

Squeaky Clean at Shakes Hot Springs

A “SUNDAY FLOAT” DOWN THE LOWER STIKINE

Article: Daniela Kosch

Photos: Doug Bell

The lower Stikine River finally worked its way to the top of our “must-do-in-this-lifetime” list. Billed as a Yosemite 160 km long, it takes you on a panoramic ride through the spectacular Coast Mountains with their vast icefields and glaciers. It rewards you with long soaks in hot mineral baths, a glacier that calves icebergs into a lake you can easily portage into, a rich

gold rush history, and native legends. Best of all, it has no adrenalin-pumping whitewater! That was enough to get Bill and Hsioh-Fan Stevenson to join the two of us on a two-week trip. That and a two-week warm-up, paddling through Haida Gwaii National Park in the Queen Charlotte Islands, but that’s another story.

July 25, 2004

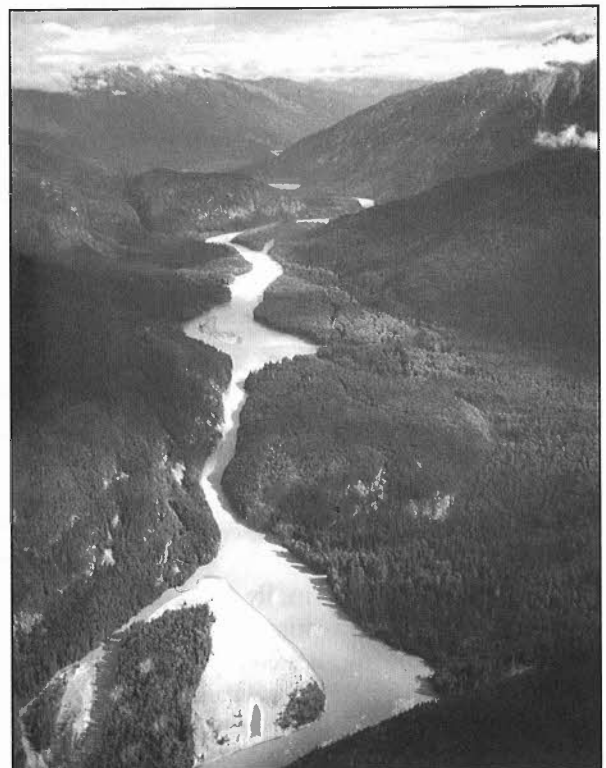
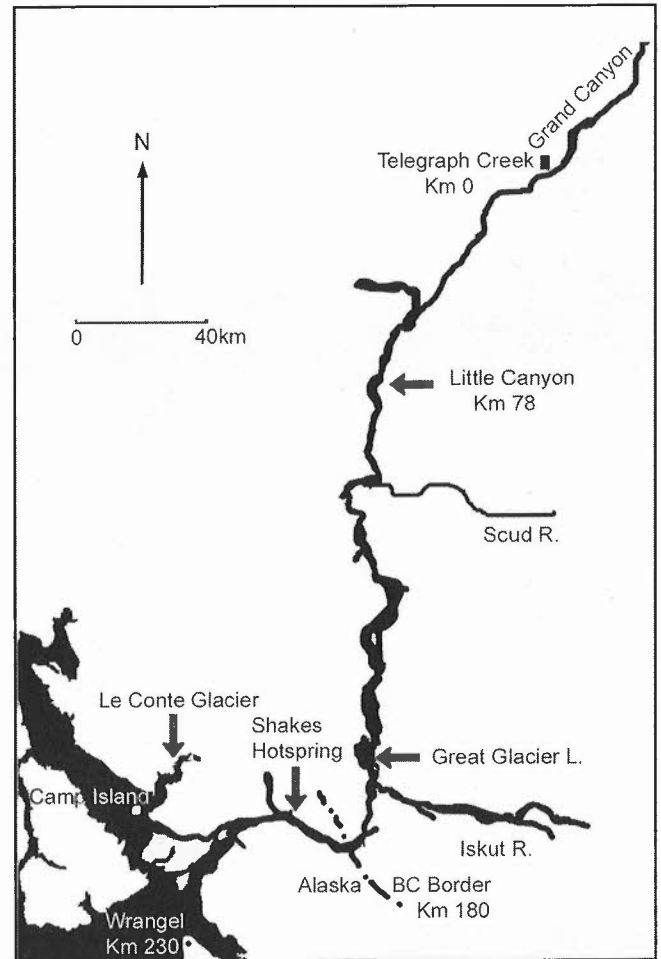
We took the Alaska Ferry from Prince Rupert to Wrangell, Alaska, and flew up to Telegraph Creek, British Columbia, with Sunrise Aviation. From the air, under a slate-grey sky, the broad river valley with its maze of brownish grey braids and border of somber mountains didn't look all that appealing. We'd been spoiled by two weeks of sunshine and sparkling blue water in the rainforests of Haida Gwaii. We took note that some of the braids looked completely blocked by log jams—a wrong choice could end us up in these giant strainers.

As we crossed into British Columbia, the peaks became more rugged, with sharp rock summits, icefields, and river-like glaciers. On the east side of the Coastal Range, the sky cleared, and we saw green plateaus instead of icefields. We talked our pilot, Dave, into taking us beyond Telegraph Creek and up along the Grand Canyon of the Stikine. It was awe-inspiring, but from this height the danger of the class 6 rapids wasn't apparent. Even the famous Gap, where some 1,900 cubic metres per second of water squeeze through a four-metre wide slot, looked just slightly rippled.

Dave had casually mentioned that we were experiencing the "usual upriver wind." We didn't know yet what this "upriver wind" would be like, but we were soon to find out.

Bill and Hsioh-Fan got outfitted by Dan Pakula of Stikine River Song, and after a hearty, and healthy, lunch in his Cafe, we were ready to set off. Eyeing a sign advertising fresh salmon for sale, I asked Dan if there was any danger from bears while we were camping. He said the animals here are "not habituated to humans," and in all the years of guiding fishing trips and "reeking of salmon" on shore, he'd never seen a bear come near. That gave me the courage to buy four steaks for our inaugural dinner on the river.

It was still and hot as we prepared our canoes by the river's edge. A few natives in fishing boats and some locals came by and wished us a good trip. One fellow told us the river level was eight metres, which didn't mean much to me. We filled up our water containers at the village tap and set off. Just as a precaution, we put on our life jackets. We hadn't felt the need to wear them at all during our Haida Gwaii trip, and Jennifer Voss' book, *The Stikine River, A Guide to Paddling The Great River*, made the lower Stikine sound quite benign: "There are few rapids to worry about and very little manoeuvring is required. For the most part, travellers can sit back and enjoy the astounding scenery." The numerous trip reports we'd read also assured us that this was a wide, fast-flowing (read: not much work required) class 1 river with some riffles and boils, any obstacles being easily avoided. We were all looking forward to an easy float on this sunny Sunday afternoon.



Flying Up the Lower Stikine Valley



Great Glacier From the Air

As soon as the current took us past the shelter of the town's bay, a blast of wind greeted us, and the Stikine bid us welcome by sending huge boils up to its opaque, grey-brown surface. The benefit of riding on a 12-plus km/h current was mostly negated by the wind coming upriver. Now we were getting an inkling of what our pilot meant, and the thought of this being a constant condition made my heart sink.

We had to draw hard to keep the canoe straight to the wind, as the constantly-rising boils pushed the bow sideways and gave the wind a chance to spin us broadside—not a good thing, as it made us vulnerable to capsize. The noise was also fearsome, with the roar of the wind, the rushing of the river, and the suspended grit in the water peppering our canoes like ice pellets on a window pane. We were able to communicate only by shouting.

We'd set off at 2:30, and as the afternoon wore on, the wind only got stronger. It was being funnelled up the river valley as if through a bellows,

roaring in our ears, flattening our eyelashes, and threatening to blow the hats right off our heads. This was all hard work and no fun.

We'd planned to camp at Yahiniko Creek (km 26 below Telegraph Creek), but were happy to stop at a gravelbar where Callbreath Creek comes in at km 17. It was a wonderful place to camp. The creek was clear, fast-flowing, and cold enough to chill our white wine to perfection just in time for the teriyaki salmon dinner. We were nicely sheltered from the wind and grateful to be off the river—if a little taken aback and (only the women admitted to this), fearful of what the river had in store for us.

July 26

We woke up to sunshine and sheltering green mountainsides rising above us, the hurrying water of the Stikine beckoning us to follow. We felt optimistic that today would be calmer and more enjoyable than yesterday. This feeling lasted until we got into midstream. At

9:45, the wind was already up to a steady 25–30 km/h. Still, we negotiated the boils more confidently this morning, getting the feel of wind and water working together. With the right attitude and hard work, we might yet be able to make peace with the river.

We passed a group in eight identical Old Town canoes, all outfitted impeccably with the latest in matching drysuits, helmets, and spraycovers—did they know something we didn't? My level of anxiety rose another notch. They politely rafted up to let us pass, and then quickly passed us again as they were obviously following a faster current near the shore. The river has more boils and serpentine



Telegraph Creek

currents in the middle, but at least you don't get pushed where you don't want to go. With this water volume and speed, it takes early setting up and some hard paddling to avoid being swept into the large wavetrains and killer eddies where the current runs hard into rock faces in the bends.

The group had pulled over for a break, and we stopped for a chat. They turned out to be social worker river guides on a "shakedown" trip. Each canoe had one guide and one native teenager, part of an Alaska Social Services program to teach native kids about their country. This trip included a two-week vulcanology course on the Edziza Plateau, and another two weeks on the river to study glaciation and mountain formation. The guides were rewriting their safety procedures, since the standards were all written for much-lower-volume whitewater rivers. For example, they found the standard 25-metre rescue lines were far too short in their trials here and they would be recommending the rules call for 100-metre ropes instead.



Commander Mountain

The trip leader, a gnarly figure with a wild red beard, told us that there has been a sharp increase in accidents on the Lower Stikine in recent years. We'd heard the same thing from people in Wrangell and Telegraph Creek. Apparently, Jennifer Voss had only experienced the river at low water levels, and thus didn't detail the level of difficulty and danger in higher water. The guide felt that too many people were out now that had neither the equipment nor skills to do the trip safely in high water. He was visibly shaken when he told us about a group on the river right now with an infant and a three-year-old on board. A few weeks earlier a German group lost two canoes in a capsized and had to be rescued. This did nothing to raise my confidence level. Neither did his explanation that the winds were constant enough that in the old days, the coastal Tlingits would regularly paddle their dugout canoes upriver, using sails and eddies, in order to trade with the inland Tahltans at Telegraph Creek. Surely this is a different river in low water.

The wind picked up in the afternoon, with gusts of at least 50 km/h. We were quite exhausted by 3 p.m., and again looked for a campsite well upstream of our planned location. We found an acceptable spot on an island at the Devil's Elbow, flat, grassy, and sheltered by tall cottonwoods and spruce.

Exploring a dried-out high-water channel behind our campsite, I was surprised by a perfect set of grizzly prints in the sediment. Salad-plate-sized tracks went in a straight line, closely spaced and obviously moving very slowly, while a much smaller set merrily criss-crossed the larger ones—a mother and cub. Great! Couldn't tell how fresh they were. Also running along the dry channel were enormous wolf prints. Trusting Dan Pakula about the animals' aversion to humans, I didn't tell the others until the next day. We weren't cooking anything too tempting for a bear tonight anyway. Just in case, bearspray and bearbangers were at the ready.

We all agreed that we weren't having any fun yet. The river was not giving us a break. And Doug and I finally found a drawback to our beloved Pakboat folding canoe: the flexible frame that makes it so wonderful for whitewater and ocean waves was giving us a less steady ride here than a hardshell canoe would have.

We decided to try making a really early start in the morning, since the wind seemed to get more obnoxious after noon. And if the weather was lousy and the wind was still howling, I thought, we could always radio a passing fishing boat to ask Dan Pakula to come and motor us down to Wrangell.

July 27

Started off at 8 a.m.—a record for us. Having a cold breakfast and being as efficient as humanly possible, it still took us two hours to get on the water. Immediately downstream of our campsite, the river bends around a huge rockface, creating very serious wavetrains and turbulence. The river guide yesterday warned us not to

“try any of the white stuff,” it wasn’t very nice, and he was right. The waves were completely irregular, coming in from all sides, rolling off boils and whirlpools, and forming a very ragged and shifting eddyline, which was all too easy to be pushed across. With the current running at least 12 km/h, it would make for a pretty shocking eddy turn, if you could brace well enough to stay upright. We ferried across the river early enough to avoid this challenge, but we faced similar bends all along this stretch of the river. The wind was brisk, teasing us, but not really a factor yet. We were pleased with the way we were managing the turbulent water this morning. Then we got to Little Canyon.

Voss’ book mentions “tricky currents” here. If you look up you are supposed to see a long flag pole, drilled into the canyon wall over a hundred years ago to signal that a riverboat was coming through. The winching rings used to pull the boats upriver are also still visible. Well, those tricky currents took all our attention and energy and we bucked and heaved and pirouetted our way past all the historical points of interest without even a chance to look up. The narrow canyon, with the serpentine current running, according to one report, at 17 km/h, was filled with yawning whirlpools and monster boils trying to push us into screaming eddies, and that was excitement enough for us.

Our world changed as soon as we were spit out of the Little Canyon. The wind was gone, and the valley broadens out to seven kilometres wide. Looking at our topo maps more carefully, we noticed that upstream of Little Canyon, the “upriver wind” has nowhere to go except through the narrow, mountain-hemmed river channel. The bellows effect is quite predictable. The river now has a chance to braid and loses some of its velocity. The boils and whirlpools decrease in intensity, and for the first time, we were able to take our eyes off the river and enjoy the spectacular scenery we were floating through.

It was a feast for the senses—the awe-inspiring panoramas of forested mountainsides dotted with meadows were reminiscent of the Alps, with rocky peaks and spires soaring up to 3,000 metres, and pristine snowfields on their slopes. The extent of the snow- and icefields makes these mountains unique and especially beautiful. Glaciers hang in the upper bowls. The air was warm, and gentle breezes now wafted past our noses carrying the fresh green aroma of alders and cottonwoods from the riverbanks. We still had to pay attention to the river, the numerous braids required careful analysis of where the heaviest water flow was going. We didn’t want to be swept into those logjam strainers we’d been warned about. (One canoeist almost drowned in one earlier this year, according to the river guide yesterday).

Just as the river almost had us in a state of complacent bliss, a large motorboat carrying sightseers passed us. A rain-slickered woman standing in the rear yelled

over to us “big water on river left.” We shouted our thanks and wondered what she meant. We soon found out—the main channel was slamming into a rock wall around a sharp bend and piling off in huge standing waves. The current was so strong that if we hadn’t been forewarned, we might have had a hard time avoiding these waves. This river still had a few tricks in store for us, we were sure.

We started looking for fresh water, not an easy task as all the streams flow into the outer river braids, the ones we were trying to avoid. Finally Doug spotted a thin, silver ribbon spilling down a distant mountainside on river right, and by luck it emptied right into our main channel. There was a tiny eddy where I climbed out and scrambled up the boulders. I filled all our containers and knew that coming off those high snowfields, we wouldn’t have to filter the water.

We’d been on the water a full eight hours and felt tired. All the river banks are too high and steep, with the current too fast and no eddies to make a landing area. We finally found a high, flat grassy area fine for camping, with a tiny eddy by a braid on river left (km 125). It was hot and a bath in the shallow braid was very welcome. The water, although greyish brown with suspended sediment, left no film on the skin. It must be finely ground rock and glacial flour (bentonite clay) since our sandals would sink into it but come out with only a few grains of wet sand on the soles, the “mud” sticking to itself but not to our feet. It made for perfect animal tracks; again we found grizzly, wolf, moose, eagle, and beaver prints on our island. Although it stayed light until 10:30 and dawn came around 4 a.m., the light never kept us from enjoying an early, long, and totally sound sleep while we were on the water.

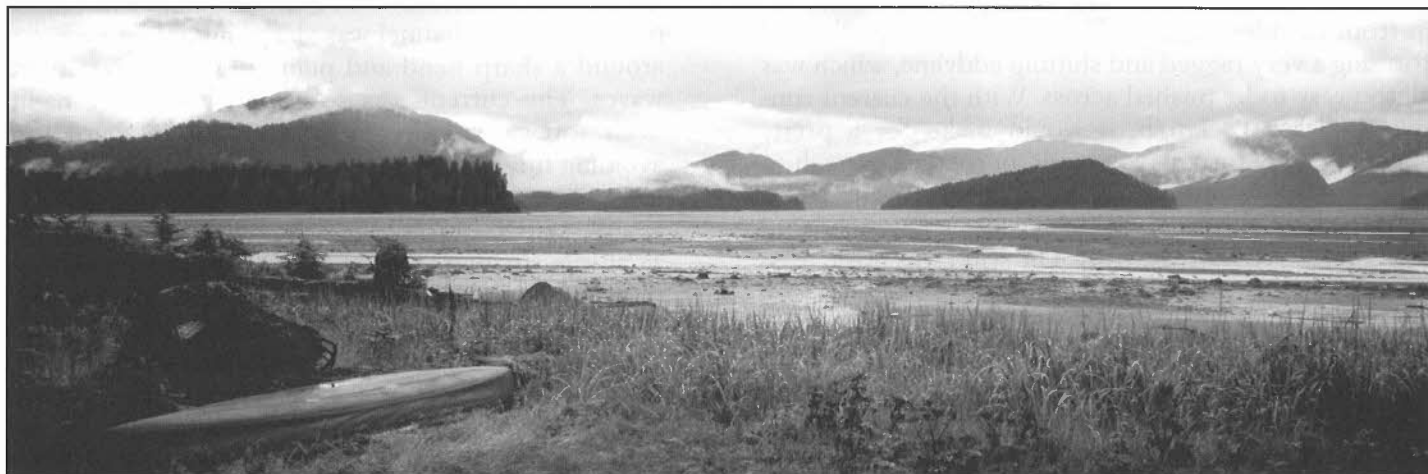
July 28

The day started with low clouds and a fine mist falling. We didn’t want to miss any of the spectacular mountain scenery on our way downstream, so we decided to use this as a layover day and hoped that tomorrow would be clear. We set up our Dryfly “house” and spent a comfortable day writing, cooking, and plotting the rest of our itinerary. We had to use river water for cooking, and were happy it left no grit in the food.

July 29

The sun was peeking through the clouds this morning and promised a sunny day. We set off at 9:45, and with the winds calm, had a really enjoyable paddle. A constant parade of mountain peaks and glaciers was gliding past us, with no great effort on our part.

The wind picked up after 12, making the last four hours of paddling a challenge again. Fighting to keep a straight course through the stiff gusts tired us bow paddlers out. We were happy to pull into the BC Forest Service campsite on the downstream side of Great Glacier Creek. This was a huge torrent of milky blue



Low Tide, Pocket Island

glacial melt, with a challenging set of boils and choppy waves to cut through in order to reach a tiny eddy, just big enough for one canoe, which formed the only pull-out for the campsite. We had to haul our gear up a two-metre bank, but the campsite was worth the effort. Widely spaced old-growth hemlocks, mossy flat ground, and old spruce trees with their lower-branch-stubs so thickly padded with moss they looked like some expressionist painter's creation. Two picnic tables made out of massive split logs welcomed us.

We hiked the 35-minute trail to Great Glacier Lake, an easy, pretty walk. A few icebergs were floating in the blue water, one of them shaped and sized exactly like an ice-blue speedboat complete with huge motor perched low in the stern, the bow steeply angling out of the water. We decided against portaging a canoe to paddle here. The water and air were ice cold. We could leave that sort of thing to the younger folks.

July 30

A hot sunny day. We had a lazy start, chatting with a group that had pulled their inflatable kayaks into the neighbouring campsite last night. Interesting folks. They were doing all their cooking on a little double-walled stainless steel backpacking stove, a unique design made by a local fellow from Iskut (trekstov.com). It burns tiny twigs and pine cones with an ingenious air venting system that fires up every available joule in the wood, so there is no need to carry fuel, ever. The group had given up their Whisperlites in favor of this little beauty. They were drinking a vile-looking green liquid for breakfast, made out of seaweed powder, hemp oil, cayenne pepper, and a few other exotic ingredients—this was what powered them along their journey.

Our late start meant that we had to battle the wind again. The current was still strong enough that we aver-



High Tide, Pocket Island

aged eight km/h, but there were far fewer boils and whirlpools. It was now much easier to set up and avoid the wavetrains around river bends.

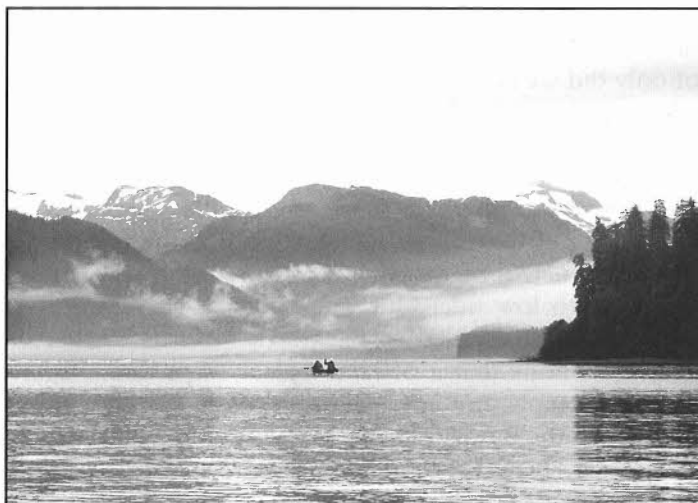
We went on in search of Shakes Hotspring. We'd been warned that it was very tricky to find. We found Ketili Creek with no difficulty, but then Doug's GPS turned out to be a hindrance. He had set the waypoints using a Canadian system but here the map was using a different, US system, so the GPS was telling us to paddle overland through an endless high bank of alders. We poked up the first stream on river right that we came to, but it was completely blocked by a fallen cottonwood tree. The next stream quickly turned into rapids, and by now we were sure we'd passed the turnoff into the hot springs. It was after seven, we were tired and disappointed at having missed a trip highlight, but ready to take the first campsite that looked high and dry. A few kilometres farther on, we saw a calm, clear green outflowing stream disappear into the alders. We followed it, causing the Stevensons some concern since it was getting late to make camp and they were not up for a wild goosechase. A few minutes upstream, I saw a motorboat tied up to some wooden steps going up the steep bank. This must be it after all!

Our hearts sank when we realized there was absolutely no place to put a tent here—a half-kilometre-long boardwalk went through a jumble of fallen limbs and trees right up to the hot springs. Flanked by a large meadow and steep forested slopes, and overlooking the broad Stikine valley and distant mountain vistas beyond, this is as beautiful a hot tub location as you could want. The water is channelled into two huge cedar vats, one in a screened-in cedar building, the other outdoors. Two hoses keep the tubs overflowing with hot and cold water, allowing you to adjust the temperature by turning either of the hoses away.

A few fishermen from Wrangell and Petersburg were soaking in the tub when we arrived, a mickey of whiskey and a few cans of beer on the ledge. They told us it was fine to camp in the meadow, and there was a much better take-out for the canoes further up the stream. Apparently this meadow floods after a heavy rain, but we thought we'd be safe. Our campsite was hidden from the potential hordes of revellers by a grove of alders. We heard a few more motorboats arrive, and the talk and laughter were turned up a few notches as the beer and whiskey likely kicked in. Just before dusk, they all suddenly left. Motors roared, and then we had the place all to ourselves. Armed with headlamps for the way back, we struck out across our meadow and had a delicious soak. Clear, clean mineral water, no sulphur smell at all, and no algae as the tubs are cleaned out frequently. What a treat after six days without a hot shower!

July 31

An unusually cloudless sky in this temperate rainforest



Paddling to Camp Island at High Tide

zone. Taking full advantage of this gorgeous location and weather, we took another layover day. The sky started filling with mare's tail clouds as the evening wore on.

August 1

Had an after-breakfast hot tub and pushed off. The water level in our little creek had fallen about 30 cm and made our departure a difficult, muddy affair. The current on the Stikine was now very gentle but the GPS still showed us moving at 10 km/h with no effort on our part. This was more like the Sunday float we'd been expecting. We tried to paddle up Shakes Slough to Shakes Glacier but the current became too strong, with rapids to pole up. We decided it wasn't worth the effort; we'd try to make it to Camp Island in Le Conte Bay instead. It was only 40 km away, which at this current speed should get us in early enough to prepare a luxurious Thai dinner. We were definitely feeling comfortable now, but Hsioh-Fan declared that she just didn't trust this river and wouldn't be really relaxed until we were at our pick-up point. And boy, was she right.

We sped along to Hooligan Slough, where again the GPS was telling us to head overland. A long debris barrier has built up over the years, cutting off the entrance shown on the map. Finally we came to the high sand cliffs at Limb Island and found our channel. We were still travelling at eight km/h along North Arm and eventually Camp Island at the entrance to Le Conte Bay came into view. It started raining, casting a gloom over this immense flat river delta. We also started hitting bottom with our paddles, and when we'd judge the current wrong our canoes hit bottom. The ebbtide was draining the water out of the delta faster than we could paddle, and the little spit of sand that we had to skirt in order to reach Camp Island was growing longer and longer the harder we paddled towards it.

Between the sandspit and our island there was also a dense line of icebergs. According to our map, there is a Forest Service cabin in a shallow bay to our right, but not only did we see no sign of it, there was an increasingly large expanse of mudflats cutting us off from it. Hsioh-Fan's dream of a warm, dry cabin for the night evaporated.

We realized that we were in trouble when we looked around to see that we were now in the middle of five kilometres of growing mudflats, and it was still two hours to low tide! Our way blocked, we called a conference and decided to backtrack towards Pocket Island, and hope that it offered a place to pitch a tent. Although steeply mounded and tree-covered, we could see through the binoculars that it was rimmed with flat, grassy areas above the tidal zone. It was our best bet in the fast-disappearing water.

Paddling hard and constantly bottoming, our biggest fear was of running out of water and being stranded on the mudflats for the next six hours. Then I spotted four large, black shapes moving along the shore of Pocket Island. We stopped paddling, and the binoculars confirmed that they were indeed moving! Four bears! What a choice, a night stuck in the mud in the middle of the river delta, bailing rainwater out of the canoes, or go and ask these island residents to move over and share. We paddled on with dread. As we got a little closer, we noticed that the four shapes had kept exactly the same distance between each other. Highly unusual choreography for bears. They turned out to be large rocks, only appearing to move because we were drifting on the tide.

Our relief was temporary. When we finally got to shore we had to haul our gear over 30 metres of oozy mud studded with barnacle-encrusted shards of slate. At least the strip of tall grass above the slick tidal area looked perfectly level. More dismay when we noticed driftwood and small dead crabs lying in that grass. And yet further anxiety when Doug checked the tide table and found that tonight at 2:45 a.m. would be the highest high tide of the month. An impenetrable forest came right to the edge of the grass. Wet, cold, and tired, we chose the very highest spot we could and pitched the tents, had a quick supper, and crawled into our sleeping bags. As a precaution, Doug asked Hsioh-Fan to set her alarm for 2:15. We were awakened by the

beeping, and Hsioh-Fan saying, "Dear, the tent is wet!" Then Bill's groggy voice, "It can't be... oh no, we're floating!" Creeping invisibly through the tidal grass, the ocean was invading the low side of their tent.

They quickly stuffed their dry things into the waterproof packs. We all climbed into our soggy rain gear, emptied their tent, and lifted it up onto two large driftwood logs. We then stood by until the water reached its peak at 2:45. Fortunately our tent stayed dry, barely two centimetres above high water. By 3:45 the water had receded enough to let us re-erect Bill's tent. We dried it out with sponges and towels; their down sleeping bags were only damp. So by 4:30, just after the break of dawn, we got back to sleep. What a day!

August 2

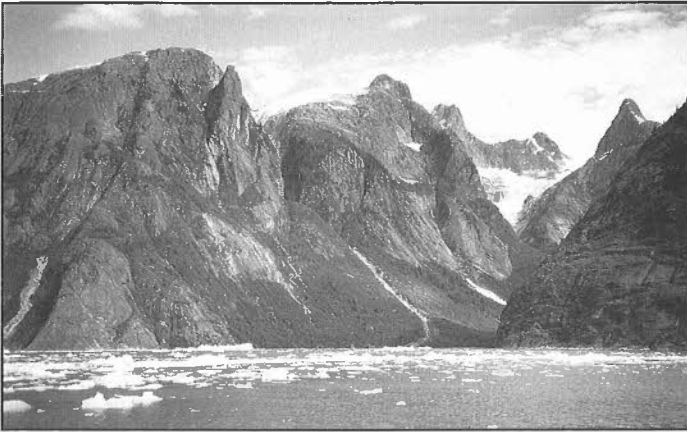
Surveying the damage after breakfast, we hadn't fared too badly. Thank goodness for the alarm clock. At least



Marooned Ice Sculptures at Low Tide

the rain had stopped, but nothing would dry without sunshine. Waiting for mid-tide at noon, we paddled out towards Indian Point, our agreed-on pickup spot. The water was calm, grey against a grey sky. There was a flotilla of icebergs around Camp Island, gradually floating free again after being stranded in the mud. The small bergy-bits provided platforms for masses of seabirds; there was a constant squealing and mewing around us. They were

mostly small, elegant Bonaparte's gulls but we also saw Canada geese and one loon. We spotted some man-made structures on Camp Island: an old flagpole and some rusted boilers on shore and then a comfortable, sprawling old cabin set in an expanse of lawn. A note on the door said it was private property, for emergency use only. Paddling on to Indian Point, we saw no campsites worthy of the name. The cabin marked on our map was a ways into the forest, dark, damp, and mouldy. Through the murky windows we saw the leavings of some hunting party and decided to head back to Camp Island. Surely this was enough of an emergency that the owners wouldn't mind us staying there. With a south-facing covered porch complete with clothes line, and a nice flat lawn, Hsioh-Fan was as happy as if she'd just booked into the Marriott. In no time all their wet clothes were strung under the overhang, and we were drinking hot cider in our Dryfly. A

*Le Conte Bay*

delicious supper of Thai noodles with beef and mushrooms (made even better by the extra day of re-hydrating) and we were completely restored.

August 3

Bill and Doug couldn't convince their spouses to join them for a paddle up to the famous Le Conte Glacier, so they set off on their own. We settled in for a leisurely five hours reading and drinking tea in the Dryfly, and were surprised to see them back after only two hours. There was a strong outflow current in Le Conte Bay and the wind was whipping up half-metre waves and whitecaps, so they turned around after 90 minutes of hard paddling. The return trip only took 30 minutes.

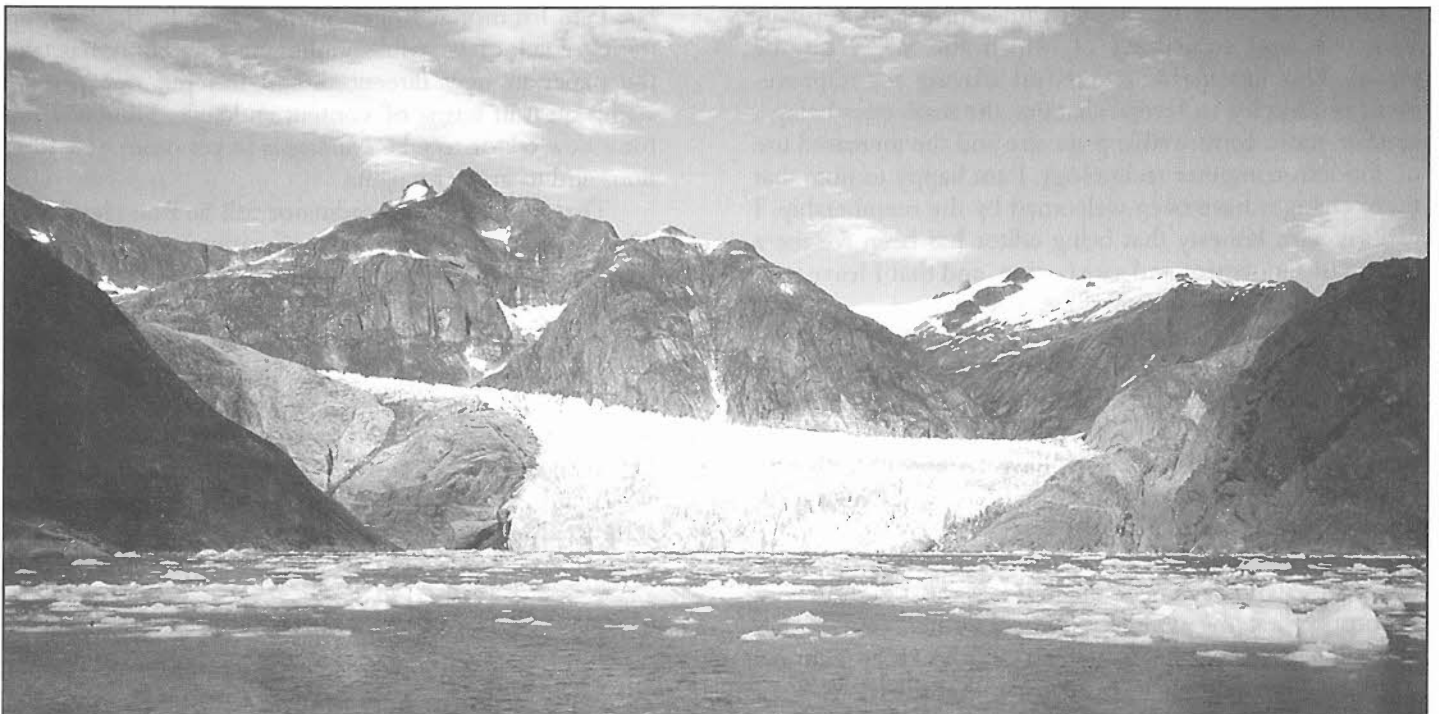
Now we were really glad we'd decided to stay behind.

August 4

The day was perfectly cloudless, brilliant. Glaciers in the mountains behind us, icebergs all around us, and the sun making everything sparkle, we enjoyed ourselves by venturing out onto the mudflats (which were sandy and firm) to inspect a menagerie of ice sculptures. They reminded us of the competition at Ottawa's Winterlude, and we agreed that Nature would have won first prize for artistry with these entries. All sorts of creatures, dragons, polar bears, ducks, chickens, rabbits, and mermaids, suggested themselves to us in the turquoise, blue-and-white ice. And no shortage of ice cubes if we'd needed to make margaritas.

Using the VHF radio, Doug managed to get a message to Breakaway Tours about our new pickup location, and exactly at high tide, their jetboat tied up to our log "pier." We talked Roxanne into taking us up to the Le Conte glacier, and she expertly wove her way through the floating bergs to reach it. Hemmed in by mountainsides, it looked like a giant white tongue at the end of the fjord. We saw the rest of it the next day from the Alaska Ferry and were amazed by its immensity.

Back in Wrangell and in a vain search of any food that wasn't deep fried, we celebrated the safe completion of our trip in a fishermen's bar. All of us felt brimful of health and vigour, magically younger and stronger for having spent the past four weeks on the waters of the West Coast.

*Le Conte Glacier*



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

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

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

EDITORIAL

(In writing this, my last editorial, I can think of no better way than following, often word for word, much of the farewell editorial by my predecessor, Sandy Richardson, published in the summer 1985 issue of *Nastawgan*.)

With the autumn 1985 issue of *Nastawgan*, volume 12 number 3, I became editor of the Wilderness Canoe Association's newsletter. Now, with the winter 2005 issue, volume 32 number 4, that is 82 issues later and 20 years and four months ago, I am retiring as editor.

During my time as editor I have tried hard to ensure that the WCA not only publish a newsletter, but put out the highest quality paper possible. The aim has always been to produce a paper that is both informative and visually attractive, and something of which the WCA can be proud. This has meant a constant striving for improvement and has led to several changes, the main ones being a smaller, more comfortable page size and the increased use of modern computer technology. I am happy to note that these changes have been welcomed by the membership. I can say with honesty that being editor has been for me a source of enjoyment and satisfaction, and that I leave with a feeling of pride at the job done.

In leaving I would like to thank all those different Boards of Directors who, over the years, have given me the creative freedom and support without which a quality newsletter could never be produced. I would also like to thank all those members who have so consistently supported the newsletter with contributions of the high-quality articles on which it depends.

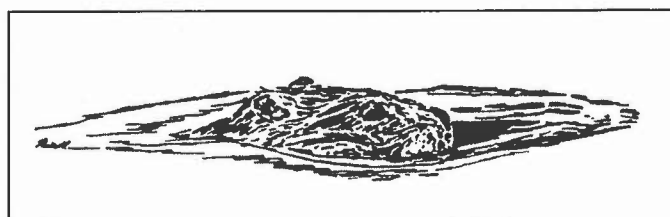
In particular I want to express my heartfelt thanks to two people who have been the journal's most faithful contributors. First my wife, Ria, who has had one of her charming drawings published on almost every editorial page since the autumn 1985 issue. (In this, the last issue of my editorship, her drawing is the same as the first one she published in our journal 82 issues back.) Second, Greg Went, who, although not a member, has delighted many of

us with his whimsical observations in most issues since the summer 1989 one. And I am, of course, most grateful to Roger Harris who has calmly guided me through quite a few a computer-based disasters for many years. I also gladly take this opportunity to thank one of the rocks on which the WCA has been secured for a very long time: Bill King, who has distributed the journal for about as long as I have been editor. An extra warm thanks to you all!

Our journal has come a long way from the original photo-copied *Beaverdam* and *Beaverdam*, through the newsprint *The Wilderness Canoeist* and the book-stock *Nastawgan*, to the current letter-size *Nastawgan* printed on semi-gloss paper. Four editors have guided this journal so far: Pete Emmorey, Roger Smith, Sandy Richardson, and myself. Each of us, while continuing a tradition, has taken the paper in new directions and has put our personal stamp on it in terms of content and style. Now it is time for a new editor to take *Nastawgan* in yet other new directions and to greater heights.

That new editor/co-ordinator will be Bob Henderson, who will be assisted by a team of enthusiastic and capable people (see the back page for their names and job titles). In appointing Bob, who has regularly contributed to this paper and many other publications, the Board of Directors has made an excellent choice to continue *Nastawgan's* tradition of quality. In handing the job over to Bob and his team, I wish them well and look forward to new and exciting changes in the future. I trust that the members of the WCA and the Board of Directors will give them the same support always given to me.

Toni Harting



NEWS BRIEFS

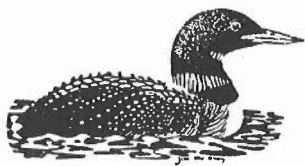
NASTAWGAN MATERIAL AND DEADLINE

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/co-ordinator (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 2006	deadline date:	January 29
	Summer 2006		April 30

MATERIAL FOR NASTAWGAN should be submitted to the editor/co-ordinator **Bob Henderson, 19 Lantern Lane, Dundas, Ontario, L9H 6N9, 905-627-9772, bhender@mcmaster.ca**

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.



WILDERNESS & CANOEING SYMPOSIUM

The upcoming 21st annual Wilderness & Canoeing Symposium, organized by George Luste and sponsored by the WCA, will take place on Friday evening, February 3, and Saturday all day, February 4, 2006. The theme this year is **Northern Travels and Perspectives, Part 5**, 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. Allan Jacobs will be assisting in organizing the program.

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 phone at 416-534-9313 or 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> as well as the simpler and older <http://members.tripod.com/northernbooks/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.

WCA JOURNAL INDEX

The astonishing amount of information, supplied by the WCA membership and collected in 32 years of WCA newsletters by its four editors, will soon be easily accessible via the up-to-date 1974-2005 index. Thanks to Brett Hodnett, Anne Lessio, and Toni Harting, the index has been revised and completed and will be available by January 2006 as an Excel file on the WCA website: www.wildernesscanoe.ca. The index will be updated regularly when new issues of the journal are published. Please send comments and reports of mistakes and omissions to Toni at aharting@sympatico.ca

WCA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, February 11, 2006

Crawford Lake Conservation Area, Ontario

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

BURNT RIVER

Every year, Bill Ness leads a much-anticipated one-day fall trip down the Burnt River from Kinmount to Burnt River. This year's annual trip saw a record crowd of nine canoes: 16 enthusiastic people in eight tandem canoes and one energetic solo canoeist. Suitable for a novice canoeist, the trip was one of many WCA-led trips this year that did not require any special canoeing skills.

Contrary to the impression sometimes created by our trip reports of the highly skilled paddlers among the WCA membership, those of us WCA'ers who like gentle trips down meandering waters are grateful for the many oppor-

tunities afforded by the WCA for a trip like this one. The scenery was lovely, the colours just beginning to turn, and the speed of the water kept you moving at a gentle pace. Although there are rapids, regular well-used portages meant we could avoid running rapids altogether. A little more than two hours drive from Toronto, the leisurely 4.5-hour paddle made for a full but manageable day among old and new WCA friends.

Gillian Mason



WINE-AND-CHEESE PARTY, NOVEMBER 19

A record crowd of 119 thoroughly enjoyed the spectacularly wild rides Leslie Dutton presented on her slides-and video show of a canoe/kayak trip down the incredible Colorado River.

George Drought offered the retiring *Nastawgan* editor, Toni Harting, a warm and appreciative fare-thee-well, followed by a presentation of Toni's moving slides-with-music show *Dreamtime*.

Everything was superbly organized and run by Elsie Carr-Locke and her enthusiastic team. Thanks for a great feast!



SOME NOTES ON THE FUTURE OF THE WCA

At the WCA 2005 Fall Meeting at Doe Lake on September 23-25, a session was held for the WCA members present on the future of the WCA. The session concluded with WCA Chairman, George Drought, assuring those in attendance that the WCA Board took the members' interests very seriously and that there were a range of initiatives underway to act on the input the Board was receiving.

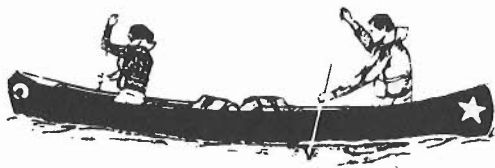
The Board is now reviewing all of these suggestions as well as a comprehensive report prepared by Board member Martin Heppner and Bill Ness, head of the Outings Committee. Their report, which has been presented to the Board, outlines a number of actions to respond to the changing needs of the WCA membership. It covers the WCA's tools of communication (from the soon-to-be-released updated WCA brochure to a brand-new display booth to the role of the club newsletter), more active membership recruitment and retention initiatives (from welcome letters to mentoring to activities specifically oriented to new and/or younger members), marketing of the WCA (e.g. at the annual WCA symposium), and additional

uses of the website (e.g. first-hand knowledge of certain paddling routes). The report also touches on opportunities for instructional programs as well as recognition of key contributors to WCA, among other suggestions.

The WCA Board has committed to devote effort this fall and winter, in a lead-up to the AGM in February (see the announcement on page 11 of this issue), to take action on these varied suggestions. The Board will take into account the letters it has received from members, the Fall Meeting session, the "Outings Committee Special Report" on the meeting held on February 8, 1998 (see page 14 of the Summer 1998 issue of *Nastawgan*), and the report of Heppner and Ness, to evolve the WCA in ways that will respond to the enthusiasm and commitment of the membership, and that will build on the resources of this thriving and venerable organization.

The membership can be confident that this Board is taking action toward their issues and interests.

(Reported by Gillian Mason, WCA Board member)



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, 2006. For contact information, see the back page.

Review

THE WOMAN WHO MAPPED LABRADOR: The Life and Expedition Diary of Mina Hubbard by Roberta Buchanan, Anne Hart, and Bryan Greene, published by McGill - Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 2005, hardcover, 490 pages, \$49.95.
Review by Toni Harting

The name Hubbard inevitably evokes images of hardship, wrong decisions, and death. But the name Mina Hubbard brings back images of a courageous and determined young woman dressed in proper Edwardian clothes, travelling in a canoe on several wild rivers in Labrador and Quebec almost exactly 100 years ago. The story of Mina Hubbard is well known and several fine books have been written about her and her adventurous exploits. But *The Woman Who Mapped Labrador* is different in that this impressive book presents the whole story of Mrs. Hubbard in often minute detail. It discusses her life before, during, and also after she made the one canoe expedition that would make her famous and which would dominate her actions for the rest of her long life. It is of particular interest that the book not only contains the biography of Mrs. Hubbard, but also the complete, though slightly edited, diary she kept during her famous trip. Fifty-seven photographs and 20 maps make the book a joy to study by anyone interested in what wilderness canoe tripping meant early last century. It is pure delight to go over the detailed map she compiled of the route she travelled, which map is included in the book as a 20 x 20 in. fold-out. This is an important book in the world of wilderness canoeing and Canadian history.

MATTAGAMI RIVER, 1974

My first canoe trip

Toni Harting

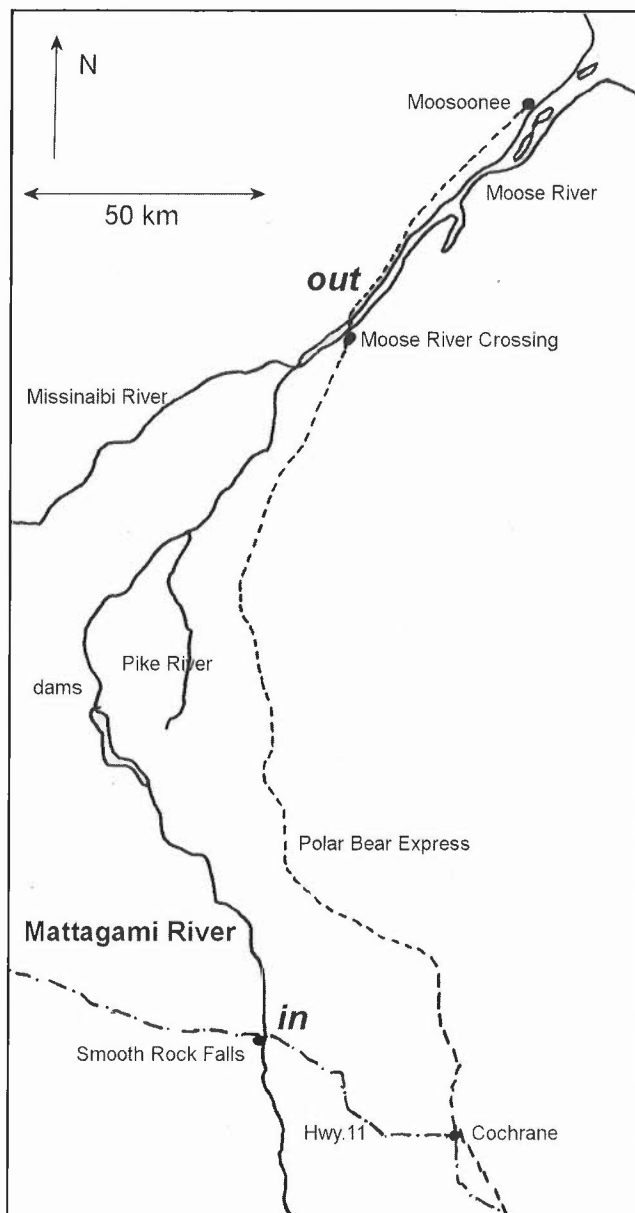
Thirty-one years ago, the face of wilderness canoeing was different from what we're used to today. Relatively few adventurous people ventured out into remote areas to "conquer" a wild river, and the equipment available was a far cry from the often super-sophisticated gear used almost universally now.

For instance: Most tripping canoes were made of wood-canvas, fiberglass, or aluminum; the widespread use of new materials such as kevlar, ABS, and plastic was still in the future. Kayaks, and certainly sea kayaks, were rarely seen on remote wild rivers. There were no blue barrels available and little other waterproof packing gear, just canvas bags with double or triple garbage bag liners. Lightweight freeze-dried food was almost universally inedible. Nobody had ever heard of GPS and satellite phones. There was no internet as a source of numerous private trip reports. The Wilderness Canoe Association had only recently been created and its justly famous collection of trip reports, published in its quarterly journal, was still only a dream. And there is much more that was different then.

Indeed, wilderness canoe tripping was less comfortable in those days. And maybe for that reason the old-timers in the paddling community tend to remember the past with great affection.



That was the situation when I was invited to participate in what would be my first venture into the Canadian wilderness in September 1974. In fact, it would be the first time I would be anywhere near that double-pointed contraption called a canoe. I had come from Holland to Canada in 1970 and had never held a paddle in my hand. Mysterious words like bow, stern, gunwale, J-stroke, upstream ferry, and many others were alien to me. However, I had spent a great deal of time in the outdoors elsewhere in the world, so sleeping in a tent and not having a bath for days was fine



with me. But I had no proper canoe tripping equipment or clothing, no waterproof case for my camera gear, no knowledge of paddling technique and canoeing safety. What I had in abundance, though, was a burning desire to learn all I could about this mysterious, alluring thing, the Canadian wilderness.

I had been invited by George (indeed, that George Drought, now the WCA Chairman of the Board) who was a friend of my friend Peter who knew how eager I was to be introduced to that, for me at least, unknown

wild country in the north. George was the only one in our team of six who had some canoe tripping experience; the rest of us were new, or relatively new, to the game. Well, this nine-day trip would turn out to be a real eye-opener for me, a 47-year-old novice.

George had selected the Mattagami River for its wildness and accessibility. A convenient put-in point was just north of Smooth Rock Falls on Hwy. 11, and the take-out would be 300 km later at Moosonee where the Moose River empties into James Bay. (At about 200 km from the put-in the Mattagami meets the Missinaibi, forming the Moose River.)

Because our trip took place so long ago, now is not the appropriate time to present an extensive report of our adventure; the situation may well have changed over the years. Therefore I'll offer only some highlights of this fondly remembered trip, a canoe trip that turned out to be the most important one of my life because of the critical decisions my wife, Ria, and I made some time later based on my experiences on the river.

On September 8, 1974, the six of us arrived at the put-in site and were stunned to discover that much of the river was covered with a disgusting coat of foam. This pollution came from the pulp mill upriver in Smooth Rock Falls, turning the river water into an undrinkable brown fluid. For much of the trip we would have to obtain our drinking water from side streams and even puddles of rain water. On the other hand, I was happy to discover that I immediately felt comfortable in the bow of the canoe and quickly learned how to handle the paddle correctly.



Something I also learned was how to run the mild whitewater we encountered on the river. This stretch of the Mattagami is relatively benign with only a few rapids or falls, which we either ran or portaged. Finding suitable campsites was also not much of a problem.

When after about 110 km we reached the dams that Ontario Hydro had put up to generate electricity, we were transported by a rented truck to a campsite just below the last dam where we stayed one night. From here on down we had to content with often very low water levels because the dams would be closed regularly, not allowing much water to go through.



The best campsite on the river is undoubtedly the one on the east shore where the Pike River empties into the Mattagami. We had a lay-over day there and I had the wonderful experience of being completely on my own in the untouched wilderness for most of that day. Only a few hundred metres inland from the camp I was just walking in the forest by myself, thoroughly enjoying this marvellous new country.

I am still thrilled by the memory of my first wilderness sunset, the one that gloriously lit up the western sky when we were camped on the east shore at the confluence of the Mattagami and Missinaibi rivers.

After a short visit to the store in Moose River Crossing, where we obtained some important items such as sugar and candy, we continued down the river intending to get to Moosonee for the planned take-out. But about eight kilometres below the bridge over the Moose River and just before Louise Island, two of our three canoes were badly damaged by rocks because of the very low water level we encountered in the one-kilometre-wide river.

Also because one of us had developed severe diarrhea, we decided to abandon one of the damaged canoes and portage the other two and all our gear to the railway line, about 400 m to the west through a wobbly field of spongy muskeg, small trees, and lots of deadfall. We camped on the muskeg near the railroad for the last night. The next morning, September 17, we hitched a ride on the Ontario Northland Polar Bear Express south to Cochrane and our cars.



Back home in Toronto I began to realize what this trip had meant to me. Ria said my eyes looked different, they had a new, far-away look that saw things I had never seen before. Meeting the Canadian Shield wilderness so intimately for the first time and discovering the perfect method to explore it by canoe made me realize that my hunger for knowledge and understanding of this wild country would only be satisfied if I jumped into it full-time. This realization led me to rethink my career priorities and we eventually decided I would stop being a professional aerospace engineer and become a photographer-writer focussing on wilderness canoeing.

And now it is 2005. I've evolved into one of those old nostalgic types who keep on talking about the olden days and how wilderness canoeing has changed and all that. True, canoe tripping is a much more hi-tec endeavour now and is being practised by many enthusiasts who might have been hesitant to go to the wild country in the past because of the so-called hardships and risks involved. But something of the "primitive" charm has been lost. Pity.

It is a shame I had to give up canoeing a few years back because of age-related health problems. I miss it very much, though. I miss seeing my trusted paddling partner, Ria, in the bow of the boat, leading the way to evermore fascinating adventures. I miss the damned bannock she could bake so well on a tiny fire in the bush. I miss the click of my beloved camera when capturing that thrilling photograph I'd been hunting for a long time. I miss ... Ah well ...

All in all, I'm very grateful I was privileged to play a positive role in the world of canoeing. Especially the WCA has been for three decades, and still is, an important part of that life; my involvement with our journal has always been very close to my heart.

I am supremely happy to have experienced for so many years the magic of wilderness canoeing, which made me thoroughly enjoy the sublime symphony of sky, water, rocks and forest I first encountered on that fateful canoe trip down the Mattagami River in 1974.

Old canoeists never die, they just eddy out.



DECEMBER MORNING

The land is fully lit long before the low December sun rises over the horizon. The lake is calm, like glass. The beauty of the forest along the shoreline is reflected in the perfection of the morning stillness. Floating islands of frost break the reflections, as does the odd breath of wind on the lake surface.

I think it is time to go canoeing. The ice is coming soon. Opportunities to paddle are diminishing. The cool smooth surface of the lake beckons: Come paddle! Come see the birth of the ice crystals that will soon put the lake to sleep for the winter!

This morning I see the edge of the old ice has been pushed back. What was a hundred feet of ice at this end of the bay is now just fifty. The northwest wind blew all through the night, breaking away at the tenuous grip of ice. Still, that fifty feet of ice tucked into the smallest part of the bay holds strong. It likely will stay until April.

Now the wind has shifted, leaving our little bay calm and still. The ice crystals begin to grow immediately. They reach out from the shore, where the water is shallowest. They reach out from the dock, and they spontaneously form in the space between me and the island out front.



I am ready to go. But then I stop a moment, and listen. There's the sound of wind in the distance—a quiet shhhh of wind in the treetops. Only hints of this wind make it to the surface of this protected little bay. If I were to paddle out, I would have to fight this wind to get back home. This prospect is less appealing in December than it is in July.

With the lake temperature hovering just above the freezing point, I have little desire to interact directly with the water. Still, I am drawn to the lake each morning at dawn. What's new? Has the ice around the fringes of the lake expanded or retreated? Is there more ice than yesterday, or less?

These shards of ice are as thin as tissue paper. They grow and bump into each other. They form delicate lacy patterns of ice, decorating the surface of the lake. With time, and in the absence of wind, they will continue to grow, and get thicker.

But the north wind is sure to blow again, pushing the ice back. And when all the winds die once more, I'll venture out in the canoe just one more time.

Viki Mather

THANKSGIVING DINNER AT CROTCH LAKE

Mary Perkins

Three years ago, a very successful Thanksgiving Turkey Cook was organized at Serpentine Lake. An extensive report on this joyous event was published in the Spring 2003 issue of *Nastawgan*.

Now, on the September 29 to October 2 weekend this year, a similar event took place but in a different location: Crotch Lake, which is located north of Kingston, Ontario, nestled in the corner formed by Hwy. 7 and Hwy. 509 (see the map on page 111 of Kevin Callan's book *Gone Canoeing*). The 14(!) participants were: Anne Lessio, Joe Pace, Ray Laughlen, Sharon Reeves, Jon McPhee, Dian Connors, Glenn and Carlene Croucher, Chris Bruck, Susan Dixon, Zoran and Alex Bojic, Gary James, Mary Perkins. This dedicated group of "turkeys" set out to cart all the fixins' for a good old-fashioned Thanksgiving dinner out on a canoe trip and do everything the hard way, when they all had everything needed to prepare it much more easily at home. But the challenge! Remember, the challenge!

Four of the "turkeys" had already done this once before in 2002. At least they had the sense to plan the present trip as a simply paddle to the site and then cook—not like the previous time when they lugged the whole kit and caboodle over several portages before they decided they had earned their dinner. However, one thing I can guarantee from this year's trip is that everyone would do it again. Watching the meal come together was intriguing and a lot of fun. Many thanks to Anne Lessio for her superb planning and overseeing!

The plans were started last year on the first weekend in October on another Crotch Lake trip. Some exploring revealed a lovely island, which would be able to handle about 20 people. It was deemed a suitable site. The word went out through a notice in *Nastawgan* and soon the trip was fully booked. The plans for the "morphological incendiary appliance" (created by Bill Caswell for the previous trip) were unearthed and Gary started construction. Since we had 14 people and the appliance has a fixed size, it was decided we needed two turkeys and hence two turkey cookers.

Anne and Gary e-mailed everyone a full-colour illustrated menu. There were a few changes but we ended up with squash soup, two beautifully roasted turkeys complete with sausage-and-walnut stuffing, gravy, mashed potatoes, green beans with almonds, glazed baby carrots, glazed Brussels sprouts with pecans, and orange-cranberry compote. (Is your mouth watering yet?) For dessert there was, of course, pumpkin pie and also an apple pie—plus real whipped cream.

Saturday was beautiful. At twelve noon, Anne put her plan into action. The dressing was created, the turkeys washed and stuffed and tied. When the turkeys were put in the incendiary appliance it was found they sat too high. Gary relished the opportunity to use his multi-tool (it's a

man thing) to make some alterations and presto, we were cooking! After putting some gravel and embers in the bottom, the turkeys were nestled snugly in, the lids put on, and then the cookers were each surrounded with a small fire, which Ray maintained to perfection. Joe was the chief "turner" and every fifteen minutes the birds were moved one quarter of a turn—clockwise (that's important). It takes a deft hand indeed.

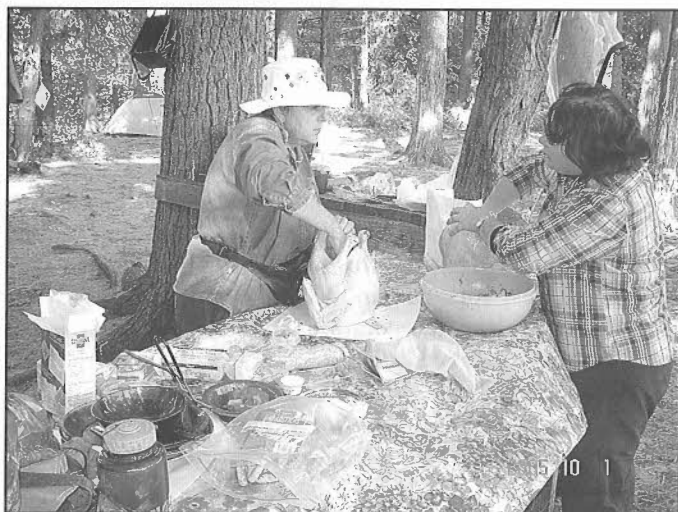
Once the turkeys had been cooking awhile, the next wave of action took place: vegetables were peeled, water measured, stoves ignited, all to the accompaniment of the mouth-watering smell of the roasting birds.

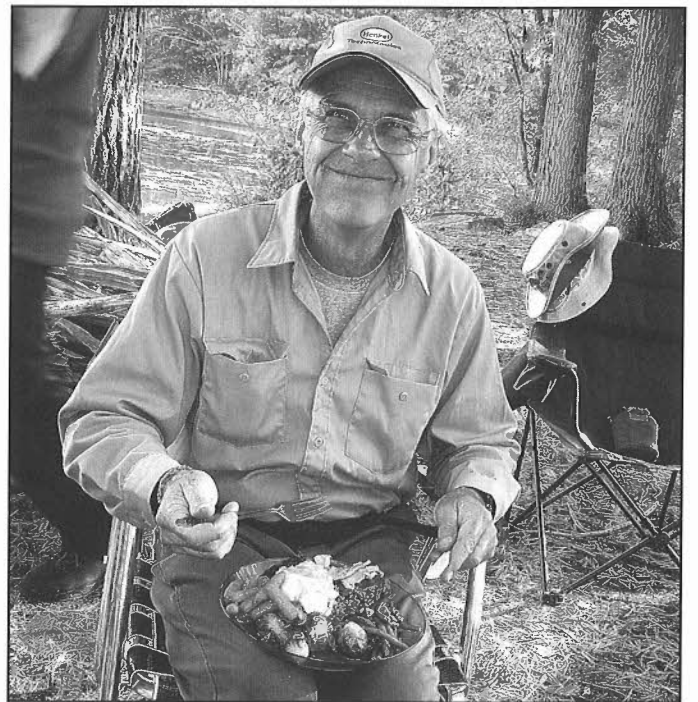
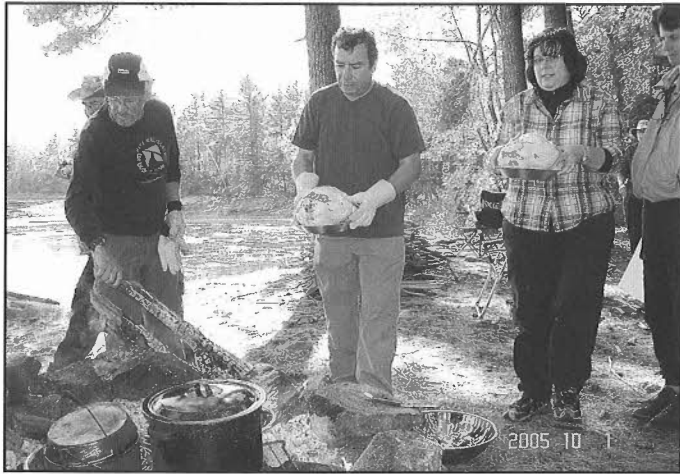
Out came the aperitifs (ever tried blueberry wine?) and wines that each camper had chosen to bring. When the magic moment arrived, the birds were removed from the fire. Fortunately the site had a small "table" close to the fire pit. The stuffing came out steaming and the carvers performed their task like pros. All the side dishes were arranged for easy access in the U-shaped "kitchen" area—such a luxurious site! You could pop over to the one table for some turkey and then move down the line in the kitchen to fill up on the other goodies. Gary even provided some dried gourds for a "centrepiece" on a stump and someone added some lovely coloured autumn leaves.

Saturday night's campfire was a blaze of glory. After spending most of the day nursing his little fires around the roasters, Ray really let go. The night was beautiful with a wonderful display of stars—if you could manage to get up and waddle down to the shore for a look. Everyone was quietly contented with full tummies. Before the campfire a draw was conducted to raffle off the turkey roasters—a sure way to create a trend.

Sunday was another one of Mother Nature's marvelous creations. The various canoes set out on a variety of different activities, none too strenuous, on Crotch Lake.

It was a perfect weekend indeed.





Photos by Gary James and Mary Perkins



THUMB'S UP! A MISHAP ON THE PONTAX RIVER

Article: Doug Ashton

Photos: Glenn Meinzer and Al Greve

The summer of 2005 would be the fifth consecutive year that Scott and I would squeeze in our whitewater trip. In past years, we had enjoyed trips on the Bazin, White, Petawawa, and Dumoine. This year we had additional time and wanted to do a more remote trip with the same group we tripped with last year on the Dumoine.

In mid-winter the plans began to come together for a trip in the James Bay area. This area worked well because Al and Liz, one of the couples, would be travelling in that direction to drop their children off at Camp Wanapitei in Temagami. The other couple, Glenn and Dianne, would travel up together from Whitby, Ontario. All six paddlers were very experienced in whitewater and had extensive canoe tripping skills. From the early stages of planning, Al took a lead role in the organization and made suggestions about several rivers in the area. In the end, we all decided on the Pontax River, which is on the Quebec side of James Bay just north of the Rupert River. The trip would have us paddle from the bridge at Hwy. 109 to the bay and into the town of Washkaganish. The logistics for the shuttle were easy, there was paved road access, and the river offered plenty of whitewater in a remote location.

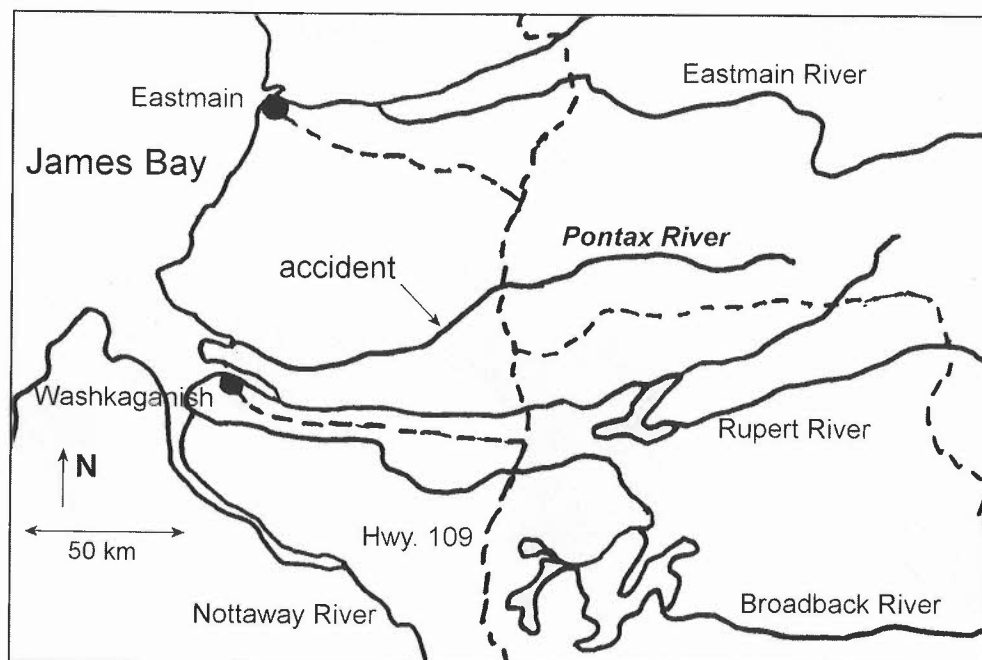
A pre-trip meeting was arranged at my house in Cambridge, Ontario, where decisions were made about equipment, travel, food, etc. Al had made all the contacts regarding the shuttle and had information on the route, water levels, and challenges we could face. Unknown to us at the time, the next decision would prove to be the most important decision of all. Do we need to invest in a satel-



lite phone? Purchase was unreasonable. However, Al had information about a rental in Ottawa that would cost between \$100 and \$200. All parties agreed that it would be a worthwhile investment due to the remote location. We also discussed other safety protocols, equipment, food, and emergency procedures. Al would bring a full river-rescue kit and flares; each canoe would have a well-equipped first-aid kit.

On Monday, August 1, 2005, we met our shuttle service at Hwy. 109 and the Pontax River, ready to start our nine-day descent to James Bay. Al and Liz were paddling a decked Esquif Canyon, Glenn and Dianne were paddling a decked Nova Craft Prospector, and Scott and I were paddling a Swift Dumoine. Travel is very light on the river and we knew we would probably have no contact with anyone until we arrived at Washkaganish on the Rupert River.

We only travelled a few kilometres that first day. It had been a long drive to the put-in and we didn't get on the water until almost 5:00 p.m. We camped at the top of a long set of rapids. The water levels were moderate; however, the river was wide and contained long stretches of rapids. We enjoyed the evening under clear skies and made our ceremonial toast to the river gods in exchange for safe passage. Liz had



brought some coolers appropriately named "Black Fly." Each of us put a small amount of it into the river and made our connection. In retrospect, I expect "Black Fly" is not the river's choice of beverage.

The next two days held spectacular weather, exceptional whitewater, and breathtaking waterfalls. On Wednesday evening, August 3, we camped at a wide section of the river that contained several class 4 drops, rapids, and a few small waterfalls. We enjoyed some relaxation, dinner, wine, and a swim in a natural shower. Everything was going well.

The next morning we awoke to an overcast sky, wind, and showers. I made breakfast under a tarp and everyone had camp packed up by 9:00 a.m. We moved down-river and negotiated our way around a waterfall and then ran some rapids. When we got to the next set of rapids around 11:00 a.m., we discovered a large class 4 drop, followed by some class 3 rapids, and then a very long set of class 2 to the end. Total length was about three kilometres. We spent some time scouting this to determine our options. We had been taking a conservative approach to running rapids and only ran what we all confidently felt we could manage. This meant we sometimes lined or carried around obstacles. Even though we had some information about portages through the bush, we were unable to find much evidence of any trails. The forest was thick with alder brush and deadfall, making it virtually impassable. This meant trying to walk on the shoreline around falls, ledges, and large rapids.

The rapid we were at was no different. We decided to walk the gear approximately 100 metres down river left where we would put in and run the remainder. The area was open, yet rugged. The rocks were uneven and very slippery from the rain we had been having throughout the morning. All six of us started to move gear down to the put-in. Scott and I carried packs on the first load and returned to pick up the canoe and barrel for the second trip. I suggested he carry the barrel and I would carry the canoe to a point near the end where I would put it down and get his assistance manoeuvring it over a more rugged section. Scott picked up his gear and moved off while I proceeded to get the canoe over my head and start the solo carry. I knew the rocks were wet and slippery, so I made sure I took my time and exercised caution with each step. At a point about 20 metres along, I stepped down with my right foot onto some smaller rocks. One of the rocks shifted and I felt something pull in my right ankle. In an attempt to regain my footing, I planted my left foot too quickly and when my weight shifted, my left foot slipped out from underneath me.

The next part happened so fast. I fell to my left with my feet coming out to my right. As I think about it now, I suspect my left hand rolled to the outside as the canoe rolled inward towards the ground. As the canoe dropped, my left thumb ended up at the outside edge of the wood gunwale. The full weight of the 40-kg canoe then dropped to the rock surface with my thumb between the gunwale



and the rock. As I landed and hit the ground, along with the canoe, Liz, who had had been returning for her second carry, attempted to catch the falling boat. I initially thought I was fine. I felt embarrassed I had fallen and simply wanted to grab the canoe and carry on. Liz approached me and asked if I was OK. I was about to say "yes" when I looked down and saw that my left thumb had been crushed. It appeared to be severed from a point two to three centimetres from the end and was only attached by some ligaments and other pieces of tissue. Liz immediately asked me what I needed. I asked her to remove my bandana so I could apply pressure because I expected the bleeding to be extensive. She took the bandana and I held the piece of thumb in place while pressing to control any bleeding. I then sat down and elevated my hand while Liz went for help. It was approximately 11:45 a.m.

With 20 years of policing behind me, I know the importance of managing a crisis in a manner that allows for rational decision making and well-executed procedures. We had thought through emergency situations and were prepared to deal with them. Al immediately took charge of the situation and did an initial assessment of the injury. He agreed with me when I removed the bandana and said, "It's a bad one!"

Everyone came together like a well-trained team of paramedics. Al took a lead role in dealing with the wound, while Liz and Dianne ensured my needs were taken care of both physically and emotionally. I initially became very hot. Liz and Dianne wet down my forehead and neck. I undid my PFD and jacket. The wound had debris from the fall that needed to be cleaned out. Hydrogen peroxide in a diluted form was used to flush out some of this. I later learned that this was unnecessary and simply using clean water is preferred and less painful.

After some time of cleaning the wound, the next step was to secure the thumb tip to the remainder of the digit and bandage it. Surprisingly there was not much bleeding. This apparently is normal for this type of injury.

Gauze was used to wrap the wound and tape was applied to secure everything in place. Throughout this whole procedure the pain was manageable. By this time I had become cold and started to shake. I had on a thin pair of cotton pants with a quick-dry top and Gore-Tex jacket. After the bandaging was complete I stood and walked without difficulty. I changed clothes and was warmed up quickly. The immediate crisis was over. Now what?

We were part-way through a long set of involved rapids. The gear had been walked around the class 4 and the intention was to run the class 3 and then negotiate the long stretch of class 2 rapids. Things were different now. We all knew evacuation was necessary as I was unable to paddle. Even though I was able to manage the pain at that point, I knew it would be getting worse. I took a Tylenol 3 but wanted to be cautious because I also knew I had to remain completely coherent. We had no antibiotics and I knew a wound like this left untreated for several days could get infected and complicate the injury. If we continued I would also pose a hindrance to the remainder of the party, forcing them to take on greater risks. We had rented the satellite phone for this purpose.



The area we were in was very loud with big rapids. I had used the phone the night before to check on a situation at home and knew the connection was often poor. We were also faced with an English/French language barrier. Al wanted to get to a more quiet area to make the call so we needed to head down-river. This involved lining the canoes around some drops and then running some class 3 rapids to get to a calm area just before the long class 2 run. Even under the best of conditions these would be challenging runs with little room for error.

Al shuffled the parties to take advantage of the various skill sets possessed by each member of the group. Glenn and Dianne were left together while Liz took my stern position, with Scott remaining in the bow. Al would paddle stern in his canoe with me as a "passenger" in the bow. This would have been a difficult run with a strong bow paddler and Al was going to attempt it with no one paddling in the bow. Even though I was concerned, I felt confident he had assessed the situation and could negotiate the rapid safely. So there I was, sitting in the bow going for a ride. But Al managed to manoeuvre the canoe through the class 3 and dropped us into a calm area on river right. We waited while the other two canoes also successfully made the run. We had everyone in a calm area on river right above the class 2; it was time to make the call.

Al attempted to call a contact in Washkaganish who would be able to send in a Beaver aircraft to extricate Scott and me along with our gear. Unfortunately there was no answer. Al then contacted Fire and Rescue in Washkaganish and explained the situation and requested evacuation by sending in a Beaver aircraft. Our location was described. However, exact co-ordinates were not available since we did not have a GPS with us. We had to work from topographical maps and describe the river features. Communication was hampered by the poor connection and compounded by the language barrier, but Al was confident the message was received and a plane had been dispatched.

The next stage was to negotiate the long class 2 rapid and wait for the rescue. The same configuration remained with me in the bow as a passenger. The class 2 was the longest technical rapid I had encountered on any of our trips. It had numerous obstacles requiring accurate reading of the rapid and quick execution of manoeuvres. Not an easy feat. Al and I went first. He managed to finesse the canoe through the entire stretch and only contacted a few rocks. We were now at the bottom of the set looking up-river. Even though it was a straight line up, the distance was so great we couldn't see the other two canoes. It was some time before we saw the first boat bobbing through the rapid. Al and I waited with apprehension and hoped that the other two canoes would make it through. The last thing we needed to compound things was a pinned canoe. With a little luck and a lot of skill all three canoes arrived intact at the bottom of the rapid. It was now about 2:30 p.m. We decided to eat lunch at a small gravel bar while we waited for the plane. Knowing Scott and I would be evacuated, we thought through the equipment and food and made necessary redistribution from one barrel to the other.

After lunch we decided to get into an open area where the plane could land and we would be more visible. The next set of rapids was less than a kilometre ahead and we also had to consider a location for a campsite for the remainder of the group. The only available campsites on this river seemed to be the occasional rock surface around some rapids. The forest was impenetrable due to the density of the alders.



Once we had moved a few hundred metres downriver, Al again initiated contact with the authorities. He had some difficulties due to a poor connection and was also starting to get a low battery signal. When the phone had been rented, an extra battery was ordered. Unfortunately, when the phone was picked up there was no spare battery so a solar-powered charger was provided. Up to this point the phone had been used for three brief calls. Regardless, Al was successful in speaking to someone from the Quebec Provincial Police who advised that a helicopter, not a plane, had been dispatched from a base on the Rupert River. We were unable to get an estimated time of arrival and it appeared the evacuation had been taken over by the Quebec police.

At approximately 4:00 p.m. the weather started to get worse. It had become dark with cloud cover and we could hear thunder in the distance. As we approached the next set of rapids we located a small rock island at the top of the run. This was the only open area available. It was very uneven, measuring approximately 10 by 20 metres. It would work as an emergency campsite. The group immediately erected two tents on the uneven ground just as it started to pour. We were now into a full-scale electrical storm. I spoke to Scott and Glenn and questioned whether an evacuation attempt could be made due to the weather conditions. I was also concerned about the ability of a helicopter landing in the eddy above the rapids. While this conversation was going on, I heard the unmistakable

sound of a chopper and within seconds the machine appeared just above the treetops. To my surprise it had no pontoons. Where was it going to land? Were they here to only assess the situation? Surely they wouldn't attempt to land on the small piece of rock we occupied?

As the helicopter circled above over our heads we waited for some direction, but none was given. So we chose to move the tents and gear to one end of the rock island and see what the intentions of the pilot were. Amazingly, he initiated an attempt to land. The pilot was able to position the massive machine very close to the surface to allow a passenger, who turned out to be a nurse, to





exit and approach us. Although faced with a language barrier in addition to the noise of the helicopter and the storm, we were able to convey the essence of the situation. During this exchange the pilot was able to completely land and shut the helicopter down.

The nurse was satisfied that the field dressing was sufficient until we were able to get to Washkaganish. We scur-



ried around and received permission from the pilot to evacuate Scott and the gear as well. The only problem was the canoe. Al and I analyzed the topo and agreed on an island just downstream where the canoe could be left for pick-up by float plane. Lots of hugs and kisses and we were off on our helicopter ride, a first for both Scott and me.

It was only 20 minutes to Washkaganish where a community nurse awaited my arrival. The nearest doctor was a six-hour drive away. The nurse was briefed on the circumstances and decided to redress the wound, administer antibiotics, and give me a tetanus shot. The difficulty arose when he attempted to remove the blood-soaked gauze, which had become imbedded in the wound with the dried blood. This required much soaking and patience to remove. In the meantime, Scott made arrangements for retrieving the canoe and also picked up his up and prepared for the drive to the hospital in Amos, Quebec. Our departure was somewhat delayed by the local police who wanted a statement.

By 8:00 p.m. I was drugged up and off to Amos with Scott driving. We arrived in Amos at the hospital at 2:30 a.m. on Friday, August 5. They had received information about the accident and awaited our arrival. The ER physician checked the injury and gave me the news that we were outside the "12 hour window of opportunity" for any re-attachment and the surgeon would attend to the wound in the morning. I was admitted to the hospital and Scott settled into the back seat of his car for a few hours of sleep. In the morning I was taken for X-rays and then to see the surgeon. He explained the thumb had been crushed and the tissue had been sheared off the bone. However, the bone had not been broken. The nail was gone and some tissue was missing. He sutured the wound, bandaged the hand, and prescribed pain killers and antibiotics.

It was now 12:00 p.m. on Friday and although we hadn't slept or eaten much for 24 hours, we were anxious to be on our way. We left the hospital, filled a few prescriptions, and then set off for the long drive to North Bay, Ontario, where my car had been left. We got to North Bay at 5:30 p.m. and I said goodbye to Scott who was returning to Ottawa. I was home in Cambridge before 9:00 p.m., thankful to see my family. The next few days I spent convalescing and wondering how the remainder of the group was managing. Three days after arriving home I received a call from Liz informing me everyone made it through.

Since the incident, I've had a lot of time to reflect on what took place. I've come to the realization that it was just an unfortunate accident and we did nothing to contribute to it. I do know we were prepared for an emergency and were able to deal with it effectively. I could not have asked for a better group of individuals to be with under such circumstances. They instantly came together and calmly worked their way through it. There will always be risks on these adventures, but they're acceptable risks. With skills training, equipment, and preparation the risks are minimized.

So where to now? Let's finish the trip!

A NEW REPORTING PHONE LINE FOR THE MNR

Each year the Ministry of Natural Resources lays between 8,000 and 10,000 charges for natural resource violations. Our natural resources are more fragile than you know. Abuse of our natural resources reduces opportunities for everyone and threatens the future sustainability of the resource. The new toll-free TIPS-MNR reporting line provides a direct line for the public to report resource violations to the ministry 24 hours a day, seven days a week from anywhere in Ontario.

Natural resource violations include any illegal activity against Ontario's fish and wildlife, forests, parks, aggregate resources, and public lands, such as:

- * The illegal sale of species at risk or wildlife or animal parts
- * Fishing or hunting out-of-season
- * Taking more game than allowed
- * Night hunting or shooting from a roadway
- * Unauthorized shoreline alteration or dumping waste on Crown land
- * Illegally removing sand, gravel or Crown timber from public lands
- * Having fires in restricted fire zones or without a

- permit, and
- * Illegal activities in provincial parks and protected areas.

A member of the public who sees or suspects resource abuse should safely take note of as much information as possible and call 1-877-TIPS-MNR (847-7667). Conservation officers will use the information to investigate. The TIPS-MNR line is not an emergency response line.

Helpful information includes:

- * Vehicle licence plate number, make, and model
- * Date and time of day
- * Approximate location (road, lake, street address, landmarks)
- * Details about the suspected activity
- * Description of any people involved in the incident.

By working together we can help protect our natural resources from abuse and illegal activity.

(Submitted by Ray Laughlen and Erhard Kraus.)

FOOD FOR PADDLERS

TUNA À LA LADY EVELYN

Gisela Curwen created this family favourite while paddling in Temagami on Lady Evelyn Lake. The following recipe serves four.

- 2 cups rice
- 2 tins tuna (or 3 pouches if tins are banned)
- 2 Tbsp onion and garlic flakes
- 1-2 Tbsp curry powder (depending how strong you want it)
- 3 Tbsp dried vegetable flakes
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup chopped nuts (I mostly use slivered almonds)
- salt and pepper

Put rice in a pot of water (approximately 5-6 cups, depending on the rice used; I always use Japanese round-corn rice). Add all the other ingredients except for the tuna and nuts. Bring to a boil and then simmer until the rice is done. Mix in nuts and tuna at the end just to warm through.

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.

DUMOINE RIVER THREATENED

The beautiful and exciting Dumoine River in Quebec is a very important watershed but it appears the river is slated to be dammed unless there is enough public pressure against the project. The river is said to be the last undammed wild river in southern Quebec, the largest area of unfragmented southern boreal forest in Quebec, and an important economy generating eco-tourist destination. For those reasons alone it is important that the river be preserved.

Please add your voice against this ill-advised and misguided damming project. The links below have all the information about the Dumoine and the project, and there is an informed letter you can easily add your comments to and then e-mail from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness site. Sending from the CPAWS site takes 2 - 3 minutes. <http://www.cpaws.org/> and <http://www.dumoine.ca/>

Here is the exact place where the letter is: <http://www.actionworks.ca/clientfiles/cpaws/actioncentres/boreal-qb/takeaction.jsp>

(Submitted by Becky Mason; <http://www.redcanoes.ca>)

NOT A CARE IN THE WORLD?

One of our favourite sights at this time of year is two or three young foxes chasing each other through the long grass by the roadside. Indeed, what more entertaining and perfect picture of youthful innocence could there be than these red streaks in the lush growth of late summer. They are so tireless, so exuberant and carefree that they often remind us of some of our fellow fox watchers—school kids on their summer holidays.

Of course, even if there are certain resemblances, fox pups are “students” in a survival school very different from that attended by any of our children. This may seem like a very obvious thing to say but it bears repeating all the same because we humans very often lose sight of the realities of animal existence. Although none of us past the age of three actually believes that animals are people dressed up in funny costumes, our childhood fairy tales really do leave an impression and, even as adults, we often persist in believing that animals and humans do, or should, share the same values.

Actually, the case of fox pups is a good illustration of just how far off the mark we can be when we fall into that sort of trap. A family of foxes is far from carefree and indeed has elements, which by our standards could only be called brutally inhuman.

To begin with, using the word family is really stretching a point. Foxes are basically loners and even if a male and female often share the same territory, they go their own separate ways for most of the year (because hunting alone is a more efficient way to catch small elusive prey items like mice and chipmunks). In late February or early March, however, when the Park is still deep in snow, the sexes seek each other out and mating occurs. The female chooses and refurbishes one of several already existing dens in the territory and gives birth to her young in late April. Five or six is the average litter size although there may be as many as ten. The pups are tiny and helpless at first and would quickly freeze if their mother did not constantly keep them warm during their first 10 to 14 days of life. Fortunately the male brings food back to his nursing mate and makes such intensive care possible. Later, both

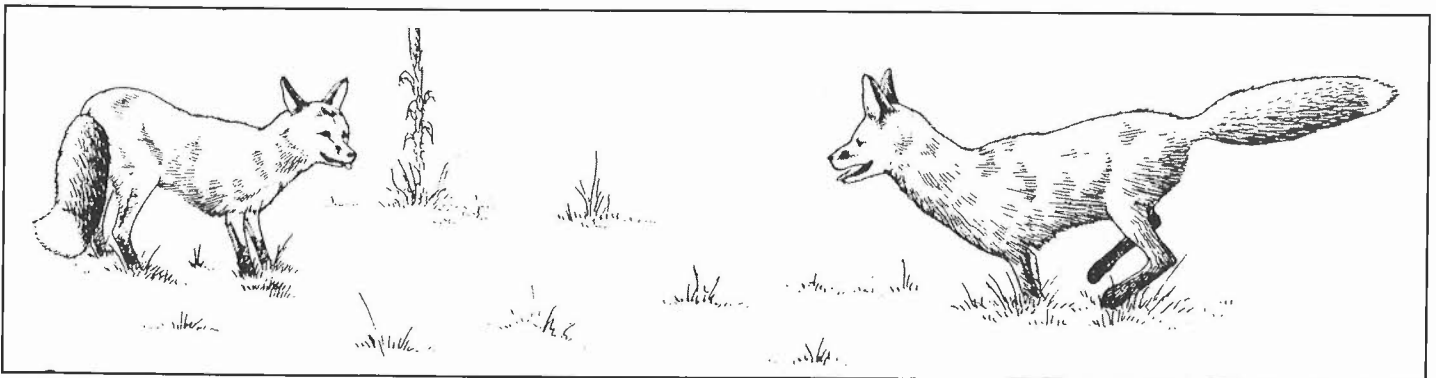
parents and occasionally a daughter from the previous year are kept busy almost around the clock trying to keep the hungry mouths well fed after weaning.

So far, even if the fox family was put together in a bit of a hurry, nothing we have described sounds particularly inhuman. Indeed, both parents are models of devotion and even a “big sis” pitches in to help with the chores. But wait, things are about to change.

Just after they get their teeth, in fact at about three to four weeks of age, the pups start to fight each other viciously. Sometimes individual pups are actually killed in these struggles and even in this doesn't happen, the contests establish, in a period of about 10 days, a strict and virtually permanent dominance order among the pups. What this means is that the number one pup will always get, or be able to steal, any piece of food brought back to the den by the adults. By contrast, the lowest-ranking pup will never get or keep any food at all unless every higher-status pup has a full stomach. Since, in fact, there rarely is enough food to satisfy the demand, it is entirely normal for the weaker pups to starve to death while the others are well fed. Even more ghastly to our human way of seeing things, the adults do absolutely nothing to prevent these “murders.” They act for all the world as if the horrible deaths of their children didn't even matter.

Now, it is true that many of our human fairy tales relate some pretty unsavoury events but we personally can't recall any as gruesome as those that occur in every fox den. The behaviour is even more perplexing because it is so contradictory. One minute the adults are perfect parents, and then they watch indifferently as their babies turn into murderous thugs. How can this possibly be justified or understood?

Well, the behaviour of foxes can never be justified in human terms but it can certainly be understood. As a matter of fact, the family life of foxes contains some thought-provoking indications about how the real (non-fairy tale) world actually operates in general. It may well be true that adult foxes feel something like the affection we humans have for our babies, but the more fundamental reason why



the foxes we see today actually care for their young is that they can't help it! In the past there may well have been mutant foxes that had no inclination to have young or care for them but, needless to say, such varieties would have died out quickly. The only strains of foxes that have survived to our day are those that were born with, and have passed on, the instinct to have babies and make sure they survive. Seen in this light, child-rearing in the society of foxes or other creatures is more inevitable than praiseworthy and, if anything, may be seen to be on the selfish side. After all, we know that no individual creature can live forever, but there is a second best alternative available in that our genes live on in our descendants. By reproducing itself a living thing can perpetuate its genes and that may be the fundamental thing that a fox does (as opposed to "loving its cute little puppies") when it gives birth to and cares for its young.

Even an apparently generous and loving daughter fox that stays with its parents and helps raise younger brothers and sisters may be doing so for very selfish reasons—albeit quite unconsciously. By raising siblings the daughter fox is raising babies that, on average, carry just as many of the daughter's genes as would its own babies. If the daughter can't find a territory and mate of her own, helping her parents to raise more young is the most reproductively selfish thing she can do. She may also gain useful experience for her own breeding attempts. Either way, big sister is in it for herself.

But how then to explain the murderous behaviour of baby foxes towards each other and the indifference of the adults if the game of the game is survival of genes? In the case of the young, if there isn't enough food to go around, it's easy to see that each youngster should fight tooth and claw to avoid being at the bottom of the heap. After all, if you don't live, you can't pass on any of your genes. In these circumstances the tendency to attack your brothers and sisters is the only behaviour that can possibly last more than one generation. The alternative

behaviour (being generous and letting the other have first crack at the food) inevitably means that you thereby starve—and therefore fail to reproduce and pass on your (suicidal) gene for generosity.

As for adults, why should they care which of their young are the ones that survive (given that some must die)? As a matter of fact, from their point of view (or that of their genes) the worst thing they could do would be to try to overrule their competitively superior offspring and try to enforce food sharing. They might well prolong the lives of their weaker young but only by weakening the stronger ones. The final result might be an intact litter of uniformly weak babies that are all doomed to die instead of a reduced number of potential winners. Playing referee might be "moral" by human standards but it would be very "stupid" for any fox that was unknowingly attempting to maximize the survival of its genes to succeeding generations.

By now, it should be very apparent, if it wasn't already, that the real world of foxes playing in the long grass of summer is very far removed from that experienced by our children. And the brutalities of their existence are far from over. Soon, unless food supplies happen to be exceptional, the surviving pups will be forced to disperse into totally unknown country far beyond their birthplaces in probably futile attempts to find territories of their own.

Only a few hard-bitten individuals ever make it to adulthood and nothing in their lives could be called innocent or carefree the way we understand these terms. To compare them ever with our children is really to miss the fundamental nature of their lives.

You could even say that, if fox pups are like school kids, then they are very much students in the school of hard fox.

Reprinted from the August 27, 1987, issue of Algonquin Park's The Raven, courtesy of the Ministry of Natural Resources

PARTNERS WANTED

We are planning a trip down the **CHARPENTIER /LEAF RIVER** in August 2006. This is a tributary & major river system in the Ungava Peninsula, Northern Quebec, that is rarely travelled because of the very complicated logistics and expenses associated with it. Although it will be a physically demanding and challenging lightweight trip, the beauty of the last real Canadian wilderness will be worth it. We are looking for enthusiastic paddlers to join us on this trip. We are assuming, due to the flight limitations, that the trip will be restricted to six participants (theoretically maybe eight), so the earlier you let us know your interest, the better. Contact me for more information: Lester Kovac, 613-228-1463, lkovac@rogers.com



WCA OUTINGS

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

Contact the Outings Committee before Jan. 29

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; Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca; Geri James, 416-512-6690, geri.james@barclaysglobal.com; Scott Card, 905-665-7302, scottcard@sympatico.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.

+++++

All Season **HAVE PADDLE WILL TRAVEL**

Scott Card, 905-665-7302, scottcard@sympatico.ca ----- Mowing the lawn this weekend because you don't have any trips planned? I paddle whitewater nearly every weekend from spring break-up through as long as the water remains liquid in the fall (or winter). If you want to get out on a river any weekend, just call me to find out where I'm headed. I go wherever there's good water. Longer trips also a possibility. Trip difficulty levels vary from intermediate to advanced. Open canoe, C1, or kayak welcome.

Winter 2005-6 **SNOWBIRD SPECIAL -- PADDLING DOWN SOUTH**

Scott Card, 905-665-7302, scottcard@sympatico.ca ----- Would anyone be interested in getting away to where the water is liquid this time of year? I'm looking at the possibility of escaping the cold to North or South Carolina for some paddling. The outing is exploratory for me, so let's start out with some rivers rated in the class 2 - 3 range. Dates and locations to be determined. Contact me if you would be interested.

Winter 2005-6 **SNOWBIRD PADDLE**

Jay Neilson, 613-687-6037 ----- If you are interested in paddling in the southern USA and have a couple of weeks available, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida are awesome snowbird destinations. Please call me for details.

Winter 2005-6 **WINTER CAMPING - ALGONQUIN PARK**

Jay Neilson and Frank Knaepen, 613-687-6037 ----- We will be setting up the warm winter tent in Algonquin Park East District. This year's project will be "feeding the wolves"—hopefully for some awesome photography and observation of the local wolf pack. Anytime, solo or accompanied, call us for details.

January 2 **THE NEW YEARS RESOLUTION HIKE**

Gary and Geri James, 416-512-6690, wca@sympatico.ca, book immediately. ----- Time to work off the Christmas and New Years celebrations. Time to start working on the lungs and legs for portaging. Join us for our annual "yeah we got to get into better shape" winter hike. Time and place not available at this time. Please see the website for updates.

January 21 **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 14 to register so we can book sufficient room.

January 27-29 **SILENT LAKE CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING**

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca, book before December 30. ----- Come and enjoy a snowy winter weekend skiing at Silent Lake. We will stay two nights in a toasty warm yurt with a wood-burning stove, and cross-country ski the trails and explore the park right from our front door. Limit six intermediate skiers.

February 4 **CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING FIVE WINDS TRAILS**

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca, book before January 20. ----- Come out and enjoy a day of winter wonderland on the marked, ungrooved wilderness trail system in the scenic Gibson River area. Varied terrain. Limit six intermediate skiers.

February 11 **UP THE CREEK**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca, book as soon as possible. ----- This year's Saturday winter workshop draws its inspiration from Doug McKown's "Up The Creek," a fascinating compilation of tales by canoeists of outings they've been on that went wrong. I'm inviting you to join us for a workshop at my house from 2:00 p.m. to whenever the conversation ends. Come prepared to tell us about trips you've been on where things didn't go as expected, and how you dealt with these challenges. Topics can run the gamut from medical emergencies, route finding problems, gear glitches, to good old-fashioned personality conflicts. So the discussion doesn't get too heavy, let's hear about the funny goof-ups as well. We can discuss what went wrong, how the situation was handled, and how the problem might have been avoided in the first place. There's a lot we can learn from each other to make our own trips safer and more enjoyable. Dinner is potluck. Doug McKown's book is recommended pre-workshop reading. Limit of 12 participants.

February 18 **CROSS-COUNTRY SKI & DINE**

Harrison Jolly, 905-689-1733, book as soon as possible. ----- Join us for a day of cross-country skiing in the Crawford Lake Conservation Area 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 18 **PRETTY RIVER PARK NATURE RESERVE SKIING**

Bob Fisher, 416-487-2950 or weekends 705-445-9339, book before February 11. ----- Cross-country ski outing on bush trails through the Pretty River Park Nature Reserve (south and west of Collingwood). Great views from the Niagara Escarpment across Lake Algonquin (It dried up about 10,000 years ago!). Meet at 10.30 a.m. at the Orchard Lodge of Osler Bluff Ski Club. Lunch on the trail. Limit of six skiers.

February 23-27 **STOKELY CREEK SKI TOURING CENTER**

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca, book as soon as possible. ----- Stokely Creek Lodge is situated in the rolling hills of the Canadian Shield just North of Sault Ste. Marie and offers 135 km of wilderness, classic and skating trails with excellent accommodation and great food. I am planning to explore this winter paradise in the Algoma Highlands. Anyone interested in joining me? Please find out more about the Lodge and what they offer under their website www.stokelycreek.com. If you would like to come along, please let me know so right away, so that I can book.

March 25 **MOIRA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before March 18 ----- This is our season opener and a chance to recover our skills after a long winter. We will start at Chisholm's Mill and finish at Latta in the morning, eat lunch in our vehicles, and run Lost Channel in the afternoon. This is a good opportunity for new spring paddlers to introduce themselves and demonstrate their competence. The river is not particularly technical and we will only be about an hour from our cars. This trip is open to anyone who doesn't mind swimming in ice-cold water. Tandem canoes must have a centre airbag. Wetsuits or drysuits are required. Limit of six boats.

March 26 **LOWER CREDIT RIVER**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca, book before March 19 ----- Just leave the boat on the car after the Moira and join me on this classic early spring trip. 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 29-30 **SPRING IN MUSKOKA**

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca, book before April 22 ----- We will paddle the Herb and Gun lakes near Minden and experience the returning birds and discover other flora and fauna emerging from hibernation. Maybe we will find the first turtles or the last cranberries, as in past trips. Since it will still be too cold to sit around, we'll try to hike a bit to explore the area and, as in past years, clean up portages and campsites along the way. There will be prizes for the best junk collected! Limit four canoes.

April 29-30 **SPENCE'S CELEBRATED SALMON - MOIRA WEEKEND**

Glenn Spence, 613-475-4176, book after January 26 ----- 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. 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 boats.

May **SPRING TRIPPING IN ALGONQUIN**

Andrea Fulton, andrea.fulton@rogers.com, book as early as possible. ---- Exact dates to be determined. Let's get out there before the black flies do! Join me and my two teenage daughters for an easy weekend trip in Algonquin off the Hwy. 60 corridor. This will be an easy flatwater trip with a few portages. I plan to camp Friday night at Tea Lake campground and do a one- or two-day loop into the interior.

May 27-28 **INTERMEDIATE WHITEWATER CLINIC**

John & Sharon Hackert, jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before April 22 ---- This is the tenth year of our clinic, which is designed to help improve your basic skills. We will paddle the Lower Mad on Saturday and practise our basics skills at Palmer Rapids on Sunday. The emphasis will be on front ferries, eddy-outs, and peel-outs. Your paddle strokes will be critiqued. You will also have an opportunity to practise self-rescue techniques. Open to properly outfitted solo and tandem canoes. Wetsuits or drysuits will be needed. We will camp at our cottage.

June 10 **GRAND RIVER**

Doug Ashton 519-620-8364, doug.ashton@rogers.com, book by June 1. ---- This popular trip down the Grand River offers a local leisurely day 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 without any portaging.

June 16-18 **FRENCH RIVER - WESTERN OUTLETS**

Bob Fisher, 416-487-2950 or weekends 705-445-9339, book by June 1. ---- We will complete a circle route from Hartley Bay House out through the Western Outlets of the French River, exploring the historic Old Voyageur Channel, and return past the ghost logging town of Copananing. There is a fee for parking, water taxi, and group dinners. Limit of six canoes.

ADDITIONAL TRIPS

Check our website at www.wildernesscanoe.ca/trips.htm for additional trips. Members may submit additional trips to the Outings Committee anytime at bness@look.ca. If you miss the *Nastawgan* deadline, your trip will still be listed on the website. Also, check the bulletin board at www.wildernesscanoe.ca/bulletin.htm for private, non-WCA trips or partner requests.

LOGGING IN ALGONQUIN PARK

(The following is taken from a slightly edited e-mail exchange. Ed.)

I was referred today (October 17, 2005) to an article in the Toronto Star, page A4, thanks in part to the Freedom of Information Act: ... it is now known that Algonquin Park has 8,000 km of 20-metre-wide logging roads...as many as the City of Toronto and four times that of its canoe routes. This in an area intended to preserve some portion of our natural heritage.

Maybe we should be thankful the USA are effectively blockading our softwood with tariffs or there would be 16,000 km of roads and they would be clear-cutting!

I know that we can't turn back the clock on Algonquin but we need to let our politicians and their bureaucrats know that environmental issues must be a priority and not just at election time with hollow promises. Deeds speak...our children and their children deserve better!

Larry Durst

Many people are under the illusion, Larry, that Algonquin Park is a wilderness area—it's not. The area was originally set aside to protect the watersheds of several important log-driving rivers in central Ontario, and the close connection with the logging industry has remained ever since. It's big money and lots of local jobs—and with that comes political support.

Logging has always taken precedence over people in canoes, and always will. I just wish the MNR would cut out the PR crap and call a spade a spade. Algonquin is a managed forestry preserve with some natural environment areas allocated where tourists and paddlers can play around, as long as they look both ways before crossing the logging roads.

Bill Ness

THE CABIN

Paddling a wide section of river today and it's my turn to be in the front of the canoe. Since bow paddlers usually have less responsibility for canoe direction, more time can be spent in both external and internal examinations. Paddling in the bow gives me a chance to think about where my life is heading. Especially as I head into the fall and winter of my life, I can draw some conclusions about where I have been and where I am going.

Broke from my reverie to look at the shore. Can make out the straight lines of a cabin roof at the point just ahead of the canoes. Pretty easy to spot from the irregular lies of the surrounding forest.

We usually stop for a look-see when we come across a cabin. The buddies comment on the workmanship in construction, the open space around the cabin, and the view it affords of the river. Me, I just like to think what it would be like to spend a winter here with the cabin as my only protection against the elements. It's a pretty small place to spend a long winter.

This one was unlocked, so we opened the door for a peek. It was very small, maybe four metres by six metres. Two things must flow from that space. You can't own much. Where would you put it? And you would have to be very organized with what you did own. In that small space you have to sleep, wash, cook, eat, and store all of the food and supplies to sustain you for four to five months.

Sometimes the cabins we stop at appear to have not

been used for several years. You can tell by examining how much damage rodents have made in the owner's absence or what roof repairs are required to make the cabin weather-tight again. I worry when it appears that the cabin has not been used during the past trapping season. I always hope that the trapper was ill and could not work last winter, but intends to do so in the coming one. To give up his trapping lines and have no one who wants to take it over strikes me as sad. Maybe by falling into disrepair, the cabin roof is also showing its grief at the future it faces.

I guess it would be the same if you had a family business or a family farm. Something that you had worked at and built your entire life. And none of your children want to follow in your footsteps. Yes, the farm was important. Yes, you grew crops and took from the land. But you also took care of the land so that it would continue to be fruitful over the generations. And now, none of the children want to continue that pursuit.

It happens. But that doesn't make it any easier to bear.

We left a note on the table in the cabin wishing the trapper good fortune and a bountiful fur catch. Then we gently closed and secured the cabin door on our way out.

I'm hoping that the note will be read this coming winter. In fact, I'm counting on it.

Greg Went

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.

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.)

DRIVE-IN SHUTTLE SERVICE is available for the Dumoine, Noire, Coulange, and Petawawa rivers. **ACCOMMODATION** is available at the EDDY INN. Contact Valley Ventures at 613-584-2577 or vent@magma.ca or www.valleyvent.ca

KUKAGAMI LODGE opens for winter season on December 26 and runs through March 24.

We are a very small wilderness resort. No road access, no electricity, no running water! Cosy and warm little log cabin accommodation; delicious homemade breads, jams, wild teas; three meals daily, snacks always available. We groom and track-set 28 km of classic x-c ski trails. Also, 7 km wilderness trail, and snowshoe trails. Rates: \$225/person for 2 nights, 6 meals, double occupancy. Includes taxes, luggage carry from parking lot, ski pass, sauna, use of snowshoes. Bring your own skis. Contact: www.kukagamilodge.com — 705-853-4929—Kukagami Lodge, Wahnapiatae, ON, P0M 3C0—kukagami@sympatico.ca

For up-to-date information on Products and Services items, go to the Bulletin Board of the WCA website: www.wildernesscanoe.ca.

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