



*Our first view of Lake Mistastin, overlaid on top of the earliest map which shows the Mistastin River to which I refer. Probably of little interest to anyone but me.*

## THE LURE OF MISTASTIN

Text and photos by Herb Pohl

When I returned home from my trip in '96 (see *Nastawgan* vol. 25, #3, Autumn '98) it was with a sense of regret and resignation, thinking that my wanderings in Labrador had reached their inevitable end. The fasciitis, which had caused me to terminate that trip at the halfway point, seemed to take forever to subside and I interpreted it as a sign that I had to limit myself to journeys of a less demanding nature, at least in terms of portaging. And so, for several years I tried to put Labrador out of my mind. But there remained one unfulfilled ambition, which would not go away: to see Mistastin Lake.

The lake is the site of an impact crater formed some 36 million years ago and occupies the centre of a huge corrugated bowl. A number of small streams enter it from all directions, but they appear much too small to offer reasonable access for the canoeist. Perhaps, for this reason I could not find any reference in the literature of recreational travellers ever visiting the region. The exception is William Brooks Cabot [see excerpts] who made a short detour on foot to the northwestern shore of the lake in 1910 while on his way back from Indian House Lake to the coast. I was also intrigued by the fact that the earliest



*Camp that evening was on a bench of gravel which separated two lakes.*

maps of the region showed Mistastin Lake and its outflow to the coast without showing the Kogaluk River above its junction with the Mistastin River. That would imply a source older than Cabot, because he clearly showed the Assiwaban (Cabot's name for the Kogaluk) above the juncture of the two streams. Where did this information come from? Together, this question was all the excuse I needed to want to visit the area, although years of staring at the maps had convinced me that to get there would require an inordinate amount of portaging. And so the issue was put on the back burner time and again. By the time A.D. 2001 rolled along I realized that there wasn't a back burner left in this man's kitchen and it was now or never.

For many years Pat Lewtas and I had traded stories about our various experiences and made tentative plans to go on a trip together, but somehow it never worked out. Pat, who has done a number of remarkable solo trips, probably I suspect, didn't want to compromise his independence. It was therefore a bit of a surprise when our annual discussions ended in his joining me on this occasion, with the understanding that we would be completely self-sufficient and could go our separate ways at any time, not unlike

modern marriages. I suppose the glue that cemented the arrangement was sharing the high cost of getting to the proposed starting point at the headwaters of the Notakwanon.

It's a long drive from Southern Ontario to Goose Bay and I thought I did well to cover the 2,800 kilometres in two and a half days. Patrick managed the journey from Michigan in 36 hours. It pointed out a significant difference in our capabilities and I could only hope this difference wouldn't continue beyond the end of the road. I had made prior arrangements with Tamarlink Air to fly us into a small lake not far from where I had crossed the height of land from Quebec into Labrador in '84. When I pointed out the unnamed lake on the large wall map to the agent, I was informed that Torngat Wilderness Adventures (TWA) had a hunting camp there.

"They are flying in supplies right now, because the hunting season is not far away," said the good man and then added with a knowing smile: "They can probably fly you in for less money than I can." It pays sometimes to travel with a slightly threadbare look and old well-used equipment: people take pity on you.

Jim Hudson, the owner of TWA and pilot of a turbo Beaver agreed to fly us into the camp from Churchill Falls, one boat and passenger at a time, for less than half the quote from Tamarlink. This was a very much-appreciated development, particularly since it promised a quick departure. Time was an important element because Patrick had some teaching commitments that meant we had to be in Nain on August 11th to catch the weekly trip of the Northern Ranger for the return journey to Goose Bay. This gave us three weeks, normally ample time for the distance we had to cover, but as mentioned above, the expectation of much portaging was going to make this a slow trip.

Bad weather delayed our departure and by the end of the second day, only I had made it to the camp. It was situated on the shore of Crystal Lake – not an official name – but quite appropriate. Jim Hudson had had the good sense not to clear the area of trees but tried to fit the buildings into the existing vegetation. I instantly liked the place and so apparently did the caribou because they moved through in large numbers on their southward migration, without taking offense at our presence. Hunting season was still two weeks away and so I was the only

man “from away” in camp. The staff members were old Labrador stock – Martin, MacLean and Blake, members of an almost extinct race, self sufficient and hard working with a keen sense of humour. They are wonderful storytellers who use hyperbole with great panache and a straight face. In the course of the evening I mentioned that my old acquaintance, Horace Goudie, claimed he was the best man in Labrador when it came to poling a canoe. That brought about a wealth of stories of strength and endurance among the trappers at competitions many years ago with Horace as the central hero, who once carried 800 pounds up a steep hillside. Horace himself told me later it was eight sacks of flour of 50 pounds each, still a staggering weight.

Pat didn't join me until the evening of the third day because of continuing bad weather in Churchill Falls. This allowed me to explore the region around the camp at leisure, but I was keenly aware that this delay was eating into our travelling time and so early the next morning we said our goodbyes and pushed off. By mid-afternoon we had covered about 15 kilometres and climbed a prominent dome of bedrock. It was the highest point around and allowed us to see the Labrador landscape at its very best: hills of glacier-carved corrugated bedrock covered with a thin veneer of lichen and moss decorated with innumerable erratics, deep blue bodies of water surrounded by a green border of willows and scraggly trees, white clouds in a blue sky, their shadows racing darkly across the sun-drenched landscape. Fifteen years earlier on my way down the Notakwanon, I had experienced the nasty side of Labrador while camped at the base of this hill and so this was a home-coming of sorts and a deeply moving one because I never expected to have the privilege of seeing it again.

We stopped early at the start of the next portage because Pat had wrenched a knee on his way up to the top of our lookout and it seemed best to give him a rest. This gave me a chance to roam around the barren high ground, ostensibly to scout the next carry and get a glimpse of what lay ahead, but mostly to absorb the aura that permeated the place.

The wind had picked up and hurried a succession of wispy clouds across the sky. The briefest of showers and evanescent rainbows alternated; the distant dome of bedrock glowed in the orange light of the late sun and the silence was deafening. It was a scene that elevates the spirit and nurtures the soul.

An indifferent morning quickly deteriorated. A strong headwind, at first only bothersome, steadily increased in force and carried with it a deluge of cold rain. Just about the time when progress became impossible, we reached a two-story building, an outpost camp of Torngat Wilderness Adventures. Nobody was there and the place was all boarded up, but an unlocked door on the second floor gave us access and we quickly moved in. It was an extraordinary stroke of good luck because it's doubtful our tents would have survived the coming blast in this exposed and barren neighbourhood. All day and through the night the wind roared around the building like a 747 on take-off and I soon crawled into the sleeping bag to stay warm. By morning, the cold front had moved through, the rain had stopped and I went for a hike to high ground. Shortly before noon we were back on the water, the wind subsided somewhat but remaining bothersome, particularly for Patrick whose canoe had a lot of freeboard and was thus more susceptible to wind.

Several hours later we were standing on a little rise of land at the head of a rocky groove of a valley – home to a string of small lakes. Originally carved out by an eastward-moving glacier, it now drained westward. It was the beginning of the stream we planned to follow to Mistastin Lake. Camp that evening was on a bench of gravel that separated two lakes. The tents were tucked into a small opening where they were well defended on all sides by a thicket of willows and misshapen spruce. A cold wind once again carried along the odd brief shower, but in the end the sun prevailed and transformed the harsh surroundings.

At the end of the next day we had reached the confluence with the stream that I had followed northward in '96. I had rejected it in the past as a suitable approach to reach Mistastin Lake for three good reasons: too steep, too rocky, and too little water. A brief reconnaissance confirmed the assessment and added a fourth too: too many black flies. Wind and cold had confined them so far but on this sultry evening they were trying to make up for lost time and succeeding. From an aesthetic point of view our little stream was rather pretty in a wild sort of way. Our descent started with a portage past waterfalls to a bouldery streambed. Occasionally we'd paddle fifty or a hundred metres and because it was not suitable for lining or walking



*Evening at the first campsite. The dome is partly shown on the left.*



*After many more steep and shallow rapids...*

the boats downstream, we became quite experienced in the final alternative. At the end of the scorching day we had advanced four and a half kilometres, more than we had hoped for.

The day's exertions must have made an impression on my companion because he decided to lighten his load by pouring out a litre of fine brandy, half a litre of vegetable oil and a small mountain of jujubes, notwithstanding my reference to Hubbard (who discarded food early on his trip in 1903 and later starved to death). By now I had, of course, recognized that Patrick's and my diet had no similarities at all and I was glad of our separate meal arrangement. For me, unless the sky is about to fall, it's bacon, pancakes, maple syrup, and tea for breakfast. Pat starts with a handful of cereal to which he adds cold water; that's breakfast. In fact the only hot food he had each day was the freeze-dried content of a package, again mixed with cold water, which he cooked over the stove. Now, these packages had mouth-watering titles but from the short distance from my fireplace to his stove, they always looked and smelled the same. Nevertheless, he never showed the slightest interest in the superior foods that his travelling companion would have been willing to share. I recognized, of course, that his approach had certain

advantages. While I was collecting stones for the fireplace and cutting wood, Patrick could ponder evolution or the compass bearing of the next portage.

On this fine cool morning, we were immediately faced with a nasty stretch of river that, had I been alone, I would have looked over carefully, but Pat forged ahead without a moment of hesitation and because he seemed to know what he was doing, I followed. My companion had negotiated a boulder garden the previous day with an empty canoe and exhibited infinite patience and considerable skill in the process. He clearly was what the fellows at the hunting camp would call a good canoe man. On this and later occasions he proved himself equal to every challenge and I watched his movements with some envy, particularly his agility in getting in and out of his boat at critical junctures.

On a short and unexpected stretch of flat water we stopped and climbed a conical hill – the only prominent elevation around – and had our first glimpse of Mistastin Lake in the distance. All around our observation post, deeply recessed game trails indicated that large numbers of caribou had inhabited the region decades ago, as they were all overgrown. Now, not a single footprint disturbed the ground. It was a clear indication of the unpredictability of caribou

migration. May years earlier it had forced the Innu, whom Cabot visited at Indian House Lake in 1910, to move to the coast.

After inelegantly running or portaging many more steep and shallow rapids, to avoid a long stretch of difficult river, we decided to head overland on a direct route to Mistastin Lake. In a situation like this my companion is a model of precision. Starting with the magnetic deviation adjusted to annual change and the coordinates of the starting and finishing points and who knows what else, he calculates the bearing and follows it, almost but perhaps not quite come hell or high water. I don't know how to do any of that; in fact I don't always trust the compass. I just look at the map (which can't be trusted either), look at the land and then follow my nose. In more than three quarters of a century that nose has always served me well. On this occasion we set off on our separate routes to the lake and the nose won because of some obstruction on the compass route that delayed Patrick. It gave me a few minutes of solitary reflection at the end of the portage, a thanksgiving of sorts, because I had looked forward to this moment for many years.

The view from the top of the gravelly shore some ten metres above the lake was quite captivating. The light-blue lake was as smooth as glass reflecting white clouds in a pale sky, the water so clear that you could see legions of massive round boulders staring back at you from a great depth. Far to the northeast, a range of barren rock gleamed in the sunshine. We spent the night on the large island in the centre of the lake and set off in the morning toward the base of an unusual elevation on the western shore that we called Table Mountain. A long and tiring hike to the top on another excessively hot day afforded a wonderful view in all directions. Table Mountain is a remnant of the impact melt sheet of the meteorite collision that created the crater now occupied by the lake – a massive sentinel and awesome testimony to the enormous energy release of that event.

In the winter of 2001, Lynne Fitzhugh gave a talk at the annual Wilderness Canoe Symposium in Toronto in which

she mentioned that the Innu of Davis Inlet had established a retreat or healing centre on Mistastin Lake. One of our objectives was to visit the place which was reportedly somewhere on the north shore of the lake. In our examination of the shoreline we came across signs of hunting camps and finally, near the outlet of the lake, the foundations of a building and building materials as well as several snowmobiles and komatiks [Eskimo sledges] but no sign of recent human activity. The most interesting element to me were two ancient tepee sites, one marked off with yellow tape – no doubt the work of my old acquaintance Stephen Loring, the archaeologist whom I had met in 1982 on Voisey's Bay.

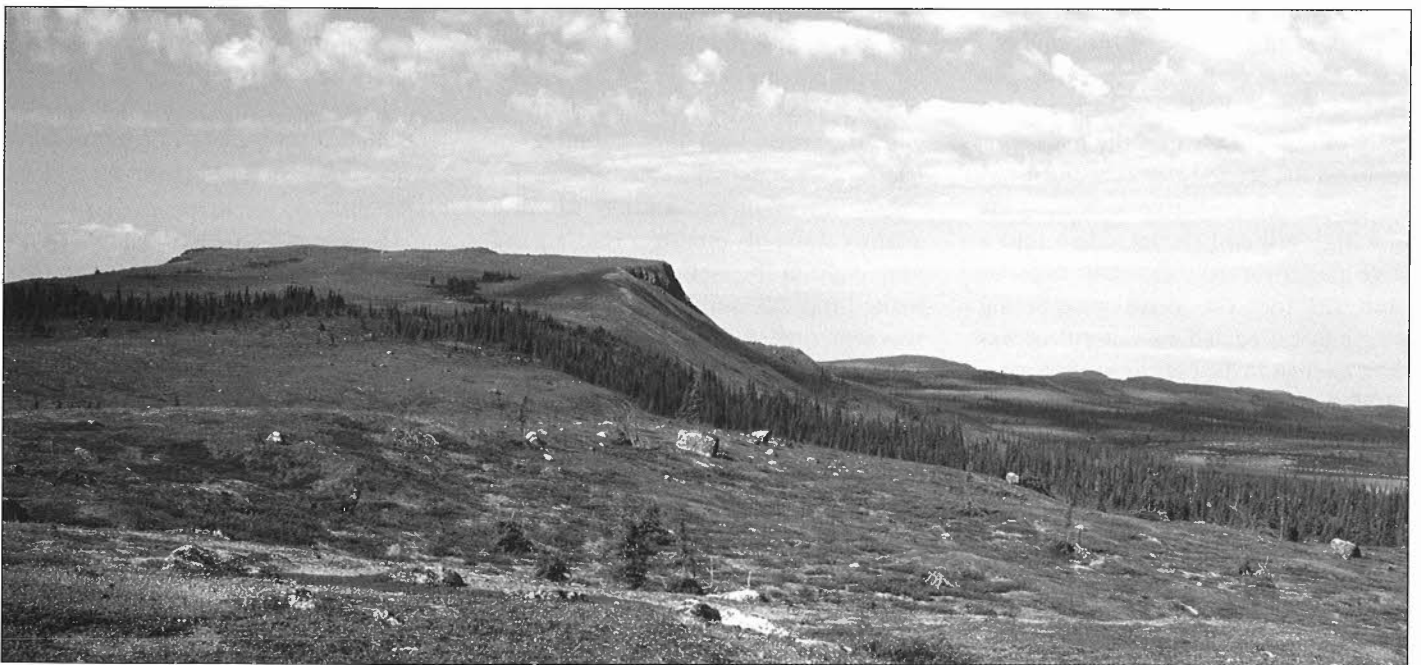
This area has a most intimidating flavour. High walls of bedrock ring the outlet of the lake. They clearly show the effect of the east-northeast direction of movement of the ice here during the last period of glaciation. That evidence is accentuated by similarly oriented high eskers. The Mistastin River begins its journey with some exuberance and for us the worry was no longer about rocks but size of waves and sharp eddy lines. We stopped for lunch not far below Mistastin Lake on the south shore of a small lake expansion and here we came across a number of very old tepee sites, as well as

signs of more recent occupation. Shortly thereafter, our progress came to an early halt at a place that had puzzled me when I first looked at the map: the contour lines didn't quite match up and there was something odd about it. The oddity, it turned out, was a large crack in the shield rock into which the river disappeared in a magnificent waterfall. The river continued in this fault less than 10 metres wide with vertical rock walls rising a minimum of 20 metres on either side. It was a spectacularly wild place and we roamed about for some time. Because there was no obvious way to get down to the river, we set up camp and agreed that Pat would look downstream and I upstream. Within an hour I discovered a way down and returned to our campsite and the usual chores. When it started to drizzle and there was still no sign of Pat I became worried and started to look for him. He was in shirtsleeves, the black flies were out in force and I knew he had no repellent with him. He wouldn't stay out under these conditions, I reasoned; something must have happened to him. An hour's frantic ramblings brought no answer to my calls. Back at the tent there was still no sign of the man. It's dusk and all sorts of thoughts surface: if he is out there unconscious the whole night the black flies

will drain him. And so off I go again, praying and hollering and finally I hear a faint answer from the direction of the camp. He was sitting near the brink of the waterfall the whole time and never heard a thing, he told me. There was murder in my heart, but I was too exhausted and relieved to do more than fill the air with profanity.

The Mistastin River, below the point where it drops into the fault, continues a turbulent course over falls and ledges. It's wildly beautiful to look at and much less appreciated as a carrying place. The whole valley is composed of rock that has been fluted and ground into knolls and furrows by thousands of years of flow of an immense volume of water. We came across a score of huge trees that rivalled those of the British Columbia rainforest in size. At the end of a hard day we had advanced no more than three kilometres and settled for the best we could find – a truly miserable campsite made worse by relentless rain. Patrick crawled into his abode without supper but I had discovered a dry chico, which provided the fuel to cook my meal, and I remained at the fire until the last morsel of food was gone.

Shortly before noon of the following day we reached a point where the river drops more than 100 metres in a series of cascades before continuing the steep



*Table Mountain.*



*The Mistastin River drops into the fault in a magnificent waterfall.*

descent in the narrow gorge of the fault. We had agreed before the start of our trip that a lengthy portage would be required to by-pass this part of the river and before long were on our way with the first load, up a long incline toward a small body of water shown on the map. Our route on the second day continued uphill to another small lake, over the crest of a high hill and thence down into a large glacier-carved valley. Our expectation was that the small meandering stream that occupied the valley floor was deep enough to float our boats and carry us back to the Mistastin River which it joins a short distance above the confluence with the Kogaluk River.

I am always surprised at how unreliable or selective memory is. Time modifies, amplifies and erases the original experience. Not long after our return home Pat mentioned in conversation how excessively hot many days on this trip had been, something I couldn't recall at all,

yet when I checked my journal entries I complained about the same thing. There seems to be a general tendency to remember events in a more positive light, for example, my recollections about the physical demands of this adventure: a good trip, some hard days, but no problem – just a standard canoe trip. A typical comment in my journal paints a slightly different picture: “Had a good long night in the sack, but it seemed to make little difference; when I got up I was sore, tired and 103 years old.” Well, maybe not that much different from comments on other trips.

What is recorded in the journal and also remembered very well is the density of black flies. On our journey away from the river we camped at the first body of water. I got up with the first light of day to retrieve my boat that was still at the river's edge, to try to get it done before the flies came out in full force. It was a failed strategy at best. When Pat, who

had started out a little later, returned with his boat, I inexplicably missed out on taking a prize-winning photograph. My companion had obviously applied a liberal amount of repellent to his face. This, combined with sweat had become the final resting place of thousands of black flies. You'd swear the man had a full beard.

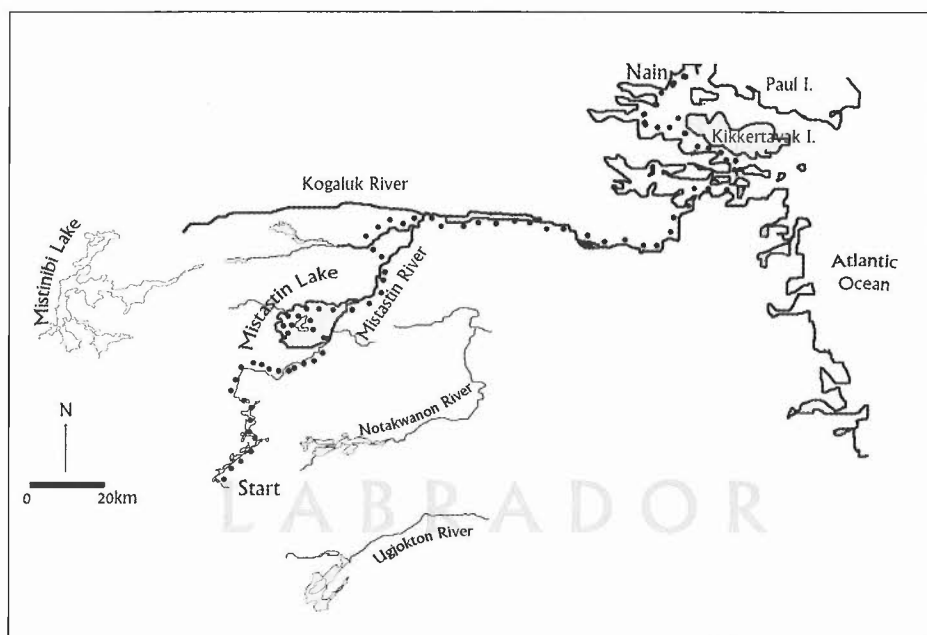
The next day's journey, high above the river valley, involved a surprising amount of boggy terrain but was the high point of the portage – both literally and emotionally – when we could finally look down and see the river we were heading for some three hundred metres below.

For the descent we loaded up the boats and took them down, one at a time with ropes attached to bow and stern. At the top, the going over barren ground was easy, but further down a jungle of alders, willows and spruce thickets and a near vertical slope caused some excitement and bloody hard work, bloody

because the black flies took full advantage of their opportunities. The worst part of the exercise for me was the scramble back up to the top. I had to stop a number of times to catch my breath, while Patrick seemed merely baffled by the slow progress. By mid-afternoon all our gear was at a nice open campsite above the river and we were dead tired. Pat put up his tent and disappeared in it. I felt duty-bound to take some pictures, especially of our route down the mountain; it had seemed so adventurous in action, but in the viewfinder was quite unremarkable and I quickly gave up photography in favour of reclining against a tree for a much-needed rest.

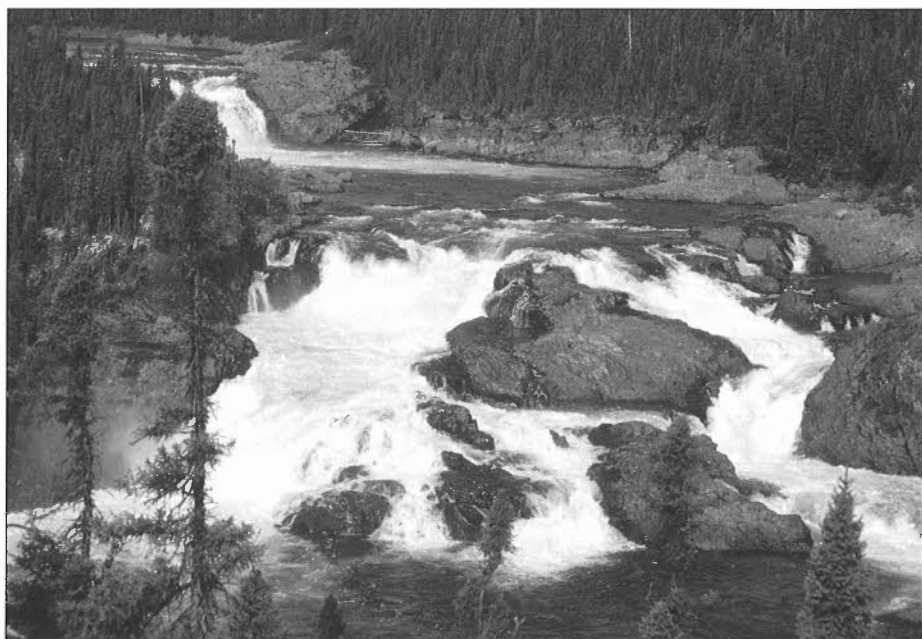
Our little stream, confined to a bed of sand and shingle, rushed along on a sinuous and braided course and had just enough water to carry us without interruption to our reunion with the Mistastin River and just a few kilometres further on, the Kogaluk River. At the confluence of the two rivers I unsuccessfully tried to revisit Cabot's 1904 campsite that I had found in '84, but it was gone. The river had claimed it. It was a sombre day with frequent showers and the rock walls of the Kogaluk River valley looked even more imposing than I remembered them. By evening we had covered more distance than in the preceding week and set up camp some distance below Cabot Lake in a magical evening of swirling mists and red sunset.

We were now quite confident we would make it to Nain in time for the Northern Ranger's departure, provided that we did not meet an unruly sea along the way – an ever-present worry when travelling along the coast. When we reached saltwater, Voisey's Bay was tranquil and we stopped for an early camp a short time later in a little bay identified on Cabot's map as E. Winters place. Nobody lives there now, but it offers a safe landing spot, fresh water, and a wide panoramic view of the offshore islands. Early the next morning a cold east wind freshened and made paddling not only hard work, but in Patrick's case also worrisome, because he had no spray cover and the waves were getting playful. At one point he suggested I should carry on alone in an attempt to



reach Nain before the arrival of the storm he thought was imminent. I didn't agree with his assessment and we spent the last night together on a barren island 10 kilometres south of Nain. Looking back, I realize now that he just wanted to get rid of me to spend the last evening alone. Solo trippers are funny that way: they like solitude. Of course the predicted storm didn't materialize, but the Northern Ranger did and within a few hours after our arrival in Nain we were on our way south.

The journey to Goose Bay was blessed with exceptional weather. A slight breeze ruffled the sea and raised a few whitecaps, the sun performing its usual magic and softening even the austere grey of the barren outer islands of Jacques Cartier's land God gave to Cain. We passed massive icebergs – blue-green islands in a deep blue sea – and the ship circled several of them to give the passengers a chance to take pictures. It was a nice, final farewell to a remarkable part of the world.



*Last falls on Kogalukmistastin.*

# MISTASTIN – A SHORT LABRADOR JOURNEY

By Pat Lewtas

Southwards lie the small lakes we struggled across. To the east stretches a jumble of meadows and cliffs, now and then fired by evening sun. Westwards, an autumn sky frowns over hill, rock and tree. From the north sweeps the great wind.

Our first camp huddles, far below, against the steeply rising side of the hill: two tents on a boggy shore, a few trees, and a wall of shrubs, Herb tending a fire in a boulder's lee – a home in a raw land, cozy for its place. But up here, atop the hill, all is wild, thrilling, and grim. Gusts rake my hair. Cold bites my face. Cliffs drop abruptly to valley woods. The scents of heath and forest fill my nostrils. And all around: wind-whipped waters, stark hills and pockets of defiant trees.

But I haven't climbed the crag to exult in nature's power. I've come to attend a reunion. To greet again a land I love, a land I haven't seen for far too long. To feel again the awesome northern spirits who lift the soul or crush it, nourish the body or blast it, but ever fill the heart with an unfading cry to return. To become again the man I am: a better, simpler, more contented man. I spread my arms in happy surrender to the manic, uncaring spirits. In a moment it's over. I've come home.

I clamber down the broken hillside toward camp. I almost reach the bottom when I spot Herb, climbing, far above. He glances down at me. I wave, then start up again to join him. He quickly speeds away, higher and out of sight. How foolish of me. Herb is off to a reunion of his own.

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It was July 2001. Herb Pohl and I had come to the north Labrador tableland for a two and a half week canoe trip. We began on one of the Notakwanon River's headwater lakes. We traveled north through creeks and small lakes alongside the Quebec-Labrador height of land, then swung east down a larger stream to Mistastin Lake. The largest body of water

in northern Labrador, Mistastin Lake fills an oval basin between the Notakwanon and Kogaluk rivers, which connect to the short Mistastin River and northeasterly to the Kogaluk. After crossing the lake, Herb and I paddled the Mistastin River until it tumbled into an impassable canyon. From there we cut north through a chain of ponds to a little creek that feeds back into a gentler, downstream Mistastin. We followed the rest of the Mistastin to the Kogaluk, then that larger river east to the coast. Our trip ended with a short ocean paddle north to the village of Nain.

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Herb and I had met through the wilderness community and had nurtured something more than an acquaintance through a decade of talk about doing a trip together. Both of us had made most of our journeys alone, so we shared many experiences and attitudes, even if we didn't know one another well. Most solo travelers, I suspect, present an odd blend of romantic and realist, conqueror and flake. Romantic, because only deep passion pushes one so completely into the wilderness. Realist, because one needs hardheaded judgment to flourish in tough country without other voices to correct mistakes. Conqueror, because a long, solo journey calls for tremendous, perhaps misdirected drive. And flake, because the solitary muse brings with it a tendency to hold aloof where others throw themselves in.

Unsure whether we'd get along and jealous each of his own experience, Herb and I planned two solo trips to the same place at the same time. Each of us took our own food, tent and boat. Of course we stayed together, paddled together and camped together. But we didn't have to. Strangely enough, the very looseness of our ties bound us more strongly. Our little group had a contingency that kept both of us attentive to its well-being. And our independence undercut the politics

that so often complicate and mar wilderness journeys. We remained together, companions by choice.

Everything worked well. Herb and I maintained an amiable distance during the trip – often the wisest policy when two people isolate themselves in the wilds. But we became fast friends afterwards, a result of having done the trip.

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The north Labrador tableland is paradise and hell, a beautiful, brutal, and evocative country. Windswept angular hills loom over naked rock and crashing waters. Patches of trees cling where they can. In a nonce, the weather lurches from one violent extreme to another. Disintegrating boulders speak of time so vast that stone itself crumbles. With its primeval, untamable heart and ill-controlled power, the place overwhelms. "Humans!" it seems to growl, "Eke out a living here you might. But never shall you truly belong!"

Then the clouds pull back, the sun at last strikes the land and oh, what a galaxy of colors burst forth! The waters glow with deepest aquamarine. Trees and grasses shine in emerald brilliance. The caribou moss is a delicate ivory; the lichen, orange and red; the rocks and gravel display pinks, browns, blacks and grays; the little flowers, purple and yellow fluttering in the wind; the long white strips of sand divide blue water from green shore.

And the trees – mostly white spruce, black spruce and tamarack – display such variety of form. Sprawling forests, some dense and most open are scattered groves of elegant conical shapes. Gnarled, deformed outliers are ground-hugging mats, groveling but alive. And the incomparable dwarf-forests – stands of wind-blasted spruce, trunks 20 to 30 cm. across, are barely half a meter high. These grasp at life where summer winds blow remorselessly and winter low drifts protect. Sometimes the tiny grey skele-



tons of an entire ghost forest tell of centuries of struggle ended by one or two harsher seasons.

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Our journey began blustery, cool, and fall-like despite the long July days. But we threaded our way happily along the height-of-land. Bracing and often uncomfortable, our days nevertheless brought home how good it is to be alive.

Everything changed when we turned east onto the larger and tougher stream hurrying towards Mistastin Lake. The wind faded, the temperature rose, and heavy, humid air settled in from the south. Flies, held in check by the cold, exploded from every bush and tree. Our thick northern clothes sealed us off from the few breezes. Portages became sweaty toil and sleep, fitful and sticky. And thus we witnessed Mistastin Lake in one of its rarest moods.

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I portaged out of the forest onto the high sand bluffs overlooking the lake's southern shore. And I saw it: Mistastin, dead calm, an immensity stretching into the hazy distance – left, right and ahead. Herb and I hastened onto the water to escape the clouds of flies. But relief eluded us, for we found ourselves upon the sun's anvil. Heat pounded down from the sky and punched up, reflected from the water's surface. Not a breath disturbed the sweltering air. Every few minutes Herb and I doused ourselves with hatfuls of icy water. We paddled several feverish kilometers before making an early camp on the big island at the lake's center.

A glance at the map won't reveal the lake's magnificence. Where paper shows low wooded shores, a paddler encounters foothills rising to the far barren hills ringing the basin. Where the chart suggests a modestly large lake, a canoeist discovers a breathtakingly vast body of water. Without featureless water horizons to numb one's sense of scale, Mistastin remains just small enough for the traveler to grasp how huge it really is.

Herb and I spent two exhilarating days exploring the lake. The first afternoon we climbed our island's main peak in (frustrated) hopes of a panoramic view. The next day we paddled to the western end of the lake, where we hiked to the top of a butte looking over the creeks flowing in from the Quebec border. Then we followed the northern shore back east, in rising wind, camping not far from the outlet in a stiff blow after a short but fierce thunderstorm.

I was very much taken with Mistastin Lake. I promised I would someday return.

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I haven't mentioned the third member of our group, my dog Cabot, an undersized Nova Scotia Duck Toller. He was ecstatic when we arrived on the Labrador tableland. He cavorted exuberantly up and down the shores. He strutted in the wind and chased his first caribou. Herb remarked, watching him stride uphill pack and all, "That dog. He'll be a different animal by the end of the trip!"

Alas, how right he was. The cold weather broke on our fourth evening and flies poured into the air. The next day they massacred Cabot. By evening he could neither stand nor eat. He convulsed during the night.

I agonized about what to do: return upstream to a fly-in camp, saving the dog, but abandoning both trip and Herb or push on, hoping to nurse Cabot through to the cooler, breezier coast. I chose to go forward. I purged my outfit so that I could carry everything: canoe, packs, and, if need be, dog, in only three loads.

For much of the rest of the trip I fought a tiresome battle to keep Cabot away from the flies. I pitched the tent for him every time we stopped: at lunch, on portages, and whenever we hiked to higher country. One lunch, on ground too uneven for the tent, I trussed Cabot in a bug jacket. He lay helpless in a hollow, legs tight to his chest. He didn't mind, though. He understood. Herb held his tongue throughout. But I could tell he entertained sour thoughts about the foolishness of having the dog along,

about the stupidity of a trip where so many decisions cater to a sick pet's needs.

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The land grows higher and rougher as the lake narrows towards the outlet at its northeast end. There the river spills through a cleft in a wall of jagged black rock. Herb and I near this place on a dark, gusty morning. The water begins to move well back from the opening. It slides towards the tunnel's mouth with a python's lazy strength. It draws in the uneasy canoeists, who strain their eyes for any hint of danger. And soon enough they scramble for land above a rapid's breaking foam.

Not far past the gate the walls fall back and the river flows less menacingly. But it concedes little. It drops unevenly, throwing the paddler one short but vindictive portage after another. There's the pitcher plant portage, over corrugated ridges crosswise to the river, with a steep-sided hollow partway along. When I come upon the hollow, pack on back, I'm surprised to see Herb and his canoe at the bottom. "What in heaven's name is he doing down there?" I wonder. "Pat," I say to myself, "Don't make the same mistake." But the land pushes me here, nudges me there, and sure enough my canoe and I walk into the trap. There's the up-and-up portage, where the walls drive us higher and higher and higher. And there's the on-and-on portage, bypassing a very short drop, where cliffs force us to walk past a kilometer of flat water before we find a route down.

\* \* \* \*

About a day's travel brought us to the falls. The river breaks into rapids around a low, rocky island, narrows into a chute, and plunges 25 meters into a sheer-walled bowl. By luck we were able to make a fairly short portage down a tongue of scree to the base of the drop. Then we ventured onto the most remarkable piece of water I've ever seen. The river turns hard right out of the bowl and enters a thread-thin gorge

about a kilometer long. Overhanging walls rise 20 meters above waters less than two canoe-lengths wide. Yet the river barely flows. Who can guess to what depths the channel drops? Around a bend or so from the falls one hears hardly a sound, just droplets off the rim landing on still, dark water.

Herb and I arrived at the top of the falls mid-afternoon, and made camp before scouting a way around. We expected a long carry. First we checked the obvious route, a dry sluice on the far side of the hill immediately right of the falls, but found that it fell too steeply at the end. So Herb and I split up. Herb headed back towards the falls in search of an improbable shorter carry. I continued to look for a way down to the river. Unfortunately I had to push far downstream before I discovered one, having scoped out a miserable portage over badly contorted ground.

On my return it began to rain, a chilly, misty drizzle. I had no rain jacket, knew I'd soon be cold, but welcomed the rain anyway. For the first time in a week I wasn't hot. Comfortable, content, alone amidst rugged beauty, I felt a thrill of life surge through me. I gazed up at the hill overlooking the falls. I'd been gone long, knew that Herb surely worried, but I was greedy for the view and gave in to the moment. From the top of the hill I saw the talus we used the next day. I walked it down to make sure it would work and scouted the gorge below for hidden drops. I'd been away for hours when I returned to camp.

Herb wasn't there. He'd evidently left in search of me. I waited awhile before looking and calling unsuccessfully for him. The light was fading when Herb finally got back. He was furious. At first neither of us said much. Herb's few short outbursts – soliloquies – vented frantic concern rather than wrath. We exchanged a few civil words before parting for our tents. We made peace more fully next morning.

I learned that evening that we were never really two solo trips. We always had the freedom to become so, but until then we were as much a group as any party of wilderness travelers. The bonds that tie run deep.

\* \* \* \*

About every day and a half, Herb and I left our canoes to view the country from higher ground. These forays took us into starker land away from the rich water's edge. They afforded sights of the immensity beyond the nearest hilltops. Most of all, they allowed us to see so much more than we ever could from the water.

And they liberated us, however briefly, from the canoeist's humdrum drill. They let us stretch our legs and swing our arms without burdens on our backs or paddle-shafts in our hands. They broke the monotony of paddle, paddle, paddle, which never fully holds the interest, yet demands just enough attention to keep the mind from its own imaginative wanderings. And they gave us the satisfaction of looking down on the world. You see, the poor canoeist leads a humble life, exploring wet and buggy lowland troughs, always peering up at things grander than the self. The river dictates one's actions, often banishing one, heavily laden, into swamps, thickets and boulder fields. Unlike the mountaineer, the canoeist doesn't gaze down from conquered peaks; unlike the rock climber's deliberate moves, one's own hectic strokes beat time to a watery rhythm that can't be ignored. What a filip, then, to stride into the hills, to regain some of the sense of power and autonomy lost as a river's slave. And how good it is to return afterwards to boat and water, to sanity, to the deeper knowledge that one never, ever overawes nature.

\* \* \* \*

Herb and I beached our canoes above the river's second great convulsion. Here racing waters squeeze into a tiny channel, then launch over a narrow lip to tumble into the earth itself. The frenzied river thunders down, down, down, crashing over two 20-metre drops and several smaller ones, deep into a jagged cut from which escapes only the roar of unspeakable violence. Herb and I gingerly picked our way across slime-slick rock and lush heath, ever moist from wind-blown spume, approaching the rim for an un-

easy glimpse of the madness below. The river finally spits out into a canyon, almost 200 meters deep, where it continues to drop at 20 to 25 metres per kilometre. But these canyon rapids we never saw.

Instead, we left the river northwards, on a two-day portage through ponds and small lakes to a creek draining back to the Mistastin below the canyon. During this trek Herb and I marveled at each other's overland technique. I've always relied on my compass, and impressed Herb with my ability to hit a small target over a moderate distance. But Herb impressed me more. He uses only his wits and eyes. He takes in the lay of the land, the direction of the wind, the angle of the sun; he studies the map. Then he sets out. No, he's not bull's-eye accurate, but he gets there. He gets there flexibly and intelligently. If he encounters an obstacle, he goes around it sensibly. He doesn't brainlessly crash over it, or walk a clumsy rectangle boxing it off to one side. I saw that we have faculties – awake in Herb's mind, dormant in mine – whose role the compass usurps. I suppose this is always the way. Inventions and machines buy us efficiency and accuracy at the cost of art, skill, and subtle intelligence. They make life easier by retiring corners of our minds.

Our last portage down to the creek dropped 280 metres in less than half a kilometre. The top of the slope was covered with grass, heath, and relatively few stones. So we loaded up the boats and lined them down. Herb took the bowline while I manned the stern. What joy! A gentle push, a modest tug, but otherwise the canoe slid along on its own. My, we laughed! Of course, all good things do end. As we entered lower, sheltered country, we came upon shrub thickets, then forest, then dense forest, at the same time as the wall steepened into a series of short faces. Poor Herb worked the hardest, yanking the bow this way and that to thread the boat through the trees. But overall what a painless way to finesse an otherwise brutal carry. And on the way back for the other boat we gorged ourselves on blueberries.

\* \* \* \*

Age played through our journey like a somber background chord. Herb, \_\_\_ years old, regarded this (incorrectly) as his valedictory trip. Early on we portaged through a clump of ancient white spruce, trees not much more than five metres tall but about 40 or 50 centimetres wide at the base. "Look at those Methuselahs!" Herb exclaimed. "They don't make things like they used to." Age weighed on my mind, too. I'd slipped into middle age. Where Herb gazed uneasily towards a narrowing future, I looked back at the passing of youth. I'd expected to be the stronger, to have to make allowances, perhaps to pick up the slack from time to time. But I started the trip in terrible shape, and had to ask Herb to cut the first day short because of sore knees. I vowed never again to let my body grow so weak: I knew now that an older man tends his garden or harvests weeds. When breaking camp our last morning, we had to portage back to the sea across a tidal boulder field. I was heading down with my first load while Herb was returning for his second. "Be careful," he warned as we passed, "The rocks are very slippery." "Thanks," I said. "Well, you're not as young as you used to be," he quipped over his shoulder. "I'll bear that in mind," I chuckled. Indeed I have.

\* \* \* \*

We bobbed happily down the creek and soon rejoined the lower Mistastin. Swollen by new water, but now tired of sharp drops, the river hurried towards the Kogaluk with nothing worse than rolling current and bouncy, big-water swifts. In no time at all we floated onto the Kogaluk's Cabot Lake. Long, straight and narrow, lined by 300-m cliffs, this lake ushers the canoeist into the mountainous country of the lower river. It sounds impressive, the photos look good, but the river runs straight as a shot through a tightly confining valley, granting a single one-way vista that takes a day to change. Yes, it's nice I guess, but give me the open, locally rugged, ever-changing tableland. I'm

sorry: mountains have never done it for me.

\* \* \* \*

The river surrenders its identity to the infinite ocean waters. An ebbing tide takes over from a faltering freshwater current. Herb and I hasten seaward to escape the boulders and shoals rising out of the draining estuary.

Our first sea day offered calm waters and grand views: westwards up long fjords to the dark and rugged interior and eastwards through islands to the open sea. Yet it still drove home how humble a thing is man before the mysterious ocean deeps. I was well behind Herb, and maybe halfway across a two-km reach, when I heard a hissing to my right. My head spun round, but I saw only widening ripples. Then a hiss to my left. Now right again and nearer this time. Then I saw it. Four black, snake-like coils arching out of the water, writhing, sinking back, gone. I fought an upwelling panic. The serpent surfaced again, even closer. And this time I could see it as a pod of six or so frolicking seals.

That afternoon Herb went ashore to look at a weather-beaten shack. I rested in the tidal shallows, peering down at the barnacled rocks, the seaweed, and the animals that made this place home. Delicate jellyfish floated everywhere: little bells, blue and fringed, pulsing this way and that; tiny disks, coin-sized, clear, flapping through the water; milky bulbs drifting near the surface. On the bottom, small, shrimp-like crustaceans went about their business. The occasional sea urchin nestled amongst the mussels. The fronds, knobs and leaves of kelp and algae swayed to the gentle push and pull of the sea. A world so different from any the canoeist imagines of the north!

The next day was windy and cool. We zigzagged north around the eastwards-tending headlands, crossing the open stretches between. Herb's covered boat allowed him to buck the swells with hardly a worry. For my part, I glanced anxiously at the gunwales each time a

wave threatened to slop in. I never feel secure further from land than a safe swim. That's not far on the ice-cold Labrador Sea. One appreciates the precariousness of wilderness travel most keenly when forcing a technology outside its proper niche.

\* \* \* \*

For our last night, we camped on a little island, barren but for a few severely stunted spruces and the odd tamarack seedling too young to have succumbed to a bad year. The wind died. The sky cleared. The sun sank into the western hills. The silence of the north settled over the place. Herb warmed himself by a fire behind a huge boulder. Cabot, free at last from flies, lay atop the boulder like a king.

I wandered to the far side of the island. I looked across the darkening water towards the spruce-silhouetted mainland, watched a pair of seals play in the channel, ran my hands over the lichen-encrusted rocks at my side, and gripped the bleached arm of a long dead tree. "Thank you, trip," I said. "Thank you and goodbye."

\* \* \* \*

I rounded the last point and beheld Nain at the foot of a shallow bay. Herb had pushed on and already finished his journey. I set my paddle down and drifted.

Every trip is a life born when a canoe first leaves shore. Through its youth and middle age it matures from awkward enthusiasm to measured stride. It becomes old when the canoeist's mind fixes upon the world beyond it. And it dies when the canoe's prow scrapes onto the last beach.

I felt the life slip away from this little journey. I felt the better me fall away, too, and the other me, the me from the outside, rouse himself and regain his place. But I knew that trip and better self would never truly die, not this time at least. Both would lie asleep, for a season, a year, maybe several years, until called forth at the next reunion.

# THE MEANEST LINK: Linking the Algonquin Outfitters Stores

Article and Photos by Jaime Capell, Leah Sanders,  
Sarah Strickland and Janet Thomas



*Early start from the Oxtongue Lake store dock. This would be both our start and finish point. From L to R: Janet Thomas, Sarah Strickland, Jaime Capell, Leah Sanders.*

It was early in the summer of 2004 that the concept of the “Meanest Link” first came into existence. Developed by Algonquin Outfitters employees, Gordon Baker and Alex Hurley, the trip was designed both as a challenge to staff, but more importantly, as a way to honour Bill Swift – Sr. Bill, better known as “Swifty” or “Meanest,” – who, in 1961 founded the first Algonquin Outfitters location at Oxtongue Lake. Swifty was a resident of Rochester, New York, but had spent many summers as a camper and staff member at Camp Pathfinder, as well as a guide at the Highland Inn on Cache Lake. His early experiences helped to foster his passion for Algonquin Park and canoe tripping within its boundaries.

The concept of the trip was simple: to join all four Algonquin Outfitters stores in a continuous loop, travelling only by canoe. The estimated duration of the trip would be 12 to 14 days and it would take its participants through a total of four provincial parks. There were, however, some special stipulations that had

to be followed for the trip to be valid. The first was that we had to spend a night on Lake Lavieille, preferably at Swifty’s favourite campsite. The second was that we had to travel through Source

Lake and stop at Camp Pathfinder, a boys’ camp that Swifty had previously owned.

The four of us, Jaime Capell, Leah Sanders, Sarah Strickland and Janet Thomas, had met while working at Algonquin Outfitters and worked together for the past few summers, developing a strong friendship. We are all between the ages of 22 and 24 and were coming to a time in our lives where some of us were finishing our university degrees and moving on to new things, while the others were still in college or university. We were at a point where we wanted to do a trip together before we went our separate ways in case we were not working together the following summer. What better way to do this than to commemorate our friendship with a special trip? Our interest in the “Meanest Link” began as a desire to rise to the challenge, as no one had yet completed the entire trip. All four of us had tripped extensively in Algonquin Park and were further drawn to the trip because it involved passage through some yet unvisited areas. As we were to learn, these “unvisited” areas were not visited for good reasons.



*Dragging on Big East River (Jaime Capell in front, Leah Sanders in back).*



*Campsite on Finlayson Lake along the Big East River (third night). This campsite, located on an old ATV trail, was one of the few places along the upper Big East River with suitable tent space.*



*Portaging along the Oxtongue River in our underwear. Chilly 6 a.m. temperatures made for a very hurried shot!*



*Sand Banks on Big East River.*

Preparation for the trip began through scattered e-mails sent throughout the 2004/2005 school year. Considerable time was spent deciding when to do the trip as we would be travelling up some rivers but down others. The water could not be so cold that we could not wade, pulling our boats behind us, but it also had to be high enough to ensure passage down some of the smaller rivers. Due to the fact that our days would be long, maximal hours of daylight were preferable. Finally, it was decided that we would travel for the first two weeks of June, trading long days, good water levels and warmer water for two weeks spent outside in the peak of bug season. The next step was to collect maps for our journey. The Algonquin Park map was easily pulled out of storage. However, the

rest of our trip was supplemented with some topographical maps and some of Hap Wilson's hand-drawn Big East River maps from his book, *Canoeing and Hiking Wild Muskoka: An Eco-Adventure Guide*.

The first leg of our journey was to depart from the Oxtongue Lake Algonquin Outfitters' store dock and paddle to the store dock in the town of Huntsville. This was a varied day as it started with some river paddling (Oxtongue River) but quickly turned into a battle against the wind to traverse Lake of Bays, Peninsula Lake, Fairy Lake and finally, Lake Vernon. Fifteen hours elapsed between our departure that morning and arrival at our campsite at the mouth of the Big East River. The length of our first day indicates one of the difficulties of

planning this trip: where to book permits each night. It was a little bit of a hassle to select where we would be staying every night, as we were not sure how much ground we would be able to cover each day. We had to go with rough estimations of where we would camp each night, which turned out to be fairly accurate in the end.

The next four days were spent paddling/wading up the Big East River as we made our way through Arrowhead Provincial Park and Big East River Provincial Park. Without a doubt, these were the most challenging days of our adventure. Frustrations ran high as we struggled to pull our boats along algae-covered rocks against the current. Water depth ranged from ankle deep to shoulder height and the majority of our days were spent immersed in water. Minimal rocky shore made lining our boats nearly impossible and portaging through the bush did not prove to be a viable option. Another challenge that this section threw at us was that the geography did not allow for tent placement, except in a select few spots. Steep riverbanks or rocky shoreline offered very few campsite possibilities and our inexperience on this river forced us to gamble. Should we take a potential site and cut our day a little bit short or meet our distance goals, only to find night approaching with nowhere to put our tent?

The fifth day was both the most challenging and gratifying of our trip. Over the course of the day, we travelled up McCraney Creek, over McCraney dam and into McCraney Lake. McCraney Creek is a 2.5 km section that feeds into the Big East River. Its water level varies throughout the summer, as Ontario Hydro periodically releases water through the McCraney Dam. The day we encountered McCraney Creek was certainly a low-water day. The water just trickled over rocks, making it impossible to keep our gear in the boats as we dragged upstream. This posed somewhat of a logistical challenge and finally, two people were assigned to boat-pulling



*Day 13 sunset on Smoke Lake. A hard day's push to the Oxtongue River was rewarded with some calm night paddling and this amazing view.*

duty, while the other two slowly carried packs over the slippery, rocky terrain. Adding to the obstacle course was a large number of fallen trees, most with spider web-like branches. We were reduced to travelling one kilometre every two hours, last two kilometres, seeming to stretch on endlessly. Needless to say, the sight of the McCraney Lake Dam was one of the most uplifting moments of the trip. This dam represented the end of the Big East River and our entry into Algonquin Park: a familiar and tamer environment.

Our first full day in Algonquin Park (Day 6) was spent travelling up the Western Boundary from Daisy Lake to Big Bob Lake. All portages were fairly well travelled (in spite of being marked

un-maintained on the map) making travel easy as we pond-hopped from one portage to the next. If you are interested in a challenging day of portaging with many climbs, then we strongly recommend this route (especially in extreme heat and humidity.) Arriving at Big Bob Lake, the humidity finally broke, as a thunder storm with accompanying downpour lit up the sky. The rain was both a welcome sight and feeling and we left our shelter to feel its cooling effect.

The trip then took a turn, both in direction and in terrain, as days seven through nine were spent travelling down the Nipissing River. Our first night on the Nipissing took a bit of a historical twist with our camp beside the Highview

Nipissing ranger cabin (a restored cabin that was originally used by park rangers.) Our second night was spent at the campsite adjacent to the Nadine Lake portage. Water levels on the river were optimal and except for several beaver dams and logjams, travel was unimpeded. Alder trees framed the river as we travelled along it and this was by far the best area for wildlife viewing, including moose, deer, waterfowl and certainly leeches. The air was also thick with wildlife, the bug jackets and long pants being of great necessity.

The day that we finished the Nipissing River and reached the Brent store on the shore of Cedar Lake was also a trip highlight. Abundant wildlife and

beautiful weather served to enhance the completion of the trip's second leg. In total, from the Huntsville store to the Brent store, we had been travelling for eight days. Some good swimming and a food drop from co-workers put everyone in high spirits. At Brent, we took in some of the local history swapping stories with a true Algonquin Park native, Jake Pigeon.

After a much needed rest and renewal at Brent, we began one of the most aggressive days of our trip. Travelling from Cedar Lake to Lake Lavieille took a total of 14 hours and included 24 portages.

We were pleased to see that Swifty's favourite campsite was vacant and spent a good night of sleep on its beautiful landscape.

We could feel the end of our third leg approaching (Brent Store to Opeongo Store) on day eleven. Finishing the 5,305 m portage between Dickson Lake and Bonfield Lake brought its usual sense of accomplishment and before we knew it, we were on the shores of Lake Opeongo's east arm. Travelling the length of Lake Opeongo is a rite of passage for canoe trippers in Algonquin Park. While a water-taxi can get you up or down the lake in approximately

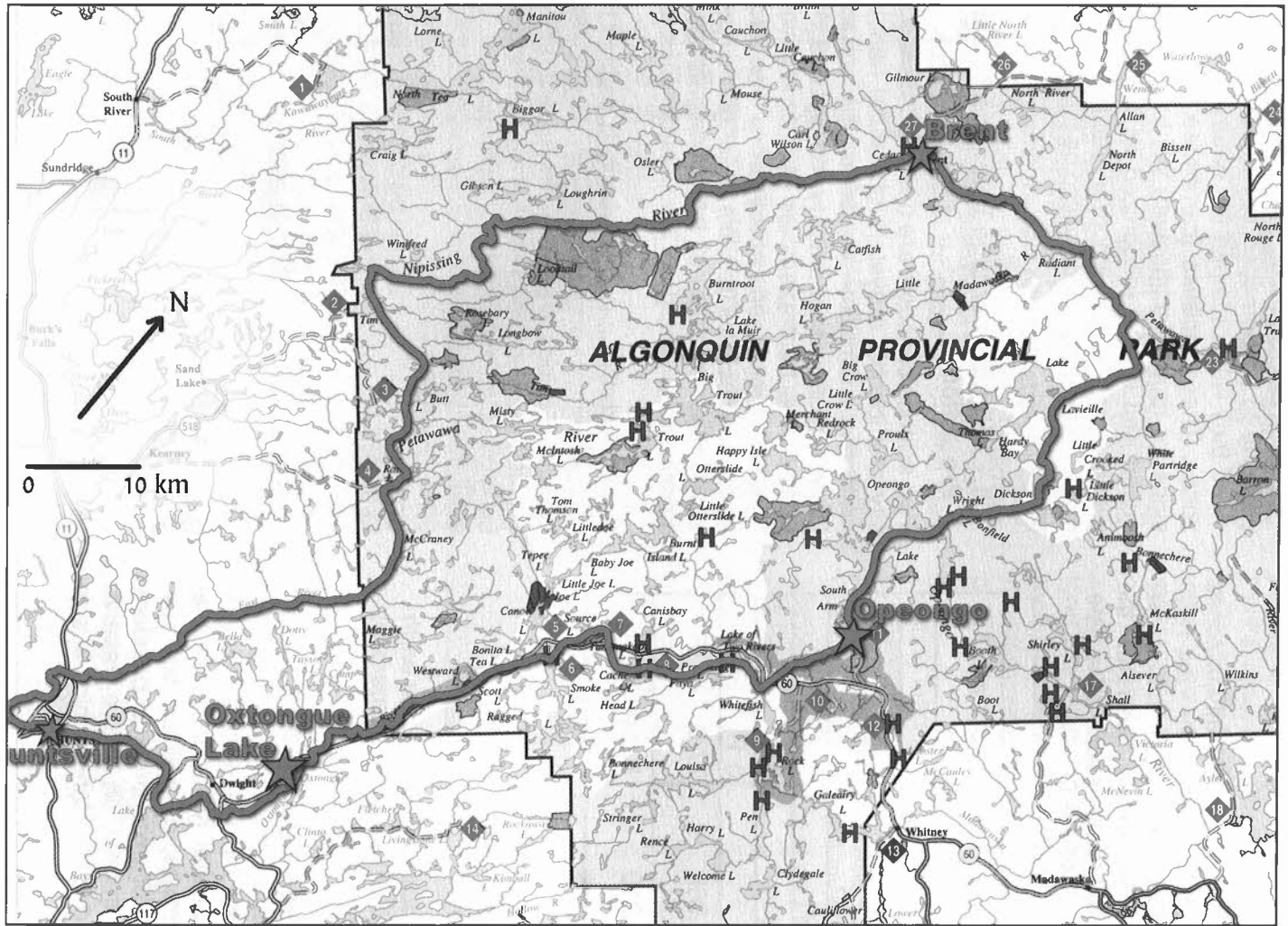
20 minutes, paddling Algonquin's biggest lake takes three to four hours. Our journey down the lake became more of a ride though as we turned into the south arm of the lake, set up sail and rode a tail wind. The sail had to come down with the advent of rain, but it had managed to carry us part way down the lake and had provided some good fun.

The last two days of our trip were pre-occupied with one thing: the push home! Travelling from the Opeongo store back to the Oxtongue Lake store is not a particularly inspiring section. There is a great deal of pond-hopping and you are



Group shot at the end of the trip at Oxtongue Lake store (from L to R – Janet Thomas, Jaime Capell, Sarah Strickland, Leah Sanders).





never far from Highway 60 and its associated campgrounds. Several times one must cross the highway while portaging – a situation that seems hardly appropriate when compared to the rest of the trip. In one day, we travelled from Lake Opeongo to the mouth of the Oxtongue River, stopping at Source Lake along the way. This was a fifteen-hour day and it left us in a great position to have a fairly easy last day.

Our stop at Source Lake brought us to Camp Pathfinder where Swifty had previously been a camper, staff person and owner. It was a little bit out of the way but a nice break, as we got to share a cocktail with some of the staff who were getting the camp ready to open. It is the oldest boys camp in Algonquin Park, having been established in 1914, though

originally based in Rochester. Between 1938 and 1951, Swifty was a camper and employee there and in 1962 bought it from Chief Norton, keeping a 50% share until 1975.

Homecoming (day 14) was a bitter-sweet day. The meandering upper Oxtongue River propelled our boats efficiently and allowed us to see a decent amount of wildlife. Every portage brought us closer to completing the challenge we had set out to meet but it also meant that our adventure was coming to an end. Arriving back to our store dock and being greeted by all our co-workers, friends and families was one of the best, most satisfying feelings in the world. We had just completed a 330 km loop, pushed ourselves and seen amazing things. We had explored new territory

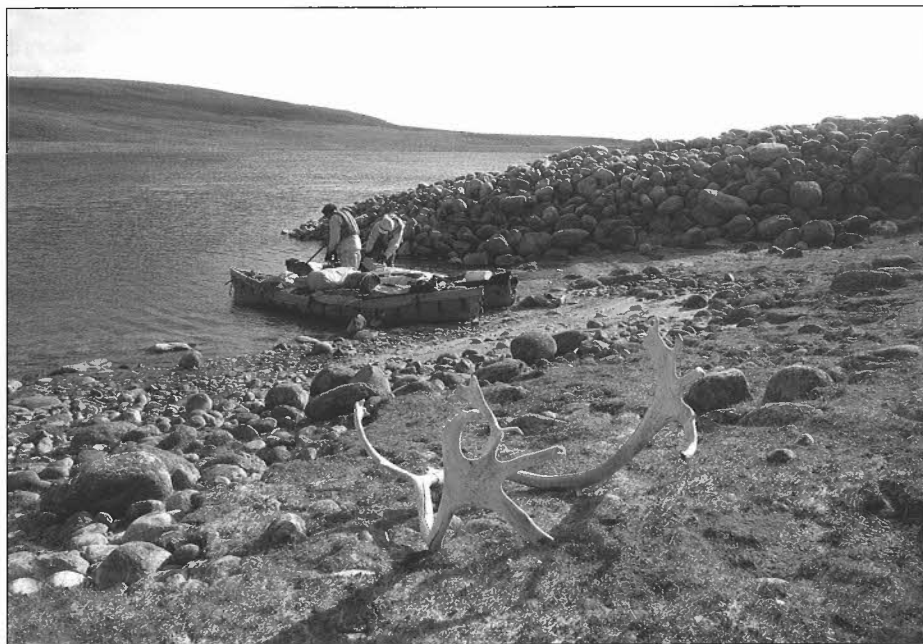
and commemorated our store owner in an experience with friends that we would never forget.

Looking back on the trip, several points were highlights for us. For one thing, this was a trip that required no alternate transportation. We were able to set off right from our store dock and loop right back to it. The trip was also a very good mix of river and lake paddling. We found that travelling in low tourist season allowed us the treat of seeing only a few other canoe trippers along the way. The adversities and constant battle with the bugs were rewarded by sharing this special trip with great friends and being the first to complete the “Meanest Link.”

# TOUGH SUMMER ON THE BACK

by Allan Jacobs

Photos by Marilyn Sprissler



*Across from Mt. Meadowbankback.*

I must preface my remarks by saying that Barrenlands trips are just plain magical; everyone I know who has paddled there, this year or any other, wants to go back.

But these are demanding trips, and the summer of 2005 seems to have had more than its share of trouble.

Some minor difficulties first:

Our Back party expected foul weather and we got it. Bathurst Inlet Lodge, not far from Beechey Lake on the Back, reports in its 2005 newsletter that the week of 18-24 July "was likely the coldest/wettest week we have ever had."

On the other hand, we are grateful that we didn't have to drag our boats over the ice. Many other parties have done so in previous years and so did Levi Waldron's party (about 10 days ahead of us on the Back) this year.

In addition to bad weather, we had very high water; according to Hans Baumgartner, it was several metres higher in the Jim Magrum Lake area than on his previous trip.

Some rapids were almost washed out, while we had to line or portage others run by the Drought-Burton parties of 2000 and 2003.

As well, the high water made way

finding difficult through the several hundred kilometres or so of sand flats, causing us much wading and backtracking; of course, navigation was even more difficult for kayakers.

The combination of wind, rain, high

water and sand (well at least the bugs weren't so bad) made conditions difficult enough that three parties, in whole or in part, stopped early at mission island rather than continue to Chantrey Inlet; all who stopped are strong, fit and experienced Barrenlands paddlers.

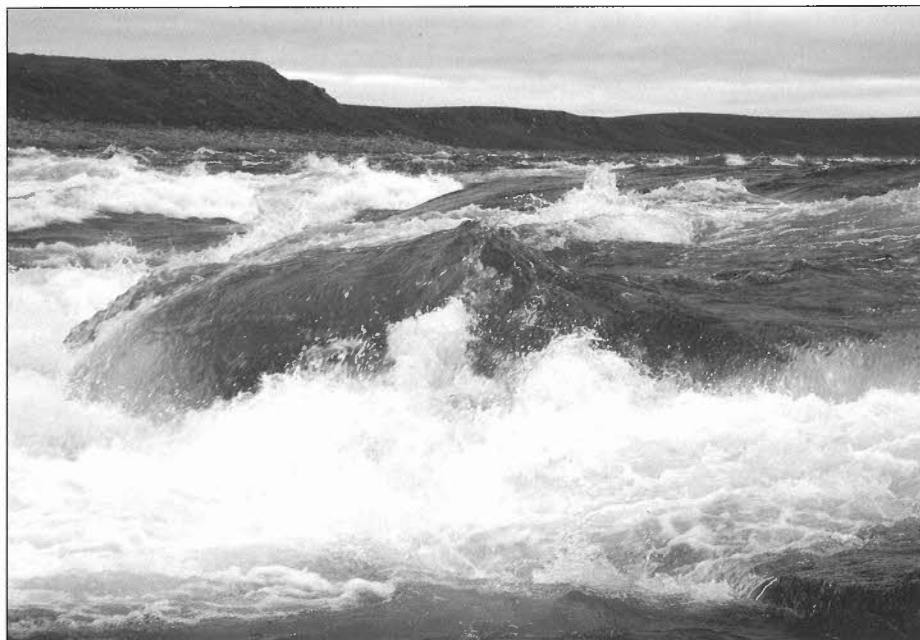
Two world-class kayakers, Hans Schneller (at the WCS several years ago he described his kayak trip from Greenland to Baffin Island) and Hans Baumgartner lost so much time to the wind and sand that they could not reach Gjoa Haven as planned.

The wind did more than force Rob Perkins to stop early; he had the additional discomfort of sharing a small island with a grizzly for two days.

Two members of our party also stopped early, but in their case equipment also played a role.

Before loading up at the float-plane dock in Yellowknife, we checked out our rental folding boat, only to find that several aluminium tubes had split; one assumes that the boat had been stored outside over the winter with water in the tubes.

The large rocker on the replacement boat (an Esquif Canyon) made it so diffi-



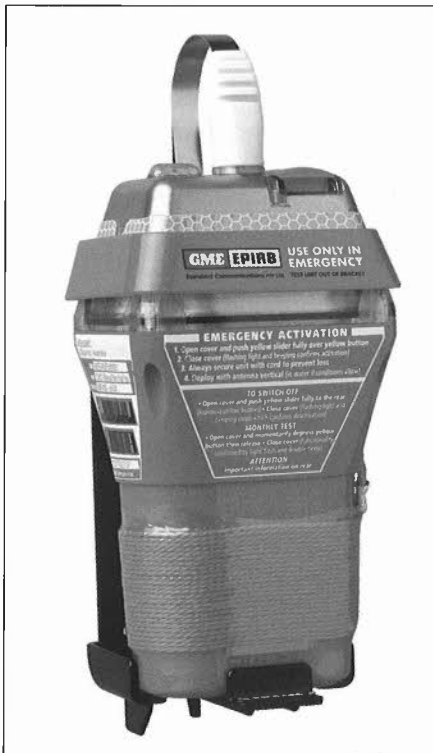
*Escape Rapids.*

cult to handle in even a moderate wind that Bob and Gene were wiped by the time we reached Mission island.

Far more serious were the two evacuations. There is no need to describe here the events that led to the evacuation of George Drought and Barbara Burton from the lower Back; George did so in his Nastawgan article (spring 2006 issue). And Gillian Mason, on the same trip, spoke at the February 2006 WCA Symposium.

My information on the second Back evacuation comes from several sources: Levi Waldron's talk at the 2006 WCS, Bill Layman's article on page 19 of the Fall 2005 Kanawa, Tom Irvin's letter on page 7 of the Winter 2005-2006 Kanawa, pages 11 and 12 of the Bathurst Inlet Lodge Newsletter of 2005, and the thread "Emergency Beacons - PLBs" initiated by Bill Layman at Nunavut. (Canoe Routes, <http://www.mycr.com>)

A group of seven paddlers from a well-known US organization lost one of their three canoes in Rock Rapids on the lower Back. They were carrying an EPIRB and chose to set it off. We were told that one boat dumped, its occupants ending up on the other side of the river from the rest of the party, and their satellite phone was in the lost boat. The Hercules search that resulted cost the Canadian taxpayer about \$70,000, not a cent of it justified;



Lower Gary Lake.

according to Bill Layman. The organization is thinking of phasing out its EPIRBs.

I wasn't there and I don't know the circumstances, but the paddlers knew or should have known that Levi's party was upstream from them and would arrive in a few days; and, if they missed Levi, that our group would arrive in about ten days.

Hypothermia was given as the reason for setting off the EPIRB. In deciding how much credence to give this justification, one might consider that the rescue aircraft could not arrive for several hours and that perhaps someone so badly chilled as to require evacuation would be dead before it arrived. It is perhaps more likely that the group was inexperienced as well as improperly equipped and simply panicked.

Levi's party came across the abandoned boats and gear and then the lost boat; the other party could have saved him and his companions a lot of time simply by leaving a note not to be concerned. As the BIL Newsletter describes, even the retrieval of the boats and gear had elements of the farcical.

We saw the abandoned boats and gear but had been warned not to be concerned. If groups who set off EPIRB's and the like were to be charged for such rescues, perhaps they would behave more responsibly, at least in the future.

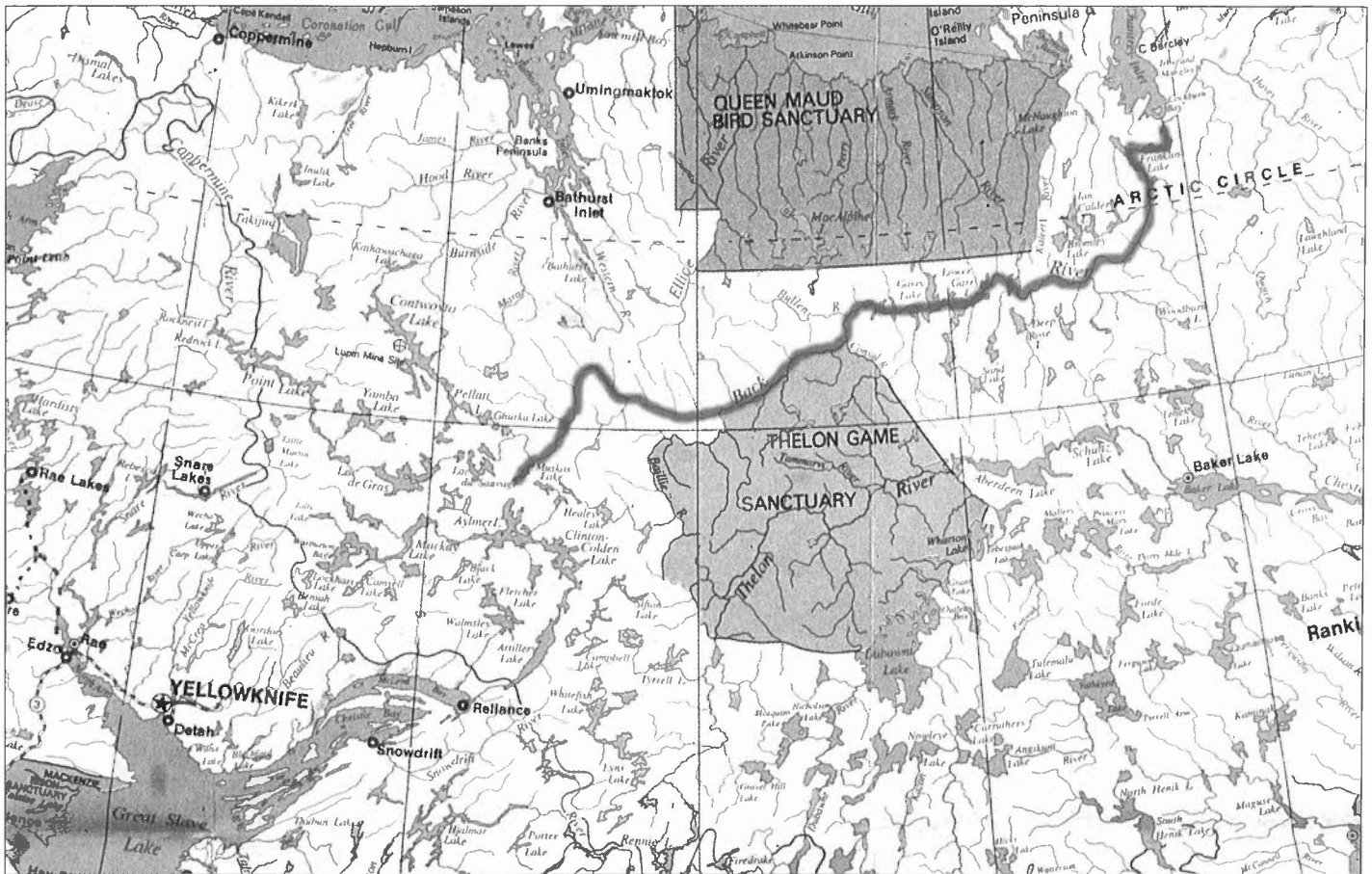
All was not gloom on the Back though. As best as I know, six of the 11 parties known to me finished their trips as planned. Representatives of three of these parties spoke at the 2006 WCS: Emily Stirr and Meg Casey on the 90-plus-day Borealis expedition, Brian Johnston on the Meadowbank-Back-Prince, and Levi Waldron on the Baillie-Back to Montreal Island in Chantrey Inlet.

Incidentally, Levi's party arrived at the Drought-Burton site not long after the explosion. For those who missed his talk, his group finished despite being wind bound for six days at the mouth and then icebound for another six at Montreal Island. Some trip!

But misfortune was found on the Kazan also. A hiker surprised a grizzly and was clawed; his companion beat it off with a Pelican case. Both were evacuated. [Sources: RCMP detachment in Baker Lake, CCR posting and email from Bill Layman, and conversations with Boris Kotelewetz and others in Baker Lake].

And two friends of Bill Layman and Lynda Holland lost their boat, permanently, on the lower Kazan; fortunately for them another party was close behind and able to rescue them.

What can be learned from these events?



- Barrenlands rivers are too isolated for inexperienced, poorly trained and improperly equipped parties.
- Carry a PLB, and carry it in a waterproof case on your PFD.
- Do not carry an EPIRB or an ELT; you will disgrace yourself if you use it. Do you really want to be written up in Kanawa?
- Carry a satellite phone and make sure it is well protected.
- Carry bear protection at all times.
- Don't hike alone.
- Learn what other groups are on the river and their travel plans, especially those upstream from you.
- Expect adversity and have a back-up plan should conditions prevent you from finishing as planned.
- Insist on examining your boat before flying out.
- Leave several days slack for wind delays.

A final word: Please don't let these troubles lead you to forgo tripping in the Barrens. It's hard to imagine the thrill of watching thousands of caribou stream past your campsite, the sight so many wolves that a few more are not worth

mentioning to your companions, the feeling that you can see forever, the scent of clean air and the knowledge that there are no more than a few dozen people within hundreds of kilometres in any direction ...

With experience, careful planning and

a reasonable amount of smarts, you will have a great trip, one to be treasured.

If we get our act together, we'll submit a trip report or two, telling you what a wonderful time we had despite the difficulties.



Scouting Rock Rapids.



CPM #40015547  
ISSN 1828-1327

Published by the Wilderness Canoe Association  
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 fac-

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

## NEWS RELEASE

March 27/2006 – Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Boreal Forest Network has launched an innovative educational project for youth exploring the significance of the circumpolar boreal (taiga) forest.

The UNESCO – Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) endorsed Boreal Kids Educational Project publicly launches program to develop a set of integrated interactive educational materials on the boreal forest in a range of media formats that are fully accessible to all youth regardless of their situation or location.

The Boreal Forest Network (BFN) hosted a series of gatherings with various artists, educators, scientists and representatives indigenous communities to share ideas for creating a highly innovative program on the boreal forest.

On the basis of the recommendations received from the gatherings, BFN framed a statement of intent that was explicitly designed to nurture the innate sense of inquisitive exploration and creativity of youth.

It is important that youth understand and appreciate the significant contribution the boreal has and continues to have in shaping countries in the northern hemisphere. We need to educate future generations of youth about the richness of the boreal landscape, the culture and its contribution to the world," states Don Sullivan, Executive Director of the Boreal Forest Network.

The primary goal of the Boreal Kids Educational programs is to stimulate and support youth exploration of natural history, science and cross-cultural knowledge of the pan boreal forest ecosystem, as well as their own role and sense of identity in relationship to caring for the land.

This unique educational project is designed from a shared set of core concepts and themes and will be delivered via three distinct media formats to youth of all ages in boreal nations throughout the world.

The three educational programs are; an interactive, multi-media, educational CD-ROM/DVD, with curriculum guide and support materials, an interactive, web-based, self-directed program allowing youth to network throughout the circumference of the northern boreal online and a boreal camp program that will provide youth with a hands on boreal experience related to the content covered in both the CD-ROM/DVD and web-based programs.

"Each educational program will have its own particular focus and youth will encounter familiar ideas and interact with the educational material to form an integrated and holistic educational experience on the boreal ecosystem," said Sandra Storm, project curriculum developer.

BFN commissioned Juno award-winning family entertainer, Al Simmons, to write and produce *The Heart of the Boreal*, music video and the centrepiece of the Boreal Kids Educational Project.

"When I was asked to write and record a music video about the Boreal Forest, I didn't hesitate, because after spending two amazing days shooting footage in the heart of the boreal for the video I was completely committed to preserving it", said Simmons.

To view *The Heart of the Boreal* video and to learn more about this unique project please visit [www.borealkids.org](http://www.borealkids.org)

Contact: Don Sullivan

Phone: 1-204-282-2339 or 947-0566, E-mail: [donsullivan@shaw.ca](mailto:donsullivan@shaw.ca).

## Book Review

**PADDLER'S GUIDE TO KILLARNEY AND THE FRENCH RIVER** by Kevin Callan, published by The Boston Mills Press, Erin, ON, 2006, softcover, 168 pages, \$19.95.

Review by Toni Harting.

Definitely a good idea to put all this information on Killarney and the French River into one book. Not only are both parks located close together near the north shore of Georgian Bay, but they are now managed by the same superintendent.

This is again a typical KC book, packed with insightful information (with a few little mistakes here and there for good measure), fine colour maps, the trademark KC photographs often showing him and family and friends doing things we all love to do in our dear canoe country. Everything is presented in the engaging Callan style.

Also, it's good to see how much his photography has improved over the years.

Some of the trips described have already been discussed in several of his earlier books, but there is lots of new information too. For instance, he takes us to areas just outside of Killarney Park where he introduces some really great stuff to explore. And also in the French River part of the book he describes a few routes not previously covered by him, including a few routes that are especially good for those paddlers travelling in kayaks. To make this more than just a paddler's guide, there's also some useful information on hiking and snowshoeing in Killarney. Nice book, very nice book; a should-have book if you want to explore this beautiful area.



## Canadian Rivers Day June 11

June 11th is Canadian Rivers Day. Canadian Rivers Day gives us the chance to take a moment to experience and honour Canada's river heritage.

In celebration of our rivers, exciting events take place across the country. Whether you take part in an organized event or plan your own Sunday afternoon paddle on June 11th, you will be experiencing Canadian Rivers Day.

It is also a time to remember the important sustaining role of rivers in Canada and globally. Rivers are vital to maintain a healthy ocean and a healthy earth. Let us raise awareness of their splendor and value to our land and our heritage.

The Canadian Heritage Rivers System, in support of this special day, has published an attractive poster. It is available in two sizes, 11 x 17, and 18 x 28, in French and English versions. If you wish to see a pdf, go to the Canadian Heritage River System website at [www.chrs.ca](http://www.chrs.ca) click What's New, and scroll down to the Canadian Rivers Day entry.

If you would like posters, please indicate how many you would like, size and language. We will mail them out to you right away. Send poster orders to [jen.katan@pc.gc.ca](mailto:jen.katan@pc.gc.ca).

In the meantime, please send us your planned events for June 11th so that we can post them on the website. Either email a detailed description of the event to [jen.katan@pc.gc.ca](mailto:jen.katan@pc.gc.ca), or visit the new web page and fill out the quick & easy registration form for an official posting of your Canadian Rivers Day celebration! Let's all do our part to celebrate Canadian Rivers Day.

## WORDS FROM MR. CANOEHEAD

Welcome to the inaugural column of Mr. Canoehead. What is this, you may ask? Well let me tell you. The new column is intended to be an opinionated, interesting mélange of items to make your canoeing experience more interesting. My apologies [?] to the Frantics for the blatant rip-off of the name!

Let's begin this issue's column with a few words about canoeing in Ontario's Leslie M. Frost Center waters. As with all free things, abuse tends to destroy them and the canoe-in campsites on the lakes comprising the Frost Center's waters are of no exception. So starting as of May 1st, reservations are required. The fees are a whopping \$10.00 per adult per night and \$5.00 per child per night. Supposedly fees are to cover clean-up and development of the sites in the area. Will this happen or will the fees flow into the revenues of the municipality? Only time will tell. The one upside is that there is no dastardly reservation fee like our friends in the Provincial Parks charge. Check out the website for all the details and there are lots of them at:

[www.algonquinhighlands.ca/water/reservations.htm](http://www.algonquinhighlands.ca/water/reservations.htm)

Here's a question for the paddling community; why hasn't anyone put together a canoe route on Lake Muskoka? How about a canoe route map showing

all the famous homes that we can paddle by and stare at? Are you listening, Kevin Callen? Kind of a canoe version of the paparazzi, perhaps called the canoe-arazzi! If you get a good photo, sell it and buy a new canoe (or several)! Follow it all up, photos or not, with a few refreshments at the Kee at Bala and your day would be complete!

On to more serious items, for those planning on paddling and camping on the French River, be aware that the park wardens plan to crack down on canoeists who camp on sites that are not official. Understandable, but with only a limited number of sites between Hartley Bay and Georgian Bay that are realistically reachable in a day's paddle, how about a little leeway? Especially now that the fees have been implemented, how about putting some of that money to work on some new sites instead of that monster visitor center? We'll see how canoeists adhere to the enforcement of the rules considering there is only one park warden between Lake Nipissing and Georgian Bay.

Well, that's it for this issue. If you hear anything out in the woods that needs passing on, please let me know. Questions & comments can be addressed to [canoehead@wildernesscanoeassociation.com](mailto:canoehead@wildernesscanoeassociation.com).

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## FOOD FOR PADDLERS

The following recipe comes from long time WCA member Cathy Gallately who notes that this trip favourite is quite rich and decadent, especially on a long trip, and is very easy to prepare.

### No Bake Brownies

- 3 tbsp skim milk powder
- 6 oz semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/3 cup shredded coconut
- 1/3 cup chopped nuts (walnut or hazelnut)
- 1/4 cup skor bits (optional)
- 1-1/4 cups graham cracker crumbs
- 1/3 cup water

At home combine skim milk powder with chocolate chips in one bag and coconut, nuts, skor bits and graham cracker crumbs in another bag.

### To prepare

- Add 1/3 cup water to the milk powder and chocolate chips.
- Heat until the chocolate is melted.
- Add the rest of the ingredients and mix well.
- Pat into a greased pan and let sit until cool and solid (30 min to 1 hour).

This doesn't solidify very well on a hot summer's day but it is perfect on an Arctic trip. I have placed the pan in cold water to help it solidify. Even if it doesn't set hard there are never any leftovers – just grab a spoon and enjoy!

Barb Young

## Citizens concerned for Michipicoten Bay

For those of you who have followed this controversial project on Lake Superior, you know what is at stake and it looks like the quarry will happen, but more far reaching than the allowing of this aggregate mine is the precedent it may set for other areas in Ontario.

Read below and pass on to others who might be able to help.

Thanks

Rob Stimson

### Subject: Michipicoten Bay Lake Superior Appeal

Dear Friend,

Citizens Concerned for Michipicoten Bay (CCMB) is a grass roots stewardship organization that was formed in response to an American-based company's plans to develop 2.5 kilometres of Lake Superior shoreline at Michipicoten Bay into a quarry. The Company proposes to ship crushed rock (referred to as traprock by lake freighter to the States to be used in the building of highways. The site is right in the middle of the longest remaining section of Great Lakes coastline with near-wilderness quality.

CCMB wants to ensure that if any quarrying does take place on this approximately 1000 acre property, it's well-isolated and buffered from Lake Superior, and (along with shipping activities) will be subject to best-practice environmental controls. The Company's current proposal does NOT do this and instead would quarry the most critical shoreline section of the property.

The Ontario Government has a policy encouraging protection of the globally significant Great Lakes Heritage Coast on Lakes Superior and Huron but is not prepared to defend that policy. It appears from a study commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines that several other potential quarry sites have been identified along the north shore of Lake Superior, so this would be a precedent-setter.

To take on a multi-million dollar American corporation is no mean task and it is also very costly, certainly more than we as individuals can afford. At the moment we need to generate approximately \$100,000+ to cover expected costs, including an Ontario Municipal Board hearing which may be the only way to achieve our objectives.

As you have probably guessed this is

where we hope you will come in.

After a rigorous application process CCMB was granted CHARITABLE STATUS under the umbrellas of ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE and CANADA HELPS, which can accept donations and issue tax receipts on our behalf.

We have a website which is currently under reconstruction ([www.ccmb.ca](http://www.ccmb.ca)) and you can find a summary there of our supporters and activities-to-date.

A donation of any amount would be most helpful and EQUALLY IMPORTANT would be your help in FORWARDING THIS APPEAL TO OTHERS. Therein lies the success of this campaign

Please add your own note of encouragement or support when you FORWARD this. (You can do this after you hit the Forward button.) Thanks so much for your help. You can't imagine how much we would appreciate your support.

### DONATION OPTIONS

Since these organizations accept funds on behalf of many groups YOU MUST INDICATE THAT YOUR DONATION IS FOR CITIZENS CONCERNED FOR MICHIPICOTEN BAY.

ONLINE: <http://www.environmentaldefence.ca/donate/donate.htm>

On the Environmental Defence page, click on the "Donate through Canada Helps.org" button. On the Canada Helps.org page, you will see a message box that asks for "instructions for ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE". Type in CITIZENS CONCERNED FOR MICHIPICOTEN BAY

PHONE: 1-877-399-2333 or  
416-323-9521

Press 0 to skip the menu stuff and go directly to a person. Remind them that your donation is to go to CITIZENS CONCERNED FOR MICHIPICOTEN BAY.

MAIL: Environmental Defence  
317 Adelaide St W., Suite 705 (See attachment for forms)

Toronto, ON M5V 1P9  
FAX: 416-323-9301

Note: If you are out of the country and cannot benefit from a tax receipt you could send your donation (by cheque) directly to:

CCMB (Citizens Concerned for Michipicoten Bay)  
P.O. Box 2043  
Wawa, ON, Canada P0S 1K0

## 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.*

**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.)

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

### Survivorman Fans

Les Stroud's Survivorman™ Series Season 1 is available on DVD containing 10 episodes for \$34.99. If you are lucky to be one of the first 250 to purchase, you will receive an autographed copy.

Also on VHS are Les's earlier works: Snowshoes and Solitude, the award-winning documentary about Les and his wife's one-year escape from modern society to live in the Canadian wilderness

Stranded (is the pilot version of Survivorman™), where Les makes his first two ventures out in the Canadian Wilderness, without food, water, shelter, matches, or a camera crew. Les experiences these 7-day challenges in the heat of summer and the dead of winter.

To order, go to <http://www.lesstroudonline.com/shop.html>

## WCA Requests changes to the Proposed New Parks Act

## Creative Writing

WCA recently wrote the support letter reprinted below to the provincial government on the new proposed Ontario New Parks Act Bill 11.

WCA participated in a workshop in December '05 and joins the Wildlands League and Sierra Legal Defense Fund in requesting changes to the proposed law.

March 24, 2006  
**The Right Honorable  
Dalton McGuinty, Premier**  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1A1

### Comments to Bill 11 – Proposed Parks Act

Reference: First Reading, October 25, 2005

The Wilderness Canoe Association, a canoeing organization of over 700 members would like to express its support for the spirit of the new act. Its focus on conservation goals will help the Province achieve those goals.

After a careful review, and in cooperation with other NGOs, the WCA has found some weak areas in the wording of the proposed law. Specifically, the concept of Ecological Integrity deserves further strengthening in the law, some of the permitted industrial uses must be reworded, First Nations Interests must receive due consideration, other jurisdictions such as municipalities must be directed towards special considerations for the protected areas, and a new loop hole – permitting motorized recreational use of wilderness parks – must be removed.

We are thus joining the Wildlands League and the Sierra Legal Defense Fund in their critique of the law and support the request for change, as outlined in the attached document "Comments on the First Reading of Bill 11" of March 6, 2006. Please take these comments into account when revising the new act.

Yours Sincerely,  
George Drought  
Wilderness Canoe Association,  
Chairman of the Board

cc: Erhard Kraus,  
Wilderness Canoe Association,  
Environmental Chair  
Wilderness Canoe Association  
PO Box 91068  
2901 Bayview Ave.  
Toronto, ON  
M2K 2Y6

For more information, see  
[www.wildlandsleague.org/](http://www.wildlandsleague.org/)  
See also PDF of Bill 11 at  
[www.ontla.on.ca/documents/bills/38\\_Parliament/session2/b011\\_e.html](http://www.ontla.on.ca/documents/bills/38_Parliament/session2/b011_e.html)

### WANTED

Information on sources for #10 cans of dehydrated or freeze-dried staples such as vegs, cubed and diced beef and chicken, tomato and egg powders. Because club members may be interested, please forward your responses to the editor ([esinclair@golden.net](mailto:esinclair@golden.net)) and we will publish the information in the fall issue of *Nastawgan*. Also, copy [jahall@rideau.net](mailto:jahall@rideau.net)

### Membership Administrator WANTED !!!

*WCA is looking for an organized individual to take on the challenge of administering membership for our organization.*

*Job Description includes:*

- *Receiving and processing of membership renewal forms.*
- *Administering database with membership information.*
- *Helping with mailing of *Nastawgan* Mailing.*

*Handling this responsibility involves a great deal of trust. Only members with two years (or longer) tenure with WCA should apply.*

## The Pike

I finally got him swimming in the shallow water just off the sloping rock shelf that I am standing on. Big pike. Looks to be pretty close to a metre in length. He's finning himself in the water recovering from the titanic struggle that we both have waged. He was fighting for his life, and I was trying to reel him in on eight pound test.

The North Knife River in Manitoba is a good brook trout river and I was trying mightily to catch them. It was surprising to me that this big pike took the shad imitation lure out in fast water where I had cast it. Pike are not noted for liking fast current. They are a game fish that usually prefers quiet pools or backwaters. There must have been a hide and rest in. One that he could venture out of at his choosing to see what the current had to bring.

Now that I had the pike in close to shore I could get a better look at him. I thought that he was grinning at me. I couldn't understand why. I had him, he was tired, and he had lost the struggle that we had both engaged in. But I could tell that he wasn't beaten. He didn't act like it. It was the look in his eyes. Defiant, confident, fearless. It was as if his eyes were saying, "You can kill me, but that is not the important thing. The wilderness is the important thing. The struggle here for survival goes on as it always has.

As long as you haven't killed the wilderness I am not beaten."

We already had a couple of brook trout on shore. Filleted and ready for dinner. I took out my pocket pliers and fished the hook out of the pike's jaws. It took him a moment to realize that he was free. Then he didn't dart away, but just swam slowly out to deeper water.

I thought that I saw his eyes give me one last look before disappearing. He was still grinning. I decided that the pike was right in his assessment of the struggle. At this moment and at this place on the North Knife River, the wilderness was still alive and well.

Then I grinned back.

Greg Went



## Wilderness Classics

published by Natural Heritage Books  
<http://www.naturalheritagebooks.com>

See artwork by Rod MacIver, Heron DanceBooks on right

### Sleeping Island

By: P.G. Downes

Number of pages: 330

Format: Trade Paperback

Sleeping Island is the sensitively written and moving account of one of P.G. Downes' trips, a journey made in 1939 to remote, and at that time un-mapped, Nueltin Lake.

### True North

By: Elliott Merrick

Foreword By: Lawrence Millman

Number of pages: 320

Format: Trade Paperback

A 1930s classic of the joys and hardships of life in the Labrador wilderness.

### A Death on the Barrens

By: George Grinnell

Illustrated By: Roderick MacIver

Number of pages: 192

Format: Trade Paperback

In 1955, author George Grinnell was one of five young men who set off on a canoe trip through Canada's Arctic. They ran out of food. Winter closed in. Then the group inadvertently went over a waterfall and the leader was killed.

### Canadian Canoe Museum Support

You can support the Canadian Canoe Museum by buying the "Canoesongs Volume II" CD. I bought volume I and really liked it. Purchase or hear previews at <http://www.canoesongs.ca/store.php>



Friendship (Artist: Rod MacIver).

## WOODEN CANOE ASSEMBLY AT KEUKA COLLEGE, NEW YORK HIGHLIGHTS RACINE CANOES

The Wooden Canoe Heritage Association (WCHA) is devoted to preserving, studying, building, restoring and using wooden and birch bark canoes, and to disseminating information about canoeing heritage in North America.

The 2006 Annual WCHA Assembly will be held in the Finger Lakes region of New York at Keuka College, Keuka Park, from July 12th (beginning with the evening program) to July 15th. Featured this year will be Racine boatyards and canoes. Racine canoes were built for nearly 50 years by five separate boatyards, each of which was called "The Racine Boat Company." On Thursday evening, Steve Wheeler, a native of Racine, WI and current resident of Loveland, CO, will share his knowledge of these boatyards, that turned out a huge variety of vessels, ranging from simple rowboats to US Government lightships to some of the most famous yachts of the day.

This annual event includes opportunities for WCHA members and other canoe enthusiasts to meet and exchange ideas; participate in and attend seminars and lectures; paddle; buy and sell canoes and related equipment; and generally have a great time celebrating wooden canoes.

The Assembly is a place to learn about your canoe; how to repair, restore and maintain it, where and how to paddle it, and generally how to get the most out of the wooden canoe experience.

The Assembly program focuses on activities related to the construction and repair of wooden canoes, canoeing and camping skills and crafts.

Other featured speakers at the evening programs include Sue Audette, author of "The Old Town Canoe Company: Our First Hundred Years," who will share humorous and sometimes poignant messages received by the company (Wednesday) and Kate Williams, Executive Director of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail who will present an overview of this 740-mile long historic waterway (Thursday).

Participating vendors at the Assembly include many of the world's premier builders and restorers of wooden canoes (including birch barks), as well as dealers in new and antique canoe gear and related arts and crafts.

The Assembly also includes a wide range of activities for children who attend the event with a registered adult.

Program and registration information is available at <http://wcha.org/>.

# PROJECT CANOE

What happens when a young person who has known only the urban environment has an opportunity to experience challenge and personal growth in the wilderness? What happens when a group of youth from inner-city Toronto must work together to meet their needs while paddling from campsite to campsite in Temagami? What happens when kids are empowered by their experiences in the outdoors and can transfer what they learn back to their communities? These are the kinds of questions Herb Batt was asking in 1976 when he founded Project C.A.N.O.E. (Creative and Natural Outdoor Experiences) and took the first group of deserving young people out of the city and into the therapeutic wilderness. The answers to these questions have resonated positively through the nearly three decades that Project C.A.N.O.E. has operated with a simple but profound mission: Help youth build positive futures for themselves. Youth gain self-esteem, life skills and healthy interpersonal relationships through wilderness canoe trips and other challenging outdoor activities. This mission provides the framework for a tremendously successful program. Since 1976, Project C.A.N.O.E. has served over 2,500 youth between the ages of 12-18 with learning, social, behavioural, and economic difficulties. Canoe trips are the medium for personal growth and every effort is made to provide a customized experience that meets individual participant needs. For many participants, the Project C.A.N.O.E. experience is truly life changing.

Many factors have contributed to the success of Project C.A.N.O.E. including dedicated and experienced staff and board members, partnerships with a variety of youth serving organizations, financial support from individuals and groups who have seen the benefit of the program, and the outstanding efforts of those who make the program possible. Through three decades, the original program model created in 1976 has remained, as has the collaborative, grassroots approach to operation. The scale of Project C.A.N.O.E. today has been made possible by the dedicated work of those who have believed in the power of what PC experiences can do for youth.

Humble beginnings best describe the inception of Project C.A.N.O.E.. As a graduate student at the University of Toronto, Herb Batt wanted to work with people who had not been as fortunate as he had. He wanted to take struggling youth canoeing and camping; to give them a chance to recognize their own strengths and interact positively with their peers. So he started Project C.A.N.O.E. and did just that. Herb

did not have to look far to find the young people who became the first campers with Project C.A.N.O.E. An early partnership with the Children's Aid Society (CAS) in Toronto brought him in contact with youth in clear need of the kinds of experiences he wanted to provide.

The first year of operation was driven completely by volunteers and based out of Herb's home in Toronto. An existing program called Project Whitewater provided the model that continues to exist today: 2 staff and 4 participants on each trip to ensure that kids receive the individual attention they need. Far less formal in structure than it is today, Project C.A.N.O.E. began with a shoestring budget, borrowed canoes and tents, a few food donations, and a small but committed network of people who wanted to do good for kids.

After that first summer, both first hand experience and feedback from CAS wholeheartedly supported the preservation of Project C.A.N.O.E. The trips had served as vehicles for kids to learn that they could make more positive use of their abilities. Project C.A.N.O.E. experiences had altered the life patterns of participants and would continue to do so for years to come.

For the next few seasons, some members of the original team stayed involved but in large part Project C.A.N.O.E. was driven by Herb and supported by individuals who believed in the initiative. Church basements served as storage facilities and seasonal offices and Herb both organized and led trips for the first fifteen years of operation. Now a senior volunteer advisor, he continues to help shape the present and future operations of Project C.A.N.O.E..

While the core concepts and philosophies have remained the same since the beginning, outside influences have impacted the development of Project C.A.N.O.E. The 1978 Temiskaming tragedy, in which 12 students from St. John's School drowned in choppy waters while on a canoe trip, changed the face of outdoor education. Project C.A.N.O.E. was no exception. Safety had always been important but the concept of risk management took on new meaning and has since evolved into the comprehensive risk management plan now in place and reviewed annually by the Project C.A.N.O.E. Board of Directors.

A Young Canada Works grant made program operation and expansion possible in early days but when it was cut, funding had to be reworked. Funding now comes from a diverse list of individual, government, foundation, corporate and other group donations. Corporate donations are few as Project C.A.N.O.E. is a relatively low

profile organization. A total of \$8000 annually comes from individual donors. Only 10% of annual operating funds are derived from camper fees. Despite rising costs, camper fees have remained the same as the years have passed and subsidies are available for campers who need them.

A grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation allowed for a full time Executive Director, Pegi Dover, to be hired three years ago. Bringing an Executive Director on board marked an important milestone for Project C.A.N.O.E. as an organization. In addition to Pegi's contributions, coordination and development of off season programming is now managed by Julie Markham, also a full-time staff member.

The dedicated staff teams of Project C.A.N.O.E. have been instrumental in the success of the program. The volunteer Board of Directors has seen only three Presidents in 30 years. Current President David Sugarman has been in his position for ten years. There is little surprise that staffing comprises Project C.A.N.O.E.'s greatest single budget item. Project C.A.N.O.E. staff are certified trip leaders and lifeguards, with wilderness first aid training and extensive experience working with youth. All staff participate in six weeks of training prior to the first trip with youth. While hard skill development plays an important role in staff training, the most critical component of training is the development of good judgment and decision making skills. Once on trip, staff must assess and react to any situation that may arise and the comprehensive training period gives them the knowledge and confidence to do so.

Another key component of success for Project C.A.N.O.E. has been and continues to be partnerships with other likeminded organizations and agencies. The last few years have seen these partnerships expanding to reach out to young people who need Project C.A.N.O.E. experiences most. Some agency partners include Youthlink, the Jane-finch Community and Family Centre, Eva's Place, Amelia Rising Sexual Assault Centre and Central Toronto Youth Services. In some cases, grants allow Project C.A.N.O.E. to provide trips without any cost to partner organizations.

Teachers working with high school students in outdoor education programs may also take advantage of Project C.A.N.O.E. program offerings before and after the summer. Bruce Murphy at New Liskgard High School had Grade 9 students participate in a Project C.A.N.O.E. trip in September. Pegi would like to see more partnerships with teachers that would see students par-

ticipating in Project C.A.N.O.E. trips in June while the Project C.A.N.O.E. staff team is training. Hands on trips with students would provide an excellent training opportunity for staff and an exciting opportunity for school groups to take advantage of Project C.A.N.O.E. resources.

A sophisticated program model provides the framework for all Project C.A.N.O.E. activities. The model features program components like providing each camper with an emotionally safe experience in a group and tailored to them as individuals. Immediate, intermediate and long-term goals all stem from various program components. Some immediate goals are for campers to feel challenged in a safe environment, to redefine success by experiencing success through effort, and to learn about alternative perspectives and strategies for coping with a variety of situations. Intermediate goals are for campers to recognize their capabilities and individual strengths, to feel capable of developing what they did not previously think they could or moving in a direction they previously thought was not possible and to develop interpersonal skills. Long term goals aim to see campers develop resiliency, capacity and important life skills that they continue to improve in the future and to learn and continue using prosocial behaviour. Staff teams become familiar with the model and use it as a constant reminder of the program goals they are working to achieve with their campers.

A Project C.A.N.O.E. experience begins with an application package that is distributed to potential participants through various Toronto area social service agencies or directly to interested youth and parents. Applications are reviewed and every applicant is interviewed either in person or by phone to ensure a match between program offerings and participant needs. Once participants have been accepted into the program, they attend a pool session to become familiar with paddle strokes and canoe safety and to meet some of the other participants. Trips vary in length from 5 and 8 days for first time participants; 12 days for returning campers interested in a longer trip; 18 days for older, returning campers and finally 21 days for Leaders in Training. Trips depart from Yorkdale Mall in Toronto and head north to the Temagami base camp that has been used for the past 7 years, courtesy of Ontario Parks. Once supplies are ready, groups head out on trip right away and spend the entire trip period in small groups of two staff and four campers.

Ownership of the experience develops as staff members empower campers to take responsibility for numerous aspects of the trip. As a result, campers gain skills, self-confidence, and pride in their accomplishments. Staff members bring an environmental consciousness to the program that

has translated into an environmental stewardship component to every trip. Participants work on projects including trail maintenance, kybo construction, and campsite clean-ups and are careful to leave campsites in better condition than they were found. Staff members and participants develop close bonds as they live, work and play together on trip. Bonds formed on trip endure long after the return to the city.

A questionnaire completed by all agencies and parents two weeks after campers return from trip provides some insight into the impacts the experience has made on participants. The greatest source of positive encouragement however, often comes from the letters received from former campers. In one such letter a participant writes:

"...For every person there is a pinnacle moment that ultimately influences every decision you make after this experience; Project C.A.N.O.E. gave me mine with its dedicated staff and admirable purpose to make the world a better place for people like me." (Maggie E.)

Another participant writes:

"In those two weeks I learned discipline, teamwork, responsibility and accountability; lessons no other person or group of people taught me. Many years later I still live by the values that Project C.A.N.O.E. instilled in me. Thank you for making a difference in my life." (Edwin O.)

Testimonials like these speak volumes for the positive impact Project C.A.N.O.E. is making. The desire to continue to reach out in novel ways to Project C.A.N.O.E. participants sparked the development of the Leader in Training (LIT) Program in the early 1980s. LIT experiences feature a 21 day canoe trip for youth age 15-17, who have already experienced a trip and wish to further develop trip and leadership skills. The focus now is on the development of off-season programs like a first aid course for LITs, and paddle making workshop for any interested past participants. These activities help sustain contact with summer program participants with a view to furthering their personal growth.

Project C.A.N.O.E. commissioned independent evaluations of its program in 2002, 2003 and 2004. These evaluations were conducted by Laura Heinz, of the Hincks Dellcrest Institute and provide an overwhelming endorsement of the program. Over 95% of those parents and agency staff who participated in the evaluations reported that Project C.A.N.O.E.'s program was beneficial to their child or client. Moreover, the evaluations also revealed that there was a statistically significant increase in the feelings of self-efficacy – a key indicator of self-esteem – for youth attending Project C.A.N.O.E. in each of the evaluated years 2002 - 2004.

While donor support can be tremendous, it can also be transitory. Project C.A.N.O.E. is completely dependent on ongoing financial support from outside sources. A long term goal for Project C.A.N.O.E. is true financial sustainability and the positive results of program evaluations may help to garner greater ongoing support.

Visions for the future of Project C.A.N.O.E. are shared by Herb Batt, the current Board of Directors and staff. These visions are outlined in the organization's current Strategic Plan (2003-2008). They would like to provide more ongoing programs for participants outside of the trip experience. Being able to do more for the campers served is more of a focus than expanding the program to serve greater numbers. Academic credit and bursaries are among the different potential avenues of support. As LITs complete their programs and are no longer of eligible age for more trips, it is hoped that they will continue to build skills, including those required to work in a camp environment, perhaps returning to project C.A.N.O.E. as staff in the future. Such a situation would allow continued participation for past campers as well as a staff team that better reflects the population from which participants are drawn.

As the 30th anniversary year approaches, a major focus on reconnecting former and current campers and staff is underway. There is now a system in place for tracking campers and staff, but there are no records of earlier participants and staff. The organization is working hard to attract past participants back to celebrate 30 years of operation. (Former Project C.A.N.O.E. campers, staff and Board members are urged to email HYPERLINK "mailto:pc@canoe.org" pc@canoe.org with their full contact information.)

Looking too far into the future is challenging for Herb Batt. While working out of his apartment on River Street in the late 1970s, he never thought even this far ahead. Managing Project C.A.N.O.E. was at that time, and for many years to follow, a survive-each-summer experience, not a thirty-years-down-the-road experience. Thirty years of surviving each summer later, Project C.A.N.O.E. is going strong and continues to do remarkable work for young people in need. Campers on trip connect with themselves and each other in ways they never imagined. Youth who have never left the city have an opportunity to see true dark and hear true silence for the first time in their lives. They are changed in countless ways by their Project C.A.N.O.E. experiences. As Herb reflected, "Project C.A.N.O.E. is a story of the goodwill in the world." He added, "It has been quite an education".

# Backferry, not Blackberries!


By Elizabeth Sinclair

Yes, it is easy to be misunderstood, isn't it? Your stern paddler, that necessity at the back of your canoe – could just be telling you to go to shore. On the other hand, perhaps not. Well, which is it, you wonder? Are we going to run this rapid and if so, how? Or do we walk around it, picking berries along the trail that leads around that maelstrom of white-water.

Running the rapid presents a new dilemma. How are we going to survive this rapid? The argument rages on: power forward as fast as possible or be a wimp and slow down. Of course, we know what the usual response is and we have seen plenty of people flipping and swamping to prove it.

Well, after a dozen or so years on the end of a paddle, I think I have figured it out. Communicating (another article topic) with your partner, you must make a quick decision and set up: then paddle in, pull forward hard or paddle in, pull backward hard. Usually, one bad decision has a devastating effect so it is very important to decide ahead of time, which you are going to do.

Bill Mason, Canadian paddling icon and celebrated author and filmmaker, is probably the person most referenced, especially by new paddlers, when it comes to paddling technique. His books and movies are very widely honoured, as is his advice. Most of us, once we become obsessed with the sport, consider his first book, *Path of the Paddle*, required reading and perhaps a little later on, *Thrill of the Paddle*, a treasured reference guide to whitewater technique. However helpful these may be though, reading only whiles away the winter until spring run off starts up,

 Bill talks about many paddling techniques and the backferry is probably the most difficult concept to grasp. Yet, it is one of the most important and miraculous maneuvers you will use. While its primary function is to slow you down in big water, the technique also gives you control of the canoe's trajectory in the case of obstacles you must avoid.

Sometimes you need to slow the boat down to achieve this, while other occasions require you to power at full speed, or as Bill puts it, "turn on the coal," with the help of a backferry technique.

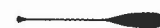
Bill discusses two types of backferries and herein begins the confusion. To grasp the concept of the backferry, keep in mind that two types are possible for distinct occasions and with distinct techniques, though they are related. Two concepts are vital to both. The first is that the technique requires backward paddling; the second is that both paddlers must do this in unison. Typically, a backferry fails because someone stops paddling, whereupon the boat turns sideways, optimising the canoe's exposure to the full river current along the water line which adds pressure along the waterline and makes it lean upstream. At this point paddlers might grab gunwales and even lean upstream themselves. This occurs in an instant while in the next instant water rushes over the upstream gunwale and the boat turns upside down. And you know, don't you, whose fault that is.


If you are very quick when the boat starts to lean upstream, you can save yourself. Lean downstream and brace. Don't grab the gunwales! It's that simple. Do a low brace on the downstream side and the boat won't flip. Reset your angle (described below) and paddle backwards. Do not give up. A few strokes are usually enough to regain control.


**Backferry type 1)** Technically, merely paddling backwards is not a true backferry but making your canoe go slower than the current to control its progress on the water. This allows it to float up over the waves rather than plunge through them. Understanding that whitewater is a series of sine waves helps (if you can remember your highschool science.) Your canoe would rise and fall vertically if not for the forward trajectory due to the elevation change. Thus, minimizing your forward momentum will allow that up and down behaviour without your plunging into the oncoming peak. Timing is critical: slow down on

the rise and speed up on the fall. You will stay relatively dry and in glorious control. If you refer to *Path of the Paddle*, you will find Bill giving you this exact advice although in a longer version. Check page 85-88.

**Backferry type 2)** Now, the second occasion is a little more complicated. In fact, I am going to discuss it after I talk about the Ottawa River. The reason for this divergence is that the Ottawa presents conditions directly related to the first occasion, described above. Now, you may have perfected your backferry. I know I have, but my advice to you is to stow it on the Ottawa. This river is full of holes and diagonal waves and is designed for kayaks. Running it in a canoe is indeed a lot of fun once you get your technique geared up.

 The trick on the Ottawa is to paddle very aggressively. Set up to the left or right but inside the deep water vee (this river has lots of those) and power hard across the diagonal wave to the outside and then around the hole and the haystacks æ easy once you have it. I should know: I made the backferry mistake once, only once. And holes are nasty items when you are swimming them, especially for legs.

 Now, understanding the second application for a backferry will help if you first get a picture of it in your mind. I hope you will do this before you encounter a backferry situation. That is, you need to know what to do before you find yourself in a big current that is sending you into the sweepers or overhanging trees and rocks at the outside of a bend in the river. The key is to plan ahead and don't wait until you are in the corner current before acting. Practicing in tame little backferry situations is a very good idea. Then when you get into the big stuff with your reliable partner, you can agree on a strategy (berry picking on the portage trail is okay too) so get ready, set up to orchestrate the backferry or power through the diagonals.

 **Backferry type two** is a clever manoeuvre that uses the current to best advantage, keeping you out of trouble in the river's most troublesome places.

But, before you decide on this backferry you have to recognize the need for it. Once you master the technique, apply it to other situations that you want to avoid. The main occasions I have found are bends in rivers. Typically these can be dangerous places with sweepers, rocks, waves, and very fast water on the outside of the bend. The current is rushing toward these obstacles and you do not want your canoe included. Thus is the prime situation for type 2.

Upon recognizing the situation downstream, you immediately yell backferry to that nefarious other or politely request it perhaps, hoping that person is awake.

Next, you (both) must decide which way to point the bow. The trick here is to point it toward where you don't want to go, which, in this case, is at the outside of the bend: the sweeper, the rock, whatever. Do this before you get to the bend because the current is sweeping you along as you are in discussion. Adjust the angle upstream, next described. (see figure 1)

If you have ever sailed, you will un-

derstand how keeping the sail slightly off the wind captures and controls wind power. You can control the amount of power by angling the sail to the wind. The same principle applies in current and particularly, in executing the backferry. You need to set and keep the best angle in the current to maximize the action of your backferry.

The reason for emphasizing angle is that it is vital to the success of the manoeuvre. The bow of the canoe must point toward the obstacle and upstream to a particular degree to exploit the power of the current. This initial angle must be judged and set only by the stern paddler who can see and control the entire canoe. (Note: The bow cannot fight the current at this point in order to turn the bow upstream.) 2) The degree of angle depends on the strength of the current: the stronger the current, the steeper the upstream angle. That is, the more upstream the bow must be pointing. This angle controls how much water force is exerted on the upstream side of the canoe, 3) Once the angle is set, bow and stern stroke the coal in a backward motion.

Now it might look like you are head-

ing for disaster but keep hauling on that paddle and you will not only slow down but often stop in the current, floating on an angle downstream. The backward motion and angle together counterbalance the predominant action of the current on the canoe. The canoe floats gently, and safely downstream, away from danger and in glorious control.

If the backferry is not working, the angle is wrong or you have not turned on enough coal. At this point, only the bow paddler can fix the angle. (Note: The canoe is going backwards and bow is now in the steering position to control the angle.) Keep in mind that it may take a few strokes to work. You might be tempted to quit because the backferry isn't working but **HAVE FAITH. IT WORKS.** Keep paddling and try to trust your stern paddler not to quit. If he/she does, you'll know it because the boat will turn sideways right away and you will have to appeal loudly. Manners don't work.

When you have passed the danger, you can eddy into the main current by turning the bow downstream.

Backpaddling and backferrying are such useful techniques and can actually stop the canoe in the current as well as safely save your bacon in big waves and corners. But remember if either paddler stops paddling, the manoeuvre will not work. Your canoe may crash into the rocks and trees perhaps dump and get pinned under the water. In a backferry, unless both paddlers brace and lean downstream, the boat will flip: end of manoeuvre: beginning of swim.

On the other hand, you can eddy out above the rapid, which isn't so bad. You can make blackberry pie for dinner.



Mason books of interest:

Bill Mason, *Path of the Paddle*, Key Porter Books, Toronto, 1984.

Bill Mason, *Song of the Paddle*, Key Porter Books, Toronto, 1988.

Paul Mason and Mark Scriver, *Thrill of the Paddle*, Firefly Books, New York, 1999.

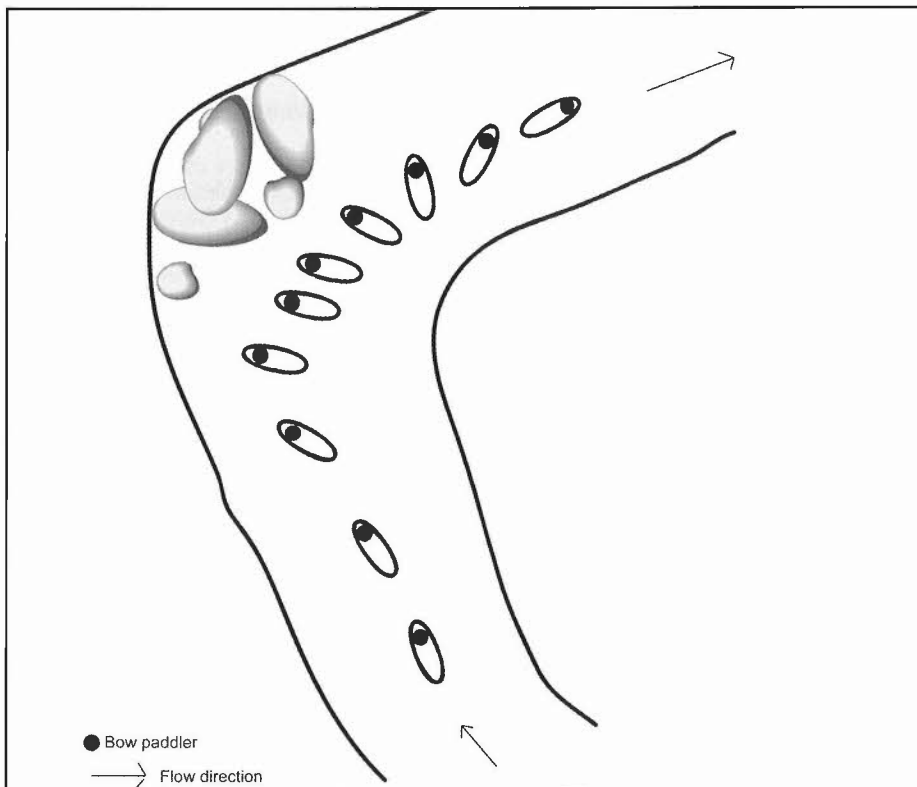


Figure 1

# WCA OUTINGS

**WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND HAVE IT  
PRESENTED IN THE SUMMER ISSUE?**  
**Contact the Outings Committee before August 15**

*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.

## All Season **HAVE PADDLE WILL TRAVEL, PART II**

Al Sutton, 905-985-0261 — I'm on the river most weekends through the season. If you'd like to get away, give me a call to find out what I'm doing. You're welcome to join me. Trip difficulty levels vary from intermediate to advanced.

## All Summer **MELLOW SUMMER WHITEWATER WEEKENDS**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca — Most weekends of the summer I am at the Gull for the day or the whole weekend. If there is decent water, I'll set up camp at Palmer's to do some paddling and catch some rays. It's a relaxed way to spend an all too short summer. Bring the spouse and kids along. If you are looking for an excuse to avoid painting or mowing the lawn, just give me a call & I'll tell you what I have planned. I'm happy to provide a little informal instruction for anyone new to moving water, or for paddlers wanting to work on their roll. Palmers is great for beginners. The run-out at the Gull can be used by novices, but you really need to be a good intermediate to paddle the course safely.

## Early June **DUMOINE RIVER**

Frank Knaapen and Jay Neilson 613-687-6037, book before May 14. — Contact organizers for exact dates. This will be a 3-4 day extended weekend trip. In early June this river requires self-sufficient wilderness and whitewater outfitting including flotation, wet/dry suits and strong intermediate whitewater skills.

## June 4 **ELORA GORGE**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca — Up north the bugs may be at their peak, but down on the Grand, you can at least paddle without getting eaten alive. At this time of year the Gorge is usually pretty tame, but it's a very pleasant day's outing. It's an excellent place for newer moving water paddlers to get some practice developing their skills, and I'd be happy to provide some informal coaching for anyone who wants it. Suitable for novice moving water paddlers.

## June 10 **GRAND RIVER**

Doug Ashton 519-620-8364, 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 paddlers with some moving water experience. An excellent family trip without any portaging.

## June 15-18 **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 Copanang. There is a fee for parking, water taxi, and group dinners. Limit of six canoes.

## June 17-18 **LONG LAKE/BUZZARD LAKE**

Cheryl Stoltz and David Atkins, 915-830-0720, book by June 10 — We have to run our teen up to this area north of Peterborough for a Scouting course, so we thought that we would stay and play too! Therefore, this is an lazy weekend/exploratory trip, and we will have our 5.5 year old son with us. This is an easy flat water trip; longest portage is 765m. We plan on camping on Buzzard and exploring from there.

## June 30-July 3 **TIM RIVER**

Howard Sayles, 416-921-5321 — We access the route at Algonquin Park west end Tim River access point # 2. This is a very enjoyable flatwater trip with slow down-river current, and narrow, winding continuous "S" curves. There are a few portages and some liftovers. Our route takes us to the area beyond Roseberry Lake, continuing along the Tim around the dam at the southeast end of Roseberry, past the Shaw portage junction to the historic farm site no longer standing. We shall return via the same route. Solo canoes welcome. Participants will need a good water filter with pre-filter as the water in this area is not drinkable otherwise and contains heavy silt.

## Late June/July **INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED SOLO WW COACHING WEEKEND**

Scott Card 905-665-7302, ScottCard@sympatico.ca — Take your paddling skills to the next level! An advanced intermediate solo whitewater coaching weekend in late June or July with Barry Godden. Exact date to be determined. We will be covering advanced river reading and running as well as playboating. The weekend will be on the Ottawa or the Gull River depending on water conditions. Participants must have their own boat and be comfortable with class III water. Limit 6 boats.

## July **ROUGE RIVER**

Martin Heppner, 416-365-7802 or 416-465-1558; mheppner@anchorsecurities.com, book by May 31. — Exact dates to be determined. This is a whitewater trip from Lac Rouge to the Ottawa. Contact organizer for details.

## July 1-3 **OTTAWA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before June 22. — We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practice your skills before attempting this river. Limit six boats.

## July 7-9 **CANOEING CHRISTIAN ISLAND**

Richard Steinberg, cell @ 647-284-8083, business 905 671-5494, email @ Steinberg.Richard@ups-scs.com, book as soon as possible. — We

will meet on the evening of Friday, July 7. Enjoy a weekend on Georgian Bay. Canoe over to one of the first Imperial Lighthouses on Georgian Bay. If the weather permits, we will search for the shipwreck Maple Dawn up the coast at Daly Point. It's mostly flatwater, but winds can make it rough. This will be a full day outing. Picnic & swimming on one of the sandy beaches before returning. Sunday is open for coastal canoeing. Due to planning requirements, can only accept participants who are certain they will be going. Please do not call unless you can make a firm commitment

#### July 8-9 **INTRODUCTION TO MOVING WATER**

Jon McPhee, 905-640-8819; Bill Ness, 416-321-3005; Scott Card, 905-665-7302, book before June 24. — This is a two-day workshop for flat-water paddlers who want to develop basic moving-water skills. It should be of interest to trippers who want to become more comfortable negotiating the moderate moving-water they often encounter on river trips, and to canoeists who want to determine if whitewater paddling could be for them. We will focus on the basics of moving-water boat control and manoeuvres, water reading, and safety. Both tandem and solo paddlers are welcome. The weekend will be spent at Palmer Rapids on the Madawaska River, one hour northeast of Bancroft. The location offers some of the best novice to intermediate whitewater in Southern Ontario. In order to be able to work closely with participants, registration is limited to six boats.

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

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

#### August 5-7 **OTTAWA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before July 30.— We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practice your skills before attempting this river. Limit six boats.

#### August 12- 20 **TEMAGAMI**

Richard Steinberg, cell @ 647-284-8083, business 905 671-5494, email @ Steinberg.Richard@ups-scs.com, book as soon as possible. — Join us for a 9 day trip on Lake Temagami and surrounding area. Short visit to Bear Island Indian Reserve and a hike on the Old Growth Pine Hiking Trail on Temagami Island. We will be exploring the northern area by way of several portages. This is rated as an intermediate flat-water trip as the lake water can be rough at times. Due to planning requirements, can only accept participants who are certain they will be going. Please do not call unless you can make a firm commitment.

#### August 22-28 **GEORGIAN BAY**

Don Andersen, dhandersen@aol.com, 716-873-4476, book before July 22. — We will be visiting the more secluded, remote sections of Georgian Bay in the vicinity of the mouth of the Key River. We will be exploring isolated sections of Sandy Bay, Kantos Point and the Champlain Islands in the southern portion of the trip with special emphasis to explore Fox Bay or Fox Lake in the trip's northern extremity. We may spend a night on Tanvat Island depending on weather and group interest. We may be exploring some of these areas by foot as well. We will be searching for new residents to the area, the Sandhill Crane, a large and magnificent water bird, whose range is increasing from the southwestern part of the Bay. This trip will use available shel-

tered waters whenever conditions require it. This trip is suitable for parents with adolescent children to retired folk alike provided they are competent novices who can manage windy conditions, waves, adhering to no-trace camping principles and can function in a team environment. Limit six canoes.

#### August 27 – September 17 **VOYAGEUR BOUNDARY WATERS**

Martin Heppner, 416-365-7802 or 416-465-1558; mheppner@anchorsecurities.com — Book by April 28th. We shall travel overland, westward to the Winnipeg River from Fort William and the Kaministiquia River or, alternatively, from Grand Portage and the Pigeon River, over the height of land, stopping in Quetico along the way, then west to Rainy Lake, then Lake of the Woods, ending at Minaki or the Winnipeg River. All plans to be made. Bring your pemmican. Limit of 3 canoes.

#### September 2-4 **OTTAWA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, or jhackert@sympatico.ca, book before August 25th. — We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practice your skills before attempting this river. Limit six boats.

#### September 2-4 **RIVIERE AUX SAUBLES**

Aleks Gusev, 416-236-7079, aleks@gusev.ca, book by August 15 — Riviere aux Sables is west of Sudbury, near Massey. This is a long drive from Toronto but well worth the trip for whitewater aficionados, with some of the best technical water in Ontario (class 2 to 4 with some class 5 falls for the adventurers). Must be at least a strong intermediate paddler. Fully outfitted whitewater boats required. Limit six boats.

#### October 15 **BURNT RIVER**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005 or bness@look.ca, book by October 6 — An opportunity to work off the calories from the Thanksgiving turkey dinner. An easy flatwater river trip from Kinmount to above the village of Burnt River. The Burnt always has enough water to be paddled. Pretty scenery and a few short portages make this a good late season outing. A great day out for families or anyone wanting to enjoy the fall woods from a boat.

#### October 27 to 29 **SHARK LAKE**

Gary James 416-512-6690, wca@sympatioc.ca, or Anne Lessio 905-686-1730 or alessio@istar.ca, book before October 1 — Join us in the Kawarthas for a fall trip from Long Lake down to Coon Lake; about 20 km with 7 portages. Four canoes and /or seven solo tents. A launch fee maybe required.

#### **ADDITIONAL TRIPS**

Check our website at [www.wildernesscanoe.ca/trips.htm](http://www.wildernesscanoe.ca/trips.htm) for additional trips. Members may submit additional trips to the Outings Committee anytime at [bness@look.ca](mailto: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](http://www.wildernesscanoe.ca/bulletin.htm) for private, non-WCA trips or partner requests.

#### January-March 2007 **POOL SESSIONS EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005 or bness@look.ca — Community groups wanting to rent swimming pools for recreational use in Toronto are challenged with numerous new bureaucratic hurdles, as well as fewer available pools. One now must pre-book long in advance to reserve space. However, we have two pieces of good news for winter pool paddlers. We have a booking at our usual Scarborough pool at Albert Campbell Collegiate for Sundays from 5:00 to 6:30 pm. Dates are January 7 to March 11. As well, fees haven't gone up for us, so the cost remains \$80 per person to cover the whole 10 sessions. Contact me to reserve a spot as space is limited.

## Where it is...



## ...in this issue

- |   |                              |                                 |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. The Lure of Mistastin                                      | 21. News Briefs              | 24. The Pike                    |
| 8. Mistastin – A Short Labrador Journey                       | 21. Book Review              | 25. Wilderness Classics         |
| 12. The Meanest Link: Linking the Algonquin Outfitters Stores | 22. Canadian Rivers Day      | 26. Project Canada              |
| 18. Tough Summer on the Back                                  | 22. Words from Mr. Canoehead | 28. Backferry, not Blackberries |
|   | 22. Food for Paddlers        | 30. WCA Outings                 |
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