



Long Lake seen from the Chilkoot Trail

SOLO TO THE KLONDIKE

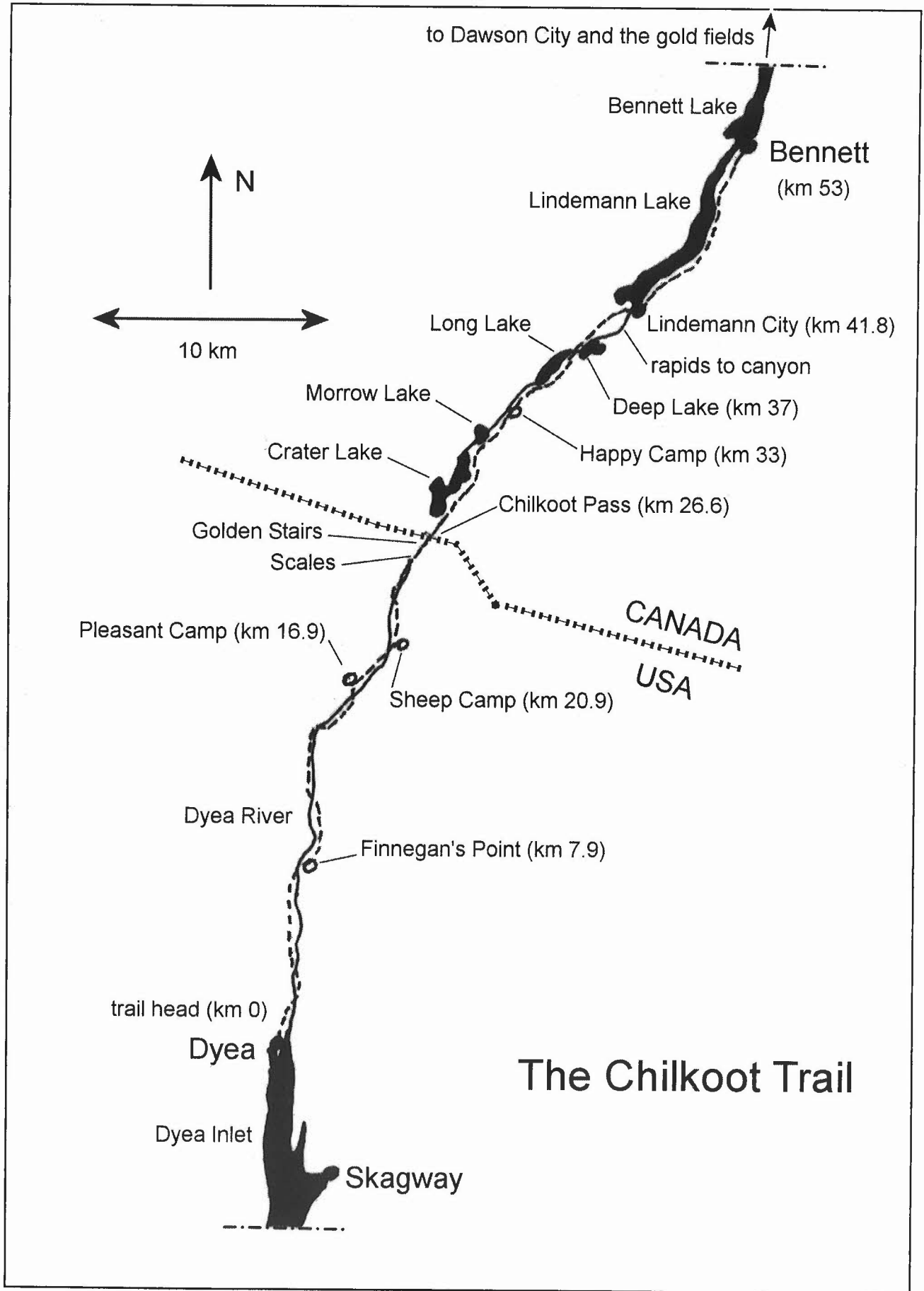
John Girard

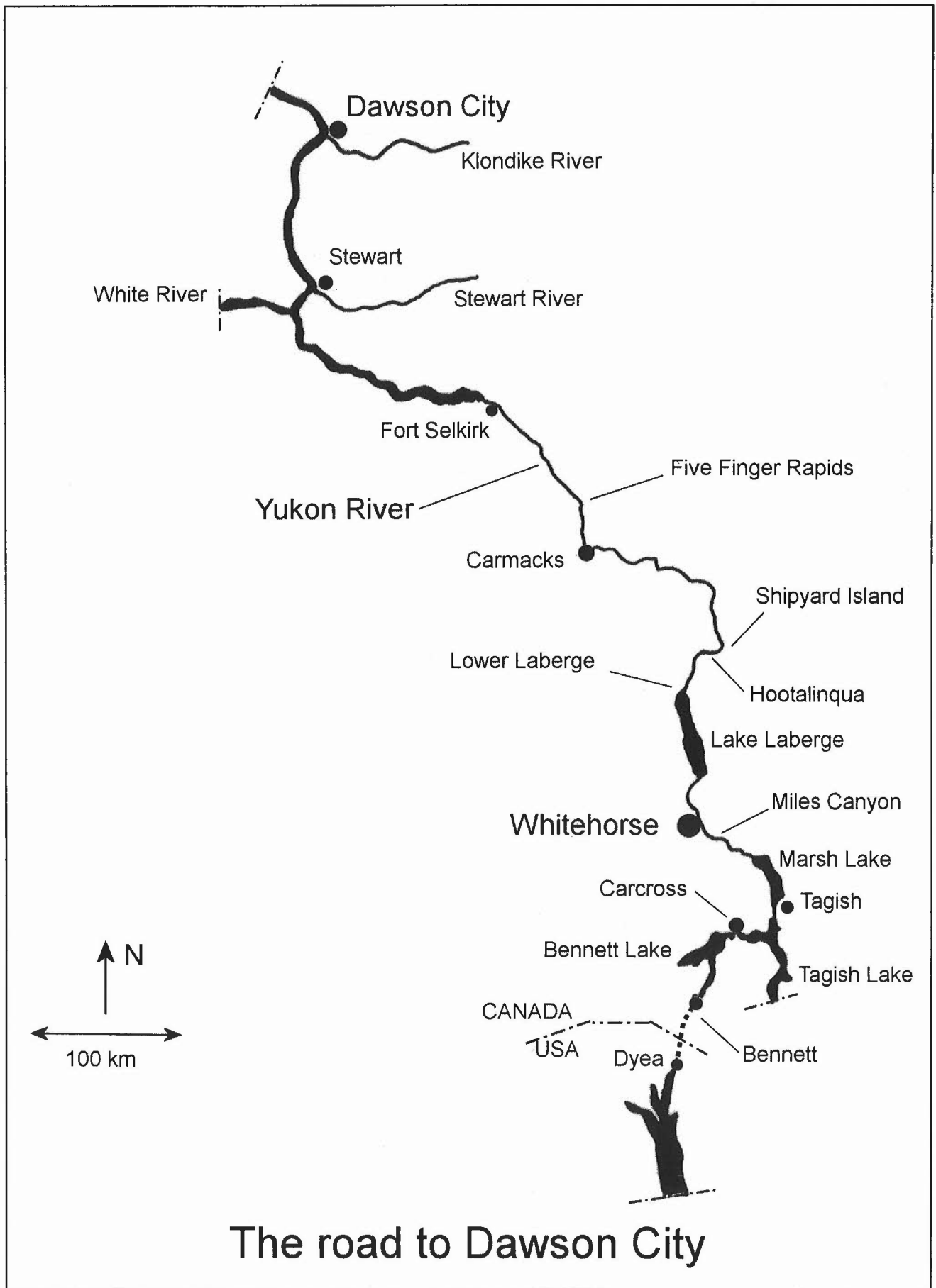
A little more than one hundred years ago, the Klondike Gold Rush was on, and thousands of gold seekers trekked to the Yukon River valley and several of its tributaries to “moil for gold.” The promise of enormous wealth in this remote region raised questions of sovereignty and the need to define our northern borders, making it a most interesting chapter in Canada’s history.

In 1899, *The Klondike Nugget* published an article referencing the First Annual Report of the newly formed Geographic Board of Canada, in which the evolution of the name Klondike was described: “Plain Klondike takes the place of Klondyke, Clondyke and Thron-diuck, and a long suffering public will thank the Board for it.

Thron-diuck is a nightmare!” (Later, in neighbouring Alaska, there was a similar orthographic dilemma in the town of Chicken, which bears that name because the miners couldn’t agree on how to spell Ptarmigan, the intended name.)

The Klondike Gold Rush was renowned for its stories of immense hardships, its tales of fortunes lost by the men trying to get to the gold fields, and its tales of fortunes being made by the entrepreneurs who provided services to the gold seekers. These same themes reoccurred with annoying accuracy during my drive from Southern Ontario to the west coast of Canada in my old truck known affectionately for the past ten years as “Black







Chilkoot: The Golden Stairs in 1897/98

Beauty.” A century after the Gold Rush, it was auto mechanics, from Ontario to Alberta, profiting from the lure of the Klondike. After the fourth breakdown, “Black Beauty” evolved into “That Damned Truck,” and was exchanged for a reliable rental in Calgary.

July 19, 2001

After 12 days of travel I finally arrived in Skagway Alaska, aboard the Alaskan Marine Ferry M.V. Kennicott. At the Canada Customs office I paid for my Chilkoot Trail pass and got current information on trail conditions, bear and avalanche alerts, and the weather forecast, and then drove the short distance to the trail head at the abandoned townsite of Dyea.

While assembling my gear, a group of hikers approached and we exchanged greetings. As I struggled to strap my blue barrel to the top of my pack, they stopped and one of them chuckled, “What’s with the barrel?” The many hikers that sped past me today all agreed that my gear was unsuitable for hiking. I gave up trying to explain that I was a canoeist trying to adapt my old canoeing gear to a new, one-time adventure, although I must admit to getting some satisfaction when they

said to me: “You chose *this* as your first hike?”

During the planning of this trip, my biggest concern was bears. All the material that I read on the topic of hiking in bear country had a common theme: “Make lots of noise so you don’t surprise a bear.” So today I sang. Although I found it difficult to wheeze and sing at the same time, I managed to belt out an off-key rendition of *Good Night Irene*. I was on the zillionth repeat of this song when an old hiker from Dallas Texas came up behind me. We walked for a couple of kilometres together, and with a smile he told me that he heard me singing, and that I can’t. Everyone’s a critic.

Today was an eight-kilometre hike that had me gasping for breath most of the day. I was a little concerned about my up-coming climb over the Chilkoot Pass, when the two 76-metre-high hills I hiked over today seemed so difficult. The trail

wandered through beautiful coastal rainforest that was very lush with moss and plant life. Tomorrow will be a 13-km uphill climb to Sheep Camp, with an estimated increase in elevation of about 275 vertical metres.



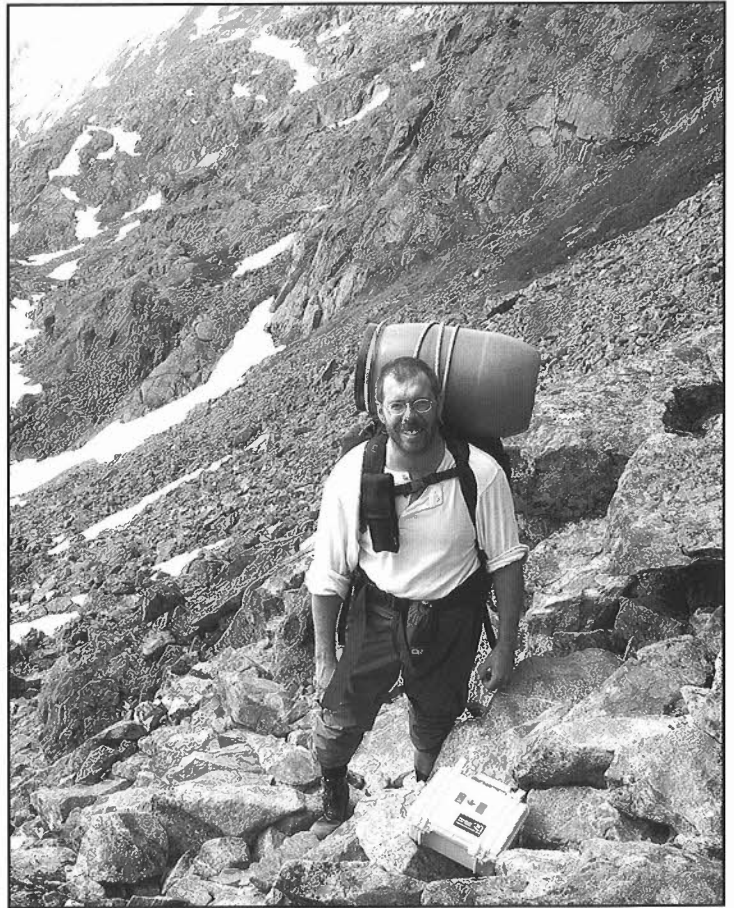
Chilkoot: The Golden Stairs in July 2001

July 20

I had an unfortunate mishap with my bear spray today. My bear spray holster was strapped to my belt with the trigger guard removed from the canister, just in case I had to quickly use the spray. On the first rock I rested on this morning, my elbow came down on the spray can trigger, blasting a jet of pure hell up my bare, sweaty left forearm and hand. I was immediately impressed with the high quality burning sensation I was experiencing. However, I wasn't able to say much more than AIIIIYYYYY ! before the wind coaxed the orange cloud back into my face. Now *that* was unpleasant!

I also had a funny misunderstanding with one of the German hikers, once again with my gear being the topic of discussion. She had asked me why I was carrying a tonne. Thinking that she was exaggerating (but not by much) the weight of my pack, I told her that I had a historically correct weight that I was carrying over the Chilkoot Pass. "The Stampeders had to take a tonne of goods," I explained, "so I am taking a tonne as well." After an awkward silence, they discussed it amongst themselves and then realized that she had inadvertently used the German word for barrel, which is tonne. Oh well. . .

Tomorrow will be "summit day," and the parks staff encouraged everybody to get an early start on the climb over the pass on account of the fact that the snow gets less stable as the heat of the day warms it up, increasing the possibility of avalanches. Tonight, the park ranger met with us and gave a talk on what we could expect at tomorrow's hike over the pass. He stressed the importance of travelling in large groups, because a grizzly bear was spotted on the trail today. It had been another beautiful day, but I was so tired that I almost dreaded tomorrow.



The author carrying his "tonne" on The Golden Stairs



Crater Lake

July 21

I'd enjoyed absolutely fantastic weather again, and the scenery was awesome. The first four hours were a constantly gruelling uphill climb. My thighs ached from the strain and I felt heat exhaustion coming on. It got to the point where I stopped filtering my water because even that was too much effort. Remembering a friend's giardia episode from a Missinaibi River trip wasn't enough to make me get out my filter.

My Bear-Aware strategy had changed and I was no longer singing "Good Night Irene." After the first day's eight-hour long-play version, I didn't care if I ever heard that song again. I was now continually calling out: "Hey bear--bear-bear!" Travelling solo means having to make lots of noise, to give bears plenty of warning that you're in the area. I followed inukshuks to find the trail.

Travelling solo also meant trying not to dwell on the "You Are In Bear Country" park literature that discourages hiking solo in the same breath that it warns against keeping food in your tent and approaching a bear with cubs. "Hey bear--bear-bear!" Around noon I was feeling weak and spent, and I still hadn't gotten to The Scales, my mid-day objective. I got in the shade of an overhanging rock to make my lunch and to assess if I'd already bitten off more than I could chew with this hike.



Morrow Lake

My rest was interrupted by a hiker who came running back from up the trail, saying I'd better come with her quick because there was a large grizzly bear on the trail ahead. Around the very next bend in the trail from my shaded lunch spot was The Scales, and there, just to the left of the steep, rocky slope known as The Golden Stairs, was a huge grizzly bear ambling up the slope. The excitement of seeing that bear, and of realizing my mid-day objective, seemed to give me the boost that I needed to carry on. After finishing my lunch break, I felt mentally and physically prepared for The Golden Stairs.

Standing at the base of The Golden Stairs and letting the challenge ahead sink in, was sobering. Looking up at about a 45-degree angle I could see the cleft in the rubble that was my next destination. From researching this trip I knew that this cleft was the first of two false summits, so once up there I'd find another snow field that would lead to the base of another gruelling climb. This would happen again until I'd eventually reach the true summit at 1,128 metres above sea level from where I had started three days ago at Dyea. I started walking.

Once over The Chilkoot Pass I still had 6.5 km more of rock and snow to scramble over before reaching Happy Camp, today's final destination. I got a cheer from everyone there when I finally stumbled into camp. What an exhausting, yet incredibly rewarding day this had been.

July 22

Awoke to rain and fog this morning; however it would only be a nine-kilometre hike to my next camp. Once again I was hiking all alone with the occasional group of

hikers passing me. I caught up with a German couple who were struggling with the wife's painful ankle, which she had sprained badly yesterday, and walked with them for a while. They were in a group of 11 hikers. She could not walk without assistance and her husband was her crutch, both determined to carry on. Their pace was extremely slow now, and it was obvious the woman was in a lot of pain.

The group's guide had requested yesterday that they turn back, as the worst was yet to come; however, they persisted and somehow managed to climb over the pass. They had made arrangements for a boat to pick them up at Lindemann Lake, where their hike would end. I was amazed that they had made it this far. The two of them were a real inspiration.

I finally made it to the Lindemann Lake campsite after four hours of hiking through this amazing landscape of clear alpine lakes, melt water cascading down the mountain sides, and whitewater raging through deep canyons. I was in complete awe.

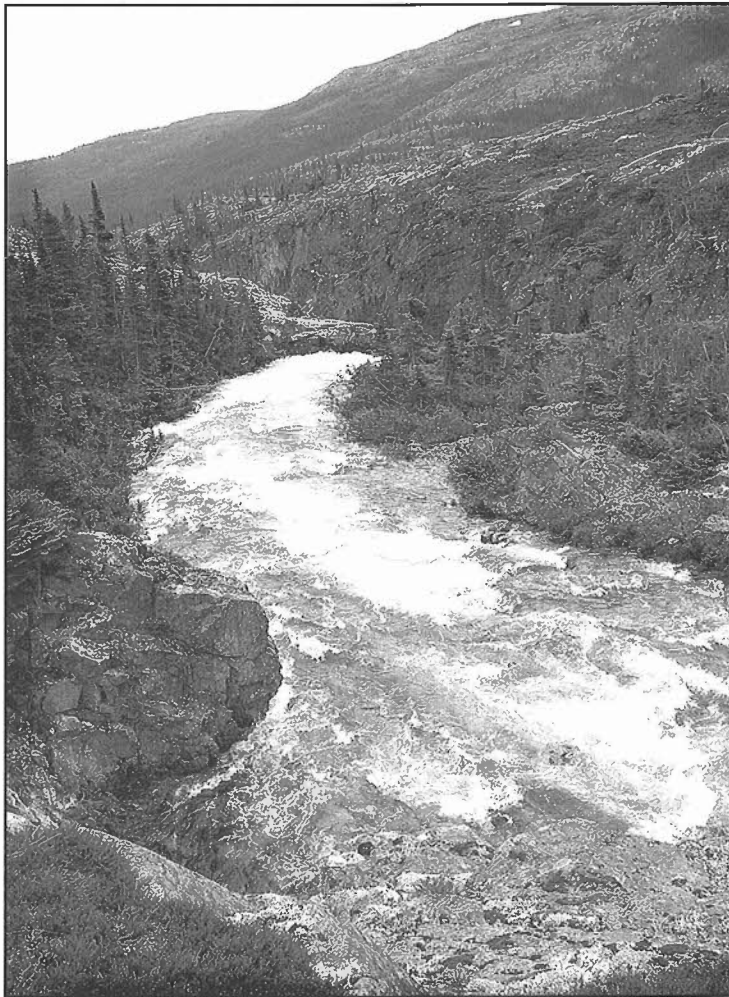
July 23

Today was an 11-km-long hike, and I was glad it was over. The last eight kilometres, mostly through deep beach sand, were more of an ordeal than a hike and I now had serious problems with both my feet. The day started off with one of the Parks Service people telling me to be extra cautious because a black bear sow with two cubs was spotted on the trail. Along the trail I met a Tagish native working for the Parks Service, who was taking a break for lunch. He told me how the Chilkoot Trail was known for

hundreds of years by his people as the Grease Trail. The coastal Tlingit tribe would trade fish and whale oil with the interior Tagish tribe for furs and precious metals.

The cheer I was greeted with as I entered Bennett town site brought a welcome end to a wonderful and exhausting experience. In 1898, Stampeders from both the Chilkoot Pass trail and White Pass trail gathered here to prepare for the trip down the Yukon River to Dawson City and the gold fields. Bennett's population swelled to 20,000 people and they spent the winter and early spring cutting down trees, whipsawing planks, and building boats that they had hoped would carry them safely along the treacherous route north. When the ice finally broke in the spring of 1898, an estimated 7,000 boats of all shapes and sizes left for Dawson City.

Tomorrow, I hope to start my solo paddle to Dawson, travelling on the same highway that the Stampeders rode on: the Yukon River. Not that I expect to share the same sense of remote wilderness that the Stampeders would have felt. Today, the Yukon River is spanned by bridges in several locations, has two power dams, and is paralleled by various highways for much of its length in the Yukon Territory.



Rapids to canyon

July 24

As previously arranged, a local outfitter arrived today in his powerboat, laden with my canoe and additional gear. He docked about half a kilometre away from us, making it necessary to carry my "hiking gear" one last time. The five days of hiking the Chilkoot Trail had taken its toll on me, and walking was extremely painful. It would be a great relief just using my arms to travel by, giving my feet a much-deserved rest.

When I finally got underway, Bennett Lake was all whitecaps and deep swells, but fortunately the wind was at my back and I happily paddled the 19-km distance out of British Columbia and into the Yukon Territory to this incredibly beautiful campsite on the lee of an island. A quick, cold skinny dip and a hot meal, and I was about ready for bed. Tomorrow, weather permitting, I would paddle the remaining 21-km distance along Bennett Lake to the town of Carcross.

July 25

Today was another windy day, but happily it was blowing at my back again. I can't believe my good fortune. I arrived at the town of Carcross around noon, assembled my canoe carrier, and headed for the historic Caribou Hotel. It's said to be the only place to stay in town, but I found it was closed for renovations. This cloud had a silver lining though, because I was directed to the Carcross Visitors Reception Centre, and it was there that I was fortunate enough to meet Shirley, a wonderful lady with a genuine heart of gold. She recommended that I stay at the Spirit Lake Motel, which is eight kilometres out of town, and she offered to drop me off there after her shift, on her way home. That was my first taste of the amazing Yukon hospitality. In the next two days, I would be driven back and forth to town, treated for Achilles tendon damage in both feet, treated to lunch, and finally dropped off at the river again to carry on to Dawson City.

July 28

Shirley recommended I use the islands on Tagish Lake for protection from the wind to cross the lake, then hug the east shore. This would enable me to avoid what is locally known as Sucker Bay, a windy and wavy trap for canoeists that has earned a reputation and a local humour name.

I paddled my way onto the Windy Arm of Tagish Lake, and since the lake was relatively calm, I covered the 40-km distance to the north end of Tagish Lake in 8.5 hours. The seven kilometres of Tagish River between Tagish Lake and Marsh Lake passed quickly and I then parked for the night at a roadside campground inhabited by a rowdy collection of yahoos and drunks, near the village of Tagish. One of these idiots had a son who went around to other campers' sites to knock over their gear and steal their firewood. When they complained about it, the idiot father slurred that they'd better shut up about his kid and don't push their luck because he had an axe. Sleep tight.

July 29

Marsh Lake was a 35-km-long stretch of ripple-calm, clear-blue water. As with Bennett and Tagish lakes, I was all alone from one end of Marsh Lake to the other. In planning this trip, I had factored in several wind and weather days that could have held me in camp on these large lakes, or at least impeded my progress. However, the extra days had not been necessary and the distances I was able to paddle each day were greater than I expected, thanks to the agreeable mood of Bennett, Tagish, and Marsh lakes. Hopefully, Lake Laberge, north of Whitehorse, would be just as co-operative.

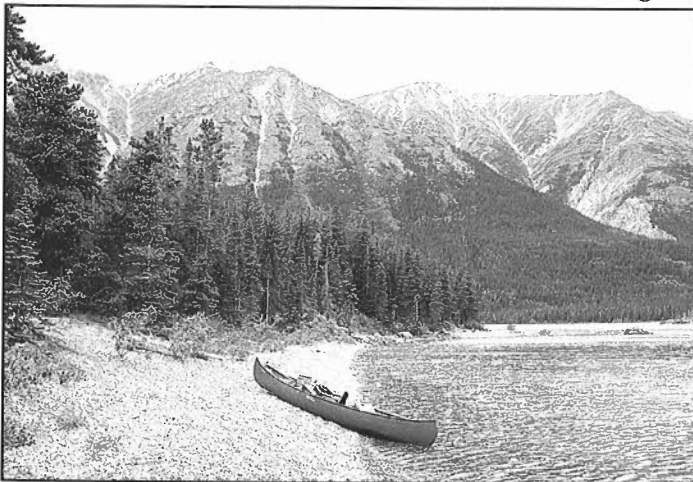
As I paddled closer to today's camp at the north end of Marsh Lake, I was able to read the subtle signs that this was another campsite with access to the highway. Here were the sight and sounds of four guys racing up and down the shore surf of the two-kilometre-long sandy beach on their snowmobiles at high speeds. Northern fun. All in all, another great day in fantastic weather.

July 30

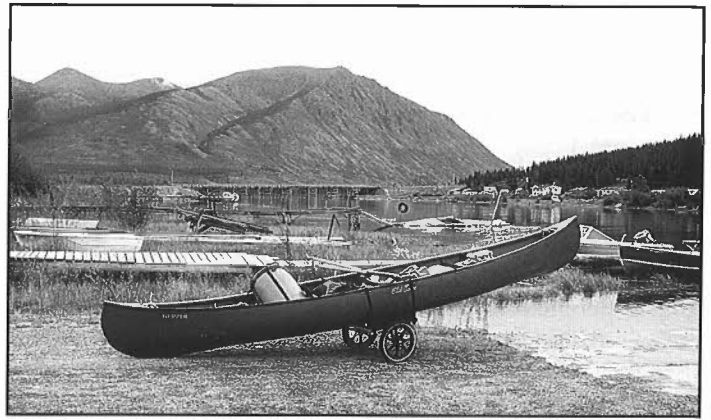
The lakes and rivers that I had paddled to date are only the headwaters of the Yukon River. Once I had paddled off Marsh Lake, I was officially on the Yukon River, although at one time the section of river between Marsh Lake and Lake Laberge was known as the Lewes River.

After 12 km of a leisurely drift-paddle, letting the current do most of the work, I arrived at the first bridge where Hwy. 1 passes over the Yukon River and, just beyond that, the first dam. With my feet crippled the way they were, I dreaded the thought of having to carry my gear over a portage, and was relieved to find that an unmanned lock bypassed the dam. That was a painless option and way easier than portaging.

I paddled 50 km today, and the highlight of the day was paddling through the infamous Miles Canyon. The force of this legendary stretch of water has been tamed by the Whitehorse dam built two kilometres downstream, but it was still exciting to paddle in the surging waters that raced between the high rock walls. I thought



Campsite at Bennett Lake



Canoe cart at Carcross

about all the Stampeders that lost their outfits, and many their lives, in the treacherous canyon and subsequent Whitehorse Rapids.

I put out at the head of the Whitehorse dam and walked my canoe carrier through most of the City of Whitehorse, including its downtown core, to the Riverview Motel. I was under the impression that not too many people had seen a canoe carrier before, on account of the number of times I heard: "Hey buddy, aren't you supposed to be sitting on the water *in* that thing?"

August 1,

Today I went to the Canada Customs office to sign back into Canada, a requirement after hiking through Alaska. I had bought enough food to get me to Dawson City.

August 2

Today's camp was on "The Marge of Lake Laberge," opposite Richthoffen Island, which is named after Baron Von Richthoffen, a prominent geologist back in the 1800s and great-uncle to WW1 German Flying Ace "The Red Baron." Lake Laberge is more widely known as being the location that Robert Service chose as the setting for one of his most popular poems, *The Cremation of Sam McGee*. Tonight a pack of wolves was howling nearby. A wonderful ending to another beautiful, calm, and sunny day.

August 3

At 5:00 this morning I was awakened by a loud, deep, throaty growl. It really bothered me that I didn't know if the noise was real, or part of an extremely vivid dream. Regardless, I was now wide awake and wasted no time in packing up and leaving. Within minutes, I was paddling past a cabin with a bunch of "wolves" penned up nearby. These wolves were cunningly disguised as domestic dogs and were more than likely what serenaded me last night. Oh well.

I was lucky enough to have great weather conditions and I got off Lake Laberge without delay, leaving the last of the big lakes and their unpredictability behind. At the

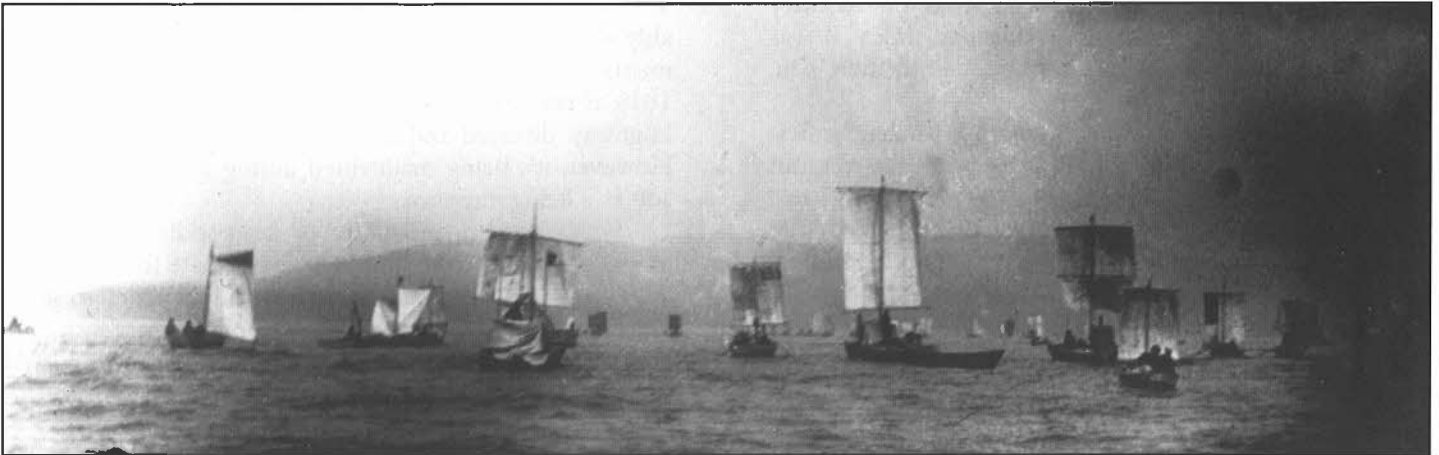
north end of the lake it took several hours to paddle past the charred remains of a 1998 forest fire to the abandoned settlement of Lower Laberge.

Here is the start of a Canadian Heritage River Park known as The Thirty Mile, with its swift current that pulled me along effortlessly to the campsite I was now enjoying, on an island about 47 km from my last camp. This was still the Yukon River, but from Lower Laberge to Hootalinqua, where the Teslin River joins in, it has this special designation in recognition of its outstanding physical and historical attributes.

This was my first solo canoe trip and as such I had pretty well come to the conclusion that solo tripping was not for me. I was enjoying this trip immensely but knew

Today's distance covered was an easy 70 km to this camp on Cassiar Bar, a wind-swept, wide-open gravel bar that was completely free of mosquitoes. I noticed some black sand here, which is said to be a gold indicator, so I gave panning a try. No luck.

There were dark clouds and thunder coming in and the wind was picking up, so I had to make storm preparations and ensure my canoe was tied down securely. Canoes are not the most aerodynamic of things, but they do fly. Years ago, in a Missinaibi Lake storm, I watched helplessly as my Old Town Tripper cartwheeled across my camp in 17-foot strides and was swept away into the lake. I didn't need that to happen here.



Boat traffic on Lake Laberge in 1897/98

that I would feel a hell of a lot more secure and happier if I had had someone with me to share this experience. More and more I realized that solo tripping really does mean being alone.

August 4

Shortly after breaking camp, I paddled past a black bear aggressively eating away at a moose carcass. Nice to see from a distance. There was so much sediment suspended in the rolling, churning water that it made a hissing sound on the bottom of my canoe. Sounded very much like bacon frying. The shore, with its hoodoos and old wood camps, glided by quickly and it didn't take long before I was at the abandoned town of Hootalinqua. Here there are lots of interesting artifacts and several old log buildings to look at; however, I was saddened to find these ancient wooden structures scarred by vandalism. Just write an entry in your diary that you've visited these historic sites, don't carve it on the buildings. On leaving Hootalinqua, I went to nearby Shipyard Island where the S.S. Evelyn (renamed Norcom), had been hoisted up and abandoned in 1913. What a bizarre sight to see in the middle of nowhere an ancient sternwheeler laying abandoned in a forest. The same vandalism was present here.

Another canoe had come to the gravel bar! I was happy to go out into the drizzle and greet Matthew from Collingwood, Ontario, and Michael from Melbourne, Australia. Right now, they just wanted to set up camp before the weather got any worse, and I went back in my dry tent. We'd talk in the morning.

August 5

Michael, Matt, and I broke camp about the same time, and we joined up to go the remainder of the day together for an 87-km paddle to just south of Carmacks. Due to the spontaneous nature of their canoe trip ("Hey, I've got an idea. Let's canoe to Dawson City tomorrow!"), they were extremely ill-prepared and had virtually no cooking gear. Matt had no camping gear at all. The idea was conceived when they met in a Whitehorse hostel, and they were going to see it through.

The day-long rain stopped by dinner time, but the mosquitoes took that as their cue to come out for their dinner too.

August 6

I had to be nuts. This morning I had second thoughts on whether to abandon this as a solo trip and paddle with Michael and Matt, or carry on and finish what I started

solo. I couldn't believe that I had doubts about this and even read back in this journal how tired I was of being on my own. Does joining them represent failure? I left them with the spare gear I had lent them and gave them a friend's phone number in Dawson so they could get in touch with me if we didn't see each other for the rest of the trip. After a few hours of paddling solo, it became clear to me that I did prefer travelling in a group, so I drifted until they caught up. They were happy to have me back and I was glad with their company, so that was settled. When we got to Carmacks, I went looking for a nurse's station to see about getting more drugs for my feet, as I had run out of medication days ago. The woman that I asked directions from turned out to be the nurse on her way to the clinic, and she told me that they only served local people until Wednesday, unless it was an emergency, so I would have to wait until then. Oh, that's nice -- bite me!

Five Finger Rapids was Matt and Michael's first encounter with rapids, ever. With no opportunity to scout the rapids, we had little to go on except the advice I had read, to keep to the right channel. As it turned out, there was not much to the rapids at all, and we made it safely through the quick, wavy ride, with Matt and Michael taking on only a little water. We found a rough campsite on a gravel bar that suited our needs, and decided to call it a day after paddling 88 km with little effort.

August 7

We spent this hazy, warm day just drifting along with the strong current, sometimes floating side by side, talking, and sometimes drifting a kilometre apart. I paid no attention to my topo's and didn't have a clue where we were now, although I knew we were past all the rapids; when we got to Fort Selkirk tomorrow, I would be back on track. We saw moose on three different occasions. As always I was amazed how a large animal like that can take just two steps into the bush and completely vanish. Again we were camped on a windswept gravel bar and enjoyed a late night out before the mosquitoes intruded.

August 8

We stopped for a while to explore Fort Selkirk, a remarkably well-preserved community, and one of the few settlements in the Yukon that predates the gold rush. Built in 1848, it was abandoned in the 1950s when the Klondike Highway diverted traffic and commerce away from it. However, it's being maintained during the canoeing season as a living museum.

We carried on, and after a 67-km paddle day picked a gravel bar that looked like a good campsite for the night. While preparing dinner, we were a little unsettled to see a black bear sow with two cubs walk out of the bush and stroll along the river bank opposite our camp. We watched with keen interest as the sow climbed into the



The Thirty Mile



Camping at the Yukon River

river and floated downstream. After a couple of *ruff's!* from the sow, the cubs went scampering along the bank after her. Later, the sow climbed in the river again and made that *ruff!* sound, but this time the cubs followed her into the river, and the current carried them downstream. My guess is that we were watching the cubs get some swimming lessons.

We were only about 200 km from Dawson City, which at our present rate of travel would be three days of leisurely paddling, followed by Sour Toe Cocktail time. I described the amputated-toe-in-your-drink tradition and, reluctantly, Mike and Matt agreed that's how we would celebrate the end of our trip.

August 9

Another beautiful day highlighted by two more black bears sightings. Matt and Mike were able to paddle up close to one of the swimming bears for some full-frame pictures. Along the way, we stopped at one of the small streams flowing into the Yukon to check it out for gold, and it seemed that the shore was littered with gold specks. I took a pan full of sand and drifted in my canoe for a few hours, trying to wash the sand out of my pan. Interestingly enough, there was lots of "colours" in the bottom of my pan. Gold?

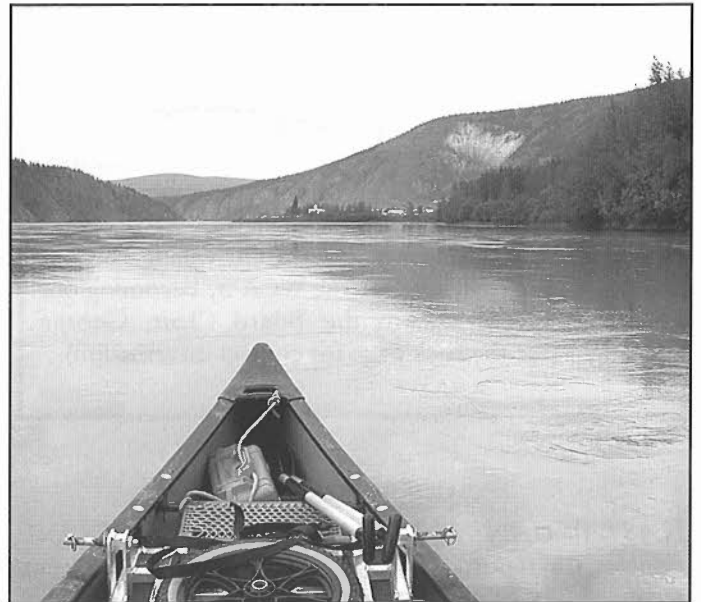
August 10

The temperature had dropped and it was cold enough today for Michael to sport mittens and a toque. At the confluence of the White River, the Yukon River changes to a chocolate milkshake colour. The White River is loaded with volcanic ash from a 1,000-year-old eruption that had covered an enormous area in a thick blanket of ash, which is still discolouring the river today. This ash is

in a seam of varying thickness that can be seen along the eroded banks of the Yukon River in this area.

Matt, Michael, and I got separated near Stewart Island. I nosed into a low mud flat and must have fallen asleep because I lost an hour somewhere along the way. When I woke up, I decided to carry on all the way to Dawson City, which was still 100 km away, figuring that today was a good day to finish the trip and that a 127 km total paddle day was attainable under these conditions.

When I rounded a bend in the river 10 hours later and recognized the Moosehide rock slide scar that shows in the old historical pictures of Dawson City, I knew my trip was nearing



Finally: Dawson City

its end. Later, after settling in comfortably with some friends in Dawson City, I met up with Michael and Matt, and as promised we each got kicked in the teeth tossing back the visually unique Sour Toe Cocktail. Cheers, to a great trip!

How do things look in Dawson after drinking a Sour Toe Cocktail?

Admittedly, the drive west had cost me a small fortune, and the "colours" in the bottom of my gold pan were fools gold, but I didn't really care. By the time I got to Dawson City, I was in many ways a richer man for my experience.



CPM # 40015547
ISSN 1828-1327

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

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

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

EDITORIAL

The request for editorial assistants, posted in the previous issue of *Nastawgan*, has had good results. There are now a number of people helping the editor-in-chief to produce four issues of our journal per year. It should be a while before the new editorial team will be able to operate efficiently because everybody has to learn to work together as a team, but we are confident things will work out well. The names of the editorial team members are presented on the back page.

AUDITOR REQUIRED

The Board of Directors needs an auditor to occasionally check the financial records of the WCA. Time spent will be about one evening per year. No accounting experience necessary. If you are willing to contribute to the well-being of the WCA by becoming our Auditor, please inform the Board Chair, George Drought (see the back page for contact information).

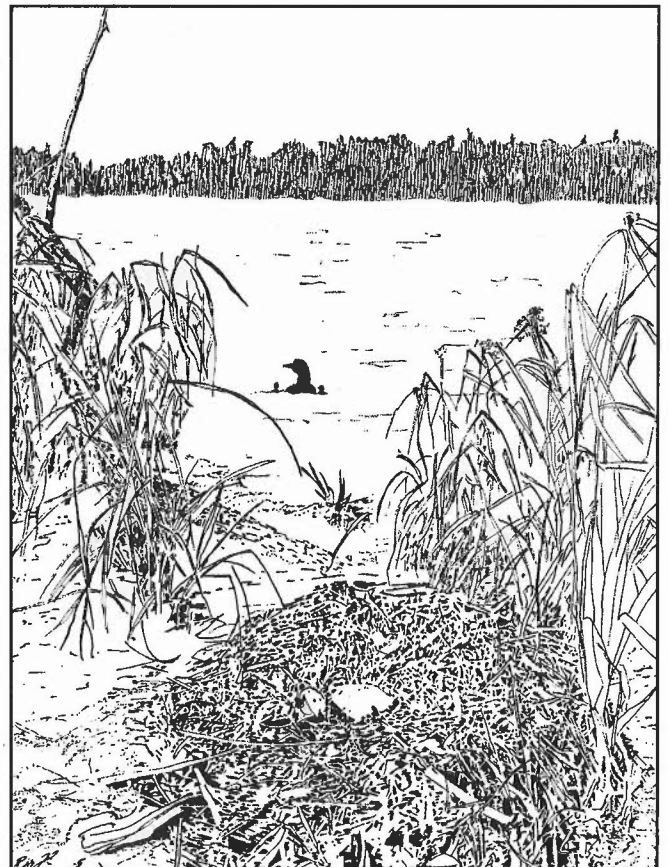
NEWS BRIEFS

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-in-chief (address etc. see WCA Contacts on the back page). Contributor's Guidelines are available upon request; please follow these guidelines as much as possible to increase the efficiency of the production of our journal. The deadline dates for the next two issues are:

issue: Spring 2005 *deadline date:* January 30
Summer 2005 May 1

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.

WINTER POOL SESSIONS Once again we have rented a the swimming pool at Albert Campbell Collegiate in Scarborough for winter practice sessions on Sundays from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. running for 10 weeks from January 9 through to March 13. Cost is only \$100.00 for the entire winter. Great opportunity for anyone with a whitewater canoe or kayak who wants to learn to roll or just stay in shape. Call Bill Ness for more information at 416-321-3005. Spaces are very limited, so don't delay.



WCA Annual General Meeting

Saturday, February 12, 2005
Peterborough, Ontario



Join us this year for our AGM at
the Canadian Canoe Museum.

Details and registration form are printed
on the inside back cover of this issue of Nastawgan.

WILDERNESS & CANOEING SYMPOSIUM

The upcoming 20th annual Wilderness & Canoeing Symposium, organized by George Luste and sponsored by the WCA, will take place on Friday evening, February 4, and Saturday all day, February 5, 2005. The theme this year is Northern Travels and Perspectives, Part 4, a celebration of wild places and notable travellers from the past and the present. The format stays the same and the location again is Monarch Park Collegiate auditorium, One Hanson Street in Toronto.

As in the past, all registration must be done via the designated registration form and cheque payment. (Sorry, we cannot cope with telephone or fax calls for special requests.) WCA members, as well as all past attendees on our list from prior years, should have received the separate Symposium mailing by early December. If there are others who wish to receive the Symposium announcement mailing, please send us an e-mail with name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address to: norbooks@interlog.com Or via fax at 416-531-8873. Or via snail mail to: WCA Symposium, Box 211, Station P, Toronto, ON, M5S 2S7. Information and a registration form are also posted at <http://members.tripod.com/northernbooks/symposium/symposium2005.html> Symposium participants are encouraged to check this website for any program changes and details. The early December mailing will not have all or the latest program details.

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

CALL FOR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

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

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

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

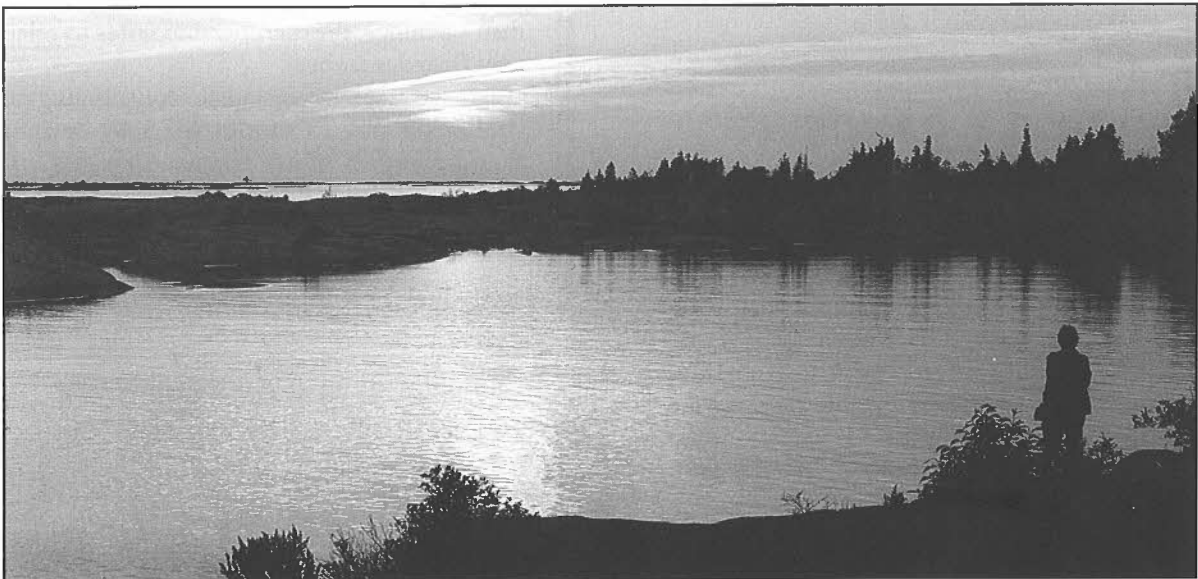
If you are interested in contributing to the continuing success of the WCA by becoming a Board member, please contact George Drought, the current Board Chair, before January 31, 2005. For contact information, see the back page



Economy knee protectors



George Drought

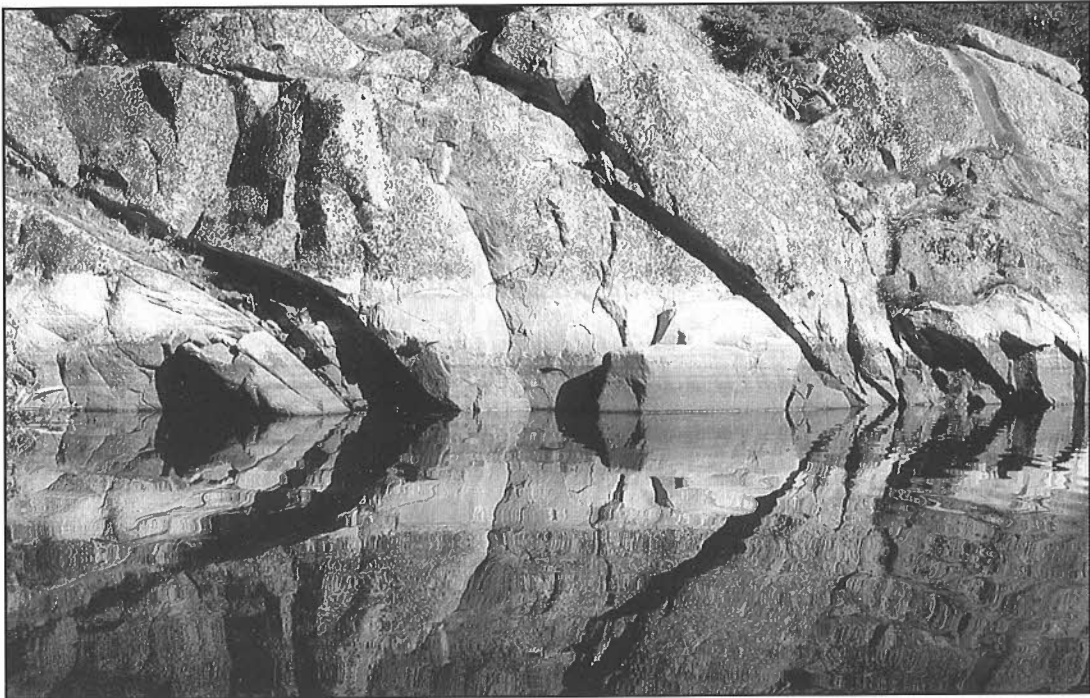


Glenn Spence



Allan Crawford

**pictures
by
paddlers**



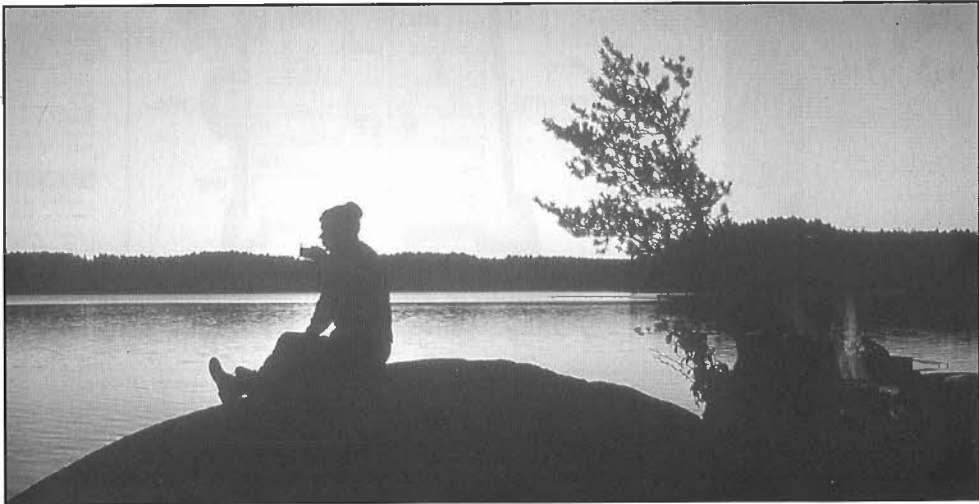
Mike Van Winkle



Jay Neilson



Gail Vickers



Dave Buckley

1604: CHAMPLAIN IN NORTH AMERICA

Sitting on a sandy beach on Ontario's Georgian Bay, I listen to the hush of the surf caressing the shore and watch the blue expanse stretching like an ocean to the horizon. I think of the French River, Samuel de Champlain, and Canada's celebration of the 400th anniversary of Champlain's first settlement in North America.

It feels as though I am back home on the southwest coast of France, resting on a sandy beach and watching the endless Atlantic Ocean. Perhaps, Champlain sat on a similar sandy beach in his native coastal town of Brouage, which is situated near La Rochelle, about four hours southwest of Paris on the Atlantic coast.

Perhaps, Champlain also paused on this small Georgian Bay beach, after paddling down the French River and then heading south while hugging the shore to Huronia, near Midland. Did he watch this big, blue sea, thinking how much it resembles the view from his hometown, a small, fortified citadel facing the sea? Possibly.

In early July of this year, I visited Brouage to celebrate, in my own little way, the anniversary of Champlain's settlement in Canada's Acadia. With the financial assistance of the Canadian government, *La Maison Champlain* will open its doors to the public later this year in his hometown.

Brouage resembles a miniature Québec or Louisburg fortress, with star-shaped, fortified walls surrounding it. Within the walls, a sleepy little town lies baking in the hot, midday July sun, the quiet and deserted cobblestone

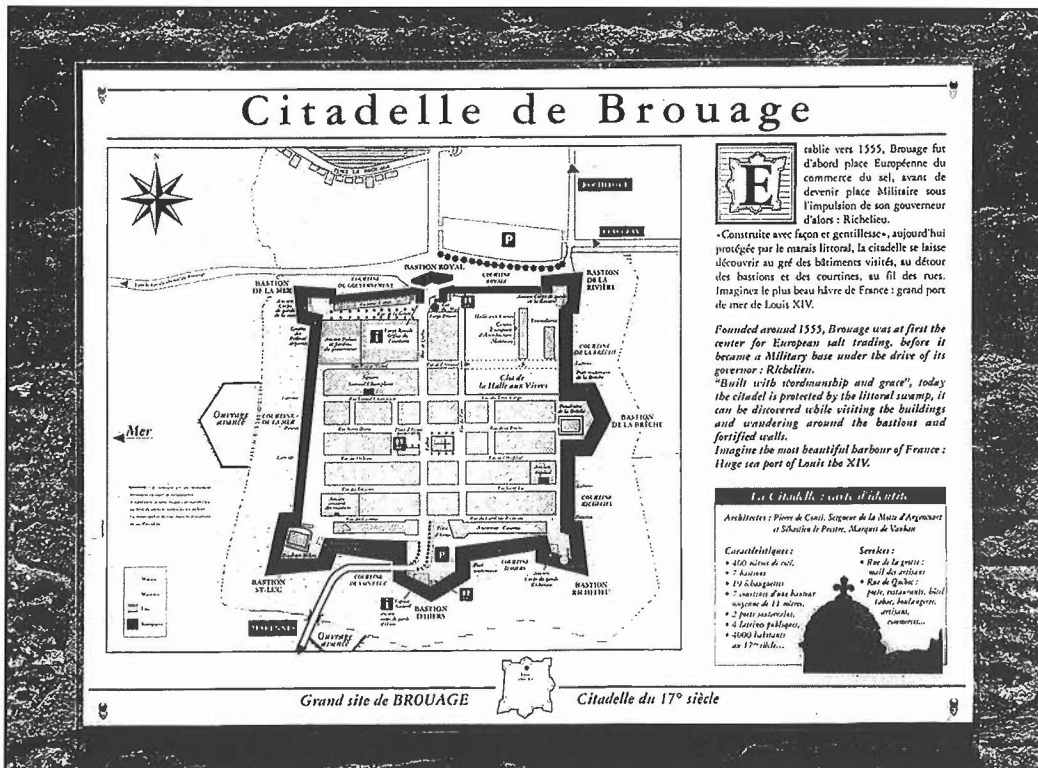
streets all leading to walls. I visited a few military buildings and a church containing a display of Champlain's expeditions to New France. An Acadian flag was also present; it is similar to the blue-white-red French flag but with a lovely yellow star in the top part of the blue.

In Brouage there are also several cafes, including the *Bar-Restaurant Le Champlain*. A small tourist office displays, in one window, the plaster head of Samuel de Champlain, as well as that of Pierre Dugua, Sieur de Mons, who headed the expedition. Dugua also appears on the 1604 commemorative stamp released earlier this summer by Canada Post.

In May of 1604, five boats arrived at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. Two of the boats, with Champlain and Dugua aboard, sailed along the south shore, exploring the coasts of New Brunswick and Maine. On June 26, they stopped at a small island at the mouth of the St. Croix River, which today is on the border of Maine and New Brunswick, establishing a small colony, Île-Sainte-Croix, thus marking the birth of New France. Champlain continued on and in 1608 founded Québec City.

In 1615, adopting the native mode of travel, the canoe, Champlain continued inland, taking the western route up the Ottawa river, across Lake Nipissing, down the French River, and south on Georgian Bay to Huronia.

Charles-Antoine Rouyer



CANOEING WITH KATE

As I packed for my annual solo canoe trip last week, I asked my seven-year-old daughter, Kate, if she would like to come along. She said yes, so I stuffed the pack for two.

After paddling for an hour, we came to the first portage. This one was easy, just a hundred feet of low, rocky rambling along the stream. Blackberry bushes lined the path, so we had a wonderful snack as we walked back to get the second pack and the canoe.

When a little rain shower came by, we tucked ourselves under the canoe to stay dry. It quickly passed, and we loaded up the canoe for the short paddle down the creek to portage # 2.



This one was not so easy. The landing was poor, and we scraped a bit of blue paint off the canoe while unloading. We hobbled across a boulder field, then up, up the hillside. There were a bunch of sweet, juicy blueberries along the trail to keep spirits up. And a big pile of bear poop. Several days old, we wouldn't likely get to see the bear.

The trail kept rising higher over the stream, which was flowing down to the next lake. Twisting, then turning on a switchback, it became rather steep right at the end. I didn't slip, but Kate did. We ate more blueberries as we walked back for the second load.

A fierce south wind sang in the trees above us, but the lake we were crossing was protected from it. We watched as four beautiful black ravens played in the wind currents high above.

The next portage crossed level ground on a well-packed trail. Another short paddle, and we stopped for lunch on a huge sloping rock. Sometimes the sun peered out and brought thoughts of diving in for a swim. But then it would disappear again into the coolness of the clouds.

Portage #4 for the day ran easily down to a long, skinny pond that led to The Gorge. The Gorge is a bad

portage. I remembered it from other trips in recent years. I carried the big pack for the first trip, so I could get a feel for how it would be when I came back for the canoe. It was worse than I remembered. As you might guess from its name, The Gorge portage runs through a narrow valley. Huge cliffs towered over us on the other side of the creek. The creek itself had disappeared under mounds of rock.

The "trail" starts out with big steps over huge logs left over from the log drives of a hundred years ago. It follows the south side of the creek as the gorge narrowed. Often we had to traverse steep hills. Sometimes the path, only a foot wide, led us across slanting, slippery rock, four feet above the ground at the creek side. Rather than risk slipping off the rock, we took the little trail that dipped down the four feet, then right back up on the other side.

Although this route is used by a number of people every summer, the brush and branches have overgrown from both sides. We pushed our way through, coming out where jumbled rocks intermingle with the mucky wet stuff at the edge of the last little pond.

I won't tell you that Kate didn't complain. She did. She said it was too hard, that she couldn't make it back over the half-kilometre trail for her second small pack. Ah, but she complains when I ask her to brush her teeth too. We cuddled for a few minutes while we rested, then she raced ahead of me on the trail back to get the pack and the canoe. It is incredible how quickly kids recover.

Carrying the canoe ten minutes later, I lost my footing trying to get up the hillside at the steep, slippery part. The canoe fell off. I climbed back to the level of the trail, and dragged the canoe up on its gunnel, hoisted it again, and carried on. Kate continued to lead the way.

The last pond was small, and I needed some recovery time before taking on the sixth and last portage of the day. We drifted along, had a little snack, admired the soaring cliffs above.

We pulled out of the water again at another huge boulder field. At least this one was level! Kate picked up her first pack and rock-hopped along the hundred feet of boulders to the trailhead at the forest edge. I followed not too far behind.

As I picked my way over the boulders, I thought, "What an amazing kid!" Most adults would think this route was far too difficult to bother with. But Kate saw nothing unusual about our long day of paddling and portaging.

For the seven years of her life, she has travelled the wilderness in canoe and along obscure footpaths called portages. To her, this is just a normal part of life. We were out on a trip, and we were together. And both of us were loving it.

Viki Mather

PAKCANOE ON THE KAZAN

Tim Johnson

Imagine yourself and a partner marooned on a tundra river, no canoe, so late in the season that no other paddlers will pass your way until next year. Your family doesn't expect to hear from you for weeks so rescue is a long way off. At least you have all your gear and the fishing is great, so it could be worse. Actually this scenario was avoided, but just narrowly.

Owning a foldable Pakboats canoe, or PakCanoe, had made it possible to charter just a small Cessna on floats from Ennadai Lake Lodge to Angikuni Lake further up the Kazan River. We were ready for a three-week paddle to Baker Lake starting August 1, 2004. Carrying out the foldable PakCanoe as luggage on the scheduled commercial return flight would solve the big problem faced by most who paddle to Baker Lake on the Kazan, Dubawnt, or Thelon rivers: getting their canoe back out.

It was fortunate that the pilot, John, was also interested in the PakCanoe, because he was still there when we dumped the pieces of the canoe out on the beach near the outlet of the lake. Missing was one of the small but crucial end pieces that connect the gunwales at the bow and stern. It had fallen out the top of the carry bag, which was so full that I had difficulty closing it as tightly as I would have liked. My heart sank at the realization that our trip was to be aborted without ever dipping a paddle in the water. And this after actually being set down on the river

and all the expenditures for the charter flight in and commercial return flight already made.

Had John not wanted to see us prove we could assemble the boat in less than 30 minutes, he would have been long gone by the time we found out. I told him the piece was definitely in the bag when I packed it in my backyard two days before. But we had driven from Minneapolis to Winnipeg, then flown from there to Thompson, Manitoba, changed planes for Ennadai Lake Lodge, and camped on the esker there overnight. The piece could have been anywhere along the way.

John said, "Let me check the cargo area in the Cessna just in case." AND THERE IT WAS! Between the three of us, we assembled the canoe in 20 minutes and John was dipping his wings as he took off over us a few minutes later while we loaded the canoe.

The plane did leave carrying another important piece of our kit though. My partner realized only after the plane disappeared over the horizon that his only mosquito head net was still under the front seat where he had left it. Fortune was smiling though as, unbeknownst to him, I had a backup head net. Before mentioning this fact to him, I contemplated what I could extort in exchange for this now obviously priceless item. But, after a few minutes of witnessing his distress, I passed it on up to the bow without conditions.



PakCanoe assembled

*Wolverine*

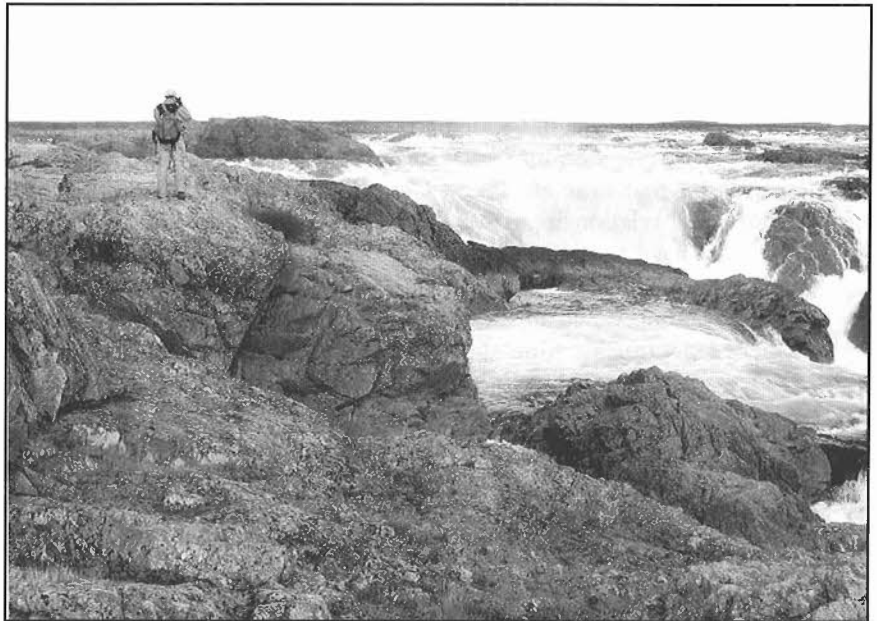
Fortune's smile continued for the rest of the trip. We saw musk oxen nearly every day. One evening, they even wandered into our esker beach camp while we were cooking up some lake trout. Two bulls then proceeded to have a short joust, either for our entertainment or, more probably, for rights to the cool sand on which they ended up lying for some time.

Mid-August is the best time to see the great aggregations of caribou on the northern parts of the Kazan River. We camped at an old caribou crossing point below Forde Lake and witnessed not only a few dozen musk oxen grazing as they ambled along, but also thousands of caribou. They entered the river within metres of our tent to swim the cold river, which seemed hardly an inconvenience to even the six-week-old calves.

A wolf made a kill within 100 metres of us while we were there. Gulls cried in ecstasy while feeding on the remains of the carcass. Sandhill cranes flew in to take advantage of the disturbance and serenaded us with their croaking calls through the evening.

At first light, we awoke to the sad bleating of separated calves and cows still searching for each other after the previous day's stampede caused by the wolf. The herds kept arriving and swimming until we pushed off down the river ourselves later in the morning. Truly a scene to rival the African Serengeti!

We were happy with the PakCanoe as outfitted, including kneeling pads, reinforced double-layer keel guard, D rings near the water line for the painters, and last but not least, the cover which enabled us to tackle bigger rapids and bigger waves on the long and often windy lake crossings. Portaging this light boat was also a wonderful change from previous trips where we had struggled with the heavier standard tripping canoes.

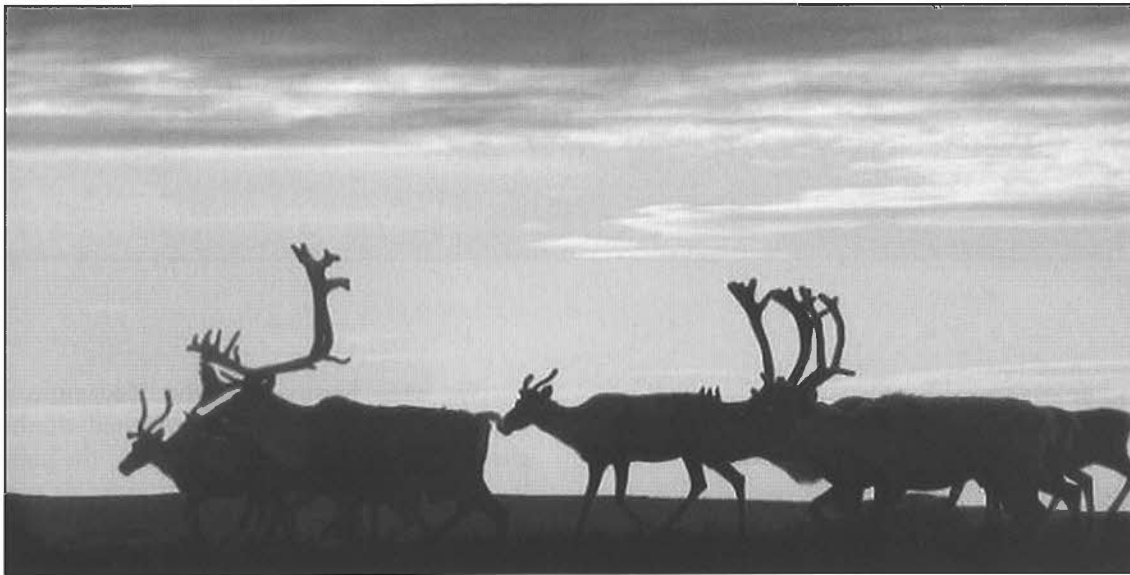
*Kazan Falls*

We had one other convenient piece of modern technology with us, a \$600 satellite phone that would have allowed us to call for rescue ourselves when we got tired of the fishing on our Angikuni beach.

I'm fantasizing where to take this boat next. Maybe I'll fly the canoe down to the southwest deserts next spring to do some canyon paddling on Lake Powell and the Escalante River. I have heard some of the previously drowned canyons are being exposed for the first time since the Glen Canyon Dam was built (due to the long drought in the area). Or maybe for something completely different I might paddle Europe using the canal systems. So many possibilities now!

Note from Mike Weirick

My wife and I also have a PakCanoe and have found it very useful for wilderness trips. Information about these boats is at <http://www.pakboats.com/> Note that a portage yoke and the kneeling pads, keel guard, D rings, and cover mentioned above do not come with the boat; they are optional accessories. I would consider all except the D rings pretty much essential for a wilderness trip. (We just tied our painters to the frame inside the ends of the canoe.) Our experience was that even with the keel guard we had to be much more careful to avoid damaging the PakCanoe on rocks; no more towing a loaded boat up on shore or crashing down shallow rapids, as we would do with our Old Town Tripper.



TIME

Every year after a wilderness canoe trip I say to myself that the trip was great, but I've got to spend more time with my wife and children. The amount of vacation time is limited, and demands on that time are many. Children grow fast. Extended family relationships need to be nurtured. A home and a car have to be maintained. You know the saying, "Time, he ain't no friend of mine."

It does all come down to time. I don't think anyone truly realizes how quickly time slips away. You really are only here for a little while. Life is like a runaway train, taking the time that you are allotted down the track. You can't stop the train. You can't even stand in front of it. Law of physics. Mass and speed cannot be easily stopped. If you lay across the tracks, the train won't even know it's run over you.

I take these thoughts with me as I hunker down for the winter. Things to ponder in the cold and dark. And then with springtime and the onset of breakup, these thoughts vanish like night vanishes before the morning

sun. I'm pulled to go north. Just like a compass needle. But instead of magnetic north, I'm drawn by lakes and rivers. I can't help it. I have to go north and savour the wilderness again. Regardless of the cost to the vacation time budget.

I realize now that I must pack as much as I can into every moment when I visit the wilderness. Will there be another wilderness canoe trip? When will it be? Will I want to go? Will I be physically able to go? Questions without answers.

You can't make time stand still. You can't run with it either. In a race it will win. It always wins. We can never be friends, time and I, but I want it to know that I understood where it was going. I just wish it could have stayed a little longer.

Greg Went

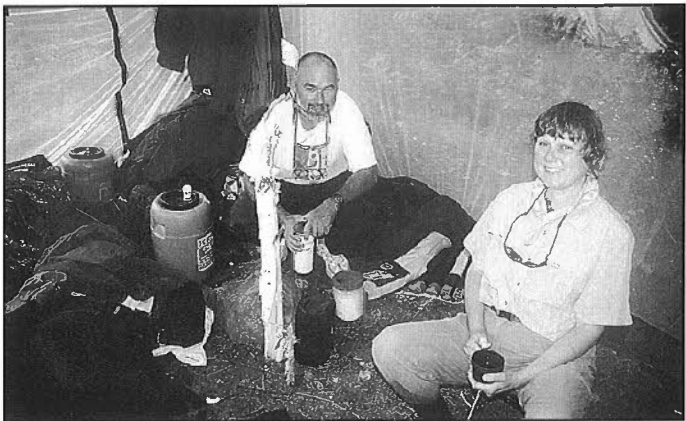
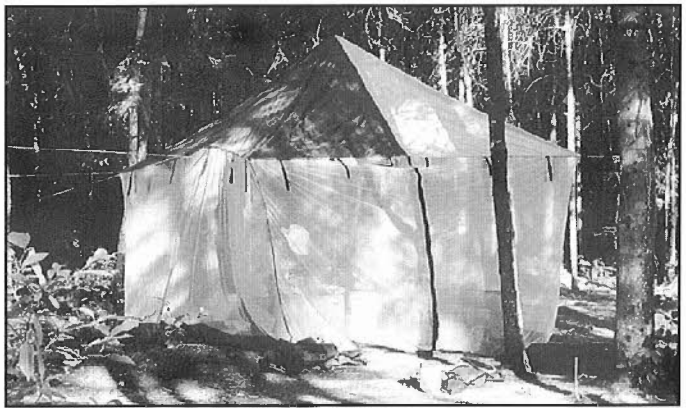
FOOD FOR PADDLERS

DEBUG YOUR DINING

For those of you who like to canoe-trip comfortably, we (Barb and Dave Young, Beth and Bruce Bellaire) recommend a custom-made Outdoor Solutions product. Tomas Benian of Outdoor Solutions has refined the traditional tarp by adding netting to the sides. We used our new "Dining Tarp" or DT for the past canoe season on the Coulonge/Noire rivers trip. We encountered numerous flying insects as well as abundant rain. The DT came to the rescue on many occasions, changing what would have been a miserable evening to a pleasant experience.

Being able to eat without wearing a head net was a delight. One drawback to the DT is that it can be addictive. We spent a lot of time in our DT not only cooking and eating but relaxing, playing cards, and reading. We were able to erect our DT most easily on treed sites but even managed without the aid of trees by gathering poles. The DT is bulkier and heavier than a regular tarp but it is worth its weight in gold.

Tomas can be contacted through his website:
<http://www.outdoorsolutions.ca>



photos: Bruce Bellaire

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



Happy smiles at the **Wine & Cheese Party** in Toronto on November 19

KISSING COUSINS?

Whether or not we like to admit it, we humans sometimes have a tendency to put ourselves on a pedestal above other animals and to look down on them with disdain or indifference.

Now, to be sure, we all think moose are impressive, everyone is wowed by a big Lake Trout, and we all stop in our tracks, awestruck, when we hear the howl of a wolf. Still, when it comes to most other animals, we fall far short of giving them the interest and respect they deserve. The classic example, of course, is the short shrift—or even hostility—we give to insects or bacteria (both of which groups are much more important to the ecological health of our planet than any bird or fish). And even among our fellow mammals, we are awfully selective about which species we choose to bestow our affection on, and we are often quite ready to ignore all the others.

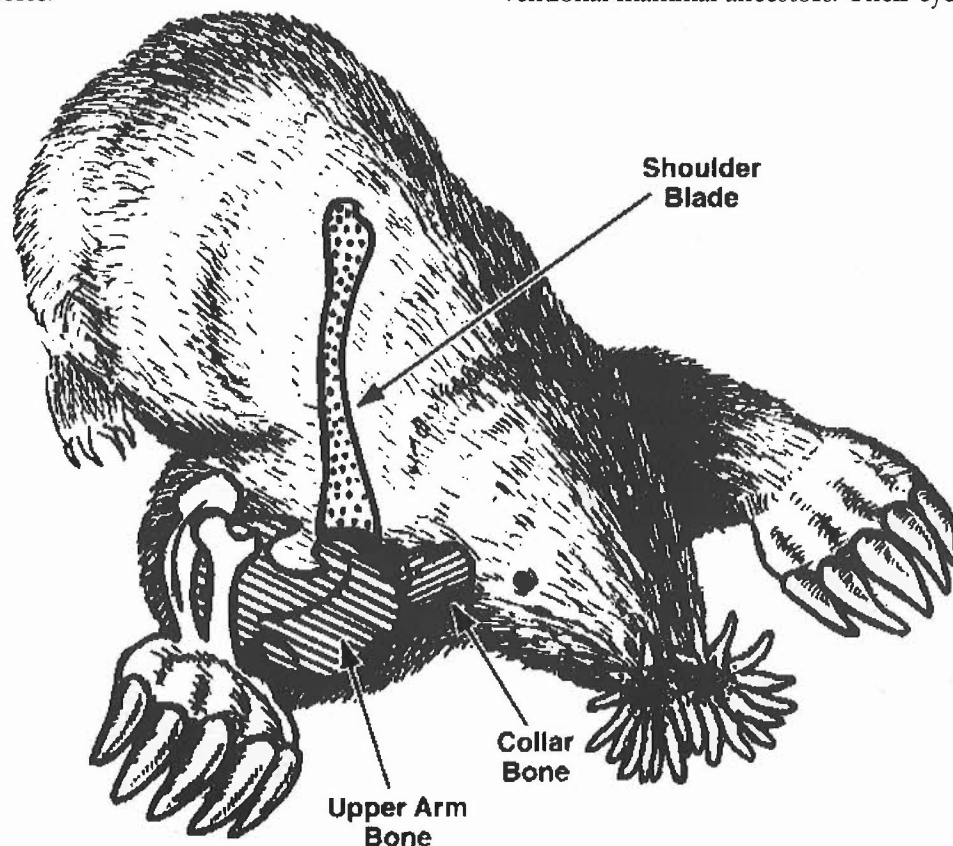
This came to mind the other day when we were lucky enough to get a good look at a Star-nosed Mole on the Booth's Rock Trail. The problem with moles is that they can't even get to first base with most Park visitors. They are just too seldom seen and lead too alien a lifestyle for most people to connect emotionally with them. This is a real pity because, in fact, moles lead utterly fascinating lives and are much more related to us than many people realize. This being the case, we thought it might be useful to do a little matchmaking and, in a manner of speaking, get our visitors to cozy up a little more with our Park moles.

We have two kinds here in Algonquin, the Hairy-tailed Mole and the Star-nosed. The latter seems to be the more common species (it's hard to be sure about such things with moles) and, being the more remarkable from several points of view, it is the one we will dwell on here.

The Star-nosed Mole apparently split off from other moles about 30 million years ago somewhere in Europe or Asia. They are extinct now in the Old World but, before that happened, they made it to North America via the Bering land bridge between Siberia and Alaska. (The oldest Star-nosed Mole fossils from North America are only about 700,000 years old.) Regardless of these details of their "recent" history, however, it is apparent that Star-nosed Moles have been on an evolutionary course very separate from other moles and other mammals for a very long time indeed. This being the case, we should not be terribly surprised that they are now very distinct. Rather, we should be just as impressed that they have as much in common with other mammals (including us) as they do.

For starters, they still have hair like other mammals, as well as the other standard mammalian characteristics of being warm-blooded, giving birth to live young, and nursing their babies with mother's milk.

Much more remarkably, because they live in a completely different ecological setting (burrowing through the soil), moles have sense organs that have, in most cases, clearly evolved from those possessed by their more conventional mammal ancestors. Their eyes, for example, are



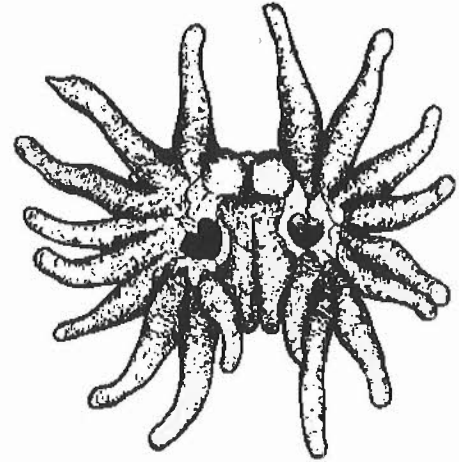
very similar in structure to our own. The only difference is that they have become extremely small (less than one millimetre in diameter) and now probably serve only to tell the mole whether it is dark or light. Similarly, and for obvious reasons, no present-day mole, including the Star-nosed, has an external ear but all the conventional, internal parts are there and no doubt serve moles well in the detection of prey and predators.

The only area where the Star-nosed Mole has come up with something entirely new, not possessed even by other species of moles, let alone other mammals, is in the sense of touch. All moles have very sensitive hairs on their faces and along the margins of their “hands,” but Star-nosed Moles also have the famous “star” on their nose. This consists of twenty-two pink, fleshy tentacles that writhe and wiggle over potential food items, apparently checking out their texture and possibly wafting trace odours towards the nostrils located in the centre of the star. It goes without saying that such an enhancement of the Star-nosed Mole’s sense of touch, and possibly of smell, must be very useful to an animal that usually has to find its way and its food underground and in complete darkness.

Of course, this is the real crux of the mole’s very strange (to us) lifestyle. If it’s bad enough in most people’s imagination, to have to find food in a pitch-black underground tunnel, it’s almost inconceivable that an animal would want to or could actually succeed in pushing its way through the ground to make the tunnel in the first place. Once again, however, as impressive and powerful as the digging equipment of a Star-nosed Mole may be, it’s really just a modified version of the standard limb package that all mammals come provided with. True, the front, shovelling legs are set to the side much more than in conventional mammals. They are also shorter and much larger and more powerful than standard issue is, but an examination of the skeleton shows that all the parts are just modifications (albeit extreme ones) of the same bones that we humans possess as well. The single bone in the upper arm is proportionately much thicker and shorter than ours and the shoulder blade is much longer in shape, stretching almost halfway down the mole’s back.

All these modifications of the basic blueprint for a mammal skeleton serve to make moles capable of almost “swimming” through reasonably soft soil. Star-nosed Moles usually make their burrows near water where, at least when they are tunnelling near the surface, they can actually lift the mucky soil with their bodies as they push through. Only when they dig deeper down in drier soil farther inland, are they forced to carry soil up to the surface and deposit it in the “molehills” that are usually the only clue we get that moles are even present in an area.

Deep or shallow, there is no denying that “swimming through the ground” requires enormous energy and Star-nosed Moles typically have to eat at least half their weight every day just to stay alive. Notwithstanding this heavy demand, the life-style of moles works because the subsoil



How's this for a beautiful nose?

habitat they exploit is exceptionally rich in worms and other invertebrates, as are the shallow water areas near most Star-nosed Mole burrow systems. One study found that Star-nose diets consisted of about 10 percent earthworms, 40 percent similar aquatic forms (including leeches), about 33 percent insects (mostly aquatic), and the remainder was a variety of crustaceans, molluscs, and even minnows.

As rewarding as it may be for Star-nosed Moles, the idea of living most of your life in damp underground tunnels and eating worms and leeches may not appeal to you. This is no reason, however, to turn up your nose at the Star-nosed Mole (even assuming you could win such a contest). After all, the diet of all the popular and politically correct animals is hardly any more appetizing. Would you be keener on eating leaves and twigs all day like a moose, or raw deer flesh and intestines like a wolf?

Besides, the lifestyle of moles may not be as far removed from ours as we might like to think. Didn't some humans talk about “going down to the garden to eat worms” and don't many of us (especially our younger urban varieties) often spend all their free time in underground retail burrows?

All in all, we and our featured animal, the Star-nosed Mole, have a great deal in common. We are both mammals and, even if we have been going our own separate ways for the last 50 million years, we still share many of the same basic anatomical features. We are also very close neighbours even if we now have usually very different lifestyles and seldom meet face to face.

If you ever do meet a Star-nosed Mole, you should look long—and if you can manage it, lovingly—at your distant relative. Who knows what such an encounter might lead to? Getting a kiss from one of our long-lost cousins with twenty-two pink wiggly tentacles around his or her nose would probably make for a quite unforgettable experience—and perhaps the start of a great relationship.

Reprinted from the August 8, 1996, issue of Algonquin Park's The Raven, courtesy of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

WCA OUTINGS

WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND HAVE IT PRESENTED IN THE SPRING ISSUE?

Contact the Outings Committee before January 30

For questions, suggestions, proposals to organize trips, or anything else related to the WCA Outings, contact 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.

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January 9 WINTER HIKE-WEST ROUGE VALLEY: TOP OF THE ZOO
 Gary & Geri James, 416-512-6690 or wca@sympatico.ca, book immediately ----- Meet us at 10 a.m. dressed for our annual New Year hike. We will meet at the parking lot beside the Rouge River on Old Finch Road. I am using Hikers Mike's guide to go south to the Zoo and hope to see "huge, hairy muskox and camels and other foreign animals." If time and energy are left after returning to the cars, we can head north on another trail. Dress for the weather and bring a lunch. No limit, but it would be nice to know if you are going to join us.

January 22 PADDLERS' PUB NIGHT
 Join other paddlers for an evening of food and drink and good cheer to chase away the January blahs. It will be a great chance to get together and plan next season's adventures and re-live last summer's outings. In previous years, this event was well attended by both WCA and OVKC members. Meet 7.00 p.m. or later at Toronto's Bow & Arrow Pub, 1954 Yonge Street (second floor), just north of Davisville, on the west side. Please contact Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, or Barry Godden, 416-440-4208, by January 15 to register so we can book sufficient room.

February 5 KOLAPORE UPLANDS SKI TRAILS
 Dave Sharp, 519-846-2586, book before January 29 ----- Join us and ski on a complex network of trails through the beautiful winter woods near Collingwood on an outlying part of the Niagara Escarpment, along the eastern edge of the Beaver Valley. Suitable for strong intermediate to advanced skiers. Limit of eight. Additionally, I am at Kolapore most weekends, snow conditions permitting, so anyone interested in joining me at any time can call me.

February 11-13 ALGONQUIN CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING
 Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca, book immediately ----- Experience Algonquin in winter, and slide over portages without canoe or heavy packs! We will spend a full day on the beautiful Leaf Lake Trail system, and ski Fen Lake or Minesing Trails on the other day, or do some snowshoeing or hiking, depending on weather and mood. We will stay two nights in a heated yurt on Mew Lake. Limit five intermediate skiers. Note date change from previous Nastawgan.

February 12 EQUIPMENT SHOW AND TELL
 Jon McPhee and Dian Connors, 905-640-8819, book before February 14 ----- A late afternoon/evening workshop to share your experiences concerning some of the paddling or camping equipment you have bought, and liked or hated. If each person could bring one piece of equipment they really like and one item that would not make them upset if it got left back at the last campsite, we can learn from each others' good fortune and dismal failures. Potluck supper. 13701 Ninth Line, Stouffville, ON, L4A 7X3. Limit of 16 participants or one fully outfitted canoe.

February 19 CROSS-COUNTRY SKI & DINE
 Harrison Jolly, 905-689-1733, book by February 12 ----- Join us for a day of cross-country skiing and/or then enjoy a home cooked supper. Dogs and kids are welcome. Previous participants can attest to the superb quality of the meal. Limit six skiers/diners.

February 19-20 SKI & TEA ON THE BRUCE PENINSULA
 Bill Caswill & Oya Petts, 519-934-2013 or du12paddle@bmts.com, book by February 12. Enjoy an exhilarating day of off-trail cross-country skiing. Then choose from a heated chalet or hot-tent for your accommodations. Dinner will be pot-luck. Limit six skiers.

February 19 **CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING FIVE WINDS TRAILS**

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca, book by February 12 ----- Come out and enjoy a day of winter wonderland on the marked, ungroomed wilderness trail system in the scenic Gibson River area. Varied terrain. Limit six intermediate skiers.

March 5 **SMOOTHING IT IN THE BUSH**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, book before February 26 ----- The famous 19th century American woodsman George Washington Sears once commented that he didn't go into the bush to rough it, but rather to smooth it. Over the years we all pick up little paddling and camping tricks that make our experiences in the woods smoother than when we started our paddling careers. This Saturday afternoon/evening workshop, held at my house in Scarborough, will focus on these tricks of the trade. Participants who are experienced paddlers are expected to bring a number of these along to share with the group. These can be any sort camping or cooking tips, canoe rigging ideas, packing and portaging techniques. The sky's the limit. However, this workshop isn't just for old hands. For those of you new to paddling, we would like you to bring along a list of your most burning questions about how to do things better, and let the group give you their suggestions. It should make for some good, heated discussions well into the night. To help smooth things for me, participants are requested to bring a contribution for a potluck supper. Limit: 12 enthusiastic, talkative participants.

March 19 **PADDLERS' POTLUCK EVENING**

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca; book by March 1 ----- This is an occasion to get together at the end of the winter and swap tall tales of past trips, exchange information with other paddlers or hikers about that specific adventure you always had on your list, or just have fun seeing old and new friends again and plan an outing together. Bring along some pictures and food to share with others.

28 March **LOWER CREDIT RIVER**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, book before March 21 ----- 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.

April 10 **ERAMOSIA RIVER**

Dave Sharp, 519-846-2586, book before April 3 ----- This is a relaxed, easy moving-water trip through the spring countryside near Guelph. The trip is suitable for novices, and great for anyone looking for a gentle introduction into moving water. Limit six boats.

April 24 **ELORA GORGE**

Dave Sharp, 519-846-2586, book before April 17 ----- Join me for a spring run down the Gorge. This makes a good spring outing for intermediates wanting to practise their moving-water skills. At normal levels for this time of year, there are a series of grade 1-2 rapids; along with a more challenging chute at the midpoint, that can be easily portaged or run by the more adventurous.. Limit six boats.

May 1 **MINESING SWAMP**

Ray Laughlen, 705-754-9479, rlaughlen@hotmail.com, book before April 24 ----- This will be a slow-paced float trip along Willow Creek down to Edenvale. Join us for a relaxed spring cruise while we check out the local waterfowl, herons, and early spring migrants. Limit six boats.

May 21-23 **MADAWASKA RIVER**

Larry Durst, 905-415-1152 or larry.g.durst@snapon.com, book as soon as possible ----- Join us for the fifth annual spring paddle/wine-and-cheese party. We paddle from above Aumonds Bay to the take-out at Griffith, a distance of only 28 km. The pace is leisurely with only the Sunday being a full day of paddling, and most of that spent on the Snake Rapids section of the river. Lots of time to play, chat, and nibble! Rapids will range from grade 1 to 4 and there are a couple of short portages around falls. Water levels are likely to be quite high and cold. In the past we have had sun, rain, hail, and snow so participants will need to dress and pack appropriately. Suitable for intermediate level paddlers. Limit six boats.

To view a sample of previous year's fun, go to http://ca.pg.photos.yahoo.com/ph/durstlg/my_photos, click on "Madawaska," and then click on "slide show." No purchase required!

May 21-23 **RANKIN RIVER RENDEZVOUS**

Bill Caswill & Oya Petts, 519-934-2013 or du12paddle@bmts.com, book by May 16 ----- We are planning a relaxing day of river paddling with lots of time to observe wildlife. Dinner will be roast beef cooked in the infamous turkey oven. Limit six novice paddlers.

May 27-29 **SPRING TRIPPING IN ALGONQUIN PARK**

Andrea Fulton. Contact Andrea at afulton@sympatico.ca before May 14 ----- Friday night optional stay at Tea Lake Campground off Hwy. 60. Early start on Saturday morning through Canoe Lake to Burnt Island Lake. The Sunday trip back to Canoe Lake includes a stop for brunch at Arowhon Pines (bring your Visa Card!). Suitable for novice paddlers. Limited to six canoes.

June 11 **GRAND RIVER**

Doug Ashton, 519-620-8364, doug.ashton@sympatico.ca; book by June 1 ----- 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.

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.

The Hole

*Decision's made.
So kneel, zip up, strap in,
breathe deep –
then turn*

*And circle wide:
A silver arc above
the waiting white.*

*No rush –
Just glide
And let the river lead.*

It draws you in.

*Beneath its silken shimmer,
Power flows.*

*Be in the moment –
Balancing –
On the brink.*

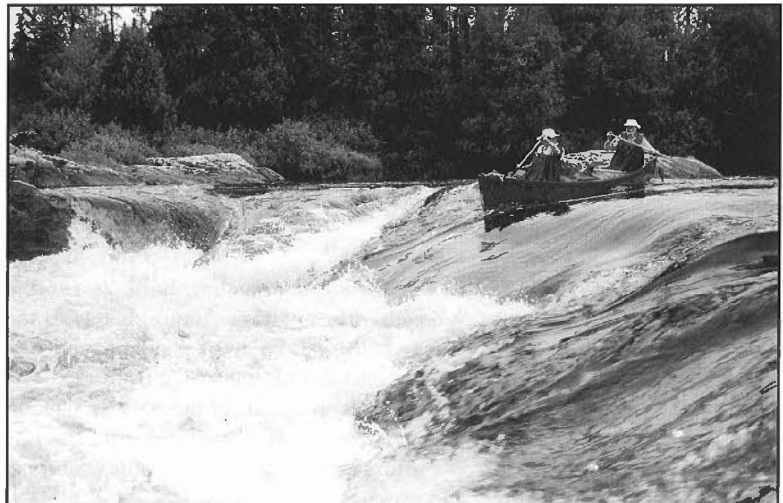


photo: Barb Young

Beth Bellaire

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 colours and sizes. Each item is a high-quality product that has been embroidered with a colourful 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.)

ROOF RACK FOR SALE

Top quality Yakima canoe roof rack, fits Honda Civic 2-door Hatchback or similar car. Has set of security locks and is in excellent shape. New \$550 + t, asking \$180. Contact Toni Harting at 416-964-2495 or aharting@sympatico.ca

DRYSUIT FOR SALE

Kokatat Multisport drysuit, new 1996, used twice, stored cool and dry, Oxford nylon with urethane laminate coating, size XXL, suitable for 6-ft tall or more, front entry, zipper from chest to shoulder, Dynat zipper lube included, grape and red colour, overcuffs and collar protect the latex gaskets. Paid

USD\$396 from Kokatat, firm price now CAD\$225. Phone 905-792-2436, evenings please, (Brampton).

STOVE FOR SALE Collapsible sheet metal stove with carrying case, damper, set of stove pipes and spark arrestor, suitable for winter tent with stove pipe opening, used carefully, well maintained. Price negotiable. Phone 905-792-2436, evenings please, (Brampton).

ONE MAN'S JOURNEY On January 13, 20, and 27, 2005, WGBH/Boston will present Robert Perkins' "One Man's Journey, A Film Trilogy" consisting of: "Into the Great Solitude," "Talking to Angels," and "The Crocodile River." This three-part TV series is about naturalist and explorer Rob Perkins as he paddles his canoe into the Canadian Arctic and down the Limpopo River in Southern Africa. For more information go to Rob's website: gotrob.com

DRIVE-IN SHUTTLE SERVICE is available for the Dumoine, Noire, Coulonge, and Petawawa rivers. ACCOMMODATION is available at the Eddy Inn. Contact Valley Ventures at 613-584-2577 or vent@gamma.ca

FREE NASTAWGANS I have the following *Nastawgans* I want to dispose of. I will mail them out free to anybody interested. Jan Tissot: 705-327-2761, tispa@sympatico.ca
Vol. 25: 1, 2, and 4; Vol. 26 complete; Vol. 27 complete; Vol. 28 complete; Vol. 29 complete plus 2, 3, and 4; Vol. 30: 1, 2, and 3.



Santa Claus parade, Toronto, November 21, 2004



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 Associate Editor, Food: Barb Young
 Associate Editor, Outings: Bill Ness

