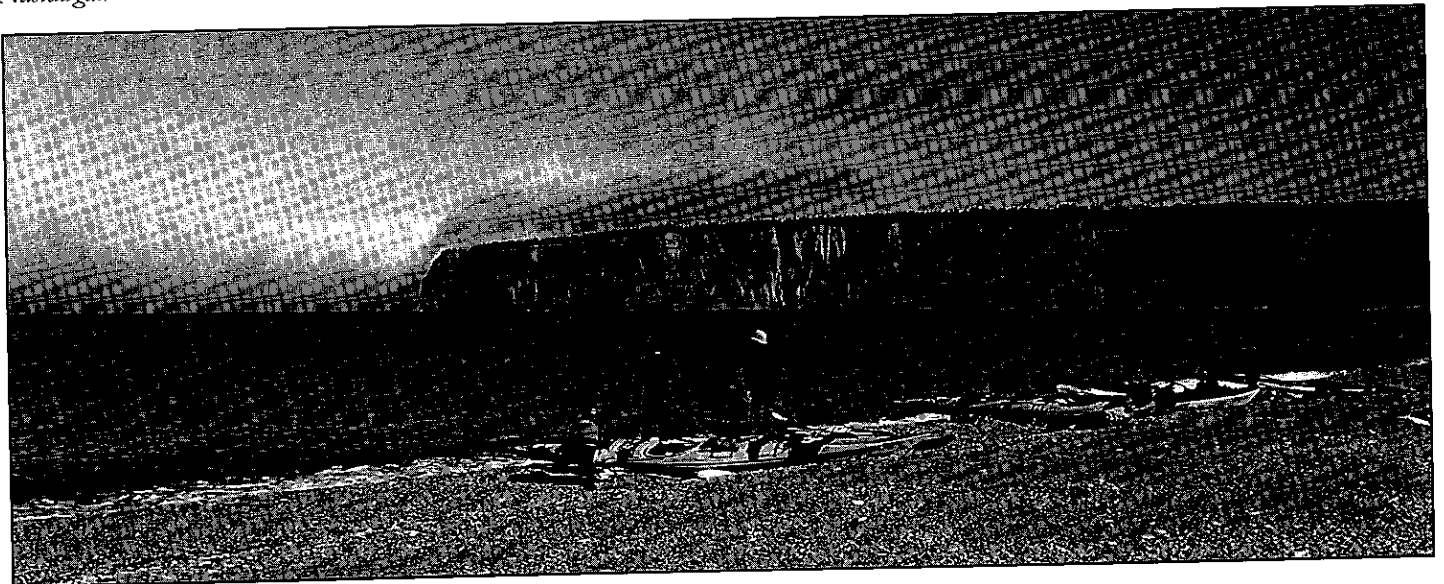
Without going into details, these logistical steps all followed each other smoothly and we were thrilled with the end result: an excellent sea kayak trip of the healthy section of the North Shore from Pointe Carleton to Baie Innomée at the eastern end of the island.

Upon our return from the trip, we had two full days before the Relais Nordik passenger/supply boat transported us back to the mainland at Rimouski. During this time we explored the only town, Port-Menier (population 300), visited its museum, explored heritage sites on the western tip of the island organized by first-rate Sépaq tour guides, ate excellent maritime cuisine at the Auberge (cooked by revered chef Denis Poirier), and generally celebrated a fine post-trip glow while planning a future trip with our new friends Gilles Chagon and Pierre Saint-Hilaire of Agaguk Expeditions along the Quebec Lower North Shore for 2004.

Here are some facts about Anticosti. The western shore is 35 km from the Quebec Lower North Shore and the island is about 72 km from Gaspésie. At roughly 8,000 sq.km. and shrinking each day with sedimentary rock slides from its northern shore cliffs, the island is 56 km at its widest and 222 km in length. Hey, it's a big place! P.E.I. would easily fit inside Anticosti.

And being big, it was also a major obstacle to any Gulf of St. Lawrence travels. Historian Donald MacKay, whose book, *Anticosti: The Untamed Island*, offers a wealth of historical information, reminds us that by the mid nineteenth century during the white pine square timber export from the Ottawa Valley, there were an estimated 2,000 ships travelling by Anticosti per shipping season. It is estimated that there have been 400 shipwrecks on its reef-extended shore.

Anticosti has well earned the nickname, "The Graveyard of the Gulf." MacKay records several shipwreck stories. The most famous is that of the *Granicus* in October 1828, which was wrecked on the eastern shore with surviving members finally succumbing to a brutal

*Baie de la Tour*

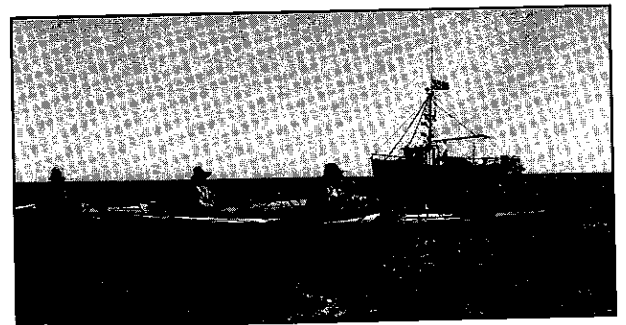
attack of one member who was also found dead, perhaps just two days, though not emaciated. It appears he went on a cannibalism-crazed attack of the other survivors just two weeks before a group of fisherman discovered the carnage in April. At this site, Fox Bay, on our day seven, we read two versions of this recorded event: one by the historian MacKay and another by historical-fiction writer Katherine Govier in her recent novel *Creation*. I'll spare you the detailed description of body parts here and there. Suffice it to say, Fox Bay is a lovely natural harbor that will forever be associated with the horrors of the *Granicus*.

The islands history is an involved one. I shall just touch on a few highlights. The first well-known Canadian-born explorer, Louis Jolliet, was given the island in 1679 in recognition of his services to New France. Jolliet had travelled south on the Mississippi River to the Arkansas River before turning back with the realization that it would not flow to the Pacific. He also travelled the coast of Labrador and to Hudson Bay via the Peribonka River. It seems to me, he should be a more-noted explorer. Eventually, New Englanders raided his homestead on the island. Some of them were soon shipwrecked with only a handful eventually returning to Boston.

Many colorful lovers of solitude, good trapping, fishing, and farming are providers of much of the islands folklore. At the present-day site of Port Menier, Louis Oliver Gamache had an early 1800s homestead. He became known as a sorcerer-bogeyman throughout the Gulf given his reputation to commune with the devil and generally be a dangerous larger-than-life figure. It appears that Gamache, who was often away from his homestead farm, embellished his own stories and bolstered a well-crafted reputation to help keep intruders from visiting. On the remote shores of Anticosti this was a safety strategy for his wife and children that he developed as an art form.

At Pointe Nord, where we picked up our kayaks, you can see the Quebec Lower North Shore in the distance. Here, the story goes, two lighthouse keepers went out in a cement mixer of sorts(?) with one paddle and a bailer. A wind blew up and they managed to survive a wicked crossing to the mainland, a distance of 35 km. Further down the north coast, at Anse de la Sauvagesse, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century there resided a native woman who saved and restored to health ship-wrecked victims. Men would return to ask for her hand in marriage and she would be gone, but with each new shipwreck, there she was ... for two centuries! As far as I know, this is a rare example of an upbeat ghost story.

Also peppered along the coast in beach harbors at different times, though mostly in the 1800s, were single families or solo hermits. John Ellison, a run-away British sailor, raised ten children at Salmon River, aiding as the only support in the birth of all ten. He died at the age of 90 here in 1885. I stared at his grave in awe, not to mention his wife's grave; such a different and intriguing life. Peter MacDonald of MacDonald Bay wished to return the 100 km to his beloved bay from the Baie-Saint-Claire hospital. One January day he up and went. A long walk at age 89. He was found in March in his cabin long dead sitting in a chair wrapped in a blanket with his feet in a bucket of ice.





Lobster Bay

These snapshots of stories just scratch the surface of campfire history lessons we all shared. One story however dominates the whole island and remains a central aspect of the island evolution even today. In 1895, Henri Menier, the chocolate king of France, purchased the unwanted island for his personal game and fishing reserve. With the island managed by Martin Zédé, the Menier family owned it till 1926. During this time, Menier's rules were in place. Local inhabitants were to comply with the rules or leave. The rules included—no hunting or fishing, no visitors without permission, no alcohol; you get the idea. Zédé conducted many experiments with the introduction of reindeer, moose, elk, rabbits, beaver, and even two buffalo. In 1896, he introduced 220 white-tailed Virginia deer. Today, there are an estimated 125,000 deer (15 per sq.km.). Our own sighting record was 12 at one time in a grassy field. It's no surprise that deer hunting is the islands main industry, an autumn phenomenon. It is also estimated that 20,000 deer die of starvation each winter and that the fall deer hunt takes 5,000 (two deer per person). The deer have eaten certain trees to extinction to such a degree that today the island is close to a mono-culture of spruce.

Menier also had an elaborate four-story villa built in Norwegian-Norman style with thirty rooms and a baronial hall, 10 m wide x 20 m long x 10 m high. Strangely, Menier only visited the completed villa twice. In fact, he visited the island just six times before his death in 1913. Such are the ways of millionaires. The Menier era was a heyday for the island economically and in terms of a legacy for future tourism. Following 1926, pulp and paper interests dominated with hunting and fishing guiding work in the summer and fall. In 1974 the Quebec Government purchased the island.

A final noticeable historic item concerns the 1935 German Government's attempt to purchase the island for pulp interests. General Hermann Goering, then an eco-

nomist strategist, wrote a letter to Prime Minister MacKenzie King assuring him that the German interest was only for a pulp mill. Coincidentally in 1942, the German navy submarines sank 20 ships in the Gulf just off the eastern shore of Anticosti. It was feared that the submarines were using deep coves such as Baie de L'Ours as hiding places. When you're in this cove, as we were, seemingly engulfed by a wall of wild breakers and then calm seas to the beach, it is odd but easy to imagine a submarine in these waters.

On a natural history bent, we saw deer and fox in unusual numbers. Grey seals were a constant delight and we saw a few minke whales. Mostly, and not uncommon to ocean sea kayak trips, we were excited by the wealth of bird life. Our bird list includes puffins, kittiwakes, razor bills, guillemots, bald eagles, and rounding Cap-de-la-Table elegantly flying gannets. I thought it was unusual to see so many common loons as well.

If you like your history old—really old—you can get that here too. Fossil hunting is a beachcomber's passion here; as novices in this complex natural "deep time" realm, we delighted in any discovery. Above Schmitt Falls, an easy walk up-river from our ocean campsite, we found rods embedded in the limestone above the falls. Walking back to the coast, we saw these rods were now broken off from the limestone and easily differentiated. We brought back the best examples and learned they were sea floor sponges 400 million years ago. Later on our trip, during a low-tide wind-bound walk under the sedimentary cliffs, Robin James and I each found large (car tire-size) snail-like white fossils, again embedded, with one side exposed. Someone with the suitable knowledge would literally have a field day here. Anticosti is known, amongst all its other qualities, for its fossils. The sea kayak is a fine way to go fossil browsing.

By day eight, we had found our "groove" with ocean travel and cliff-beach shorelines. Had we had another

Nastawgan

week, we were all keen to round the luring Pointe Heath. We had particularly good weather conditions that day. But the ferry back to the mainland follows a strict schedule. It's either two weeks for the kayak trip or closer to four weeks. Air service is available through Sépaq, but generally caters to Sépaq-organized tours and events.

Give Sépaq lots of notice of your intentions and plan to fit into their structures as much as possible. Sépaq is interested in promoting sea kayaking tours, but it is a new initiative. Trip planning is a must. Bad weather here can really slow down progress. Generally the wind blows westerly around the north shore (the better shore for kayaking). With the right tail wind, the island seems small as coves and capes pass by quickly. With thirty-plus-knot winds of any kind, you are either travelling at odd hours (hopefully!) or seeing each rounding of a cape as a major trip accomplishment and each cove as a refuge. We found a conservative 20–25 km per day allowed for beach exploring time and make-up time. We moved each day, covering a modest 120 km in eight days. We experienced a good mix of conditions and for all of us rookies to exposed ocean travel, we experienced rough conditions on a few mid-day paddles that had us on the edge of our comfort level.

For us, Anticosti lived up to its exotic out-there image. It is an involved place to visit. Sépaq will help, but be

patient. The islanders, locals and Sépaq staff, were wonderfully friendly during our non-kayak time. Agaguk will rent you kayaks and are excellent Anticosti sea kayak guides. Highly recommended! Enjoy a lobster dinner at the Auberge. Bring binoculars for the bird life. Plan a modest route, not an aggressive one. Read Donald Mackay's book. Brush-up on your French. Plan to walk beautiful pebble beaches. Don't over-plan for distance...did I mention that?

In the 1890s, the French Government had told Henri Menier that Anticosti was merely "a geographical expression." That was meant as a prerogative. Today such a sentiment is a clue for a choice travel destination. A geographical expression indeed!

* * * * *

For background information: Donald Mackay, *Anticosti: The Untamed Island*, McGraw Hill 1979

For guiding information and general inquiries:

- Sépaq Anticosti, C.P. 179, Port-Menier, Anticosti, Québec, G0G 2Y0, 418-535-0122
- Expédition Agaguk, 1062 Boreale, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Québec, G0G 1P0, expeditionagaguk@globetrotter.net



Baie Innommée

FOOD FOR PADDLERS

Number 5 in a series of recipes/ideas from the **2002 Food Seminar**
hosted by Doug and Lisa Ashton.

The following recipe was submitted by Tom Dreidger following the Seminar. He uses it as a base for a number of different recipes including spaghetti sauce, chile, and tacos. He used to make Beef Stroganoff as well but can no longer find an inexpensive source for sour cream in Canada. It used to be available from Club House for \$1/packet. (Please drop me a line if you know where to get dehydrated sour cream or have an easy method to make it.) Tom does not remember the original source for this recipe.

DRIED GROUND BEEF

1 pound lean ground beef
2 cloves garlic
½ cup finely chopped onion
ground pepper to taste
¼ teaspoon rosemary (optional)
1&½ packets instant beef bouillon or 1&½ beef cubes (use as is, not diluted with water)
¼ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
2 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon salt

Brown the beef with the garlic and onion. Setting the pan slightly on a slant and pushing the meat to the higher side, let the fat collect and spoon it out. Add the rest of the ingredients and cook over medium heat, scraping the flour off the bottom of the pan to brown it evenly.

Note: After browning the meat, pour off whatever grease has collected. Although some fat ordinarily adds flavor to dishes made with ground meat, it will get rancid in dried foods if they are left for long at room temperature. It's best to store dried meats that might contain a little fat in the refrigerator or the freezer if you make them ahead of time.

Spread the mixture in a thin layer on a greased pan and dry it in a 140 degree F oven (with the door propped open) until it is crumbly - about six hours. After drying, spread it on paper towels to absorb any extra grease.

Store the dried beef, labeled, in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. To reconstitute, add 1&¾ cups water, bring to boil, and simmer five minutes.

This recipe may be doubled but do not do more than that at a time. Small batches turn out better.

We get mail: The following was received in an e-mail from Tom Elliott. In the winter 2003 issue of *Nastawgan*, Ghee (clarified butter) was listed as a tripping food. The flavor of ghee is fabulous and it keeps well. It is used in place of butter or margarine and can be made at home. A good variation is Better Butter: 2 cups ghee, 2 cups canola oil (the processed type which needs no refrigeration), 2 tablespoons liquid lecithin (aids digestion of fat). Heat and mix. Store in the freezer until trip time.

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

THE ICOC NEEDS YOUR INPUT



Think of yourself as a kid from Parkdale living in a high-rise apartment with a single parent or perhaps no parent in Canada. Think of yourself as a parent with no summer camp experience or wilderness experience whose child finds it easier to watch TV, play video games, or just hang out at the mall. Unfortunately there is precious little opportunity for those kids to see the world beyond their confining walls and learn about the vast wealth and beauty living in nature, unless we who know the spirit of wilderness open the door to that understanding.

For an increasing number of Canadians like these young people the experience of wilderness and all that it stands for is not readily available. Yet we have at our front door an abundance of rivers and lakes, rocks and water, beaches and islands that have the ability to enchant everybody visiting them. It is tempting to label these youths "underprivileged" or "at risk" but consider this: nature will never be visited by those young people unless we open up the way, unless we introduce them to our wild places in the true spirit of the wilderness and not leave them seeking thrills and challenges in some video arcade in a shopping mall.

That's where the Toronto Parks & Recreation Inner City Outtripping Centre (ICOC) comes in. The ICOC is a community development program of the City of Toronto Parks & Recreation Department. It is based on the position paper of James A. Caldwell entitled "Youth at Risk: The Stewards of the New Millennium," coupled with the striving to meet the vision statement of Toronto Parks & Rec which is: "civic leadership, youth, lifelong wellness and the environment."

Professor Kirk Wipper, an elder of this program, has kept us focussed on accessible experiential education and encouraged ever-developing partnerships with those that

value the spirit of wild places. The Toronto Police Service has partnered with the ICOC in the development of the Toronto Outtripping Outreach Program (TROOP) in which we have been fortunate to have the input of WCA member Garry James. The goal of the ICOC is to present the opportunity to get close to nature those "youth at risk" who are truly "the stewards of the new millennium." By this we do not mean the "deserving poor," we mean all city youth that are getting further and further away from the spirit of this land.

In 2003 we had a busy year. With the Toronto Police Service we developed the Toronto Recreation Outreach Outtripping Program, with ORCA we presented the Safe Canoeing Program, with Future Watch to we did EcoPaddling; and with the Toronto Regional Conservation Authority and the Ministry of Natural Resource we celebrated the first Canadian Rivers Day on the Humber Heritage River. Now, in 2004, we would like to welcome the support of the WCA and everyone else who is genuinely interested in getting many members of Toronto's youth acquainted with that part of nature that WCA members love dearly and have been visiting for so long.

You can help the ICOC by writing a letter to the city in support of this type of non-traditional approach to wilderness programming: Councillor S. Watson, Toronto City Hall, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, M5H 2N2. You can support ORCA and its goal to bring urban people to the Safe Canoeing Program on the Toronto Waterfront this summer. Most particularly we would welcome the WCA's participation in the 2nd Canadian Rivers Day on 13 June 2004 in Sir Casimir Gzowski Park at the mouth of the Humber River, Canada's only Heritage River accessible by hiking, biking, canoeing, or taking subway, streetcar, or bus. For more information on this Rivers Day, please call Allan T.K. Crawford at 416-392-6928.

Keep paddling.

PARTNERS WANTED

I'm looking for an experienced WCA group planning a northern river like the Thelon that I might join. If you know of any such party going out this year, please put me in touch. Tony Barton, tonybarton38@hotmail.com

REVIEWS

NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN CANOE TRIPS, A Guide to Fifteen Wilderness Rivers by Laurel Archer, published by Boston Mills Press, Erin, Ontario, www.bostonmillspress.com, 2003, softcover, 240 pages, \$19.95.

What makes this book so special is the presentation of a huge amount of information in an attractive and easy-to-use format. The author has done extensive research, evidenced by the lengthy list of references and the numerous details on topography, history, accessibility, river conditions, tripping opportunities, etc. Each of the 15 rivers is discussed as a separate unit, which contains sections such as: length, topographic maps, getting there and away, when to go, difficulty of the river, character of the river and region, local history, level of solitude, wildlife, fishing, special equipment. There are extensive Trip Notes with detailed information on rapids, portages, campsites, put-in and takeout points, etc. The black-and-white maps are clear and useful (although it would have been nice if a distance scale were included on them). The color photographs are a pleasure to look at (but why only 12?). Archer's writing style is engaging and personal; she has produced a fine book that's not only packed with wonderful things but a pleasure to read, too. It sets a good example of what other guide books to wilderness canoe tripping should look like. A lovely book to have, to use, and also to dream with.

* * * * *

PADDLING ACROSS THE PENINSULA, An Important Cross-Michigan Canoe Route During the French Regime by Timothy J. Kent, published by Silver Fox Enterprises, P.O. Box 176, 11504 U.S. 23 South, Ossineke, Michigan, 49766, USA; 2003, softcover, 63 pages, US\$9.95 (CDN\$15.95) plus S/H.

This is another one of Kent's self-published and impressively researched works on canoe travel during the fur-trade era. It's not nearly as wide-ranging as his classic two-volume study on birchbark canoes, *Birchbark Canoes of the Fur Trade*, but it still presents fascinating information about a crucial canoe route formed by a series of rivers across the entire lower peninsula of Michigan, carrying traffic between Saginaw Bay and Grand Haven. The author takes us on a search for the most probable connecting route, including portages, illustrating his narrative with several simple but clear and detailed maps. The book gives valuable insight into the requirements for a useful and manageable canoe route.

The second half of the small but admirable book is occupied by a series of 20 black-and-white photographs

with extended captions that illustrate an interesting recreation of the ancient Native and French methods of traveling by birchbark canoe. Although it's regrettably not mentioned in the book's title, this section is at least as fascinating as the first one on the Michigan canoe route. It shows how to paddle, load, and portage a birchbark canoe, the use of a complete canoe-and-canvas shelter, and the kind of equipment and clothing these travellers would use. By involving his family in these recreations, Kent gives us a wonderful picture of some aspects of life in the French fur-trade times of the 1600s and 1700s.

* * * * *

FROM REINDEER LAKE TO ESKIMO POINT by Peter Kazaks, published by Natural Heritage Books, Toronto, Ontario, www.naturalheritagebooks.com, 2003, softcover, 155 pages, \$22.95.

In 1981, four paddlers set out on 800-mile, 38-day canoe trip in the barren region west of Hudson Bay where Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut come together. Their complicated itinerary on these seldom-visited waterways included Reindeer Lake, the Cochrane River, the Thlewiaza River, Nueltin Lake, the Kognak River, South Henik Lake, and the Maguse River, ending on the western shores of Hudson Bay.

It was the first real wilderness trip for the author who had very little canoeing experience. Fortunately his three partners had lots of paddling miles under their belts and taught him many of the ups and downs of travelling in the wilderness. As a result, this book is filled with astute observations by a curious newcomer to the country and the best way to explore it, the paddling, the portaging, the camping, the vast vistas, the cold wind, surviving the clouds of black flies. It all made a deep impression on the man and it comes through in his writing that reflects, often in well-observed detail, on his new experiences in this harsh but breathtakingly beautiful country. The author also talks about his personal feelings and growth, the evolving relationships between the four men, and the insights he gains from being part of a team on an extended northern trip. The numerous black-and-white photographs, made by George Luste—who also contributed the excellent Foreword—are on the whole quite good in illustrating the country and how the four men travelled through it; unfortunately the quality of their reproduction in the book is not always satisfactory. This well-written book should also have had a more inspiring title and a better cover photograph.

Reviews by Toni Harting

WCA OUTINGS

WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND HAVE IT PRESENTED IN THE SUMMER ISSUE?
Contact the Outings Committee before 9 May

It's paddling season again! Time to evict the squirrels from their nest under your boat. Our organizers have come through again with a highly diversified offering for your paddling pleasure. We've got relaxed lake trips and white-knuckle whitewater, educational workshops, and on-the-water skill-development clinics.

If you've recently joined the WCA but haven't yet participated in our club outings, we would like to take this opportunity to personally invite you to come out with us. We're a very friendly, welcoming group. Our organizers are individuals who enjoy seeing new members on their trips. Before you know it, you'll feel like one of the gang. You'll meet new paddling companions and find friends to plan future trips with.

If you are a more-seasoned WCAer, please consider becoming an outings organizer. We are very short of regular organizers at this time. The club would really appreciate your willingness to share your experience with other members by organizing outings. Over the years, as we develop our own personal circles of paddling buddies, we sometimes forget how much we

benefited from the generosity of those who came before us in providing opportunities for us as new paddlers to get out on lakes and rivers we had never seen before. Please help us ensure that those same opportunities remain for those joining the WCA today. Find just one free day or weekend this year and volunteer to organize an outing for fellow paddlers.

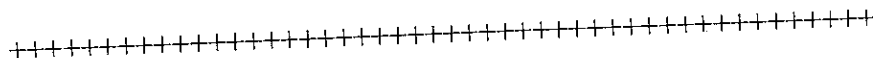
Just a reminder to our organizers and potential organizers that the WCA does have an outdoor education benefits program to reimburse you for approved outdoor course fees. It's one of our ways of letting you know how much we value your contributions to the club. Why not take advantage of it to help pay for that wilderness first-aid or river-rescue course that you'd really like to attend? Please see our website for program details.

Wishing you all happy paddling, hiking, biking, etc. Looking forward to seeing you out there with us on the trails and waterways this year.

WCA Outings Committee

For questions, suggestions, proposals to organize trips, or anything else related to the WCA Outings, contact any of the members of the Outings Committee: Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca; Barry Godden, 416-440-4208; 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.



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

21 February
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.

BLACK (WASHAGO), HEAD, MOIRA, ETC. RIVERS

March - May
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 roocnsi@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 potluck. 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.

17 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.

17 - 18 April

SPENCE'S CELEBRATED SALMON-MOIRA WEEKEND

Glenn Spence, 613-475-4176, book before 10 April ----- Just north of Belleville, these two rivers offer exciting whitewater and fine scenery. The Salmon is the more gentle run, with some small rapids for you to practise your skills on. The Moira has larger rapids possibly up to class 3. You can bivouac at my house, and enjoy a potluck dinner. These are two of Southern Ontario's finest spring rivers. Intermediate paddlers welcome. Limit six canoes.

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.

21 April

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A WILDERNESS FIRST AID KIT AND HOW TO USE IT

Bill King, 416-223-4646, book by 7 April ----- Want to learn the secrets of the pros? Come to Bill's home at 7:30 on Wednesday, 21 April. Coffee provided (the #1 professional cure for caffeine deficiency!). Call Bill for directions.

Nastawgan

UPPER MADAWASKA RIVER

24 April
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.

MINESING SWAMP

24 April
Ray Laughlen, 705-754-9479, book by 17 April ---- The Minesing Swamp, just west of Barrie, is one of Southern Ontario's most significant wetlands and bird habitats. We will follow Willow Creek down to Edenvale. A slow-paced float while checking out waterfowl, herons, and early spring migrants. Limit six boats.

MISSISSAGUA RIVER AND EELS CREEK

24 - 25 April
Bill Ness, 416-321-3005 before 9:00 p.m., book before 20 April ---- On Saturday we will paddle the Mississagua, north of the village of Buckhorn. This is a classic pool-and-drop run. The river is a series of rapids in the class 1-3 range separated by flat sections and scenic falls (class 4-5). All major rapids can be easily portaged, making the trip suitable for intermediates, or even experienced novices who don't mind doing some extra carrying. Saturday night accommodations are participants' responsibility (I usually stay at a motel in Peterborough.). The next day we will run Eels Creek near Apsley, which is similar to the Mississagua but narrower. It's a very pretty little creek with some real fun drops, but you must be a solid intermediate with good boat control in class 2 water to be able to navigate it. The scenery justifies toting a camera. Limit five boats.

ALGONQUIN SPRING HIKE AND CANOE

30 April - 2 May
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.

BRONTE CREEK

May
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.

UPPER MADAWASKA AGAIN

1 May
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.

MAGNETAWAN RIVER

8 - 9 May
Al Sutton, 905-985-0261, book before 30 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.

HIKING ALONG GREEN RIVER AND DUFFIN CREEK

8 May
Bill King, 416-223-4646, book by 1 May ---- Was Mother upset that you didn't hike in her honor last year? Never mind, Bill is leading another hike on the Seaton Trail on Saturday, 8 May. (It's not easy to get ahead of Mother!). Granted a break from the weather, we'll try to do the whole thing this year. Call Bill for details.

INTRODUCTION TO MOVING WATER

15 May and 5 June
Jon McPhee, 905-640-8819 and Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, book before 1 May ---- This is a two-day workshop for flatwater paddlers who want to develop basic moving-water skills. It should be of interest to trippers who want to become more comfortable negotiating the moderate moving-water they often encounter on river trips, and to canoeists who want to determine if whitewater paddling could be for them. These will be intense skill-builder days, focusing on the basics of moving-water boat control and manoeuvres, water reading, and safety. Both tandem and solo paddlers are welcome.

The first day we will be at a section of the Black River, near Washago. There is easy access to a short section that contains several rapids, each with different characteristics, that are ideal for learning the basics.

Our group will reconvene on 5 June at Elora to run the Gorge. At the usual level for this time of year, the Gorge presents a series of class 1-2 rapids separated by short, flat sections. Located on the Grand River just north of Guelph, it will provide us with relatively warm water and freedom from the bugs farther north. There is an easily portaged chute in the midsection that will provide a rewarding challenge for the more adventuresome. This will be your opportunity to practise what you learned on the previous weekend, reading the water to plan your routes, ferrying and eddy turning your way down the river. There are several excellent spots where we can also do some basic rescue exercises.

For those interested in moving on to develop whitewater playboating skills, there will be an opportunity for coaching at the Palmer Rapids Play Weekend on 10-11 July (see below).

In order to be able to work closely with participants, registration is limited to six boats.

Prerequisites: Participants must be able to steer a canoe competently on flatwater. A Royalex boat with supplementary floatation (air bag, air mattress, inner tube, etc.) to simplify recovery when you capsize is mandatory. If you need to rent one, you should book the boat immediately as there are very limited numbers available with outfitters. Vest-type PFD's, helmets, and square-bladed, T-gripped whitewater paddles are necessary. There are several models of adequate and inexpensive whitewater helmets and paddles now available at outdoor shops. Lastly, you must feel at home in the water to enjoy these workshops.

Recommended: While not required, a wetsuit will make floating in the river more pleasant. Reviewing a whitewater instructional book or video before we meet will familiarize you with the important concepts so you can get the most value out of your river time.

Preference will be given to participants attending both sessions. If there are openings for single days, these will be allotted after 1 May. No registration will be accepted until all the prerequisites are satisfied.

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 takeout 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 class 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.

12 June

GRAND RIVER

Doug Ashton, 519-620-8364, doug.ashton@sympatico.ca, book by 1 June ---- The Grand River offers a local leisurely day trip from Cambridge to Paris where it passes through scenic farm country. This trip is suitable for novice paddles with some moving-water experience. An excellent family trip. Limit six boats.

25 - 27 June

NORTH CHANNEL OF LAKE HURON

Bob Fisher, 416-487-2950 or info@upthebay.com, book by 1 June ---- This will be an exploratory trip for the organizer. Three days exploring the pink granite of the Benjamins and the other famous North Channel Islands. We will be there before the summer cruisers and keel boats. June on the lakes is a low-wind month, but just in case, participants should be comfortable paddling in a swell and in larger water. Camping on the rocks and open shore means fewer bugs and no portages means you can bring an extra sleeping pad to make the rocks extra comfy. Dinner kitty. Leave 10 a.m. from McBean Harbour south of Massey (Hwy 17 about one hour west of Sudbury). Driving from Southern Ontario the evening before is suggested. Limit five canoes (or sea kayaks if you are self-sufficient).

26 - 27 June

OXTONGUE RIVER

Ray Laughlen, 705-754-9479, book by 19 June ---- We will paddle from Canoe Lake down to Hwy 60. There should be runnable rapids if water is still up. Mosquitoes will be part of the attraction. Suitable for novices. Limit five boats.

July - September

MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005 ---- I'm frequently at the Gull River 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 to 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.

10 - 11 July

PALMER RAPIDS PLAY WEEKEND

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, book by 1 July ---- 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. The water is warm and most of the bugs have departed. If you took a WCA whitewater workshop earlier this season, why not join us for some more practice. We can work on specific skills, depending on participants' interest. No limit to the participants or the fun.

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.

12 - 18 August

GEORGIAN BAY

Don Andersen, dbandersen@aol.com, 716-873-4476, book before 1 August ----- The area of Georgian Bay located between Byng Inlet and the French River Delta comprises an excellent cross-section of the northeastern shore of Georgian Bay. Sparkling waters and sun-drenched islands can characterize this spectacular area of the Big Bay in August. Starting and ending at Byng Inlet, we will paddle to the Churchill Islands, Fox River Delta, Bustard Islands via the Northeast Passage, Roger's Gut Islands, and Cunningham's Islands. We may be exploring each island group by canoe and on foot. This trip will use available sheltered waters whenever conditions require it. Suitable for parents with mature adolescent children and for retired folk alike, provided they are competent novices who can manage windy conditions and waves. Limit seven canoes.

20 - 22 August

ALGONQUIN PARK

Geri and Gary James, 416-512-6690 or wca@sympatico.ca, book immediately ----- A long weekend of family canoeing, hiking, and camping in Algonquin Park (tentative location). Join us at the Whitefish Group Campgrounds where we will circle the tents on a large site to ourselves. We can hike, canoe, swim, and play to our hearts' content. Water games are always a part of the weekend to keep cool and get everyone involved. The weekend timing is firm; however, the Park booking cannot be made until 20 March. Check out the Park website for fees and details at www.algonquinpark.on.ca/campcan/moreinfo/campgrd.html. Let us know as soon as possible if you are interested in attending so we can make the arrangements.

September

ORCA CANOE TRIPPING 1 AND 2 COURSE

Barry Godden, 416-440-4208, book by 1 August ----- If you would like to earn ORCA Canoe Tripping certification, join our group for this course. The week of the course will be decided by early spring. Call for details.

27 Sep. - 2 Oct.

NIPISSING RIVER

Ray Laughlen, 705-754-9479, book by 20 September ----- Join me on a leisurely trip in Algonquin Park, going down the Nipissing River and back up the Tim River. Hopefully the leaves will be in color. We will likely see moose, otter, and a full moon. Suitable for novices who can enjoy portages of up to 1370 m. Limit four canoes.

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.

WANTED: SENIORS WHO LOVE CANOEING

Are you 55 years of age or older, an outdoors enthusiast, who, in addition to canoeing, also probably loves camping, hiking, cycling, or cross-country skiing? You may canoe infrequently, or perhaps you are an experienced canoeist who has led multi-day trips into the wilderness.

We are the Seniors for Nature Canoe Club (SFNCC) and we are actively looking for new members. Club activities include scheduled outings throughout the year. Daily outings are held each Tuesday and Thursday and include canoeing, hiking, cycling, and cross-country skiing. In addition, multi-day canoe trips of varying lengths are

scheduled to provincial parks and wilderness areas. The Club can supply some canoeing and camping equipment. Training is available as is the opportunity to find a canoeing partner.

It's widely accepted that exercise can add quality and perhaps even years to your life. If you are interested in more information or a membership application, send an e-mail to info@sfncc.org, or send a letter to SFNCC, Box 94051, Bedford Park P.O., Toronto, M4N 3R1. Our website is www.sfncc.org

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.

MEMBERS' DISCOUNT Peterborough-based outfitter, Human Heights, who is also the Ontario sales representative for Esquif canoes, will provide a club discount for WCA members who want to buy an Esquif boat through him. Contact Bill Ness for special WCA price list: bness@look.ca

WCA MERCHANDISE We have a wide selection of WCA merchandise available for purchase at all WCA events (but not by mail order). Items available include WCA mugs (\$5), crests (\$3), and decals (\$1). We also have WCA clothing in a range of colors and sizes. Each item is a high-quality product that has been embroidered with a colorful WCA logo. At your next event plan to purchase one of these garments and proudly represent your organization. Golf Shirts: \$30; Fleece Vests: \$40; Fleece Jackets: \$60. (Cheque or cash only.)

CANOE FOR SALE Mad River Independence, Kevlar, solo-tripping canoe in excellent condition. At 15 ft. 8 in. long with a 28-in. beam, it will carry my 230 lbs. plus gear for a week with adequate free board. It is fast and tracks well in flatwater but retains reasonable manoeuvrability in current. At 32 lbs., it is a joy on the portage. Originally \$1800 in 1992, I will sell it for \$1100 or would also consider a trade for a lightweight tandem canoe. To arrange a viewing call Bill King at 416-223-4646.

CANOE FOR SALE Mad River Flashback, Royalex, pedestal seat, airbags, grab loops, vinyl gunnels. Good condition, great for smaller solo paddlers. \$500. Sandy Harris, 416-489-8980, sandyandroger@sympatico.ca

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.

CANOE FOR SALE Dagger Impulse, 12' 8", teal blue. Exceptionally good condition. This is a great canoe for the paddler just making the move into solo whitewater. One of

the most stable and forgiving solo boats ever made, but it also has good manoeuvrability and speed. It makes a good river tripper as well. Fully outfitted with saddle and airbags. \$750. Contact Bill Ness, 416- 21-3005, bness@look.ca

CANOE & KAYAK FOR SALE 16' Old Town "Kennebec" canoe, ideal for rocky Southern Ontario rivers. It can be used for tandem tripping and either solo or tandem whitewater, \$300. "River Runner" high-volume kayak, which can be used by large people and for tripping; incl. waterproof storage bags, paddle, and skirts, \$100. Gerry Yellowlees, joanandgerry@hotmail.com

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, Coulonge, 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.)

ADVENTURE PADDLING

- Anyone having done the Caniapiscaw River from Schefferville (via Swampy Bog River) to Kuujuaq, please contact Werner at www.adventurepaddling.com with details.
- Adventure Paddling Inc. provides ORCA and WO certified canoeing and kayaking instruction in both flat- and whitewater. Check out our website at www.adventurepaddling.com for details.



Where it is ...



... in this issue

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mountain River 12. News Briefs 12. Mailing Nastawgan 13. Canadian Canoe Museum 13. Conservation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Matter of Great Import 16. Symposium 17. Book Drive 17. Poem 17. Second Waterfall ... 18. Sea Kayaking at Anticosti ... 23. Food for Paddlers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 24. ICOC Needs Your Input 24. Partners Wanted 25. Reviews 26. WCA Outings 30. Seniors 31. Products and Services |
|--|---|--|

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