



# nastawgan

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*The endless rapids below the falls that we ran*

## Kattawagami River and the James Bay Coast

**Text and photos by Brett Hodnett**

When planning where to go for a canoe trip, I almost invariably start by pulling out an Ontario and a Quebec road map. I scan these vast areas, looking for rivers that stay away from roads and towns, yet have an accessible start and end point to keep costs down. I say "I" plan a canoe trip because when I go on a trip with my long time canoeing comrade, Alex, all of the planning is left to me. Alex doesn't participate in the planning process; he prefers not to know what I've gotten him into. I tell him the date, the province, and how long we will be gone for. He packs the stuff he's responsible for, and I pack the stuff I'm responsible for. When the date comes we go.

The date for 2002 was June 12. The river was the

Kattawagami. If you look at an Ontario road map, you'll see that the Kattawagami screams, "Paddle Me!" Highway 652 runs north out of Cochrane for about 100 km where the paved road ends at Kattawagami Lake, which is the beginning of the river. The river then flows north where it eventually joins up with the Kesagami and flows into the Harricanaw, just before that river empties into James Bay. Heading west along the coast brings you to the Moose River, and a twenty kilometer paddle up the Moose brings you to the train station in Moosonee. The train is then a direct line back to Cochrane.

On the eleventh of June, we found our way to Cochrane, and spent the night at the campground in town, even though it



*Where'd the water go? Clay shoals of James Bay with tide out*

wasn't yet open for the season. For this trip, we decided to be extravagant and hired a fellow named Rick, who runs an equipment rental and car shuttle company called *Couriers de Bois*, to give us a lift to the start of the river. At about 8:45 a.m. on the 12th, Rick met us at the train station in Cochrane and we soon had our gear in his truck and were on our way. It was a straightforward drive and on route we were fortunate to see three bears, first a small one, and then a big sow with a cub. At the put-in, Rick helped us to unload his truck, and it was a simple carry from the road down the embankment to the river.

Although the river here was small, only about 35 feet in width, it was still much bigger than we had expected. We had heard that the few people who paddle this river usually fly into a small lake called Bayley Lake, about 50 km downriver from where we were starting. I had visions that this 50 kilometres would be a tiny creek crowded with treeautumns and boulders that we would have to struggle through for the first few days. That wasn't the case at all. There was lots of water and quite a few rapids early on,

mostly swifts and CI's, but also a couple that were big enough that we felt the need to scout them. The water was really dirty and often the standing waves looked like rocks, making it difficult to read the river.

During this first 50 kilometers, we also saw some wildlife. A beaver quickly dove underwater at our approach, and we came across two really large moose. An osprey was being chased by a bunch of smaller birds. There were dozens of Canadian Geese with young all along the river, always honking and splashing in an attempt to divert our attention from their young. The air was also filled with insects, mostly mayflies, which fluttered aimlessly over the water. Undesired wildlife was also plentiful. Whenever we stopped, the mosquitoes were horrendous, and they even annoyed us in a few areas as we paddled along the middle of the river.

The river had a fairly constant current and the shores were either swamp or lumpy and covered in autumnen black spruce trees on which there was no hope of putting up a tent. On our first day on the river we paddled until 9 p.m., we

came across the best place we had seen so far, having gone to shore a number of times and walked up into the bush in the hopes of finding somewhere to camp. We had to move a lot of autumnen trees, and it was lumpy and not actually big enough for the tent, but the moss and lichens made it quite soft to sleep on. Fortunately the days are long and it didn't get completely dark out until almost 11 p.m.

After Bayley Lake, there were a number of swifts but the river was generally wider and a bit more sluggish. The first rapid marked on our topo map was too big for us to run, but for the first time on the river so far there were rocky outcroppings, which made it straightforward to ease the canoe over the ledges. From these first rapids we paddled almost 10 km, passing a few swifts and CI's to the second set of rapids marked on the map. These rapids had a portage around them with a space for three tents at the start of it. They were all really bumpy, slanted, small spaces, but by far the best place to camp we had seen so far along the river, so we didn't hesitate to stop for the day. Since Bayley Lake we had seen quite a

few birds: six osprey, every one of which was screaming at us, and a lot more geese with their young. We also saw three hawks.

### June 14/02

From our campsite, the first section of the portage trail was only twenty-five meters or so long, where it put in just below a bit of a autumns, leaving the rest of the rapids to be run. Beyond this, the trail continued to the bottom of the rapids but it didn't appear to have seen very much traffic. By 9:30 a.m. on a hot sunny morning, we had done the short portage and run the bottom section of the rapids. All day long we had rapids to run. There weren't a lot of rapids shown on the map, but in between the ones shown were a lot of CIs and a few CII's. One of the rapids shown on the map was definitely an autumns, and most of the other ones shown required careful scouting and often lining. There were so many rapids that at the end of the day it was hard to remember them all. We had problems finding a site again because there really wasn't anywhere to set up. We didn't stop today until after 8 p.m. and this was on a shrubby outcropping where we had to chop down a lot of little shrubs and then lay down hemlock boughs to try to get the tent level, and to keep the underbrush from poking holes in it. Since the road we've paddled approximately 105 km's. With all the lining and scouting this river is a lot of work to get down, even though there are almost no portages.

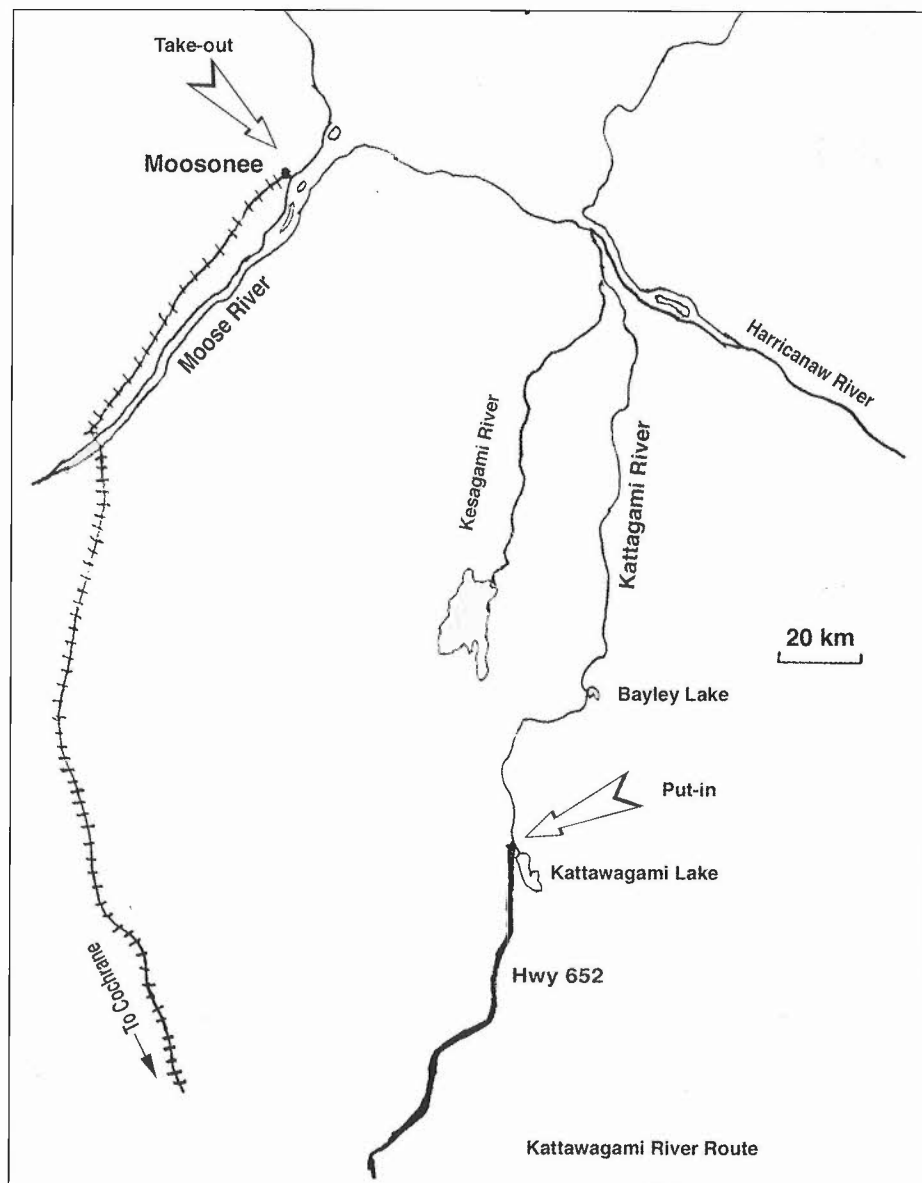
### June 15/02

It was another hot sunny day; the weather has been great so far. Today was chock full of rapids. We passed nine that were marked on our topo map and couldn't run a single one. They were all either too big to run, or had severe ledges, unless of course they had severe ledges AND were too big to run. Between the unrunnable rapids that are on the map, however, there are a large number of runnable rapids. There were none that we felt the need to scout, but a few of them would probably have been CIII's and there were a lot of technical CII's.

Despite all of the rapids that we couldn't run, we only had to do three portages all day, and these were just short walks along the bedrock shore. What we did spend most of our time doing was lining. It also took us a lot of time to figure out the best place to line or portage. In particular, there was one place where the river turned into quite an impressive autumns as it split into three around a pair of islands only to be followed by another pair of islands where the river split into three again. This made it incredibly difficult to judge which way to line and carry around them, since taking the easiest route around the first pair of islands could force us into taking the most difficult route

around the second. After much time spent scouting each side of the river and the top pair of islands, we found a route that turned out to be just a short stretch of lining followed by a short easy portage.

In the early afternoon, too early to think about stopping, we were passing an island where I had planned for us to stay that night. As we paddled by it I was telling Al that this was our planned stopping point, when along the shore we saw a big black bear walking through the alder bushes. He walked along the shore, watching us with curiosity before turning and strolling into the woods. I'm glad we hadn't set our hearts on stopping there. When we did stop at 6 p.m. we



Kattawagami River Route



Al, who was controlling the rope at the front of the canoe, spent ten minutes attempting to throw the rope to himself around the trunk of an old cedar that must have had a ten-foot circumference. Eventually he got it, and after some more hard work and wet feet we reached the main channel.

It was a sort of grey rainy day, but it didn't end up raining very much in the end. We made camp on a rock about thirty feet up from the river at about 6:30. Although the river is very rocky, it is surrounded by swamp. Apart from our second night's site, we haven't seen any real campsites. In fact, the only signs that people have been here at all, are a few scrapes of red and blue paint on some of the same rocks that we pull the canoe over. So I suppose at least two canoes must have been here ahead of us, but where they camped I have no idea.

#### June 17/02

It was a good thing we stopped yesterday when we did. This morning, just past our site, we came to two sets of rapids, one right after the other, that were the most convoluted and complicated of any so far. We spent ages going from side to side of the river and bushwhacking around different islands trying to figure out what route to take without getting ourselves committed to a route that we would regret. We finally decided on lining through a shallow steep section on the far side of an island. I think we chose the best route, but it had taken us a long time to decide on it. The rest of the day didn't go much quicker, as we were constantly in and out of the canoe, over and over; there were a lot more carries than there were yesterday (where we have to unload the canoe and carry everything a few meters, just to load it back in the canoe again-not really long enough to call a portage.) There were even two short trails to follow, although they didn't look like they got much use. We also passed an actual campsite that people had used, but it seemed very small for our big tent and it was only 6 p.m. so we kept going. At the site, I did find a waterproof map bag with some faded maps in it. I hope no one was relying on those.

*What we spent most of our time doing – lining canoe down the waterfalls*

had only traveled 10 km total all day. It's a good thing that our previous days had put us ahead of schedule, because the map shows even more rapids ahead.

#### June 16/02

We were up early and at the next rapids right away. All day we never had more than 500 metres between rapids. Of the more than 15 rapids on our map that we passed today we could only run maybe three. The rest, apart from two easy portages, we lined. Our lining is getting pretty creative. We lower the canoe full of gear over three foot drops, or run along beside the canoe as it cascades down in four inches of water over the smooth bedrock. A few times we slid the

canoe out of the rapids and "lined" the fully loaded canoe down ten or fifteen feet of dry rock to avoid stretches where the water was too tough to line. We would use the bailer to wet the rocks before pulling the canoe onto the shore, but even so, only Royalex would have withstood such abuse. At one set of rapids the only reasonable way to get around them was to line through a little "creek" that broke away from the main river and through the trees before meeting up with the main channel again below. It was very fast moving and rocky, and trees were hanging over it making it necessary to pass the rope from one hand to the other around their trunks as we made our way downstream. I sat laughing as

We ended up camping at the start of a short carry on some moss covered rocks. We've lost track of where we are exactly. With the constant rapids it makes it difficult to distinguish one from the next and we never seem to make time to pay attention to the map when we're so busy. We must be fairly close to the end of the rapids though. Both of our hands are in pretty bad shape, with cracks and blisters from all the lining we've been doing. So a break from the lining might be nice.

Most of the day today it was rainy, but it was very calm and the sun was out sometimes. From our site we saw a fantastic double rainbow, one of which had very distinct strips of color and seemed to come down right to the water. You could see it on the trees on the far shore. We were going to cross over and look for the pot of gold, but even if we found it, who the hell wants to portage it.

#### **June 18/02**

Well, we got to the end of the intense rapids section of the river. The numerous rapids along this river have been a lot of fun, even though we end up lining most of them. There is a lot of time spent figuring out where to run/line/ portage the river and it's interesting to see how creative you can get. I don't know if these few days of intense rapids would be much fun on a guided trip however. If someone knew the river and told you exactly where to get in and out, I think you would start to feel like a member of a chain gang, slaving away all day with very little time actually spent in the canoe.

This morning there were a few big autumns to portage and line, and we ran a few good runs, when quite suddenly it began to look like James Bay Lowlands. The shores are clay and scattered with boulders, until you paddle for a while and the boulders start to disappear. It looks a lot like the Missinaibi River does after you get through the gorge below Thunderhouse Autumns.

Even on the lowlands the river has a pretty good current, and we made good progress despite the fact that we were still negotiating rapids on the shield after 3 p.m. It was hot and sunny all day and

the bugs weren't bad at all for a change. When we got to our site however, the mosquitoes were worse than they had been all trip. The banks are soft clay with grasses up to the forest edge. We continued paddling for a long time before settling on a spot to camp at about 8:30. Over the last few days we have seen numerous osprey, one pair circling around their nest high in a tree on an island. We also saw a skunk digging in the soft ground along the edge of the river.

#### **June 19/02**

Late in the night, when a full bladder prompted me to go outside, the sky was clear and filled with white streaky northern lights. It was a treat since I don't usually stay up into the night, and so don't get to see them very often.

In the morning it was hot and sunny with not a cloud in the sky. We paddled the short distance in a slow, indifferent current to where the Kattawagami meets the Kasagami River. We stopped where the rivers met and filled up with about 15 liters of water, not knowing what to expect on James Bay. Along the river, we spotted a marten and we also came across two young moose. They allowed us to paddle quite close to them, but then when they did run into the bush they went so fast that they left behind five or six moose flies, which buzzed around us for a while in confusion. It had been windy all afternoon, but when we got to the clay shoals where the Harricanaw empties into James Bay the wind picked up significantly. It was about 1 p.m. and it appeared that it had just recently been high tide. Over lunch, we tried to figure out how we would go about our paddle to Moosonee along the James Bay Coast. We had never dealt with tides before and knew we had to come up with a strategy.

About half way between our location at the mouth of the Harricanaw and the mouth of the Moose River, is Netitishi Point. Although there were no contour lines shown on the map, we figured that this must be a relatively high spot, since there appeared to be very little difference in the size of the shoals between high tide and low tide. Low tide at any other

place along the coast creates shoals that go literally kilometers out from shore. Also, at thirty kilometers along the coast, Netitishi Point seemed like a perfect goal for one days paddle.

Although the shoals are less significant at the Point, we still didn't know what to expect, so we wanted to arrive at the point at high tide to avoid carrying all of our gear and canoe through the mud when we landed. Since high tide seemed to be at around noon, we figured that the next high tide would be at around midnight. So if we left after we ate lunch, we would want to arrive at Netitishi Point around then. This didn't seem like a great plan on a windy day, so we figured that we would try to be ready to go by 4 a.m. the next morning, when it started to get light. Unlike the bay itself, the river tide only goes out twenty or thirty feet, so we could launch at whatever time we wanted.

Now that we had the day off, we had a lot of time to look around. The conifer trees have all but gone, and there are only poplars and willows along the shores. Where we are now is mostly open field with sparse four-foot high willows. It's very windy and we are quite exposed, so I hope that no bad weather blows in. The shoals really are big. When the tide is out, the bay is just a field of clay. We can't even see the water in the distance. We walked around on the shoals for a bit, and at least around here the clay seems pretty solid; we don't really sink into the mud at all. At 6 p.m., lying in the tent writing in my journal, it is so hot that I feel almost sick. Even though it is still sunny we are going to try to get some sleep before 2:30 rolls around and it's time to get up. At least we have a plan.

#### **June 20/02**

We were up at 2:30 and on the water just after 4 am. We put our homemade three quarter canoe cover on the canoe and wetsuits on ourselves, preparing for the unknown. It was still hot, and really windy. At low tide, which it was pretty close to, the river flows between shoals that continue beyond the actual mouth of the river for about seven km. This is



*Waterwalker. Our five minute break*

where all of the sediments that come down the Harricanaw settle. We would have to paddle out and around this before we could paddle west along the coast.

We raced along the edge of the shoal, thanks to a strong tailwind, covering several kilometers in no time. When we looked back we couldn't see the true shore anymore, just clay tidal flats as far as the eye could see. Then quite suddenly, the skies grew black and the wind picked up as it started to pour with rain. We were extremely worried about lightning. If there was lightning, there would be nothing taller than us in any direction for miles. I didn't know what we could do, just hope we were lucky I guess. We were also a little worried that the tide might come in quickly, leaving us in the middle of nowhere with no land around and a strong wind heading out to sea. We reluctantly decided that we had to turn back.

It was a brutal paddle back, pouring like crazy with a powerful wind kicking up big choppy waves. The fear of lightning was rattling my nerves. As far as paddling the rough water itself was concerned, the reassuring thing was that the water was shallow, and at any time we could get out of the canoe. The scary part

about that was that standing tall on shore was the last place you wanted to be.

The worst seemed to pass and we could see clouds again. We stopped on the shoal to decide if it was just a passing storm cloud but the distance was just a grey haze and we didn't think it was a good idea to continue. The winds heading back were still brutal and it took a couple of hours just to paddle back to where we had started from. We decided to continue eight kilometers up the Harricanaw to Goose Camp. This is where a lot of people finish their trips down the Kattawagami, Kasagami, and Harricanaw rivers, to await a shuttle out. We didn't really have a plan from there, but figured we could talk to someone and find out if these relentless winds ever let up.

It was a long eight kilometers into the wind, but eventually we dragged the canoe up the shore to have a look around. There was an impressive two-story log building—a chalet I guess you would call it—nearly finished being built. It looked as though the building process had been taking years, but it didn't seem very far from being completed. This new-looking building had a couple of windows wide open and the front door was open and blowing in the wind. The grounds were quite a mess, with junk

piled all over the place. Beside the new chalet was a more modest wooden building that was obviously the building that was used. A sign on the door read: "Please remove your shoes." So we removed our shoes and made ourselves at home. From the magazines laying around, and a journal that was left on the kitchen table, it was clear that no one had been here since last season. The cabin had four large bedrooms and a big central kitchen and dining area. Although we had been out on the water for almost six hours, it was only 10 a.m., so we had all day to kill. We mostly just hung around and read old articles of *Time*, *Macleans*, and *Readers Digest* that were laying around, but it was nice to be sitting comfortably on chairs. The weather cleared up a bit during the course of the day but the persistent wind didn't let up. Our plan for tomorrow is to leave at around 9 a.m., so that we get to the mouth of the Harricanaw at about 10 a.m. High tide will likely be closer to noon but with any luck we can sneak around the corner past the shoals without going to far out. Hopefully the weather will improve.

#### **June 21/02**

Last night we had a pretty bad sleep. We were excited about being able to sleep on beds, but as soon as it got dark the mosquitoes started to fill the bedroom, and we ended up having to sleep in our bug jackets. It would have been more comfortable in the tent without the all night buzzing. We got everything packed up and into the canoe by 9 a.m. as planned. The power of yesterday's winds became apparent to us as we walked down to the canoe. Another door had blown open in the chalet (we closed the doors before we left) and a hand-carved wooden chair with a big W on the back that was sitting out overlooking the river had blown over. That chair had to have been sitting there since the previous autumn without blowing over, so the winds must have been particularly bad. This morning the wind was nowhere near as strong as it had been, but now it was blowing in off the bay, giving us a headwind. With the high tide coming in as well, it was a lot

of work just to get to the mouth of the river. The bit of extra time it took us put us at the bay when the tide was quite high, and we could cut across the shoal without any problem. It was a beautiful day for paddling. There were virtually no clouds once we were out on the bay there was only a slight breeze blowing in towards land.

Paddling in the bay took some getting used to. The water gets deeper so gradually that we needed to stay what must have been about a kilometer out from shore in order to keep just enough water under us to paddle. I don't know if it was us creeping in or the tide going out, but it always seemed that we had to paddle at about a thirty degree angle away from shore if we wanted to avoid having our paddles start hitting bottom.

About 20 km along the coast, there is a small island that is about three km from shore. With the clear blue skies we could see this island from quite a distance, and we soon realized that there was no water between it and the land. The tide was already low and going out further. Paddling around the outside of it seemed to take forever. The tide was out far enough that there was land for over a kilometer beyond the island. The shoal was littered with rocks, many of which were several feet in diameter. We originally tried to keep a minimal depth of water underneath us, but kept getting tied up in the rocks and uneven ground that surrounded the island. This forced us to paddle far outside the edge of the shoal. At our furthest point, we must have been actually paddling at least six kilometers from the true shore. It certainly seemed like a long detour at the time.

After we got to the far side of the island, the paddling became much more straightforward, as we cut on an angle back towards shore. This gave us probably five or six kilometers across what is called Hannah Bay, in water that for the first time was deep enough that we couldn't touch bottom.

We continued along shore for a couple of more kilometers to Netitishi Point, which is where we had planned to stop. It was 6 p.m. and the tide seemed low, which left Netitishi Point quite a distance

across the shoals. We had not been out of the canoe since we started paddling nine hours before, and had only eaten a chocolate bar and nuts and raisins all day. But the air was still and the sun was blazing in the sky. When would we get another perfect day like this? After a brief discussion we decided to continue on. We didn't want to take a chance that there would be a change in the weather while we still had some of James Bay to paddle.

The mouth of the Moose River is about 20 km away as the crow flies (Oh to be a crow.) Al was happy to just continue on uninterrupted, but for my psychological health I wanted to stand up on land for a minute. So we got out in a few inches of water, and had some nuts and raisins as we walked, pushing the canoe along shore at a leisurely pace. Although we only walked for five minutes, it felt good. It was like we were heading out anew.

The shoals around the Moose River are much bigger than those around the Harricanaw. The map has them extending about 10 km beyond the mouth of the river. So our paddling brought us gradually further and further away from shore. After several hours paddling it was beginning to get dark and we were getting worried that we wouldn't even be able to see the mouth of the river from so far away. The trees on shore made only a thin line along the horizon. We were fortunate in that it was the longest day of the year, but when the sun went down at around 10 p.m. we still hadn't seen the mouth of the Moose, or found any deep water that would lead us there. Shortly after the sun dropped behind the horizon however, we could see a break in the thin line of trees in the distance. Keeping tight to shore, a channel eventually opened up and we were heading towards land.

The night was beautiful. Directly to our right, behind what really looked like the edge of the world, the sun's glow painted the horizon red. And to our left, the almost-full moon shone a bright white light in an empty sky that seemed to stretch forever. After paddling some distance between these enchanted shoals, the silence was broken by what must

have been a small army of geese, honking incessantly. At one point, I saw something large surface briefly about fifteen feet from the canoe: a seal; a Beluga whale; my tired mind playing tricks in the dark?

Although it was a beautiful night, the ten or so kilometers we had to paddle between the shoals to reach the mouth seemed long. We had lost track of whether the tide was going in or out, but the Moose River has a strong current, and there was no reason to think that the current would stop as it ran between the shoals. When we did finally get to the mouth, we stopped on Ship Sands Island. This was actual land with trees and everything! We stretched our legs and had some more nuts, but there was no stopping us now. In the morning there would be a train leaving Moosonee for Cochrane. If we didn't make that train it would be a three-day wait for the next one. Moosonee was still twenty kilometers upriver, but this time "as the crow flies" wasn't so far off the truth. We climbed back into the canoe after our only second five minute break of the day and started upriver. Just a short distance up the river we could see some lights on a tower in Moosonee or Moose Factory. This made it seem close. Lights are deceiving that way however. You paddle and paddle and they just don't get any closer. It seemed to take forever.

When we finally did reach the edge of town, Al was inspired to paddle full out for the last stretch, and of course I had to keep time. The part of town that we had to get to was a lot further away than I think he envisioned and we pumped away like maniacs for what must have been fifteen minutes. But we had made it. The moon was just setting as we stumbled onto shore at 3:30 or 4 a.m.

While Al portaged the canoe through the quiet streets of Moosonee to the train station, I carried all of our packs up the embankment to the side of the road. Luckily Al ran into the OPP officer on duty, who gave us and our packs a drive up to the station. In no time we were laying on the asphalt next to the train, with only a few hours to kill until we left for Cochrane.

# The Changing North

Text and photos by Diane Gribbin



*One o'clock a.m. on Kathawachaga Lake where the Burnside River begins*

Heading to Canada's north each autumn-time has become a part of my natural rhythm. It's a personal migration with the change in seasons, a journey that brings forth a shift in my own patterns, pace, and way of being. It is a time for hard physical work, rushing water, and outdoor living. As an arctic river guide, the North has become a second home for me. For the past nine years my time river guiding up north has become a ritual so interwoven into my being that I've come to depend on it for retreat, healing, and adventure. With each passing year I find I dissolve a little more into the northern landscapes, becoming a reflection of the rivers and terrain I travel. Truly connecting to place for me, means embedding myself into the rhythms of the north in a full sensory way, and surrendering to the many river arteries I continue to flow with each season. When my whole body recalls the feelings, sights, smells, sounds, rhythms of a place and its changing seasons, I feel I am at the very beginning of developing a sense of place.

In my life as a river guide there are rivers I've traveled countless times. There are rhythms and patterns I've come to know and recognize that mark the seasons beginning and end. I notice the cues and patterns; I like autumn's brief and impressive rainbow-carpet wild flower displays. Arnica, orchids, paintbrush, heather and more, their smells amplifying in sweetness and combining to create a new distinctive aroma that can't be described yet can't be mistaken. I see the season bringing an exponential increase in the number of bird species to the north. Traveling exhausting journeys from all over the world to the tundra, they come for the plentiful mosquito food source and a safe place to nest and refuel for a long journey back south again. I anticipate the thick threads of caribou that will cross flowing waters by the thousands, also in search of a safe place to bear their young. Being present in these rhythms season after season, I find I remember and even expect certain cues. Cold and warm air pockets moving

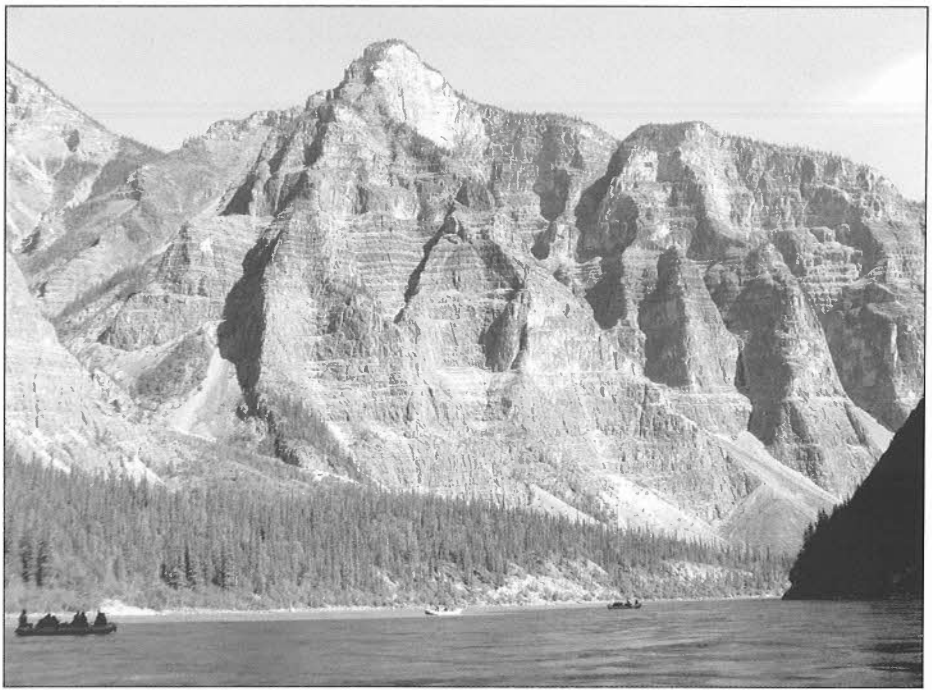
through the river canyons indicate to me it must be August, a time when the frosty mornings linger in the shadows while all else heats up with the warm afternoon sun. The beginning of the autumn rainbow carpet is created as carefully adapted creeping, low growing and dwarf plants change colour with the cold air every so slowly, until overnight it seems to rush the entire tundra and becomes an ocean of colour. The night sky begins to move from 24-hour daylight into brief periods of dusk. When dusk becomes ever so briefly dark, the vast expanse gives birth to the dance of northern lights, an indication my seasonal river life is coming to an end, and I know the time approaches when I'll head south once again for autumn and winter.

For nine years I've traveled northern rivers, brief really if you're thinking like a mountain. It's not long enough to truly know a place when compared with the stories we've heard in many northern towns and villages, told to us by elders whose ancestors have been passing down



traditional local knowledge for over ten thousand years. Though it has certainly been time enough for me to become embedded in a way that has me expecting familiar patterns and rhythms. This past season I realized that my ability to notice explicit and subtle patterns makes it obvious for me to also notice something else: when something is different. This past summer it was strangely clear to me that the rhythms and patterns I expected and awaited had changed.

A river guide's dream came true when I was gifted with a most colourful and challenging array of the river schedule last summer. I had the opportunity to embark upon a diverse tapestry of northern rivers, each unique in history and features, each overwhelmingly stunning. I traveled the Burnside River and Thelon River in the North West Territories, the Soper River on Baffin Island, and the Nahanni River three times – a river very dear to my heart. When I was asked to write about the experience of navigating so many great northern rivers in one summer, my mind kept taking me over and over again to what had struck me the most last season: all the things that were not the same as in years past. This past summer what stood out above all else to me were the overwhelming shifts and changes taking place in these landscapes I travel. It seemed most fitting to express what I truly experienced, to relay my observations, feelings, and concerns



*Towering walls of endless history that Nahanni carved*

for the changing north, a place I love so deeply.

As a river guide I was excited to hear I'd be guiding the "caribou migration trip" on the Burnside. The trips are advertised this way as they are timed to coincide with the historic Bathurst Caribou migration. Musk oxen and caribou are the two most commonly-seen animals along the river. The Bathurst caribou herd numbers over 300,000 animals, and they cross the Burnside River on

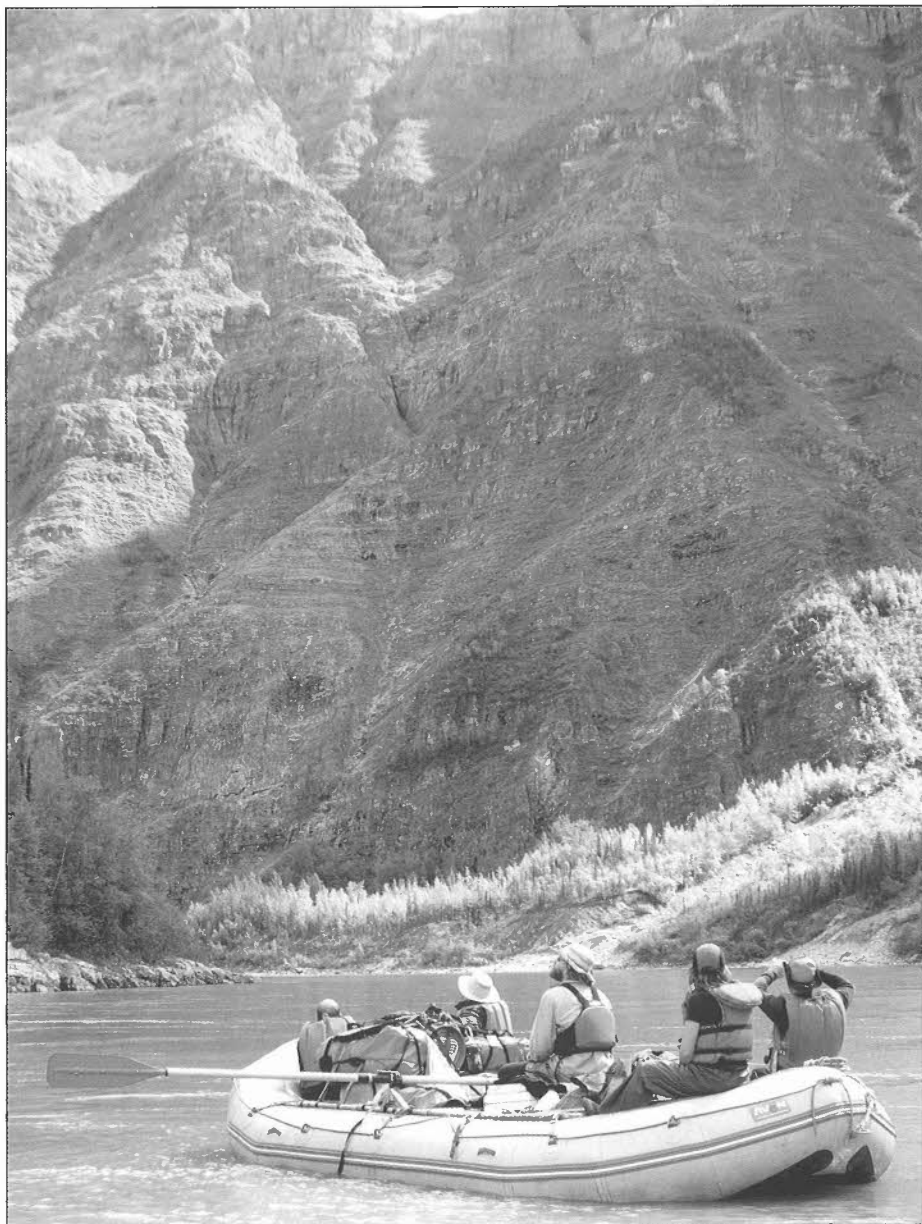
their way to and from their calving grounds along the east side of Bathurst Inlet around the Elise River. Nature has its ebbs and flows, though for this trip it is usually safe to say caribou sightings are guaranteed; it is usually only a question of how many will be seen. During two weeks of traveling the Burnside River there was no sign of a migration to be found. At places we could see a high water mark lined with white fur, indicating the herd had passed through some time ago. At the end of the trip

we asked local people of Bathurst Inlet about the migration. They told us the herd had been many weeks early, and had taken a completely different route. This was considered mysterious behavior, potentially related to the shortened winter and early coming of autumn.

Was climate change the reason for the shift? Perhaps, or maybe the drastic change in timing and route was due to other factors. One thing is for certain, the climate is becoming warmer, and the Arctic being especially sensitive, will be the first and most drastically effected. The Arctic regions are strong yet so very specialized and sensitive. It wasn't until I spent a good part of my Environmental Science Masters degree program in Alaska studying plant adaptations and the uniqueness of the arctic ecosystem that I realized just how very sensitive this region is. The northern ecosystem is extremely strong in its ability to survive the region's conditions, but fragile in that its very specialized adaptations are highly unique to the arctic environment, and therefore result in an ecosystem that is extremely vulnerable to change. For this reason species are highly interdependent on one another for survival. The extent of this interdependence hit home for me when I discovered that without mosqui-



*Nadlock Island on the Burnside River is the only known excavated site showing the transition from Thule to Copper Inuit culture*



*Soaking up the beauty of Nahanni canyons*

toes there would be no bears! It works like this: mosquitoes are dependent on water for breeding; the permafrost is what allows the tundra and alpine lakes to exist; the mosquitoes pollinate everything, including the berries depended upon by bears. So as the permafrost melts, the lakes drain, the mosquitoes can't reproduce: no pollination, no berries, no bears. Mosquitoes are also what bring so many birds to the arctic; the arctic tern literally travels from Antarctica for the perfect feeding and breeding conditions.

This past summer the lakes were still there; we watched many healthy grizzlies

and their playing cubs and the tundra mosquitoes were in fine form, let me tell you. It was, however, the first time I witnessed the stress that early effects of climate change are having on another type of bear—the polar bear. After the Burnside River, I had headed next to a very special Canadian heritage river, the Soper River, on Baffin Island in Katannilik Territorial Park. Katannilik means “the place of waterautumns,” a beautiful lush valley that magically appears amongst the extremely barren landscape of surrounding rock and ice. The Soper River valley passes through the Meta Incognita Peninsula from

Kimmirut. Cliffs rise almost 1,000 feet on both sides of the valley. This valley exists within its own microclimate, a surprising greenscape with waterautumns cascading down to the river at every bend. The river is even host to the tallest dwarf trees on Baffin Island with a willow forest over six whole feet high! Quite a remarkable occurrence at that latitude.

On Baffin Island there exists only one kind of bear—the polar bear. There are no black bears or grizzlies. The polar bear, however, is not even written about in the Park Brochure as they are normally not seen in Katannilik in the summer time.

You can imagine my shock as we pulled into camp one night and I was called over to investigate some tracks. They were clearly fresh bear tracks, and there's only one kind of bear on Baffin! We were alarmed to say the least. We wondered what on earth a polar bear was doing so far inland in Katannilik Territorial Park. We learned later it might have been a starving bear, wandering inland in search of food.

The bears patterns and behaviors have been shifting with the changing climate; they depend on the sea ice for hunting. Known as *Ursus maritimus*, or “bear of the sea,” the largest land carnivore in the world, polar bear is also the species most vulnerable to climate change. The amount of time the ice is frozen is directly proportionate to the body weight they are able to attain to get them through the summer. When Arctic sea ice starts to break up earlier than normal in the autumn because of warmer temperatures, polar bears have reduced access to hunting and breeding grounds. Females in particular are not able to hunt enough food to sustain them through the summer months and with lower body weights, the mothers have a hard time successfully nursing their cubs. In Canada, the southernmost polar bear populations are already experiencing declines in cub survival because of these factors. A hungry polar bear was not something our group wanted to experience! Upon return to Kimmirut we let the parks office know about our bear-track discovery. Long time park wardens were disbelieving, and asked to see photographs of the bear prints. We gave

them copies of the photographs. Extremely surprised, they let us know they would immediately change the park brochures to warn of polar bears, the changing patterns, and polar bear safety for hikers and boaters even in the summer time.

Our group was fortunate to have an opportunity to stay with local Inuit families in Kimmirut at the end of our trip. The family I stayed with informed me there had also been a polar bear sighted in town. I left Baffin Island reflecting on the changes I was witnessing first hand. For the first time, I felt I was beginning to experience climate change in a very real and full sensory way. Just as I was having these thoughts on my plane out of Iqaluit, I looked up to see a familiar face. It took me a few minutes to recognize I was looking at Peter Mansbridge. Over the course of the flight I learned the T.V. crew was heading up to do an episode for "The National" from an ice-breaker, the subject being climate change.

I then headed to my home away from home, a river I've traveled more than any other, the Nahanni. I can say with certainty that the Nahanni is where I feel the most taken care of, of all the northern rivers I've journeyed. I have a deep connection to this river that flows deep in my heart. The changes I've witnessed on the Nahanni over the past nine years involve the ever-increasing threats of mining that could lead to the contamination of this sacred and pristine watershed. Of particular threat are Canadian Zinc Corporation's proposed Prairie Creek Mine, North American Tungsten's Cantung Mine operating on the Flat River, as well as several other long-dormant exploration projects that are being re-activated due to the current high metal prices. The long campaign to stop these threats and nation-wide efforts to expand the park boundary expansion to include the entire watershed seem to be endless and slow. I've guided several of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's trips to raise awareness of these issues that began years ago. Now it is hard to believe that some of these companies may still be allowed to operate less than 16 km away from the river with tailings ponds right next to the in-



*Katannilik Territorial Park. Soper River is known as Baffin's Green Valley, lush and laden with waterfalls*

flowing creeks. I feel very passionate about protecting this sacred place, as do many others. For me the Nahanni is a spiritual meeting place, a place where I've met many lifetime connections, including my partner Sean. I've lived over winter in the community of Fort Simpson working with elders and Dene youth to create programs to reconnect youth to their culture language and traditions. Successfully acquiring funding for the proposed programs, we were able to organize trips along the river once a year for three consecutive years with the youth. I have vivid memories of the heart-moving moments and breakthroughs we had with Dene youth supported by the Nahanni landscape. These memories always return to me each time I travel with this river flow. I feel deeply connected to the Nahanni; it is frightening to me that despite nation-wide campaigning, this watershed is still under threat in the changing north. This summer I am only guiding a single trip on the Nahanni. It comes with a bit of unease and nervousness; there is a feeling

that something magic, a place that should last forever, a river that was there before the rise of the very mountains its canyons flow through is imminently threatened. This season I worry, I wonder, I will savor every magic moment, every orchid, every vista from every canyon top, and I will keep writing my letters of protest. Last season, as the bright sun nights began to show signs of dusk I headed lastly for the Thelon River, a place far from anywhere. An incredibly unique landscape that combines barren tundra with pockets of spruce trees. Truly a remote and untouched wilderness, with an extraordinary "edge effect" because it is here that boreal forest meets tundra. The Thelon River is on the edge of two ecosystems colliding. Not only can you spot wolves, caribou and muskox from the canoes like a classic tundra river, but in the last decade animals only seen previously at lower latitudes have also been sighted. The moose have arrived by moving tree pocket to tree pocket until reaching the Thelon River Sanctuary. The sanctuary is



*Stranded on the moonscape of Eyeberry Lake on the Thelon River, awaiting better weather that would allow float planes to land*

North America's largest tract of wilderness, with the closest settled communities in any direction being over 400 km away. You can imagine our shock when half way through our journey of silence and solitude we were interrupted by a large incoming helicopter that landed in the middle of our camp! The pilots who climbed out to enthusiastically greet us (more enthusiastic than we were to see them) were flying for a uranium mining exploration camp that was set up nearby. The next two days we were buzzed by float planes and more helicopter action. We watched planes bring in local elders to be given tours of the camps with an environmental scientist who was working with the community. She took the time to meet with our group in an effort to explain and apologize for all the disruption. The complexities of uranium mining on the Thelon and the cultural, political, corporate, and environmental layers involved in the decision-making were described to our group. Having autumn in love with this rainbow tundra, and having experienced such magic moments of connection with the wild animals to which the Thelon is home, we all felt affected, concerned and reflective for the rest of the trip. Many of us have written letters in hope of protecting this place with which we so

deeply connected. The Burnside, the Soper, The Nahanni, the Thelon: each a completely unique experience in feeling, ecology, culture, and history, but all drawn together in the effects they suffer from a changing north, be it through exploitation of resources or climate change. In my connection to these places and my embeddedness in patterns and rhythms over the past nine years of northern travel, I noticed, in this past season above all else, the differences to years past. I am concerned for the north, these places I have come to know and love, places that are woven deeply throughout me. I have shared these rivers with so many people, these powerful landscapes I've observed to deeply move and transform individuals, my own family included. I know that ultimately I have to be the change I wish to see in the world. I continue to write letters and join the campaigns to protect these places.

But perhaps what has even more meaning, is the empowered action I am taking in my own life on a daily basis. I am acting locally to create global change. Climate change effects not just these rivers, but all rivers, all life, the health of our water, air, and food, our earth, us. This year in addition to the importance of letter writing and campaigning, I have

been celebrating my passion for Canadian northern wilderness but also the health of our earth and its inhabitants by diligently decreasing my own impact. Conserving energy, buying locally, taking public transportation, composting, using fabric shopping bags, and growing food instead of a lawn. These are just a few of the easy steps I've taken to impact my own impact! There are so many ways I am empowered as an individual to take action and pay gratitude to the north I know and love. I have been greatly changed by the rivers that I've traveled. Their flow, their constantly changing channels, like the course of life, bring great lessons, and in this way even the rivers I've traveled countless times remain somewhat unknowable to me. They have taught to be humble and flexible, a life-long learner, and an agent of action to carry forward the changes I wish to see in this world.

For more information these issues or to learn what actions can be taken to be the voice of rivers and/or act locally to decrease climate change visit:

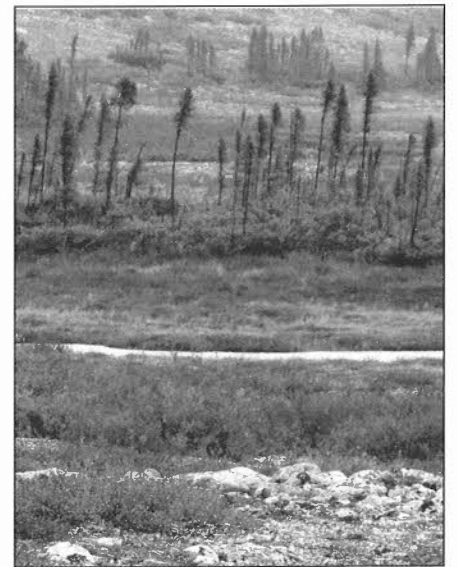
<http://www.davidsuzuki.org/NatureChallenge/more.asp>

<http://www.cpaws.org/nahanni/>

[http://www.nahanni.com/pdf/AGPrairieCreekMinePetitionJune10\[1\].pdf](http://www.nahanni.com/pdf/AGPrairieCreekMinePetitionJune10[1].pdf)

<http://www.myfootprint.org/>

<http://www.davidsuzuki.org/NatureChallenge/>



*"The edge effect" Boreal forest meets tundra on the Thelon River creating a highly unique ecology and habitat*

# Canoe Trip to Balboa Bay

Text and photos by Allen Hill

To understand why I was headed across the seven miles of Unga Strait in early June into 15 to 20 knot northwest winds at 2:30 p.m. you need to know about autumn, winter and autumn in the Shumagin Islands. This year our first frost was on October 6th. Our last frost will be in April or May. Our climate is maritime temperate. Our latitude is very near that of Ketchikan, Alaska. Here we do not generate the low pressure systems that rush through every three or four days during most of the year. Here we are victims of weather.

When I park while the wind blows rain or snow across the island, I need to park into the wind. This keeps the door from being pulled out of my hands when I get out. In December and January it doesn't get light until after 10:30 a.m. On weekends when the wind is from the southeast, drifting out of the northwest or calm, I can hike along the beach from East Head to Danger Point or beyond to Sand Dollar beach and Pirate Cove. I look for petrified wood, jade, agates, and driftwood. In a few places there are roots like whitish rock. They are round and tapered with a darker spot in the center like a preserved pith, but I'm not sure if they are crystals or fossils. I take driftwood with knot holes that is thick enough and still small enough for holding beaded flowers. The rocks go in the sand box by the house.

For many years when I hike I'll set a goal before I start. It might be to find a new walking stick or to find a piece of

jade or a black rock that stays shiny when dry. Setting the goal increases the likelihood of finding what I want.

I'm wearing underpants, a white T



Balboa Bay

shirt, a heavy T shirt, sweat pants and shirt, heavy socks over light socks, a flannel shirt under a sweater and denim overalls. I'm wearing cut-off rubber boots. The sun is low in the sky to the south. The beach is 30 feet wide with gentle surf on one side and crumbling cliffs on the other. This is the start of my hike below the Kelly Avenue sewer plant. The walk down is over the fill above the sewer-out- autumn pipe. The ground is frozen with a steady drip of water under the ice. My feet break through the ice and ground here and there on the way down. I keep my hands in my pockets and hope not to slip and autumn. My eyes are brimming

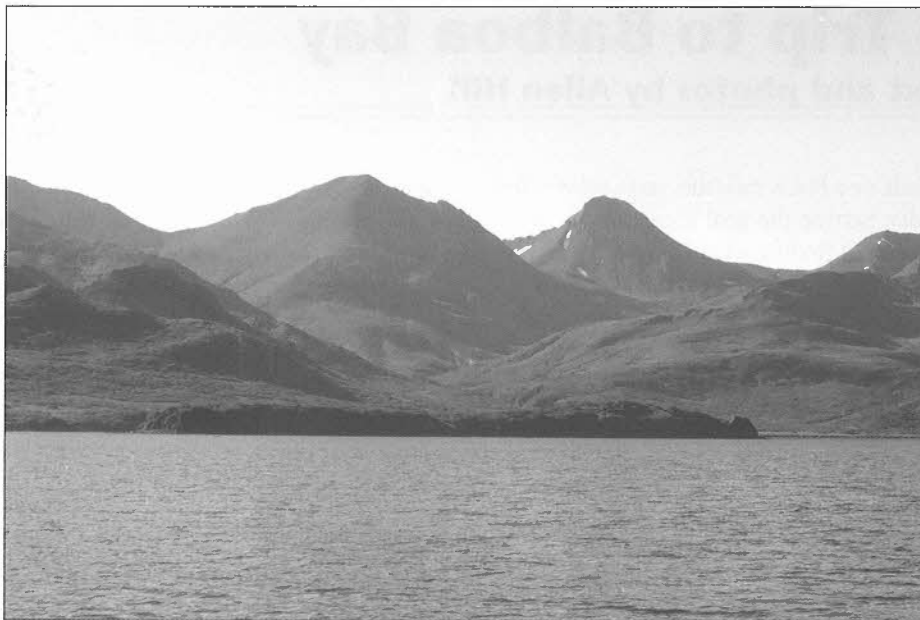
with tears from the wind and my nose drips constantly. I carry several handkerchiefs to wipe my nose during the hike. I'm careful to wipe before the wind blows snot across my glasses where it will freeze immediately. But I keep clean handkerchiefs just for cleaning that problem.

Let's say it is 28 degrees. In the sun and out of the wind it will feel warm. The beach stays in the shade though because the sun is so low in the sky. The wind chill might be in the high teens. I could wear my gator gloves which are neoprene and work like a wet suit, but I keep forgetting them, probably because they are a recent purchase and I don't associate them with hiking. Because of the rain and snow I can keep my hands warmer by putting them in my pant pockets than by wearing mittens or gloves that get wet. The rubber gloves the fisher-

men and processors use lose too much body heat when they are wet and the wind is blowing. You get used to numb face and ears and numb aching hands. The rest of me is warm and the cold air in my mouth and lungs delicious.

Several kelp lines rot above normal high tide pushed there by storms. The beach smell in winter is pleasant. Small crustaceans in abundance are under the kelp closest to the water. In summer flies feed on the kelp and drab sparrow-like birds feed on the flies.

I find a shark on the shore. In places cartilage shows through. I can see the tail, but there are no eyes in the head. It looks



Balboa Bay

as if there were never eyes in the head. I'm confused by the body and decide decomposition is to blame. There are ribs from a harbor seal. Sometimes I see the horn of a buffalo or the ribs or vertebra of a sea lion.

Walking over and through boulders along the beach provides treacherous footing. Smaller rocks, say less than 100 pounds, but sometimes larger, shift as I walk across them. I use my alder walking stick to keep two points with weight on them below me at all times. Without the walking stick I pivot more when the rocks shift. With my trifocals on and the water in my eyes, picking my feet up above the rocks is a special task. I don't want to autumn when I'm somewhere between two and five miles from help. Wilderness hiking involves taking fewer risks so I choose easy routes along the beach.

In places, the cliffs above me must reach 700 feet. The beach is close enough that someone could hit me with a rock tossed underhanded from above. Each winter I see new boulders that have autumnen from above. When I walk under cliffs with loose rock I look for boulders to hide behind and decide beforehand which way to run if rocks autumn. Recent autumns leave rocks on the beach from the size of a medicine ball to two or three boulders over 12 feet in diameter. Some older autumns of

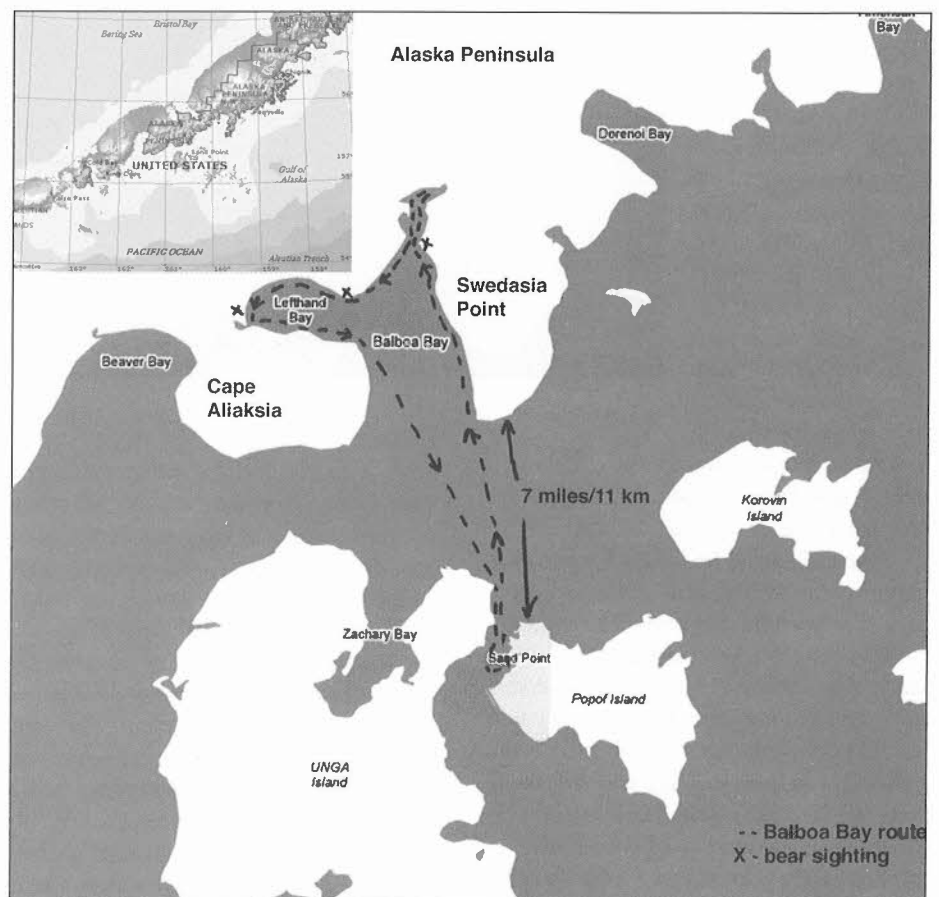
rock are much larger.

Some beaches make small bites into the island. They have sand at their centers and rocks and boulders on either

end. I walk through a series of these beaches. Petrified wood is found from the edges of the rocks and boulders across the sand. On very low tides pieces the size of pulp wood are exposed. In the sand in the tidal zone are smaller pieces polished by the sand. At the rock lines left by storms high up on the beach the petrified wood is plentiful as are other unusual rock.

The usual rock on a Shumagin Island beach is a shade of gray. There are potato shaped rocks, flat rocks with rounded edges, almost round rocks mostly gray. Here and there are purplish rocks and light green rocks that look like concrete. All these rocks are beach rock worn smooth by the sand.

Some sections of beach are old lava flows. Lava rocks are black and tortured. The walking is difficult with irregular rock from the size of softballs to volleyballs littering the shore. These loose rocks lay on solid flows or over bed rock. In places cliffs block the walk along the shore. Here you can turn around and go back or find a place to



Balboa Bay map

climb up and over the cliff.

Many days, the combination of wind and rain or snow, wind and cold are too much for a hike along the beach. From the middle of October until January the bad weather is mostly 32 degrees or above with wind and rain, but with some days of wind and snow. From January to April the temperature averages a few degrees colder with a couple of spells when daylight temperatures are about 20 degrees and it drops to 12 degrees at night. Of course, the cold spells are accompanied with northwest winds from 20 to 35 knots. Good weather has less wind.

Sport fishermen become restless in late winter and early autumn. There are calm, bright days with temperatures in the 30's with no wind. It feels and looks good enough to go fishing. Surely there are some cod in Popof Strait or maybe the trout are biting in the reservoir or at Red Cove Lake. In May, when daytime temperatures are in the 40's and it stops freezing at night, the call is from halibut. However, most weekend days seem to bring bad weather or prior commitments. It's hard to push the limits of wind and seas when the water temperature is in the 40's.

My canoe is a 21-foot Scott Canoe. The Model is a Hudson Bay. The bow is 34" above the bottom of the canoe. The sides are 20" high. The canoe is rated for four people or a ton of cargo and a 15 HP motor. I have a 15 HP Honda four-stroke, but should have gotten a 20 HP since they are the same size and weight.

In the bow, I have a large plastic milk or soft drink crate scavenged from the beach. It holds two anchors, anchor lines and an anchor buoy. The large anchor and buoy are for lying off the beach. I tie one line to the bow and thread it through one ear on the buoy. The other ear is tied to the anchor line. I tie another line to the stern. The bow line is about 500 feet long and the stern line is about 350 feet long. To get on the beach I paddle in with the outboard up. Once it's shallow enough, I hop out and load up with whatever I'll need ashore. Then I pull the line tied to the bow to get the canoe back out to the buoy. I have to feed the stern line out. The lines can get tangled up in the surf. Eventually, the canoe is floating beyond the surf and I can go up the beach and find a log or rock to tie the two lines to.



*Looking back at Sand Point*

Also in the bow are my Rubbermaid tote with my emergency kit and a six-hook halibut line strung between anchors and end buoys, plus the marker buoy and line in a Coleman cooler minus the top and drain plug found on the beach. Extra spark plugs, tools, extra prop, extra prop nut, extra prop washer, stainless steel cotter key, fire extinguisher, whistle, flares, oar locks, and strobe light. Under the bow seat is a six-gallon gas tank mostly for added ballast. Before I got the six-gallon tank, the canoe really wallowed in cross seas. It wallowed enough to worry me that I'd get thrown overboard.

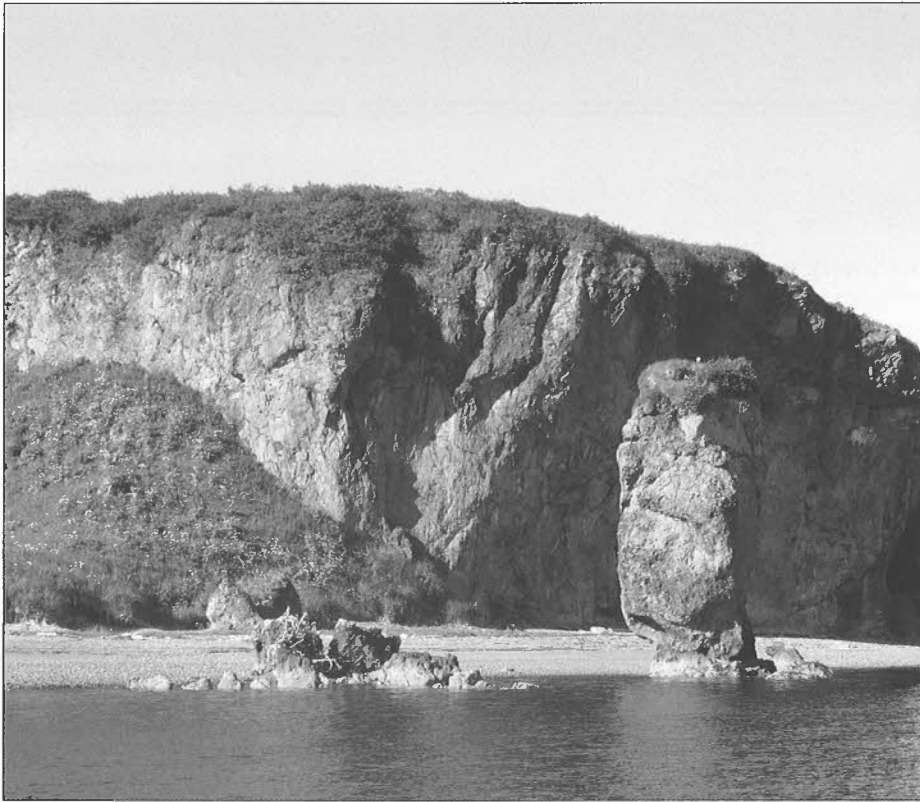
Behind the bow seat the bottom is only an indoor/outdoor carpet. In fact, all the deck has loose indoor/outdoor carpet to protect the fiberglass and keep things from sliding around. Behind the center seat is the bottom 12 inches of a plastic 55 gallon drum with my lines for tying to the bow and stern when lying up off the beach. I toss these lines in front of the center seat when I catch halibut, cod, red snapper (actually, a type of rock fish) or salmon. The drum bottom keeps blood and slim off the canoe bottom. An old towel thrown on top the fish keeps them from splashing slime everywhere. My oars and paddles are stowed on either side of the drum.

A little in front of my feet is the three-gallon gas tank which is good for between 40 and 50 miles, but I seldom use more than half a tank in a day. This is the area where I also store my fishing rods,

backpacks, coolers with food and dry clothes – all the stuff that varies according to the nature of the trip.

On a marginal weather day in June with the wind above 15 knots from the northwest, but warm enough for just blue jeans and heavy flannel shirt, I head across Unga Strait for Swedania Point on the mainland. I have to slow down for the seas in Popof Strait, which is not a good sign, but may be due to the current opposing a changing tide. The seas past Range Island rapidly go to three and then four feet. I slow down to idle and then bring the throttle up until I can just hear an increase in RPM's. The bow of my canoe cuts into the waves and stays just above the water. Every few minutes, part of the crest of a wave comes over the sides of the canoe at the bow. I come off many waves and crash into the trough. The canoe shutters. It takes intense concentration to stay at a good angle to the seas, to speed up and slow down as necessary.

Just behind my seat is an automatic sump pump which removes nuisance water as it builds up. I should have my life jacket on, but it seemed nice when I left the harbor. Now I can't quit steering into the waves long enough to crawl up front and retrieve the life jacket. The ocean water is somewhere between 48 and 50 degrees. The life jacket would keep my body afloat if I swam, but would not help save my life. Knowing when to turn around and how to ma-



*Monolith Point*

oeuvre through the waves will keep me alive. The sump pump won't bail me out quickly enough if I swamp. Once the outboard is submerged it would probably quit working. Even though I have oars in the bottom of the canoe and oar locks in my emergency tote, I don't have a plan that includes bailing out the canoe and rowing back to the harbor.

The seas get worse off Swedania Point as I enter Balboa Bay. The wind has picked up and there are a couple of miles of open water ahead and the shore on my right. I get very close to turning back before I move into calmer seas as close to shore as I'm comfortable. There are large rocks in the water and sections of kelp to avoid. My six gallon tank and various crates have moved off center and back a little, but there's no way to straighten them and regain a completely proper trim.

The water is clear so I can see both the dangers and safe routes. There are lines for set nets along the shore and I have to turn left away from shore to safely go around the buoys anchored offshore. The lines run from shore out to the buoys and I don't know how close to the surface they are. I only draw about 8" of water at

the bottom of the prop, but I'm not tempted to try to run above the lines. It's harder going traveling around the buoys and back to shore than just running the shore. This area has a strong run of Red Salmon and the boats will be here as soon as the mainland opens.

Gradually, the seas calm down. I'd thought about turning around for quite a few minutes after I reached the mainland. Determination to see Balboa Bay, the copper mine area and Left Hand Bay kept me going. The mainland is like Popof and Unga Islands with small mountains rising to over 2,000 feet. There are outcroppings of lava plugs, cliffs with scree running across the beach into the ocean, cliffs ranging from a few hundred feet to more than 700 feet with little or no beach below them. Meadows of patchski, fireweed, and ferns with clumps of willow here and alder there run up to the tree line. Above that grass grows wherever possible on impossibly steep slopes. Bare ridges of broken rock run along the crests between sections of bare rock.

I'm running about eight knots a few hundred feet offshore past a small cliff when I spot a brown bear walking around Reef Point. I slow down and idle toward

the bear. When it sees me it stops. It's standing sideways to me and standing on all fours on the rocks so that his head is higher than his rump. Its head and neck and back are blond and his legs are brown. The bear turns and walks away from along the beach. The cliff stops him from turning inland. The bear stops and looks at me several times. The look is calm, just checking to see where I am now. I get the feeling he's uncomfortable with me, but not afraid. When he reaches a place where the plants grow down to the beach, he climbs up through the vegetation to a ridge. Sometimes I can see his back, sometimes not as he travels up a path. I'd guess the angle of the land varies from 10 degrees to 45 degrees where he climbs up. I'm aware of how much faster he can move up over the land and through the vegetation than I could. When he reaches the ridge crest he looks back for a long while and then disappears into the vegetation.

I come up on what the nautical chart calls Ballast Island. It's little more than a reef, but crowded with many gulls and shags (cormorants). I steer past on the deep side. All the way back on the right there's an area that I figure has a pink salmon run. I continue on over some sort of long sea grass I've never seen before. I'm at the end of Balboa Bay and have turned west searching for a large incoming stream. I can't believe that such a large mountain doesn't have more streams running off it. I can see the road to the copper mine winding its way across the bare brownish red dirt and rock on the mountain. The water shallows up over a bottom of round beach rock. I slow down and turn the canoe out for a run to deeper water before turning west along the shore again as I work out of Balboa Bay and head for Left Hand Bay. I see pieces of a wooden skiff on shore just a little way past a small stream good for pink salmon.

Just coming into Left Hand Bay there is a mountainside with an alien landscape. The ground above the undergrowth along the beach is rocky. Large rocks appear that could be from the Southwest desert. They stand in groups with spires left from erosion. I'd guess weak rock and not wind. Suddenly a bear runs off the beach just beside me and is lost in the undergrowth. I slow down to make sure of the water



depth. I'm in over six to ten feet of water with very large rocks scattered below. Left Hand Bay is shallower than Balboa Bay. Reds are jumping all along the shore. I cast here and there hoping to pick up a chum or pink salmon, but nothing bites until I catch a dolly varden. Finally, I reach a stream big enough for a silver salmon run.

I motor between sand bars and paddle while standing up to see how wide the stream is. I can't see very far, but it is big enough for silvers. I hope to come back in late August or early September to catch fish before they begin their run up the stream. I'm afraid to fish from shore and don't want to buy and carry a gun to shoot bear. The valley is really big and lies between two mountain peaks. It must be a few miles long—longer than I'm used to on the islands. I look in vain for moose or caribou and know the insects are bad enough now to have driven them up the slopes of the mountains. Disappointed, I drift out and start out again along the shore of Left Hand Bay. The end of the bay is a barrier of small rock and sand about ten feet tall. On top of it grows beach grass between three and four feet tall. I fish for salmon again, but only pick up a few more dollyies.

There is some driftwood along the shore. I stop to pick up a large plastic buoy. I find bear tracks that are between nine and ten inches wide, wider by far than the ones I saw near the Cold Bay city dock. I hustle back into the canoe and continue along the bay. In the distance I see what looks like a tree stump. In a few minutes I can see that it is moving and then I can tell it is a bear. All three bears were blond above with light brown legs. They could be all from the same family. This one sits down on his rump with his hind legs sticking out toward me. His right front paw is on the ground. We look at each other for a while and then the bear gets up and walks away from me into the grass.

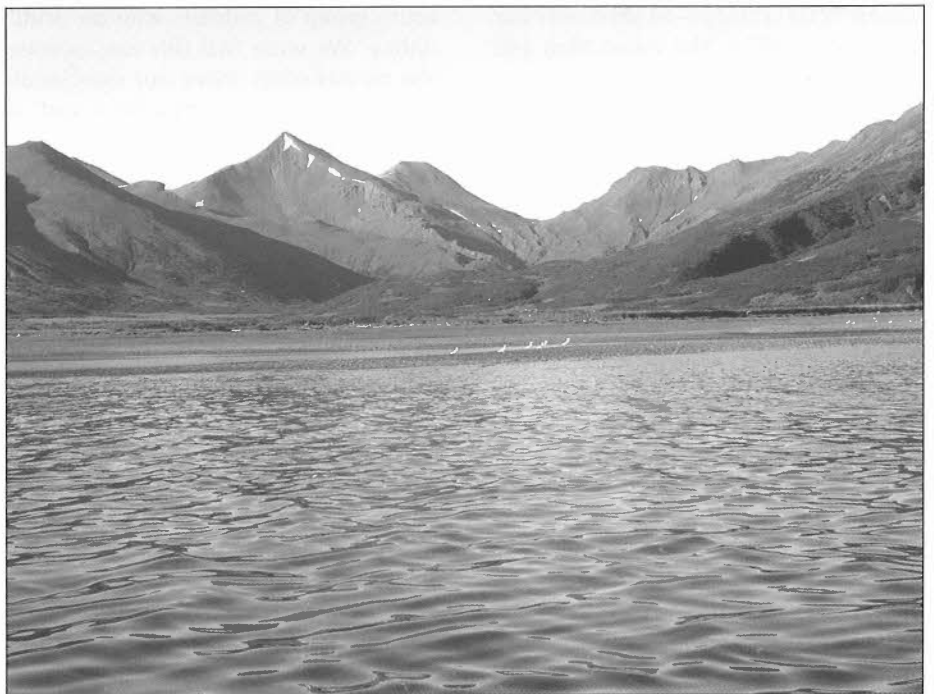
I can't tell how big the bears were. I'd guess between 400 and 1,000 pounds at the most. The water, the mountains, and the bay—everything I could use for reference—was so big or so far away. My feeling was that it didn't matter. I liked seeing animals that were able to survive here. I know the weather and the mainland is a little colder each day than on Popof Island. There are a few months

during the salmon run when food is in overwhelming supply. These bears were at the end of those lean months and looked very healthy. Although I startled one, the other two weren't afraid of me.

Just past the bear is another wide stream that looks like it may go into a small lake. The stream may be wide, but I won't go in because if a bear charged me it would be hard to maneuver and get away. I make a turn and begin running down Cape Aliaskin. This shore is more typical of the islands. Small cliffs of less than 200 feet run along much of the beach. Above the beach, mostly grass slopes run up to higher cliffs that top out above 2,000 feet. I run across a shallow reef of beach rock that dings my new prop. I quickly cut power and tilt the outboard out of the water. While I'm waiting to drift past the shallow spot I look closely at another pink salmon stream. I drop the outboard back down and make a test run to see if the prop is unbalanced. It's ok, so I head away from shore to avoid any more trouble. I was out over a hundred feet which is usually safe, but storm swells must have pushed up a shoal. The wind and seas begin to build again. It's a fight to stay close enough to shore to stay out of the heavy seas and far enough out to avoid the occasional really big rock.

When I come to the end of Cape Aliaskin and turn right and head to the nearest point on Unga Island, it becomes obvious that wind has shifted west northwest. Now as I head back, the seas are running from my right and lift and drop the canoe much more gently than on the way over. I feel like I'm doing eight to ten knots. Last year, I made several trips with a GPS to get a feel for what speeds the canoe would make with different amounts of throttle, so I do have an idea of how fast water is passing under me. Twilight is coming on and it's getting colder. As soon as I reach Unga I turn toward Popof Straight and run with the seas. Running with the seas is exciting. When I catch up with a wave I eventually surf down it. I feel like my speed doubles and I worry the canoe will turn broadside to the wave when I reach the trough. I keep a firm grip and use a gentle touch on the throttle to stay in control.

When I reach Popof Straight the turn-in toward the Harbor lets Unga block the wind and the seas. It's an easy, fast run in. But someone has taken my spot on the float. So I go back around and tie up in an empty spot on the end of the float. This adds a couple of hundred feet to each hike to the truck as I take off everything someone might borrow.



*Valley North of Lefthand Bay*

# The Wilderness Canoe Association and Canadian Canoe Routes

A Letter to our WCA Members

August 26, 2007

By the time that you read this, the WCA will have acquired the Canadian Canoe Routes ([www.myccr.com](http://www.myccr.com)) web site from WCA member Richard Munn, its founder.

Most of you know about Canadian Canoe Routes (aka "CCR") and have visited or participated in the site. The "official" stats are that it has 5,000 registered users, 150,000 articles, and an "ever growing" database of over 500 canoe trips in all areas of Canada. It has active forums, by our reckoning, with about 700 active participants.

The site had grown to such an extent that it was occupying more and more of its founder's time. Richard had done the yeoman's work of conceiving and establishing the site. So when he advised your Board that it was time for him to move on, we carefully considered the opportunity.

The acquisition of CCR is an opportunity for the WCA—particularly in this "online" 21st century—34 years after our founding in 1973. The vision then and today remains the same: to be an active, vibrant non-profit organization of individuals who share a passion of wilderness travel mainly by canoe and kayak, and who encourage and sustain this passion amongst both its members and the public. We do this through clinics, trips, newsletter "Nastawgan", website ([www.wildernesscanoe.ca](http://www.wildernesscanoe.ca)), and our public advocacy.

A WCA operated Canadian Canoe Routes will enhance both our activities and our aspirations. Here is how:

Associating the WCA and CCR brings together the WCA's 550 members, the 700 active CCR participants, and its 5,000 registered users. This is a large, vibrant community of paddlers and wilderness travelers, both "on" and "off" line.

CCR has created a valuable useful database, albeit incomplete. It is a work

in progress. Now the database is not only available to us as a reference, it is available to us as an activity. WCA members have a wealth of experience, which we can now share with a wider audience through CCR. CCR now has a new resource of experienced contributors, and the WCA has something valuable for its members to do, for themselves and for the public, i.e. editing the CCR's routes, keeping the information current, and completing the data base including its new (incomplete) mapping feature. Many of our fellow members have been looking for a way to contribute. Now they can, and especially during the winter months when, for most of us, our paddles are idle.

CCR forums provide an online way to talk, discuss, and express ourselves. It needs more moderators. The WCA has been looking for convenient ways for its members to communicate. Now we have an additional venue to do so.

We WCA members have often remarked that our group is getting older. We need "young blood". A bit of modernization is in order. CCR provides a way for us to communicate to a younger, active group of paddlers who do "stuff" online. We sense that this can increase our membership, make our association grow, and thus help preserve it and its legacy, in the future.

The combination of "Nastawgan", our quarterly journal, and CCR, a current, frequently-updated web site, is attractive and unique. One can enhance the other by increasing the number of potential contributors, the quality of information online, and its convenience through cross referencing, archiving, and other methods.

Public service is important for any organization, particularly a non-profit such as the WCA. Now, the WCA can much more effectively and conveniently fulfill this mandate. If we really wish to preserve wild places, then operating CCR as our service to the public is one good way to accomplish this goal.

Last, but not least, is our public advocacy for waterways and wild places.

Many older members, who were paddling back in 1973, have remarked how much more difficult it is today to simply "put in". More and more all the good spots are "taken." The WCA-CCR combination is a significant, visible presence, one that can now be easily understood by politicians and government. Now we have a much more visible public advocacy "presence" and a louder "voice".

At our last AGM, we discussed various ideas about communications, web sites, the possibility of the CCR acquisition, etc. These included price, liability, organization, budget, and management. A few words about these are in order.

Suffice it to say that the price is one that the WCA can well afford, particularly considering the alternative cost of organizing something like CCR "from scratch." Liability-wise, understand that any liability will be limited to the CCR itself, as it is being acquired by "Canadian Canoe Routes Inc.", a limited liability company, established and owned by the WCA to acquire, own, and operate CCR. CCR's budget is modest, and there is some CCR revenue to pay this budget, revenue that we plan to increase. Lastly, and most importantly, we have a capable management team, initially comprised of WCA members Marilyn Sprissler, its chair, Allan Jacobs, and Erhard Kraus, our conservation chair. They are working now to ensure a smooth transition, with Richard Munn's help and advice.

Note also that there some priorities. For those of you who are concerned about "SPAM" on the CCR web site, rest assured its elimination is a top priority. Other priorities include establishing policies for CCR and completing our organization so that both it and the WCA prosper. You will be hearing, no doubt, more news in the months ahead.

Congratulations everyone! We are now the proud owners of CCR and we have a (good) job to do!

Martin D. Heppner  
WCA member and WCA Board member

# Food for Paddlers

**If you would like to share your favourite tripping recipes, please contact Barb Young  
12 Erindale Crescent, Brampton, Ont. L6W 1B5, or [youngjdavid@rogers.com](mailto:youngjdavid@rogers.com)**

Whenever paddlers get together they swap bear stories and recipes. Well maybe not always recipes. But when you have a large group gathered in a dining tent (thanks Mary Perkins) and the group has had a tiring but fun day of paddling, pre-dinner drinks turn thoughts to food and recipes begin to surface. The setting I'm describing occurred during the Intermediate Whitewater Clinic run by John and Sharon Hackert. What a great clinic! Following Saturday's session on the Madawaska the group got to see their attempts at following Viewing videos filmed by Cathy Gallately and Sharon Hackert really enhanced the learning.

Robyn Macpherson shared the following recipe with the group. Gary James tested it out and gave it two thumbs up. He suggested possible additions of dried veggies and a side dish of quick cooking bacon.

## Breakfast Bulgur

- 2 cups bulgar
- 4 cups water
- 1 onion (fresh) or 1/3 cup onion (dehydrated)
- 2 cloves garlic or garlic powder
- ? cup oil (can use a bit less) (not olive oil)
- 1 and 1/3 cup grated cheddar cheese
- salt and pepper to taste

Boil water then add bulgar. Cover and let sit for about 10 minutes. Drain off extra water. While bulgar is hydrating, dice onion and garlic (if using fresh ingredients). Heat oil; add onion and garlic and sauté. Add drained bulgar and fry until golden brown and crispy. Add salt and pepper to taste. Fold in grated cheddar just before serving.

Makes about 5 cups which usually serves 4.

Stay tuned next issue for more of Robyn's recipes.

# Book Reviews

## Nastawgan Editor Elizabeth Sinclair

**Capturing the French River**, Wayne Kelly, Natural Heritage Books, Toronto, 2007 is a visual feast for paddlers and devotees of Canadian historical waterways. With images captured over a century ago and reproduced from surprisingly high quality prints, this rare vision of a family's French River tripping provides the backdrop of the river's own history. Equally charming are the photographic talents and outdoor skills of the Rushmores and Shermans, their creations revealing a fascinating glimpse into early river tripping and as well as the community of logging that is our heritage.

Paddling the French River is not just a canoe trip but a journey into the past. In passing sites such as French River Village, one can imagine the river's unique history of logging, development and recreation. Wayne Kelly's **Capturing the French River** brings it to life.

**The Lure of Faraway Places**, Herb Pohl, Natural Heritage Books, Toronto, 2007.

Herb's personal style, exceptional canoeing and wilderness tripping skill shine in this journal of his northern travels.

Discovered just after his death in July 2006, the collection represents 27 years of wilderness travelling in northern Canada by canoe and foot, recalling the extremes of misfortune and exhilaration, as only a solo traveler can experience.

Herb was at home with the hardships that nature has to offer in the wilderness, usually seeking untrodden or native trails in northern Quebec and Labrador. When others might have given up, Herb had an instinct for the most remote trail and overcame a canoe that caught fire, forgotten maps, hoards of blackflies, vague and very long portages, and huge whitewater. A love of nature dominates his writing as does an uncanny ability to draw you into his experiences with words, always with humour and honesty.

**The Lure of Faraway Places**, edited by James Raffan (author, canoeist, edu-

cator and curator) includes Herb's biography and accounts of 17 trips, as well as other tidbits, such as many of his photographs, detailed notes about the text, a list of Herb's published works, and even his menu.

This legacy of Canada's best-known solo paddler is a must read for everyone in the paddling community.

## Editorial Notice

This notice has been sent to recent contributors of *Nastawgan*. Unfortunately we cannot contact all contributors of articles of past issues of *Nastawgan*. The WCA is now publishing all *Nastawgan* articles on-line. Thus, all articles have been placed on the [WCA/journal/archive](http://WCA/journal/archive) website. If you do not want your article published on the web, please indicate your choice to the editor or alternatively add copyright to your work. While we are aware of copyright laws around original work, we can only warn people. Enforcing this law is very difficult. Your work will be printed and added to the database unless you request otherwise. Elizabeth

# Letter to the Editor

This message is in direct response to the notice of the Website Survey Results. First, I must apologise for not being more aggressive in presenting my viewpoint and not presenting this message in an earlier issue.

Since assuming the responsibility of constructing and maintaining the website six years ago, I tried to enforce integrity while adhering to the objectives of the website. The objectives of our website are: to provide information about the Wilderness Canoe Association and its functions to non-members, to keep members informed of all activities, and to assist canoeists in obtaining information related to wilderness canoeing.

In order to realise the final objective, I believe in the concept of building a database to hold information that might be useful to canoeists. Further, I do believe that visitors to the website should be permitted to contribute to a database. However, I do not believe that a discussion forum is the appropriate method of building an information database.

Open discussion forums can be a good source of information and people that use them find them enjoyable. However, many forums tend to develop discussion threads that attract a large quantity of superfluous information and further develop into a "chat board" involving long-winded conversation. There are many examples of people requesting information on a forum with the respondents engaging in conversations with each other without contributing any valuable information to the initiator of a topic. In order to prevent "Website Pollution" I would suggest that we not add a discussion forum to the WCA website. Discussion forums are fine if they exist as independent sites but not as components of an organisation's website. Most experienced Website developers share this opinion.

I should point out that in addition to our brochure, presentation booth, and word-of-mouth, the website could be the first point of contact for many non-members. For this reason, many members including our current and previous journal editors reviewed the development of our website along with each revision. The website should receive the same consideration as our quar-

terly journal. If a discussion forum is added, then this integrity will be greatly diminished. Further, our editor-in-chief suggests that a note be added that the WCA does not take responsibility for editorial issues on the live bulletin board. However, it will be screened for canoe-appropriate material.

With this all said you all might want to know how members could contribute to an information database. Discussions regarding our Bulletin Board have come up earlier and plans were pending to make some components of the Bulletin Board user interactive. The one obvious shortfall of the Bulletin Board is that if a visitor to the website posts a request for information, a response will be emailed to the requestor but is not shared. There have been delays in correcting this problem, and for this I apologise.

However, I did present a document some time ago to the board summarising how the Bulletin Board should operate. This document describes using a discussion forum for requesting information. When there is a response to any request for information, the response can be subject to editing. Further, the document states that no other portion of the Bulletin Board will use the discussion forum format. Subsequently, I have conceived a design that would permit information sharing with added restriction of open discussion. At the time of writing this memo, this design concept has not yet been presented to the board. However, this is the best idea, in my opinion.

Regarding the addition of a canoe route database, this can be added with considerable work on the part of members volunteering their time to research different areas of the country. It will also require work on my part in providing the framework.

The board is considering a plan that is, unfortunately, not in compliant with my suggestions and at great expense. Hopefully, this memo is read before there is a commitment to such a plan.

If you find what I am presenting here reasonable, I suggest that you inform the board, (see the contact list on the last page of *Nastawgan* or the Contacts page of the website). If you disagree, you can also notify me.

Jeff  
jhaymer@ionsys.com

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*Illustration by Rod McIver – Rod McIver, artist*



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Contact Hilary Morris 705-325-8220 before Sept 15th or after Oct. 15th.

Swift Mattawa ... kevlar ... white.  
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and skid plates. \$900

[rlaughlen@gmail.com](mailto:rlaughlen@gmail.com) or 705 754-9479.

# Padding the Boreal Forest

by Diane Pullen

Crows. Whether they are cawing to greet the dawn at first light, or flying alongside my canoe as self-appointed sentinels to guard and guide me through this wild place, after five days of canoeing alone with two dogs in relative solitude, I realize I have come to not only expect - but to rely on their presence. Yet now, fully clothed and swimming alongside my canoe, one hand holding the line on the gunwale, the other pushing hard against the current in a sublime act of sacrifice designed to keep us all from drifting perilously back downstream, I can't hear anything except my dog's whining pleas for mercy and the sound of churning water as it forces its way past rocks and debris.

The Ogoki forest is 14+ hours or 750 miles by car from Toronto to the put-in at Marshall Lake, which can only be accessed via logging roads that run northwest off Highway 11, deep into the bush within the Township of Greenstone. Widely regarded as the Mecca for hunting and fishing, Greenstone is a microcosm for Northern Ontario. Sprawling across 2,780 square kilometers, this municipality is the largest incorporated town in Canada, larger than several countries yet host to less than 6,000 people. Although a hard-core mining and pulp and paper culture is still evident, with the Greenstone amalgamation in 2001 and a recently launched web portal in 2007, the north has clearly revitalized itself with a direct focus on tourism.

In spite of the marketing and hype, canoeists seeking adventure in "shield country" are admittedly few and far between. But if the view of breath-taking boreal landscape is what you yearn for, and solitude is your idea of a daily fix, the Marshall Lake Canoe route within the Ogoki forest is the drug that will take you to a place where magic begins. After all, if a middle-aged woman who bought her first canoe only one month earlier can go solo in Ogoki - anyone can.

Now as I scan the shoreline for a log or branch to hold on to, shoulder deep in "adventure", I must confess that on-lookers would be justified to conclude this girl's gone wild! With sunglasses askew on my forehead, a torso soaked through to the bone, and hair gnarled with forest flotsam, it would seem the final stages of transmogrification were

upon me. How ironic, that my wish for "magic" would be granted conditional to such comedic and grotesque distortions. Decorum gone, I refuse to be diminished by my situation, and in spite of my dogs' pleas to get back in the canoe where I belong, I continue my slog upstream against the current for another kilometer until finally, the water is calm and I can once again paddle safely to terra firma.

Whether you blame it on global warming or just the luck of the draw, with over 30 days of rainfall in the past 6 weeks, water levels in north-western Ontario have reached biblical proportions: an arc might have been a better choice! High water means fast water, and this makes paddling upstream impossible. Portaging through thick spruce, rock and blow-downs isn't an option, so it is walk, swim or battle my way back to the lake.

But decision-making is part of the drill, and the excitement of the boreal is its wild and unpredictable nature. High winds on large lakes can keep you wind bound for days at a time, wildfires are not uncommon during the summer season and leaving a detailed trip plan with the Ministry of Natural Resources or the Geraldton OPP is well advised.

As I paddle my way back towards Marshall Lake, rain clouds loom dangerously low overhead and the temperature begins to drop. I need to get off the water and find shelter. Weary from my foray in the creek, I look along shore for a place to crash and am drawn to a low-lying rock ledge that juts out invitingly from a nest of conifers. Paddling closer, I'm thrilled at my choice. Cloistered within these 80 + year old pine and spruce are deep beds of lichen and moss. Lichens are not a single plant, but rather a complex group of plants that maintain a close association between a fungus and algae in a symbiotic relationship only nature could divine. Lichens are the primary food source of the Woodland Caribou, found only in old growth forests like Ogoki where the average tree is more than one hundred years old. In the harsh northern climate where vegetation is often scarce, lichens provide this prey animal with a much needed advantage for survival. Sadly, these majestic creatures and one of the most emblematic species of Canada's boreal wilderness are at risk

of extinction in Ontario, where their range has dropped by about 50% in the last 100 years.

There is no question their biggest adversary now is logging. Since 1998, the Buchanan Group acting through its subsidiary Long Lake Forest Products has been harvesting timber in the Ogoki Forest. The 20 year license issued by the Ministry of Natural Resources is now up for renewal. The current plan proposes harvesting via clear cut approximately 70,000 ha of Boreal forest over the next ten year period commencing April 2008. 70,000 ha is about the size of the city of Ottawa! For a few moments I forget my beleaguered shoulders and sit in silence, hoping to see any sign of Woodland Caribou. As I ponder the fate of the forest and the caribou, I wonder if it is a coincidence that the name "Lichen" means "dejection" and "solitude".

The next morning, I awake to a bright and sunny day. The rain has passed, and I am eager to get back on the water. Sleeping on a bed of lichen is an unparalleled experience in comfort. I am revitalized! I pack my gear and command the dogs to load. After taking a careful inventory to ensure I have left no trace, I look around one last time to fill my senses with the sight and smell of this idyllic place.

In my canoe paddling towards open water, I smile. The crows are back, announcing to the world my arrival. I feel comforted once again by the cacophony of beating wings and rhythmic cawing as my blade cuts through the water. Straining my eyes, I look through the dense canopy to see where these mythological messengers of spirit and creation are hiding. Too smart to be goaded into view, they remain in the shadows, safe from predators while they boldly continue to mock and chide me. It's going to be another great day!

For detailed route information check out the Canoeing and kayaking section under the Culture & Recreation tab in the Greenstone portal at <http://www.greenstone.ca>

For more information regarding the logging planned in the Ogoki forest, check out <http://www.earthroots.org/> or view details at <http://savetheogokiforest.blogspot.com/>

# WCA OUTINGS

## OCT. 2007 - SPRING 2008

**WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND HAVE IT  
PRESENTED IN THE WINTER ISSUE?**  
**Contact the Outings Committee before November 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; 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  
----- I paddle whitewater nearly every weekend all year through, as long as I can find water that's liquid. 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 FROST CENTRE CANOE ROUTES**

Ray Laughlen 705 754 -9479, rlaughlen@gmail.com  
----- There is some superb fall lake paddling in the routes out of the Frost Centre near Dorset. The leaves are beautiful and the crowds have left- as have the bugs. As I live in Haliburton and have a flexible work schedule, I visit the area frequently, especially during the week. If you would like to paddle with me, give me a call. Outings are suitable for novices.

### **September - October MINDEN WILD WATER PRESERVE**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca book as soon as possible . ----- I'm frequently at the Gull River on weekends through the summer, so if you would like some paddling companionship at Minden, give me a call. I'm sure that you can persuade me that paddling is more important than staying home to paint or to mow the lawn. You need to be at least a strong intermediate to run the lower course, but the bottom can be played by novices. Happy to provide informal instruction for novices needing some moving-water practice or give you help in rolling your canoe or kayak.

### **October 14 BURNT RIVER**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005 or bness@look.ca book by October 1----- An opportunity to work off the calories from the Thanksgiving dinner. An easy flatwa-

ter 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 21 ELORA GORGE**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005 or bness@look.ca book by October 8 ----- At the normal water level for this time of year, there are a number of Class 1 rapids and a Class 2 chute at the mid-point. If we get some rain, it might go up a Class. However, even at low water it's a pretty spot to paddle, especially for those in little solo boats. There are some excellent spots to work on your fundamental moving water skills, and it's very forgiving if you end up in the water-though at this time of year you'll need a wetsuit or drysuit. It's a good late season outing as it's close to home and if we get cold we can cut the play and quickly get to the cars. Should the weather not cooperate, we can re-schedule. Great for novices, or anyone unwilling to hang up their paddle. No limit.

### **November-?December BLACK RIVER ICE-BREAKER**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005 or bness@look.ca call anytime ----- It's not unusual for us to get late season rain, which brings the rivers up. However, at this time of year it's often very cool (a euphemism for cold) and the days are short. One of our favourite day trips at this time of year, if we have water, is the Black River near Washago as it winds through the Black River Wilderness Park. It's just an hour to an hour and a half drive for most of us in south central Ontario. The car shuttle is only 10 minutes long and the car never far away if you get cold. And best of all, it has a whole bunch of Class 1-2 rapids packed into that short distance. If the weather and water are really good, we can combine it with a short but challenging Class 2-3 section of the Head River

nearby. We have a regular group of late season fanatics who enjoy it. As this outing is very much water and weather dependent, we make our decision to go a couple days in advance. If you want to be put on the call list, let me know.

### **November 24-25 WILDERNESS FIRST AID TRAINING**

Back by popular demand - customised for WCA members by CWMT (Canadian Wilderness Medical Training). This is a 2-day program offered at the Toronto Sailing & Canoe Clubs, [www.tscc.net](http://www.tscc.net), 1391 Lakeshore Blvd. West, Toronto, Ontario. Cost \$160.00 plus tax, includes course manuals, certification and of course excellent instruction. Course details available at [www.paddlerco-op.com](http://www.paddlerco-op.com) under Rescue & First Aid.

Contact Aleks Gusev [aleks@gusev.ca](mailto:aleks@gusev.ca)

### **November 24 ANNUAL WINE & CHEESE PARTY**

Contact RSVP before Nov. 20th by email to [elsiescot@yahoo.ca](mailto:elsiescot@yahoo.ca) or [aleks@gusev.ca](mailto:aleks@gusev.ca)

----- Guest speakers/\$15 per person/7:00 p.m.  
Usual venue at the Toronto Sailing and Canoe Club.

### **January-March 2008 WINTER POOL SESSIONS**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005 or [bness@look.ca](mailto:bness@look.ca) -----  
Despite the reduced number of high school pools in operation, we have managed to book our usual Scarborough pool at Albert Campbell Collegiate for Sundays from 5:00 to 6:30 pm. We have 10 sessions from January 6 through to March 9. The other good news is that the fees haven't gone up for us, so the whole winter costs only \$80 per paddler. Whether you're an experienced boater looking to refine your technique or a new whitewater paddler looking for help with your roll, this is a great opportunity. Open canoes, C-1's & kayaks welcome. Call me as soon as possible to book a spot as space is limited.

### **April 25-27 SPRING TRIPPING IN THE MASSASSAUGA**

Andrea Fulton, 416-726-6811, [andrea.fulton@rogers.com](mailto:andrea.fulton@rogers.com), ----- book as early as possible. -----  
Let's get out there before the black flies do! Join me for an easy weekend trip into the Massassauga Provincial Park. This will be an easy flat-water trip with a few portages. I plan to camp Friday night at Oastler Lake Provincial Park, near Parry sound, and then do a quick overnight trip into the Massassauga Interior for Saturday night and out on Sunday. Limited to 9 canoeists.

## **EVENTS**

### **Wilderness First Aid Training November 24-25**

Back by popular demand - customised for WCA members by CWMT (Canadian Wilderness Medical Training). This is a 2-day program offered at the Toronto Sailing & Canoe Clubs, [www.tscc.net](http://www.tscc.net), 1391 Lakeshore Blvd West, Toronto, Ontario. Cost \$160.00 plus tax, includes course manuals, certification and of course excellent instruction. Course details available at [www.paddlerco-op.com](http://www.paddlerco-op.com) under Rescue & First Aid.

Contact Aleks Gusev [aleks@gusev.ca](mailto:aleks@gusev.ca)

### **WCA Annual General Meeting Saturday March 1st, 2008 Kleinburg, Ontario**

Contact Aleks Gusev at [aleks@gusev.ca](mailto:aleks@gusev.ca) .  
The annual AGM will be held at the McMichael Art Gallery in Kleinburg. Watch for more details in the winter issue of Nastawgan and on the WCA website.

### **Wilderness Canoe Association Fall Wine & Cheese Saturday, November 24th, 2007**

7:00 p.m – Socializing  
7:30 p.m. – Presentations

Toronto Sailing and Canoe Club  
(Lakeshore Blvd., Toronto)  
\$15.00 per person

RSVP before Nov. 20th by email to [elsiescot@yahoo.ca](mailto:elsiescot@yahoo.ca) or [aleks@gusev.ca](mailto:aleks@gusev.ca)

## Where it is...



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