



*Bloody Falls*

## **Coppermine River**

**Text and photos by Allan Jacobs**

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**Route:**

Parent River from the west end of Grenville Lake, through Rawalpindi and Parent Lakes to Redrock Lake, then the Coppermine River to Kugluktuk on Coronation Gulf.

**Comment:**

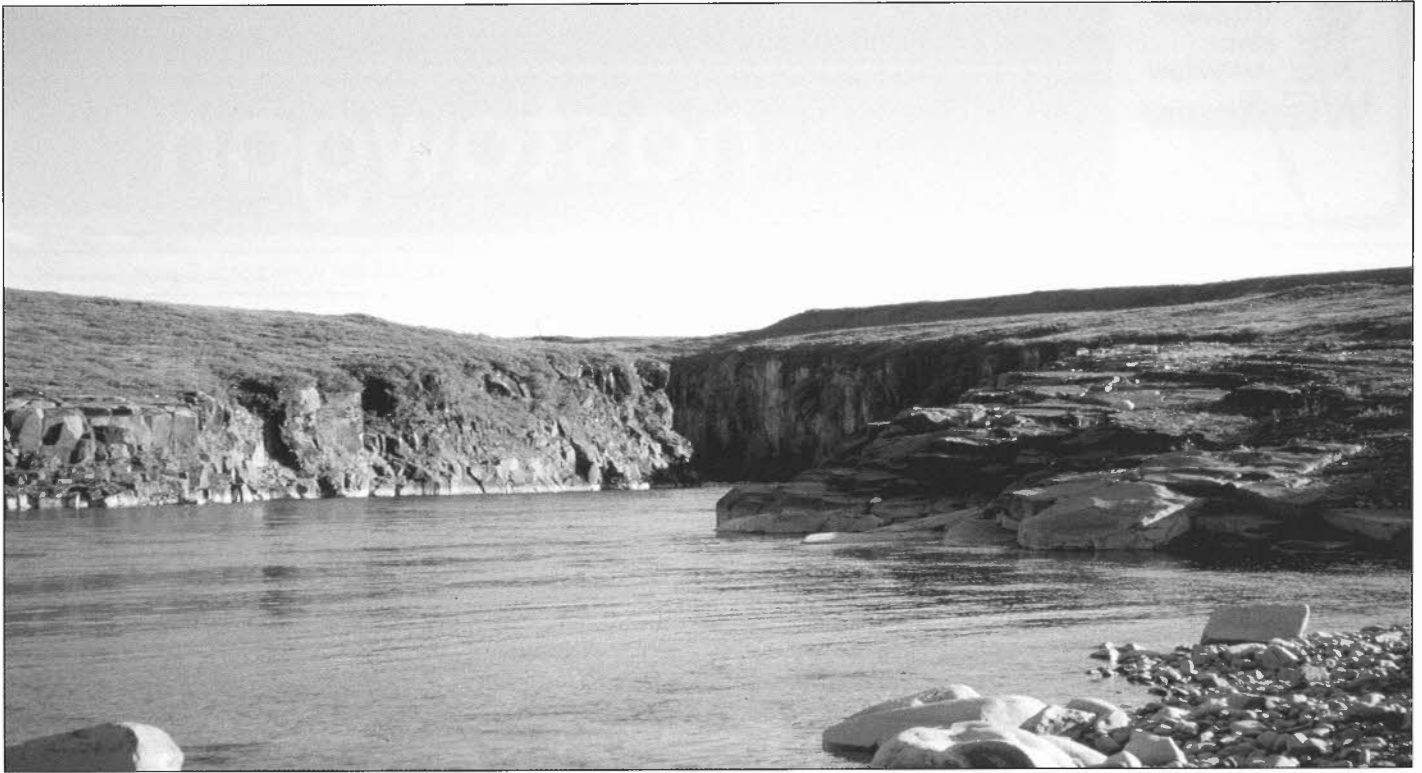
A technical version of this report (with for example UTM's for campsites and rapids) is available by emailing [allan.jacobs@sympatico.ca](mailto:allan.jacobs@sympatico.ca); it will be posted at <http://www.myccr.com>

**Overviews:**

Eric Morse: "... the Coppermine ... is the ultimate — even better than the Thelon. The rapids, scenery, game, and everything put it at the top of my list." (from November 1966 letter to Bob Matteson).

Bob Matteson: "It has everything — history, clear water, miles and miles of exciting rapids, great fishing, no people, pure air, beautiful scenery, few portages, and few bugs."

The source for both quotations is Matteson's trip report, 1970.



*Canyon of Escape Rapids from downstream*

### **Summary**

An excellent trip, about half in the barrenlands, at the top of the do-again list for some of us; it is moderately tough though and not recommended for a first north-of-60 trip.

We found the rapids more difficult than expected from the information available to us. Depending on what you run and the conditions, in our opinion the rapids are comparable to the rock garden below the Moose Ponds, and tougher than those on the Bonnet Plume, Mara/Burnside, Kazan, Mountain, Thelon and Horton.

We portaged five times. The ones around Rocky Defile, Escape and Bloody Falls are not easy; they are comparable to the ones around the Burnside, Thelon and Horton canyons, but shorter.

The scenery was not as good as on the Horton or the upper Thelon, better than on the Mara/Burnside.

We saw less wildlife than on the Thelon, Mara/Burnside, Back and Kazan.

For me, the main attraction of the Coppermine is the history; to appreciate it though, one has to read Richardson's or Franklin's journal.

The isolation is well up the scale; the

river is tough enough to discourage many. We saw only six people; we heard though that tourism was way down that year (2002) after the events of the previous autumn.

We did almost no fishing (100% success rate); others report very good fishing.

### **Dates:**

We landed on Grenville Lake on 16 July 2002 and camped there that night; we reached Kugluktuk (527 km downstream) in the morning of 5 August, for 19 days on the water.

### **People, boats and logistics:**

WCA group: Jayne Beardsmore and Stephen Catlin (16' red), Linda Gordon and Allan Jacobs (17' green), and Enid Weiner and Bob Bignell (18' blue), from Toronto, Flamborough and Mississauga; all three boats were Novacrafts, excellent performers.

Boyd Warner of Bathurst Arctic Developments ([bathurst@mail.inter-north.com](mailto:bathurst@mail.inter-north.com), highly recommended) arranged boats and logistics (flights from Yellowknife to Grenville and from Kugluktuk to Yellowknife).

Boyd's idea to nest the boats (hence

the 3 sizes) worked well; the several hours spent installing and removing the seats, thwarts, etc saved us a lot of money in getting the boats back to Yellowknife.

If you don't use Boyd as an outfitter, be careful (Che-Mun, Outfit 125, summer 2006).

### **Weather:**

Most days were sunny with temperatures in the 10s and 20s; it was cooler near the coast. We had only a little rain, only a few cold days, and frost only one night; we were windbound only one day. It seems that we lucked out; most other groups had it tougher, some much tougher. The norm seems to be several cold, rainy days and several windbound.

### **Water level:**

According to Phil on his 4th trip and Faruk on his 11th, both of whom we met on the Coppermine, the level was well below normal. Records from 1967 through 2002 show that water was highest in 2001 and lowest in 2002, a difference of 1.3 m [Source Faruk].

Both we (with very low water) and Layman-Holland (with very high water) found it hard to recognize some rapids

from the reports; the water was dangerously high (in the trees!) for the latter's trip, so high that a group ahead of them returned upstream after calling in to be flown out.

The main point of these comments is that the rapids descriptions to follow may be dangerously inaccurate at different levels.

There is supposed to be water-level information that can be found at <http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/environment/hydrology/currentwater-levels> but the site is very poorly designed. It's easy to get to the box containing information from the site at the outlet from Point Lake; from there, click on "Get Info from Map", but it's anyone's guess where you go from there to get historical information.

**Emergency Preparedness:**

There's no reason these days not to carry a satellite phone, a PLB or some such means of getting help. Do NOT carry an EPRIRB; see articles in Kanawa.

There are only two places on the Parent/Coppermine where you can get help. Max Ward's place is on Redrock Lake (not occupied when we checked). And, in case of emergency only (understandably if true, there's a rumour that the owner wants only paying guests), there's a camp on the south shore of Point Lake, about 25 km upstream from Ward's place.

Check with your outfitter, and maybe the RCMP, to try to find out whether other canoe parties are on, or will be on, the river at the same time.

**Comments on gear etc.**

Tent, pfd, sleeping bag, rain gear and clothing must all be of high quality.

Boats: I'm not confident enough to use a wooden, Kevlar or aluminum boat on this river. PakCanoes would be great on the Coppermine but Mark Fels and his group couldn't avoid damaging their rentals on the Parent.

Wet/dry suit: highly desirable, especially on the lower Coppermine; we didn't dump there but would have felt uncomfortable not wearing one.

Helmets: We didn't take them, but Mark Fels's group did.

Spray skirts: almost essential on

the lower Coppermine; not needed on the Parent (where they are worse than useless since they hinder getting in an out of the boats at drag time).

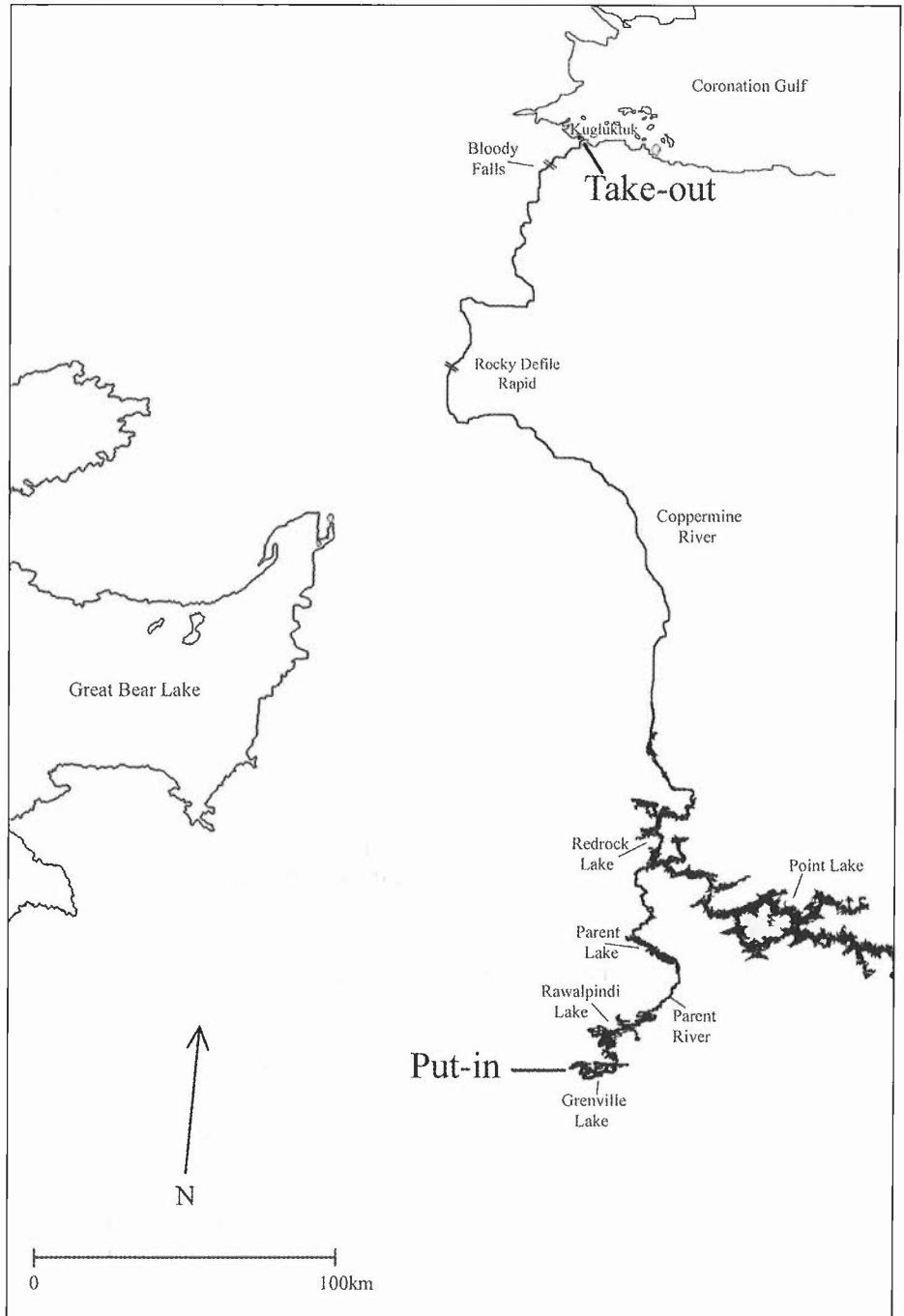
Bugs: weren't as bad as on the Kazan and Thelon, but "few bugs" seems inaccurate.

Bug shirts: next to essential; head nets are not so good but your group might carry one as backup.

Bug tent: the greatest idea since the

bug shirt; it should have a cover though, for rainy days.

Good ideas: paddling gloves and hand cream (fingers crack); waterproof camera or case; folding plastic food pots (Pak-Bowls from Backpackers Pantry); big carabiners; fungicide (feet got wet and stayed wet too long); a saw (even if you plan to use stoves exclusively; if you need a tree as a pry, I assure you from experience that a Swiss army knife doesn't cut it).



**Coppermine Map**



*Esker complex on the Parent*

Flashlight was not needed (16 July to 5 August).

Barrels: The big blue guys worked great; olive barrels leaked, as did Seal bags not properly closed.

Bear protection: We carried pepper spray and bangers; we had access to a shotgun but voted not to bring it.

Cooking: We used wood mostly. The upper Parent and the Coppermine below Escape are in the barrenlands but driftwood is usually available; we needed our naphtha stoves at some sites. Next time I might take my Sierra stove.

Wayfinding: A pocket compass is not reliable (the dip is large, the maps are old and the declination is changing rapidly). The GPS was only occasionally useful.

Maps: We had 4 complete sets (copies) of 1:50k topos (all NAD27). In order of traverse, they are 86B15, 86G2, 86G1, 86G8, 86G7, 86G9, 86G16, 86J1, 86J8, 86J7, 86J10, 86J11, 86J14, 86J13, 86K16, 86N1, 86O4, 86O5, 86O12, 86O11 and 86O14.

Cleaning: It is an extremely sensitive area. We used no detergent; we used gravel and sand for cleaning pots except occasionally we used biodegradable soap to cut grease (then rinsed thoroughly and dumped away from river; I've heard horror stories of people getting sick from ingesting soap). We rinsed bodies in river or sponge bathed, using bdg soap occasionally.

Water filters: Some filtered (you're crazy if you don't) and some didn't (you're crazy if you do); I haven't heard of anyone getting sick on the big northern rivers.

Waste: We covered poo and burned toilet paper.

Again, better:

Carry longer ropes and a satellite phone. Take river rescue course. Allow more time (or push harder) in order to hike more.

**People Encounter:**

Phil, Mary, Mary Kay and Katie from

Wisconsin, one tough group of pros, travelling fast (3 days to our 4 or so for the same distance); two started at Rae and the others at Mesa Lake; all did the 4 mile portage to the Parent. Thanks for help with the pin.

Fishermen Faruk Ekich ("Flytying Enhancements", fekich@yahoo.ca) from Brampton and Bill Blatch from Bordeaux. Thanks for tips on rapids and campsites. In Bob's words, they "were fly fisher aficionados, so despite being invited to cast a lure where they were fishing I declined. They were the consummate sport fishers and I didn't wish to offend their ideals of what fishing should be. It is rare to see this "class" of fishermen. They probably debate if fishing is an art or science!"

**Wildlife:**

10 muskoxen (all in one herd), 5 moose, 2 caribou (maybe same one twice), 2 wolves, 3 bears (mom & 2 cubs), a few Arctic ground squirrels, many pere-

grines, bald eagles, tundra swans, arctic terns and gulls.

### **Information Sources, Publically Available:**

Richardson, John: "Arctic Ordeal". Journal of John Richardson, McGill-Queen's University Press, edited by C S Houston (University of Saskatchewan), 1984. A must read.

Douglas, George M: "Lands Forlorn", NY Putnam 1914. A must read, if it were not so rare and expensive. Fascinating account with many photographs; Michael Peake has spoken of reprinting it (Hurrah Michael!).

Simpson, Thomas: Narrative of the Discoveries on the North Coast of North America Ö, Bentley, London, 1843. The book contains little on the Coppermine proper; it is of interest mostly for its description of the western part of the Passage, and for Simpson's attitudes with respect to the native people.

McCreadie, Mar: "Canoeing Canada's Northwest Territories, A Paddler's Guide", Canadian Recreational Canoeing Association, 1995. No home should be without this one. Informative and gives good background.

Hodgins, Bruce W and Gwyneth Hoyle: "Canoeing North into the Unknown", Natural Heritage / Natural History Inc 1994. Lists early travellers and further sources. I wish that the "Morse files", referred to many times, were readily available.

Franklin, John: "Journey to the Polar Sea". Conway Maritime Press, 2000. His journal for 1821 (which describes the Coppermine) was lost on 14 September 1821 and he used Richardson's notes.

Verbeek, Peter (1993): Lac de Gras to Kugluktuk. Spring 1994 issue of Nastawgan (Volume 21, No.1). Also, first part of <http://www.myccr.com/canoedb/routeDetails.php?routeid=317>

Layman, Bill and Lynda Holland (1999): Lac de Gras to Kugluktuk. Second part of <http://www.myccr.com/canoedb/route>

National Parks Service report "A Wild Rivers Survey" (1972).

Waldron, Levi (2002): Parent/Coppermine from Grenville Lake to Fairy Lake River and on to the Hood. <http://www.myccr.com/canoedb/routeDetails.php?routeid=456>.

NWT report on the Coppermine: <http://www.explorenwt.com/resources/northern-library/PDF/coprivier.pdf>

Information on Kugluk Territorial Park at Bloody Falls: <http://www.nunavutparks.com/parks-special-places/-kugluk-bloody-falls-territorial-park/overview.aspx>

### **Private Information Sources:**

Trip reports of Jack Goering (1966), Bob Matteson (1970), Wendy Grater (1977), Peter Verbeek (1993) and Bill Hosford (1996); Eric Morse's abridged version (1970) of Franklin's journal; conversations with Herb Pohl and Peter Verbeek.

### **Thanks:**

Herb Pohl (kind, highly knowledgeable, eager to help, showed us his slides and gave suggestions about the river, sorely missed); Peter Verbeek (lots of helpful information on rapids and campsites); Glenn Spence and Maureen Bretz (reports otherwise not accessible); Bill Hosford (trip report); George Luste, Faruk Ekich and Bill Blatch (information on rapids).

### **Locating Franklin's sites from the old journals:**

Richardson (and so Franklin) reports observed coordinates (from sextant and chronometers) and also values obtained by dead reckoning from previous positions. His coordinates for latitudes and longitudes of positions on the Coppermine can differ from modern values by a few km and by up to 20 km respectively. For example, page 71 of Richardson gives the farthest west as 116d39', about 13 km west of the map value 116d21'.

Locating Franklin's campsites, etc seems to require a lot of pre-trip analysis; my one attempt en route (to fix the campsite of 11 July 1821 using relative

data for it and Larrigan Creek from page 72 of Richardson) gave nonsense. According to Houston, surprisingly many people have tried to locate the sites and he suggests that they have been largely successful; I don't know whether the results are generally available.

### **Rapids:**

Believe no map; trust no trip report, including this one. In the final analysis, you have to rely on your own judgement.

The following describes what we did; there is no suggestion that you should do the same. The ratings are inexperienced and are not adjusted for remoteness or run-out. The difficulties may be significantly different in different conditions.

The Parent is a small, pool-and-drop river with many boulder fields unrunnable at 2002 water levels; higher water will mean less dragging but may cause other difficulties. I counted 26 rapids and many swifts.

The Coppermine is a big river, not to be paddled lightly. Paddlers have died on it; this is no place for someone with something to prove. Intermediate skills are necessary for those travelling without a guide; guides have to be very good to get ww rookies down this one. Some rapids can be scouted from shore, but most have to be scouted from the boat, often in fast water with hazards. Some rapids are long with no easy exit; a dump could mean a long, cold, dangerous swim (and has meant it for some). It has been said that no one ever drowned on a portage. The standard count, from Richard Martin's 1962 trip, is 34 rapids, some very dangerous.

Tip: In big water, go to the inside of the curves.

Tip: In slow shallow water, go to the outside of the curves.

### **Background on the Parent:**

We had little information on the Parent (Grenville to Redrock Lakes), other than it had been paddled (for example by Herb Pohl) and that we would be scrambling some (as was obvious from the maps). We chose this route for a number of reasons: little was known of it, the trip duration fitted our schedules, it is the road less travelled, we thought that Point





*Pinned on the Parent*

Lake might be blowy and monotonous, we didn't want to chance seeing what the diamond mine is doing to the area, and it looked like fun to paddle a small river as well as a big one.

The Parent, starting from Grenville, was paddled the same year by Levi Waldron's group, on their way to the Hood! The Ross Hodgetts party of six intended to start at Grenville a week ahead of us but started at Redrock because of the low water.

#### **Day-by-day Report:**

Note: Abbreviations: L, R : river left, river right. Ped: portaged.

#### **16 July**

Boyd flew us from Yellowknife in to the west end of Grenville Lake, in two flights. We assembled the boats and camped at the base of the esker;

we walked around in the evening.

#### **17 July**

We paddled down Grenville Lake, then entered the Parent River. We ran the upper part of the creek and dragged the rest to Rawalpindi Lake. After another 15 km or so, we saw a likely campsite at an esker and went for it, not knowing whether we would find anything better. We camped at the top, up a steep hill.

#### **18 July**

Rawalpindi is actually two lakes; the creek between the upper and lower parts was a bump, grind and drag show. A series of rapids starts at the end of Rawalpindi, with ponds between, as follows: a CI, a CII drop (can be Ped R), a CI, a CI+, 500 m of dragging through a boulder field, a CII, and then 500 m of CII with boulders. We stopped for lunch

just before the marked rapid upstream from the P in Parent; sure wish we had scouted the rapid, but it looked OK from upstream, and it was really only a CI+.

After lunch, red boat went down first and got hung up on the centre rocks near the end; it turned, filled with water and got pinned, open side upstream. Green and blue Ped (150 m R), in a hurry. After several hours trying to free the boat, we put the tents up at a buggy spot up the hill (not so nice, but we were very fortunate it was there); after supper, we returned to the boat and pulled some more, without success.

#### **19 July**

More pulling. Bound paddles together and used them as a pry. Went to the other side of the river and cut down a tree for another pry, using a Swiss army knife; sure wish we had packed a saw. Nothing

worked. We had lunch. Linda suggested filling the river upstream from the boat with rocks (the river could be waded there), to lessen the force of the water. Rather than do so immediately, we pulled and pried some more. After 24 hours or so there, we were getting rather discouraged and about to try Linda's idea.

### **Deliverance!**

Four pros from Wisconsin suddenly appeared on the hill. Phil smiled and took charge. He attached a rope to a thwart and wrapped it around the boat so that, when the rope was pulled from upstream, the boat turned bottom up and the water spilled out. More pulling and prying, from all ten of us I recall, freed the boat. After accepting our profuse thanks (Bob secretly gave them some hooch), the Badgers took off downstream. We decided to stay put. At home, I checked my Cliff Jacobson; it doesn't mention Phil's trick.

### **July 20**

Once again on the water, we lined a rapid, dragged for a long while through a boulder field and passed an esker with good campsites below it. We ran a CI-, dragged through another boulder field and ran a CI-. We ran the upper part of the last rapid before Parent Lake; being a bit spooked from the pin, we Ped the middle part (CII+, 70 m L), then ran the rest on the L. That was the end of the rapids for the day, but not the end of the dragging; after pulling the boats through the sandbars at the entrance to Parent Lake, we paddled another hour, then camped at a beach on the R side. The flies (Jayne called them bulldogs) made washing up unpleasant.

### **21 July**

We passed many good campsites on Parent Lake; there's a really good one up a hill on the R. At the end of the lake is a CI+; there followed two swifts, a CI+, an open stretch, a swift, a CI- followed by a long boulder field and finally lake 393. We camped toward the end of the lake, on a sand spit on the L. From here on, most white stuff on the Parent is marked on the maps.

### **22 July**

Another day of rapids. The CI+ at the

end of the lake is followed immediately by a boulder garden, a pond, another boulder garden, another pond, swifts, then boulders, a stretch where my notes are bad (probably ran, can P or track, then ran L), a CI-, and then an open stretch with an esker on the right. After lunch there and a short hike, we ran a long CII- and two swifts. Then came an ugly stretch, several km long, chock full of swifts and boulder fields, requiring much dragging. A quiet stretch brought us to Redrock Lake and the Coppermine. The first sandspit on the L was barely above water and we camped at the second, a good spot with protection from both the W and E wind (easy carry from one side to the other). The wind came up during the night and Bob got up to take down the bug tent.

### **23 July**

We started out; blue boat headed over toward Max Ward's place and went far enough to see there was no one there. The turn left down the Coppermine is, believe it or not, easy to miss. On the lake section below the turn, wondering what the noise was, I looked over to see a gull struggling on the surface; it went under, came up, flapped about but couldn't get out of the water, squawked more and then disappeared for good. That must have been some fish!

We ran a big swift at the first constriction; we didn't see the second rapid mentioned in some reports. We entered Rocknest Lake (well named) to a stiff wind, struggled to the end of the EW stretch and camped at an esker beach site on the L shore. I reflected on the struggle Franklin's party had to find the exit.

### **24 July**

After about 7 km, we came to the first major rapid, about 1.5 km below the Napaktolik. Still spooked from the pin on the Parent, we Ped some packs on the L side (600 m); the takeout is rocky, with no trail worth the name. Returning from the first carry, we saw that we could run it and did so. The waves were fair-sized but we saw no rocks; there's an eddy on the L near the end.

A few km more got us to the second rapid. With many boulders, a bad diagonal ledge, etc, it was not runnable that

day, not by us anyway; we Ped L about 600 m. The takeout is very rocky; the first half of the trail is indistinct, the second well trodden. Green and red boats put in down a steep slope, above a point on L, and ran close to the point through fair-sized waves; blue put in about 100 m farther, down a steeper slope below the point. The portage on R side looked easier, but we saw it only from the L side.

The third was just a short stretch of big waves, but we Ped it anyway (60 m R).

The fourth was a very long (about 2 km) stretch of fast shallow water with many boulders. Red and green boats got through OK, but blue hit a rock, dumped and wrapped. Fortunately, the water was shallow enough that blue paddlers could stay at the boat; red and green paddlers put in at a handy gravel bar and most were able to wade upstream and help free blue. Portaging this one is not an option; wading looks tough as well as unnecessary.

We pulled in on the R shore at the S end of lake 342 and camped at a popular site (no firewood) with beach & tundra; much of Bob's stuff got wet in the dump, including his camera.

### **25 July**

The next day was quiet in comparison. Three bouldery swifts below the Hepburn were run without incident. Shortly after the third, just before the opening, we came to the next rapid; the L side of the island looked very shallow, so we went down the R side to the bay, then continued R.

After another bouldery swift, we came upon an immense boulder fan, several km long. We went R of the island and stayed more or less in the centre; we didn't see the extreme L where Verbeek says there's a chute. The rapid ends in a high boulder dam that seems to run all the way across. At the dam, green sideswiped a rock and almost swamped; red followed but adjusted and got through cleanly; blue swallowed pride, ran aground on the R and waded. If you don't fancy a blind probe at speed through a boulder jungle, do as blue.

After green bailed, we paddled a km or two and camped at a beach site on the L.

## 26 July

About 5 km on the water got us to another rapid; we went R of the island, L of centre, then drifted to the centre through fair-sized waves at the confluence of wash from R and L. We paused to inspect a wrecked canoe on the L shore at the start of the lake where the White Sandy River (well named) joins the Coppermine. After another swift at the end of the lake, we came to a major rapid above the confluence of the Fairy Lake River. We stopped at the tip of the island and scouted both sides. We decided to go R of the island, snaking down little channels. Next time, I'd seriously consider going L of the island, after a good scout. Below the island, green crossed to the far L to avoid the gravel bars; red and blue stayed R, grounded and waded. You must go R of the island if you want to fish at the mouth of Fairy Lake; this is where Levi Waldon's group left the Coppermine, on their way to the Hood! Below the gravel bars, Bob caught a five pound lake trout (first cast) and cleaned

it on the spot. The Fairy Lake rapid is the last one for some time.

A quiet 15 km of paddling got us to our next campsite, a sand strip on the L. We cooked the trout fillets in foil in the fire and ate them as a "mega hors d'oeuvre" that evening.

## 27 July

We ran a swift, then crossed 66d30', initiating Jayne and Stephen appropriately. A long gentle paddle got us to another sand strip on the L.

## 28 July

On the EW stretch, we passed oil drums, remnants of a cabin and assorted junk on R side. This stuff was followed in a km by two abandoned plywood cabins. Paddlers write their names on the walls of one; I saw George Luste's and those of other well-known adventurers. The wind came up and we were soon struggling to make headway. We pulled into a bay on the L and managed to find places for the tents; it was a desperation site but not so bad.

## 29 July

The wind was still up in the morning but we headed out anyway. All too soon, we were getting blown from side to side, making little headway. After 12 km of struggling, we gave up and pulled in at a muddy spot on the R where we could shelter behind some willows; it was a very cramped site, but otherwise not so bad for a desperation site.

## 30 July

We woke up to find a thick layer of frost on the tents. After drying out a bit, we headed downstream again; just after the sharp L turn, we passed a cabin built into the side of the hill but didn't stop to investigate. At the R turn to the NW, we saw a herd of 10 muskoxen, the only ones on our trip. The canyon there looks dangerous but it was just fast water until near the end where we entered a very long bouldery swift. There was another bouldery swift after the open section. The walls close in, a sign that Rocky Defile Rapids is not far ahead.



*Better luck next time*



Suggestion: stop early, just below the fan on the R; you can track the boats down later. Some people run Rocky Defile; most of them survive. But some don't; at the midpoint of the portage trail is a memorial cairn to Carol and David Jones who drowned here in 1972. And Guy Honold perished here in 1974 [Source Hodgins-Hoyle]. George Luste portaged; we had decided before the trip to do the same. The takeout (on the R) is very rocky and requires careful footwork. The trail goes up a steep hill at the start; we used four people to get each boat up. The trail (listed at 600 m; seems longer) is steep also at the lower end.

We camped at a sandy spot at the end of the portage; it was cramped but otherwise OK.

### 31 July

The next morning we entered what Faruk calls The Splits, a shallow area from Rocky Defile to below the Mouse. We were soon scrambling from side to side to avoid, in no particular order, a line of rocks passable on the L, a rocky swift and a gravel bar. We went R of the island just upstream from the mouth of the Kendall.

Faruk recommends visiting the mouth of the Kendall River on your journey through The Splits. He says that the area is a caribou crossing; there is an abandoned camp at the mouth, and a majestic red sandstone canyon with lots of falcon nests. The Kendall is part of the ancient route connecting Great Bear Lake and the Arctic; George Douglas went this way.

After the Kendall, we entered a jungle of gravel bars several km long; it was very difficult to spot the current. Most reports recommend the far R channel, past Mouse River (rule is to go outside early in shallow water). We looked for the passage, but dodging gravel bars got us too far L and we missed it. We took the second channel from the L and danced and wriggled through somehow; the channel on the far L looked un navigable.

The river becomes easier as you approach the September Mountains and the big right turn. We were looking for a

campsite reported near Copper Creek, but pulled in 2 km too early. The site was a sandy bank, not so good. As was her wont, Enid went for a hike, this time downstream.

Suddenly, a bear roared very loudly. Looking downstream, we saw Enid scrambling back to us and two moving blobs, one dirty white and the other dark brown. At first we thought it was a bear attacking a muskox, but then as they raced toward us realized that it was a mother and two cubs. Some of us got the boats ready for a quick exit, but Jayne coolly banged pots together and the bears took off into the bush. We kept a watch for some time.

### 1 August

About 10 km downstream, we came upon an abandoned camp. One source says that it belonged to a survey team, another to Plummer's, another to Frontier Lodge. It's a real ey sore, so whoever owns it please clean it up (fat chance). While walking around exploring, Stephen stepped on a nail which pushed through his boot, almost into his foot. We made the big left turn and ran into Faruk Ekich and Bill Blatch, the fishermen. Concerned about the quality of the information we had about rapids on the lower Coppermine, I spoke to Faruk; he was very helpful. After more chatting, we took off again; soon we were dodging gravel bars on the straight stretch heading NW.

Everyone but the cartographer agrees that Muskox Rapids is located incorrectly on the topo; the stretch marked Muskox Rapids is just some rocky swifts.

Muskox is actually two rapids. Most reports agree on this, but we were still surprised.

The first part is about 5 km downstream from the topo position, near the last E in Coppermine; we got out maybe 100 m upstream, scouted, then ran the ledge on the far L, through fair-sized waves. After the ledge, the river curves to the R; the cliff on the L blocks the view downstream so we worked over to near the R shore to peek around the bend. In higher water, maybe do a full shore scout

to make sure that you can get into the next bay on the L, in order to scout the second part of Muskox.

The second part is a narrow passage with big waves in the centre. We landed at the upstream end of the bay on the L (as advised by Faruk), climbed to the top and scouted. Reports say to sneak L, but the gap was closed for us due to low water. Green and red ran, backpaddling hard. Red dumped at the end on crossing an eddy line, and washed R into an eddy. Blue tracked L in no time. We dug our colleagues out and headed downstream, to the R of the larger island, through a bouldery swift.

Jayne was getting cold, so we headed over to the smaller island and got her changed. We then dropped down to the tip of the island and camped on a sandy, grassy spot just before the wall closes in on the L; from there we could see the sandstone walls that form the precursor to Sandstone Rapids.

### 2 August

In 5 km, after going R of the island, we were at the Gate to Sandstone Rapids; it consists of basalt rocks, an impressive sight. If memory serves me right, Douglas has a photo of it. Faruk advised the middle of the three passages. Being on the R, and seeing no trouble, we took the R gap rather than cross in front; the passage was bumpy with fair-sized waves but we saw no serious obstacles.

Sandstone Rapids: One might think from the topo that there's an island just above Sandstone but there isn't (the L "channel" is bone dry). We landed on the R side of the "island" about halfway down and scouted to the tip. We returned, paddled to the tip, went up the bay and over to the far side, climbed the steep hill to the top and scouted; there's a well-worn path close to the cliff. We decided to run it. We went out hard below the froth on the R, over nearly to the R shore, paused on a gravel bar, worked back to the centre and then went L; this plan requires crossing in front of lots of boulders, so it may be a bad idea in faster (higher?) water. Other parties have used different routes, as reported in the technical version. Faruk has run Sandstone

every time but one, that in very high water.

We kept to the inside of the bend at the next rapid (1 km below), no problem.

Serious rapids start at the beginning of map 86O12, before the hard bend to the R. It was dangerous in 2002 and a dump would have meant big trouble. We ran into an almost continuous stretch of CII+: 2 km of fast water, fair-sized waves, ledges, boulders and holes. We ran the insides of curves where possible, but still had to make frequent course changes. The gravel banks on the insides of the bends were useful mostly as rest spots; scouting from them didn't help much. Other paddlers didn't find this stretch so difficult. The three rapids after the R turn were easy runs. We camped R on the second sandy beach on the NS stretch.

### 3 August

We did two easy rapids, the second at the R turn, but then ran into a stretch that was dangerous in 2002; again, a dump would have been very serious.

The trouble starts well upstream from the most southerly point of the U turn and continues to the bend to the N. There are five or so ledges, at least one of them a CIII, running almost all the way across. Whether it was a case of having incomplete or misleading information, or just plain carelessness, green boat (in the lead) went R at the first ledge, realized where we were and signalled to the others; we couldn't work fully L before the next ledge and so we stayed near the centre, found gaps in the ledges (thanks Linda), lined up, charged and braced. Red saw the signal to bail out L and front ferried, missing the worst. Blue missed the signal and followed green; they did most of the bad stuff (went R of one ledge). We had no dumps, didn't even get much water in the boats, but things were a bit tense. After pulling in at the end, I looked downstream and thought there but for the brace of God go I.

Advice: scout where possible, push hard L as soon as possible and hug the L shore.

The next rapid, 15 or so ledges and half-ledges, starts past the bottom of the U turn; it can be scouted from the gravel

bar on the L. We had an easy run on the L.

After passing a neat waterfall on the R, we came to Escape Rapids, which we had decided before the trip to portage. Some groups run it; all reports say it's tougher than Sandstone. The portage, listed as 2400 m, is on the R; it goes up a steep hill from the start and we needed four people on each boat. By the way, the trees on L at the takeout are the last on the river. The trail is indistinct until about half way. Go L of the pond and look for an early down, checking for the trail near the cliffs.

We camped on a sandy spot at the end of the portage.

### 4 August

We went R of the island just below the campsite. At the next rapid, we kept L, on the inside of the turn. There followed a long stretch of gravel bars and boulders; we got too far L avoiding them and had to work hard to get R, through lots of fair-sized stuff, to stay away from the wall on the L.

And then we reached the "delta", a huge maze of gravel bars; the current is difficult to spot and channels split and rejoin beyond reason. Green went L and the others R; all three did a lot of dragging.

A few km of decent river got us to the mandatory portage (listed as 1200 m) around Bloody Falls. The takeout is on the L, before the wall closes in. The trail starts up a steep, narrow, winding path (we needed five of us on each boat), goes over a flat area, down to some rocks, up to the ATV trails and right to a beachy area where we camped.

Lots of people ATV in from town or boat in from lower down to fish at the falls, primarily for char; the people we spoke to were catching only pike. Some camp here; it's very busy well into the night. We tried to hire a lift to the village but were told that ATVs couldn't handle the boats. We missed the cairn at the site of the 1771 events. We gave our stoves and fuel to a couple for use by the Kugluktuk Girl Guides.

### 5 August

We got up early, in case a head wind

came up; rather than a head wind though, we had a strong tail wind, uncomfortably strong in fact. Route note: We goofed and went L of the island at the beginning of map 86O14. The houses of the native people built below the falls were the first we had seen for almost three weeks, save Max Ward's place. To get shelter from the wind, we went L of the island about 5 km from the mouth. This stretch would be a real grind in a head wind; the main navigation problem is to spot the huge sand bars in time. We pulled out at TANKS road rather than risk being blown out into the Gulf. Most groups take out at the beach at the N end of town; I see no reason to do so unless you plan to stay at the campsite (or want to "finish the trip"). It was not nice to see the smashed windshields.

All stores were closed (civic holiday) so we couldn't contribute to the local economy. Then we found out that the hotel requires reservations for meals. Alas, the weather was too cold to clean up at the beach. With nothing else to do, we wandered around, bumped into geological survey guys and registered with the RCMP after a wait. Linda looked up people she knows from her stays at Bathurst Inlet Lodge and their relatives. We hired the taxi (\$100) to take us and our gear to the airport. We cleaned up a bit there while waiting for our 4 pm flight to Yellowknife, but I still felt uncomfortable presenting myself to the general public. Linda chatted up the airport supervisor; she, an Inuit, had no idea what a black fly is. Her main job was to check the runway for caribou when the radio announced that a plane was coming in to land.

### Epilogue:

The flight back to Yellowknife paralleled the Coppermine for a long time, then the lower Parent; the eskers were even more beautiful from the air. It was great to see them, the rapids and campsites like the sandspit on Redrock again, but really sad to leave the north. Crammed into the aircraft after three weeks outside, I thought again how terrible a punishment it must be to imprison people who live mostly outdoors.

# River Dreams: Burnside River

Text and photos by Morten Asfeldt



*Pulling across the ice downstream of Nose Lake*

This is not a fish story; it is a true story. On a 1991 Mara River trip, two keen fishers, Sharon and Lisa, were along and not long after the floatplane had disappeared into the southern sky, lures were being dispatched into the lake. Sharon soon had a small trout weighing perhaps a pound on the line, and as she reeled it towards shore a large trout took after it. In an effort to save the small fish from cannibalism, Sharon gave a sharp yank on the line, pulling it from harm's way. The large trout disappeared into the deep water and Sharon's focus turned to the release of the smaller trout. However, the small trout had found its way into the rocks on the bottom of lake, and all that could be seen was the fishing line leading into a small crevasse between two rocks. Sharon could not get the fish to come

out. Not wanting to break the line or to leave the small trout trapped, Sharon rolled up her pants and waded in for the rescue. As the rest of us stood watching from a slightly raised vantage point, Sharon ran her hand down the line and into the water. To everyone's surprise, especially Sharon's, the water erupted as the large trout returned, latched onto Sharon's finger and tightly closed its teeth filled jaws. She pulled her hand from the water with the large trout firmly attached creating a maelstrom of trout, floundering Sharon and splashing water.

Sharon emerged from Nose Lake wet from head to toe with a stream of blood rushing from her trout-mangled finger, wondering what had just happened. Her finger looked as if it had just been pulled from an auger with several deep cuts ex-

tending its full length. Had we been near a hospital, I am sure she would have received a finger full of stitches and a prescription for painkillers. We cleaned the wound and bandaged in it textbook fashion while Lisa tempted the large trout to lunch on a red devil. We had fish for supper.

For as long as I can remember I have had an intense love affair with the Canadian north. As a young boy I spend five years in St. Anthony, Newfoundland, reading the stories of Sir Wilfred Grenfell and traveling with my physician father by boat, plane and helicopter to remote outposts up and down the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. From Newfoundland, our family moved to the Yukon where the adventures continued. Those early years of adventure instilled in me a deep love for wilderness travel



*A short paddle as we pull across Nose Lake*

and adventure that remains strong and has found its way into my professional life.

For 25 years I have been involved in teaching and leading groups in the outdoors in some shape or form. The pinnacle of those years has been co-teaching a university course where together with 10 students, we choose a river, complete all the planning and preparation, study the expedition route and then embark on a 21 day canoe expedition. Over the years, this class has paddled the Mara and Burnside Rivers (1993, 2005 and 2007), Thelon River (1995), Horton River (1997), Ellice and Huikitak Rivers (1999), Kuujjua River (2001) and Hood River (2003). In this article, I will give descriptions of the Mara and Burnside Rivers and share stories from my four journeys down these rivers where I have realized a childhood dream.

It was with five friends and 21 days food that we landed on Nose Lake on July 21, 1991, the first of my four trips on the Mara and Burnside Rivers. At that point I had been guiding on the Nahanni River for 6 seasons and wanted to expand my paddling experience and explore the tundra. I had read about the tundra and experienced bits of it in Newfoundland as well as during a trip on the Coppermine River in 1990. It was a typical tundra day with a warm sun and few clouds as the twin otter doors opened filling the plane with the familiar smells

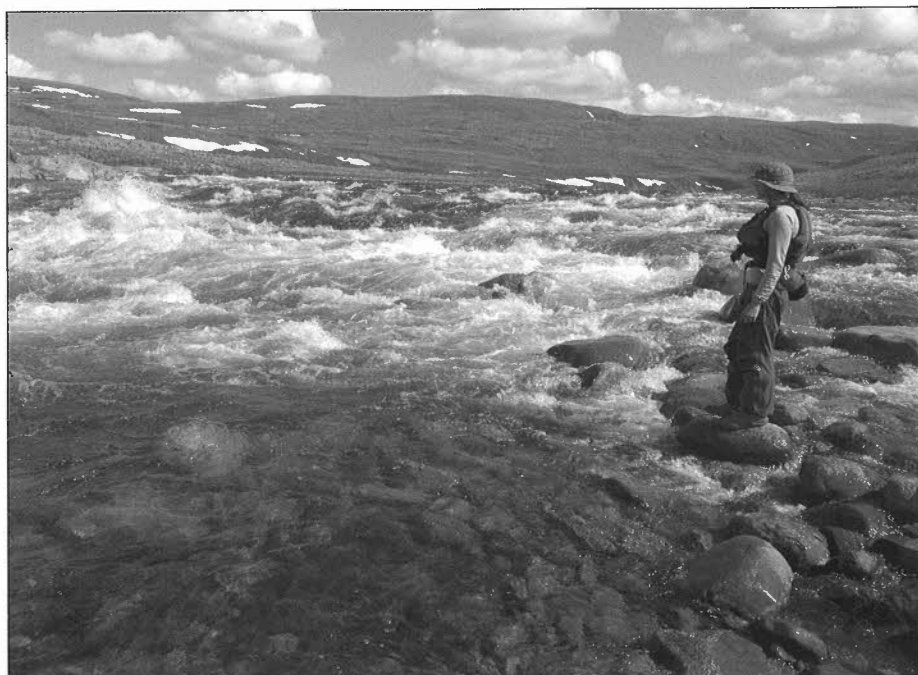
of the tundra that would become our constant companions.

Nose Lake is the headwaters of the Mara River and takes its name from a distinctly shaped island near the middle of the lake that protrudes skyward as the nose of a sleeping giant would. From here, it is approximately 300 kilometers to Bathurst Inlet. The first 60 kilometers of the river is a series of five lakes joined by short swift sections of river. For the

most part, the rapids are easily navigated although boulders are plentiful and opportunities for wrapping canoes are frequent. Certain rapids have been lined one year or paddled another, depending on water levels, weather conditions and the confidence of the group.

The river narrows for the next 20 kilometers and presents some challenging rapids. In particular, one significant drop we have always lined is followed shortly by a 1-kilometer long boulder garden that requires very intentional maneuvering. This section of the river has resulted in a number of swims for those not paying attention, but for the alert and skilled paddling team, this is a fun and enjoyable section of whitewater with many great fishing spots along the way. In addition to Nose Lake, the fishing on the Mara River is exceptional with the best fishing below rapids in the first 100 kilometers.

Below the long boulder garden rapid, the river meets the first of many dramatic eskers along the river. This is a fabulous camp spot where we have had many wildlife encounters. Abundant wildlife is one of the great attractions of the Mara River; we have seen caribou, muskoxen, wolves, wolverine, grizzly bears, red fox, arctic fox, arctic hare, ringed seal, peregrine and gyrfalcon, golden eagles and rufflegged hawks, and a number of different owls and many smaller birds and



*Scouting on the Mara River*





*Evening light at Burnside Falls*

waterfowl. Beginning our trips on the Mara in late June and ending in mid July has several advantages and disadvantages.

The primary disadvantage of a late June start date is that you may find the lakes choked with ice and have a difficult time finding a place for the plane to land. In 2007 Nose Lake was completely frozen except for open water at the west end where a river enters the lake. We spent the first day pulling our canoes most of the way across the lake. I enjoy pulling my canoe across ice and get a great deal of satisfaction from the walking and pulling. Perhaps it is the contrast between white ice and deep blue arctic sky and the irony of pulling a canoe across water in its solid form.

The advantages of a late June start usually include a week or so of bug free travel and higher water making most boulder gardens much easier to paddle. A late July departure in 1991 resulted in considerable walking through shallow boulder gardens that simply didn't have

enough water to float our canoes. Finally, a late June start date maximizes the likelihood of intercepting the migrating Bathurst caribou herd on their southward journey.

Caribou encounters have been a highlight of the Mara River trips. My childhood dream has been to experience the caribou migration. While living in the Yukon I had many encounters with small bands of mountain caribou but never the large roaming herds of the barrenland caribou. My arctic river paddling trips have been largely fueled by my dream to see the large barrenland caribou herds. In 1990 I paddled the Coppermine River, followed by the 1991 Mara River trip and a 1992 expedition on the Horton River, all as part of this quest. On each of these trips I saw caribou but never in big numbers. It wasn't until 1993 on the Mara that I had the first realization of my caribou dreams. It was July 6, just a few kilometers below the mouth of the Hackett River. The wind had stopped us at the mouth of a small creek on river

right. After a brief group discussion, the tents were set up and we hunkered down to wait out the wind that made downstream progress impossible. Rather than follow our student's lead and head for our tents and an afternoon of reading or napping, Dave Larson, my co-leader, and I, headed out for a walk. My dream was about to be realized.

Dave and I climbed a short steep bank behind camp that led to a broad flat terrace that was peppered with basketball-sized boulders emerging from the lichen-covered landscape. Pockets of caribou were scattered throughout the river valley. We stood leaning into the north wind. Before we had time to move on, a group of caribou appeared from a small valley. We each threw ourselves behind a boulder and stretched out prone. The caribou approached us and passed us by grazing 30 feet to our right. The group was composed of a few hundred animals including motley looking cows, bulls with dark velvet covered antlers and calves that were only 30 days old at



*Napping at the Mara-Burnside confluence*

most. My heart was beating quickly and my body tingling.

I was about to get up when I realized that another group of caribou was drifting towards us. This was a large group with hundreds, perhaps thousands, of caribou stretching from one side of the terrace to the other and headed straight for us. We were about to be either surrounded or trampled – both prospects were frightening. I gambled on being surrounded and laid still with my camera lens resting on the edge of my guarding boulder.

The caribou flowed around me and filled in the gap a few feet behind me as if I was a mid-stream boulder in a slow moving river. From ground level, hooves, legs and lichen munching caribou lips dominated my view. I stared into their eyes without a returning glance. I was astounded by the continuous sounds: clicking ankles, goat-like snorts, farting and bleating. I took picture after picture until I came to the end of my film. As quietly as I could, I changed the film in my camera; however, as I reached into my pocket

for a new film I revealed myself to the caribou and their pace quickened leaving Dave and I belly down on the tundra knowing that we had just experienced a long sought after dream. We slowly rose and once again stood leaning into the north wind, broad smiles on our faces watching thousands more caribou pass by in the next few hours.

I have been fortunate to have a number of similar encounters since that time. In 2005 our group once again crossed paths with the migrating post-calving herd – this time on July 2, a few kilometers upstream of the Hackett River. We had been encountering small bands of caribou along the river all afternoon, and about 4:00 pm we noticed a distance hill spotted with thousands of caribou. We paddled on towards the hill and pulled our canoes up on shore. With cameras and binoculars in hand we hid behind large boulders and small hills. For hours we watched as caribou streamed by without giving us a second glance. Our stomachs rumbled as we headed back to the canoes, made camp, cooked supper and

developed our evening caribou watching strategy. The caribou continued to move past us by the thousands all night long and into the morning; we slept little that night. By noon the next day, it was as if someone had flipped a switch and the caribou vanished from the land – we saw less than 30 caribou in the next 14 days.

The mouth of the Hackett River was the site of a profound, perhaps spiritual moment in 1993. Some time during the night I remember being awakened by the howl of nearby wolves. Normally, I would be out of bed in a shot to see wolves and perhaps get a picture. However, on this occasion, I rolled over in my sleeping bag, wishing the wolves would keep quiet so that I could sleep. Some time later, I was awakened again, this time by a student shouting that wolves were in camp. After searching for my glasses I peered out the window of my tent just in time to see several white wolves loping casually away from camp. After a brief conversation between tents with the student I went back to sleep thinking that the story was over.

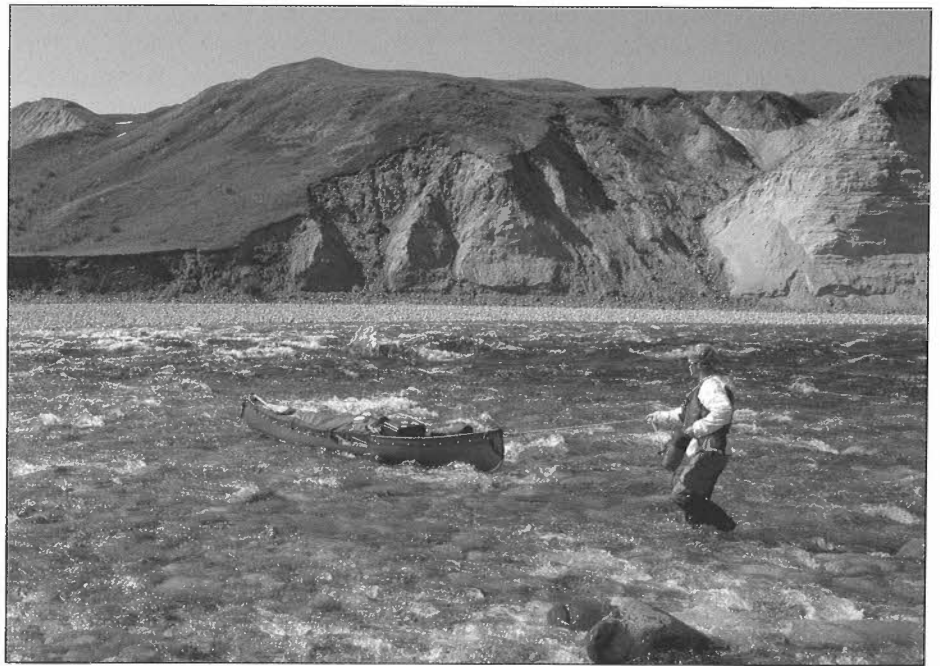
In the morning, I couldn't find one of my shoes. Assuming that the students were playing some sort of prank on me I began to banter back and forth with those I assumed were the source of my one shoe morning. It became clear they had nothing to do with it and that I was not the only one missing a shoe. After some searching we found a number of shoes 50 meters or so from our tents. We assumed that the wolves were responsible, knowing that wolves had done this sort of thing before, but, in our case, the wolves had taken the shoes from inside the vestibules of our tents – inches from our heads and feet.

Most astounding, however, was the experience of the student that first noticed the wolves in camp. Waking up to the howling, she sat up and looked out the screen window of her tent. To her surprise, she found herself making eye contact with a wolf sitting peacefully meters from her tent as if it was inviting her to commune. She doesn't know how long they remained locked in eye contact but it was a powerful moment for her. Her father had spent his life studying wolves, which demanded that he spend long periods in the field away from his family. Unfortunately, her parents had divorced and she harbored considerable resent-

ment towards her father for the failed marriage and his long absences during her childhood. That moment of eye contact with the wolf was a moment of understanding and reconciliation. She spoke the next day about how it felt as if the wolf had been sent to her, seeking forgiveness for her father and providing an opportunity to look deep into the eyes of the wolf so that she might begin to understand her father's lifelong passion for wolves. It was a moment of epiphany.

Downstream of the Hackett River, the Mara narrows creating numerous rapids in the bottom of a deepening river valley. Just over half way to the confluence of the Burnside River the Mara turns sharply northwest. Shortly after the corner, the river narrows again and squeezes through a constricting rock canyon. This canyon warrants scouting. In the low water of late July and early August we have run this canyon, but have always lined or portaged it in the high water of early July. This is a stunning canyon with smooth water worn rocks and isolated pools of sun-warmed water. Below the canyon is a beach of smooth round gravel marking the mouth of an incoming creek that makes a fine campsite. A short evening walk up the creek brings you to a small but beautiful waterfall. From the old riverbank above the waterfall we once watched a pair of white wolves on the far side of the Mara River.

Shortly after crossing the Arctic Circle, the Mara and Burnside Rivers come together. This provides a number of superb hiking options with spectacular views up the Mara and Burnside Rivers. The best camping is upstream of the actual confluence as the gravel bar between the two rivers is composed primarily of large boulders. We had read that Inuit tent rings were present at the confluence and after much searching over the years we found them in 2007. They are on river left of the Mara River on the pronounced terrace that formed between the two rivers. The Copper Inuit frequented this area in the summer. These people would spend the fall, winter and spring at Bathurst Inlet and move inland to fish and hunt caribou in the summer. They would return to Bathurst Inlet in the fall and wait for the sea ice to form so they could hunt for seal. During this wait, they would eat caribou and seal meat that they had cached in stone meat caches be-



*Lining on the Burnside a few kilometres above the portage*

fore their inland journey. Many meat caches, caribou hides (hiding places for hunting caribou), stone fox traps and other artifacts in Bathurst Inlet tell the story of that traditional Inuit life.

The Burnside River feels like a big river after paddling the small and intimate Mara. The 70 kilometers from the confluence to the portage can be quickly paddled in the fast current. For the most part, the Burnside River is a straightforward paddle. However, during the last 25 kilometers before the portage, the river drops at a rate of 2.0 to 3.5 meters/kilometer. At times, the river literally drops away in front of you. Throughout this section are numerous stretches of continuous standing waves and a number of sharp corners with huge standing waves and holes along the outside that could easily swallow a canoe. As well, about 10 kilometers before the portage the river makes a 90-degree bend to the southeast. This corner is always interesting. The river is wide with many gravel bars as it approaches the corner and the river changes course from year to year. You have to look ahead and determine which channels are most runnable and how they will set you up for the final corner. The outside of the corner is composed of solid rock causing the water to bounce back, creating whirlpools, standing waves, eddy lines and sometimes a hole.

The alert paddler can easily navigate this corner, but a moment of carelessness did result in a short but cold swim for a pair of our students.

A number of rapids are present from here to the portage that are easily run, including one that we have both lined and paddled, depending on the water level. I always find myself being more cautious above the portage; however, in reality, the last rapid is several kilometers above any real danger. Nevertheless, caution is in order.

The long but straightforward portage begins on river left several kilometers above the actual canyon and falls. Paddling past this take-out does not put you in immediate danger; it just makes for a much more difficult portage. A pile of boulders marks the portage on a terrace high above the river. More notable, however, are the paths leading from the river to the terrace. The portage route does not follow the river but instead goes up over the height of land that lies between the pullout and Burnside Falls. The distance is about 5 kilometers, and cairns intermittently mark the route. From the height of land the community of Bathurst Inlet, a cluster of white buildings, can be seen in the distance.

Burnside Falls are spectacular. The river splits around a large center rock outcrop creating two waterfalls. Many



hours can be spent watching the water in the fading light of the summer sun. The canyon above the falls is often home to a pair of peregrine falcons. Below the falls are a number of large eddies that are often great for fishing where we have caught lake trout, grayling and occasionally arctic char.

It is a short paddle to Bathurst Inlet, a community with a storied past. The Inuit of Bathurst Inlet are Copper Inuit who evolved from the Thule culture. The name Copper Inuit comes from their practice of using copper for tool making. However, the people of Bathurst Inlet do not call themselves Copper Inuit. Rather, they call themselves Kingaunmiut, or, "people who live below Nose Mountain." The first European contact with the Copper Inuit was likely Samuel Hearne in 1771 followed by Franklin in 1821.

Dominion Explorers established an exploration camp at the current community site in 1929. This was followed by the Hudson Bay Company in 1931 and a Roman Catholic Church mission in 1936. The mission church still stands and is now used as a dormitory for Lodge guests. In 1965, Glenn Warner, then an RCMP officer in Cambridge Bay who had made several visits to Bathurst Inlet by boat and dog team as part of his patrols, discovered that the Catholic Church was closing the Burnside Mission. Glenn and his wife Trish contacted the Church and arranged to buy the church as a home. The church was subsequently deconsecrated and handed over to the Warners. The following year, the Hudson Bay Company also decided to close shop. Along with a few partners, the Warners purchased not only

the Hudson Bay Buildings but also the land surrounding the buildings. In 1969, well ahead of its time, Bathurst Inlet Lodge opened as a naturalist lodge. Today, Bathurst Inlet Lodge has an esteemed reputation as a world-renowned naturalist lodge that is co-owned and operated with people of Bathurst Inlet.

We have enjoyed many warm welcomes at Bathurst Inlet and had the priv-



*My first caribou migration encounter, just below the Hackett River*

ilege of touring the Inlet with Glenn Warner and naturalist Page Burt. As well, on two occasions, our students have enjoyed spending time with Bishop Jack Sperry, author of *Igloo Dwellers Were My Church*. Bishop Sperry spent many years working in the north and in his early years routinely traveled over 3000 kilometers by dog team each winter visiting his parishioners. He is a gentle and inspiring man with vast knowledge of the north and its people and displays a deep compassion for the current people and their struggles. During one visit, Bishop Sperry was showing us around the com-

munity, recounting a variety of stories. He invited us to walk to the local cemetery that is marked by a large wooden cross that reaches high into the arctic sky. Below this marker are two long rows of simple white crosses, many marking the deaths of the flu epidemic victims of 1941. In that year, a young RCMP officer visited Bathurst Inlet and unknowingly brought with him the killer flu that

took the lives about 40 people. As we approached the cemetery we could see a casket resting on the ground beside a freshly excavated grave. We gathered in a circle beside the casket and grave and Bishop Sperry told us the story of the young man soon to be buried. He had committed suicide that winter in Kugluktuk and had recently been returned home for burial. With compassion that was overwhelming, the Bishop talked about the many struggles that Inuit people face today. Without warning, and as naturally as a wolf lopes across the tundra, the Bishop said, "let's have a prayer." Among other things, he prayed for hope and thanked God for the promise of hope

and the good life. In spite of the varied religious views and beliefs in our group, Bishop Sperry's spontaneous prayer stirred the spiritual core in each of us. It was a humbling moment; we left the cemetery in silence.

On each canoe trip our tents are inevitably packed for the last time. It is always a time of mixed emotions. On the one hand, the excitement of returning home to family and friends pulls at us and the completion of the expedition brings satisfaction. On the other hand, there is the pull of the group and the land to stay, to hike together one more time,





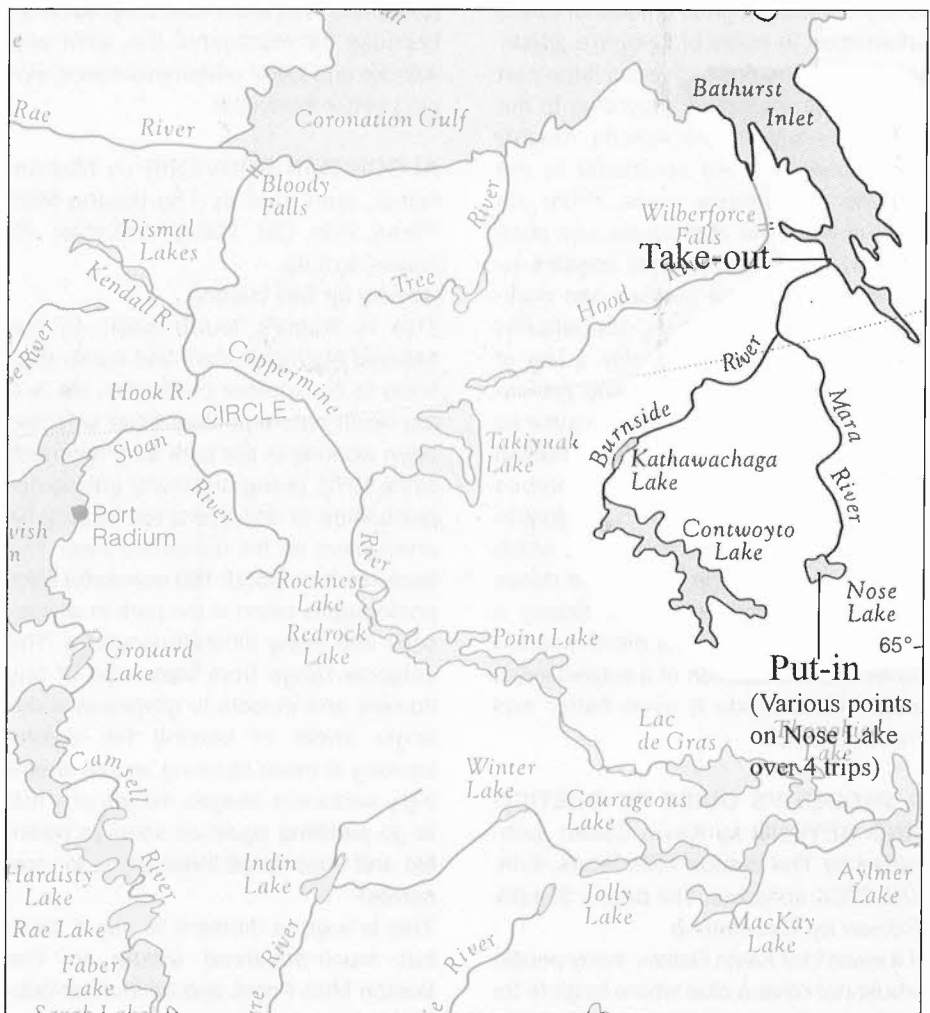
*Cemetery at Bathurst Inlet*

to share another meal together, to breathe the cool arctic air and to be governed only by the natural rhythms of nature and wilderness travel. These rhythms were quickly disrupted by the high-pitched whine of the twin otter's turbo engines as the plane landed and came to a stop in front of our pile of well-traveled gear and canoes. The smell of jet-fuel overpowered the fragrance of the lupines that surrounded us. The pilots looked at us with suspicion: our faces were weathered and our clothes smeared with mosquito guts. Some students jokingly asked about the in-flight movie while others lingered in the background hoping to delay our looming departure. Once airborne I stared out the window; I was suddenly exhausted. By chance we circled over the cemetery and I noticed a dark patch of fresh dirt in a line of white crosses. The contrast between the white crosses and the life of the green tundra was striking. I took a picture.

Enroute to Yellowknife we flew over portions of the Mara and Burnside Rivers and a flood of memories came alive. I thought back to the many canoe trips that I have been a part of in the Canadian north and felt a tension in my belly. What have I learned from all those trips? How have they changed me? How will I share what I have experienced?

What have our students learned and how have they been changed? How will they share their experience? These questions raised a tension that was both disconcerting yet comforting. It was disconcerting because it didn't allow me to rest in the joys and satisfactions of the journey yet comforting because it reminded me that even though the tents had been packed for the last time, the insights and lessons from these expeditions will take a lifetime to realize. And yet, at that moment, there was clarity: the Mara and Burnside Rivers had become sacred places for me where I felt connected, grounded and whole. With that, I rested. Morten

Note to all WCA Symposium attendees: Watch for Morten's presentation at the 2008 WCA Symposium.



*Mara-Burnside River Map*

*Map Credit: Bruce Hodgins and Gwyneth Hoyle*

# Books

## **AN ARTIST'S AND PHOTOGRAPHER'S GUIDE TO WILD ONTARIO**

by Rob Stimpson and Craig Thompson, published by The Boston Mills Press, Erin, ON, 2007, softcover, 224 pages, \$29.95.

Review by Toni Harting.

Many people, paddlers certainly included, go out into the "wild" country to experience first-hand the splendor of nature, often recording their observations in the form of photographs, drawings, and paintings. These tangible memories will give them countless hours of cherished reminiscences and help them relive those wonderful times. To assist these adventurers in their quest for beauty, the authors, a photographer and a writer, have created a handsome where-to guide book (rather than a how-to one), offering a great amount of useful information to many of Ontario's artistic resources. The book covers a large part of Ontario, organized according to the province's major travel regions, roughly from Lake Superior southeast to the Toronto and Ottawa areas. From the back cover: "The authors discuss each region's art history, provide detailed information on unique courses and workshops available to artists, list galleries and studio tours, and profile a few of each region's most interesting professional and amateur artists." Because so much of the area covered is Canadian Shield country, most of the numerous and beautifully reproduced color illustrations come from lakes and rivers, which will surely delight the hearts and minds of all wilderness canoeists. Surely a well-crafted book, but a more inspired cover and the addition of a subject index would have made it even better and more practical.

## **A PADDLER'S GUIDE TO QUETICO AND BEYOND**

by Kevin Callan, published by The Boston Mills Press, Erin, ON, 2007, softcover, 192 pages, \$24.95.

Review by Toni Harting.

If it wasn't for Kevin Callan, many people would not have a clue where to go to for their regular or occasional canoe fix. Fortunately, in this tireless promoter of all things canoe tripping we have an inexhaustible source of first-class tripping in-

formation to guide us to yet another put-in point and set off for yet another great paddling adventure. In this, his 12th (?) book, he presents his customary deluge of detailed information on 11 trips in Ontario's Quetico Park as well as on five more trips in areas to the north and northwest of the park. As usual, the information offered here is extensively researched and written down in the trademark Callan style. The 50 color photographs are generally very good (you'll love the one on page 79!) and the 20 superb maps are a joy to study. Kevin keeps inspiring thousands of novices and others to take up paddling. He also provides experienced trippers with excellent information on where to go and how to get there. Even though my canoeing days are over, I always enjoy Kevin's books and read them from cover to cover because he represents the spirit and wonder and joy of wilderness canoe tripping better than most.

**ALGONQUIN SOUVENIR** by Michael Runtz, published by The Boston Mills Press, Erin, ON, 2007, hardcover, 96 pages, \$19.95.

Review by Toni Harting.

This is Runtz's fourth book on our beloved Algonquin Park and surely destined to be another bestseller. He is a top-notch nature photographer who has been working in the park as a naturalist since 1972, giving him many unique opportunities to document the beauty he encounters on his numerous trips. The book contains about 100 wonderful color photographs taken in the park in all seasons and many different locations. The subjects range from close-ups of tiny flowers and insects to gorgeous wide-angle shots of blazing fall colors. Looking at these stunning, mouth-wateringly seductive images makes one itch to go paddling again as soon as possible and observe all these gems for ourselves!

This is a good moment to pay a small but much-deserved tribute to The Boston Mills Press and its founder/publisher, John Denison, and his staff for the outstanding publishing job they have been doing now for so long. Over the years, Boston Mills has produced

dozens of books that have brought great joy to tens of thousands of lovers of the outdoors, and especially to those who enjoy nature while paddling a canoe or kayak. Many BMP books have become classics that will be read and re-read by countless outdoors enthusiasts. Thanks, Boston Mills, keep it up!

## **CANOE ATLAS OF THE LITTLE NORTH**

by Jonathan Berger and Thomas Terry, published by The Boston Mills Press, Erin, ON, 2007, hardcover, 144 pages, \$95.00.

Review by Toni Harting.

At 14 by 16.5 inches (36 x 42 cm), this is indeed one big brute of a book. But what an irresistibly delightful brute! Page after page filled with maps and satellite photos and drawings (an astonishing 1200 illustrations!) and a vast amount of background information, this is one book that a dedicated wilderness canoeist will find hard to put down; a book that will thrill every paddler who has ever portaged her/his gear over a barely discernable trail, wondering what the hell he/she was doing. The very ambitious project to collect all the material and put it in publishable form has occupied several decades of the authors' lives, but the resulting book is more than worth the time and demanding work. It documents in astonishing detail the extensive network of canoe routes that links all parts of the Little North, a huge area that encompasses over 20 major lake and river systems within 1.3 million square km in Ontario and Manitoba, north of a line running roughly from Winnipeg to Cochrane.

Besides the more than 50 annotated topographical maps (one may need a magnifier to read them), this atlas also provides a great amount of information on other aspects of the Little North, such as climate, geology, vegetation, wildlife, land use, too many to mention in this short review. Not everybody will be happy with Berger's decision to use his mostly black-and-white drawings instead of photographs to provide illustrations of the great number of sites visited. Photographs would no doubt have given more detailed information, but would probably also have increased the pro-

duction cost and hence the price of the book. This is an impressive, truly wonderful book of very high production quality (they certainly know how to print and bind books in China!). Obviously not one to take along on a canoe trip, but a treasure to study at home at great leisure, dreaming of wonderful canoe trips to far-away places.

**CAPTURING THE FRENCH RIVER** by Wayne Kelly, published by Natural Heritage Books, Dundurn Group, Toronto, [www.dundurn.com](http://www.dundurn.com), 2007, soft-cover, 128 pages, \$27.99.

Review by Toni Harting.

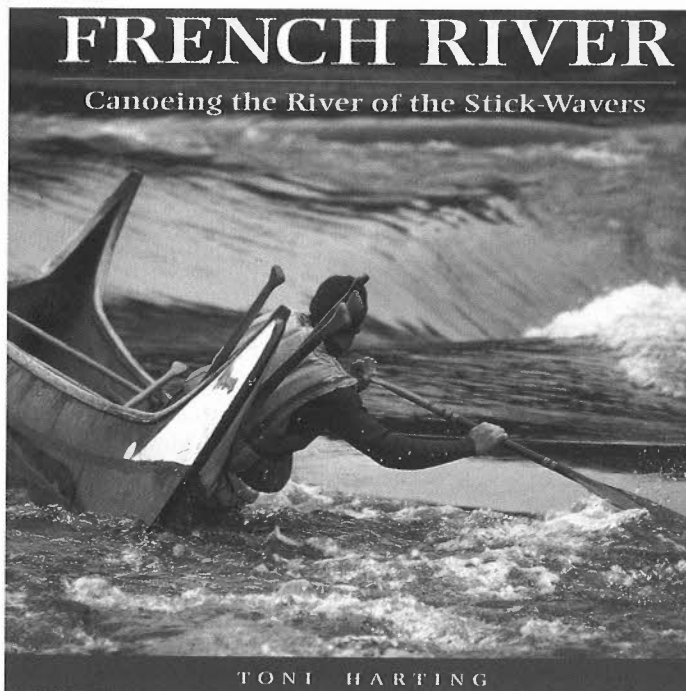
Surprisingly, the first 46 pages of this rather slim volume are concerned mainly with the family histories of two men and two women who share a love of nature in the first quarter of last century. But when one continues reading, it becomes clear that, between 1910 and 1927, this adventurous foursome spent

their holidays in a manner that in those days was quite unconventional and daring: canoe tripping in the wilderness of northern Ontario, in and around an area now called the Main Outlet in the Delta of the French River. Because both men were avid amateur photographers, they left behind a large and unique collection of often surprisingly good photographs taken on their many trips. The author of this wonderful little book was lucky to recently discover the whereabouts of the collection and now offers us a small but endlessly fascinating selection of snapshots taken in Ontario's remote north country, which in those days could still be called wild. Most images are accompanied by extensive captions and the book also presents thousands of words of very informative text. It's delightful to see how these four people, properly dressed for their times in jackets and neckties, long skirts and hats, enjoyed the same kind of activities we do now,

cooking over campfires, catching fish for dinner, running rapids, swimming, just sitting on a rock. Most photographs are black-and-white but several handcolored ones have also been included. The reproduction of all images in the book is exceptionally good, allowing us to see many details captured on fragile negatives and glass plates. It's great fun, but not easy, to try and identify the various locations captured in the photographs.

This thoroughly researched work is not only a human document of the first order but also one of great historic value; for instance, see the intriguing shots of French River Village which was still thriving in those days but is now just a pile of ruins. Let's hope the whole collection will soon find a proper home where it should be available for research and public viewing. Are you listening, Canadian Canoe Museum?

## Revisiting the French



Toni Harting is near and dear to the hearts of the WCA and to the entire paddling community. We are very fortunate to glimpse, in his books, two of his passions in life: the French River and the art of photography. His favourite work, *French River, Canoeing the River of the Stick-Wavers*, The Boston Mills Press, 1996 draws us close to the profound and pas-

sionate connection he has to the land and water. Longing and love for the river and it's history fills the pages, invoking a similar response whether one is familiar or not.

Many passages explore the region's history of human presence through the ages, teaching us how to really feel its pulse and echoes, how to listen, how to remember, how to love. Fascinating aspects of this river are the focus: its geology, its topography, its history, its beauty and its paddling attraction.

Whether you are recollecting this natural treasure or are awakening to it, the array of colour and monochromatic photography delights and infuses the heart and soul. Or if you are interested in the history of peoples on the French, this is a good place to start. But, if you think you know about this river, think again. This book truly is a love affair with nature.

On the more practical side, if you need one, this book provides many route choices and accompanying maps--useful if you have ever had the experience of getting lost, or if you would like some ideas as to a route choice. Contact him for a copy at [toni@sympatico.ca](mailto:toni@sympatico.ca).

Toni's second book, *Shooting Paddlers: Photographic Adventures with Canoeists, Kayakers and Rafters*, The Boston Mills Press, 2000, also The Dundurn Press or Indigo \$29.95 CAD | \$20.95 USD [this may have changed] takes you inside the art of photography to the core of its spirit. This is all about capturing the essence of the love of your life through the eye of your viewfinder, evoking in the reader, a reliving of experience and transcendence to the art of photographic creation.

The editor

# Enjoying Lure of Faraway Places



WCA Symposium 2007. Photo: Aleks Gusev

A while ago, I wrote a short review on this book and the comment was put forth that it was not adequate. To this, I concur. If you have not read this delightful memory of our dear, lost WCA member, get your hands on it somehow. I will even lend you mine if you promise to give it back. Note though that it needs copyediting. I have done this and hopefully the next printing will be an improvement.

If you knew Herb at all and happened to chat with him, you would know that reading his book seems the same as listening to him talk about his experiences or give a presentation. His good-humour, honesty and well turned language skills have a way of getting you into his canoe and reminding you that you have a lot to learn.

That Herb travelled alone enhances the experience of reading his adventures. The fact that he didn't need a map amazes you all the more. He "just knew" where to go from the lay of the land, or

would chose his route enroute.

Herb just knew how to survive in the wilderness, a trait that enabled him on many occasions.

Here is how he describes his trip down one particular rapid on the Coppermine in that most disarming (and charming) style of his:

As I was coming down the first drop, the force of the river threw me against a bulbous rock, which buried itself with a resounding crash in the side of he boat. I sat there for some seconds, fully expecting to sink. In that short time, and convinced that the boat and all my gear were lost, I had already decided that I had to make my way back to Red Rock Lake... but then another wave liberated me from my anchorage and I continued on a wild ride through the willows and back out to the river....

Even a cursory examination of

the damage revealed the need for extensive repairs: two cracks about half-a-metre long, where the hull had folded with the force of the collision and a circular crack at the impact site. (p 79)

Bear encounters were typical for Herb. This passage gives you a taste:

The search for Prichard's canoe came to a premature halt when my advance was blocked by a bear who showed no inclination to budge. I tend to feel rather vulnerable when facing a bear without an implement of intimidation at hand, so I cautiously and slowly retreated. Who cares about remnants of canoes anyway? (p 69)

Perhaps the next time, I will give you the text about how he put his canoe on fire. Watch here for future excerpts. Natural Heritage Books, Toronto, 2007, \$27.95.

The Editor



# EVENTS

## WCA Symposium 2008



Photo by Aleks Gusev

Ban the midwinter blahs and prepare for the next paddling season by joining fellow WCA members and paddlers from across the continent for George Luste's 23rd annual Wilderness and Canoeing Symposium (8 and 9 February, Monarch Park Collegiate, Toronto).

Detailed information, including registration forms and a list of speakers with the titles of their talks, is available at <http://www.wcsymposium.com>. Alternatively, you can request information by email to [allan.jacobs@sympatico.ca](mailto:allan.jacobs@sympatico.ca) or by phone to 416 424 1871.

The symposium's three main threads are the landscape (including its fauna and flora), the experiences of those who visit there, and the na-

tive peoples and their history. Topics of this year's talks include the discovery of the Hornby tragedy, locating the sites of Group of Seven paintings, descriptions of trips in our North (some excessively long, one of these by birch-bark canoe), photography, reflections on the boreal forest and the barrenlands, saving our wilderness canoe routes, a canoe atlas of north-west Ontario and the like. The symposium also offers the companionship, for an evening and a day, of hundreds of persons who share a passion for the wilderness and know the joy of experiencing it first-hand by canoe, kayak, on foot or snowshoe.

I hope to see you there!

Allan

## WCA AGM 2008



**Saturday, March 1st, 2008**

**McMichael Art Gallery**

**Kleinburg, Ontario**

**with special Guest Speaker**

**Katherine Suboch**

Join us in 2008 for our AGM at the McMichael Canadian Art Gallery. The McMichael is a unique and enchanting experience that will enrich and revive you. This impressive gallery is adorned by its amazing collection as well as its vistas of the surrounding countryside. Enhancing your adventure in art, writer and photographer, Katherine Suboch, will share with you her passion for the arctic in a presentation of art slides.

See the back cover of *Nastawgan* for more information and registration. Contact Doug Ashton at [doug.ashton@rogers.com](mailto:doug.ashton@rogers.com).



*Puffins at Sand Point, Alaska, Photo by Allan Starnes, resident of Sand Point, with a Canon Rebel xti, EF75-300mm, f/4-5.6. Note from Mr. Starnes: I have spent many hours as a child in a canoe, my father taught me to sail in an aluminum canoe. I still paddle but in a kayak. Just the other day two of us were paddling here in Sand Point.*



*Ragged Falls, Algonquin Park. Photo by Aleks Gusev, 2007*

## **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 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.

# Letter to the Members

As I am parting with my responsibility as "Environmental Rep" for the WCA - or formally "Chair of the Environmental Committee" - I would like to thank all you folks that have acted in some way to help preserve our canoeing places. Hats off to you! And my thanks to the WCA for allowing me to represent its interests in the past nine years.

But the WCA needs to fill the vacancy again, and maybe you would like to consider this opportunity.

To do the job well, the environmental rep should have a love for nature and understand the connections between its many elements - either by studious observation over the years or even some form of formal study. Also, he or she should be a paddler of canoe routes so one understands the concerns and issues that matter to the WCA membership.

It is necessary to communicate with government offices

and thus one needs to be able to work with formal processes like the one governing forest management. Issues are never one-sided and they are supported tenaciously by the people on both sides of the fence - so tact and sensitivity with people are essential.

Last not least, you should have some personal flexibility in time and transportation - it helps if one has visited the places in order to see first-hand what is at stake. There is no better excuse for checking out some of those places and broaden one's knowledge of our canoe country. It's a very rewarding job!

If you decide you can spare the time and would be a fit for the job, contact Aleks Gusev and let him know by April 30.

Cheers,

Erhard Kraus, past Chair of the Conservation Committee

## Food for Paddlers

Submit your tripping recipe ideas to Barb Young at [youngj david@rogers.com](mailto:youngj david@rogers.com)

### Tomato Leather

Many of you know this tip but for those who want a simple, basic, quick, featherweight, non-perishable solution to adding variety to camp meals, here is one of my favourites:

1) At home on the stove, make a tomato sauce with

- crushed canned tomatoes
- tomato paste
- chopped onion
- garlic
- dried oregano
- hot chil powder (to taste but remember dehydrating concentrates the flavours)

2) Line dehydrator tray with saran wrap

3) Cut holes in the middle for the moisture to escape

4) Pour sauce into trays in a thin layer, about 1/4" thick

5) Dehydrate, occasionally rearranging the trays for even drying. This will take one-two days depending on your machine

6) Wait until the sauce is totally dry (it will darken but will return to its fresh colour when rehydrated)

7) Let the layers cool to room temperature

8) Lift each layer out and peel the tomato leather from the saran wrap

9) Roll up each layer and place as many as you can in a clean ziplock bag. Note: Your sauce now weighs almost nothing

10) In camp, put rolls of tomato leather in a pot and add some water. Heat will speed up the rehydrating process. Watch that the sauce does not dry out. It will keep absorbing water while it is rehydrating

11) Add whatever you like (other spices or dried vegetables) to the sauce or use it straight on cooked pasta. Or make a pizza. Don't forget the cheese.

Elizabeth Sinclair

As promised, part three of recipes from Robyn Macpherson.

### Pasta with Sundried Tomatoes, Cured Black Olives and Feta Cheese

Cook pasta (penne, fusili, or rotini are nice choices) and drain well. Rehydrate sundried tomatoes (make sure you take the dried type - not the ones packed in oil). Crumble feta cheese into bowl and combine with rehydrated tomatoes and olives. Season with salt and pepper (and a bit of oregano if you have it), and add drained pasta.

### Shitake Mushroom Risotto

1 large package of dehydrated shitake mushrooms (sold at many Chinese grocery stores)

1 package of 'instant' plain risotto found in the packaged goods section of most grocery and/or health food stores.

Prepare risotto according to instructions. Rehydrate mushrooms. If mushrooms are quite large cut into smaller pieces. Sauté mushrooms in a little oil while preparing risotto. Combine mushrooms and risotto and top with grated Parmesan cheese.

### Mango, Cucumber, Pepper Salad (serves 4)

1 English cucumber, diced

2 mangoes (either type is nice but make sure to choose very hard mangoes if using later in the trip), peeled and diced

2 peppers (red, yellow, orange or a variety), diced

1 lime (or 1 lemon)

1 tsp brown sugar

Combine cucumbers, mangoes, and peppers together in a bowl. Cut lime (or lemon) in half and squeeze juice into a small cup. Add brown sugar and stir. Pour over salad and stir well to coat.

# The Wolf

We came around the bend and saw him standing on the far shore. Adult wolf.

Standing perfectly still and staring at something with great intensity.

Motioned to the buddies and we all quit paddling and started just drifting.

The wind was in our favor and I was hoping that we could get fairly close to the wolf before he noticed us and bounded away.

We drifted for a couple of minutes and the wolf still hadn't noticed us.

Pretty unusual. Our experience has been that a wolf sees you long before you see him and is then well on his way out of the country. Often all you get to see is the rear end of the wolf just before he disappears into the trees or goes over the ridge line.

Then I saw why the wolf hadn't noticed us. There was a flock of Canada geese on the near shore milling about in a marshy area where a creek emptied into the river. Probably good feeding there.

The flock was composed of several pairs of adults and their half-grown goslings. I figured out why the wolf was so interested in the geese. Nobody in that flock could fly. The adults were molting and the goslings still had a ways to go to get their flight feathers. A combination of circumstance that in the wolf's mind said that he had a chance to catch something to eat.

We angled the current and got within fifteen meters before the wolf noticed us and disappeared into the bush. I guess when meals are hard to come by you have to give it your full attention. We floated by the spot where the wolf was and then past the flock of geese. Another bend and we were out of sight of this wilderness moment.

I hope that the interruption of our presence did not upset the balance between predator and prey. There was lots of daylight left for the wolf to do more stalking. And nobody in that flock was

going to fly away anytime soon. Perhaps the eternal struggle for survival would continue unaffected by our short passage through the contest.

However, that night as I sat at the campfire I couldn't stop the anguish in my soul. I hoped that we didn't deprive the wolf of a meal that he could have had if we hadn't disrupted his concentration. I wished we could have stayed out of it. As wilderness canoeists, even though we try to keep our touch as the lightest of leaves floating down the river, the touch of man is heavy and it seems that everything we do has some impact.

I want so desperately to see these wilderness scenes, and yet I am afraid that even my seeing them will cause irreparable harm. The pain knots up in my stomach. And it hurts.

I think I knew then why there is so much weeping in the homes of men.

Greg Went



*Wildlife at Yellowstone Park 2007. Photos by E. Sinclair*

**Just a brief note to bring everyone up-to-date on the composition of the Outings Committee. Since last winter when Gerri James had to leave the Outings Committee, our group has been composed of Gisela Curwen, Scott Card and myself. This past fall Mary Perkins generously offered to join our group, and now we are back to our usual**

**group of four, which provides us with a healthy range of personal outings interests and outings ideas, as well as provides excellent contingency back-up in the event that one or two of us are absent during our quarterly outings drives to enlist experienced paddlers to organise activities. Bill**



# WCA OUTINGS

## JAN. 2008 - SPRING 2008

**WANT TO ORGANIZE A TRIP AND HAVE IT  
PRESENTED IN THE WINTER ISSUE?**  
**Contact the Outings Committee before February 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](mailto:bness@look.ca); Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, [gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca](mailto:gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca); Scott Card, 905-665-7302, [scottcard@sympatico.ca](mailto: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](mailto: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 **HALIBURTON COUNTY**

Ray Laughlen, 705-754-9479, [rlaughlen@gmail.com](mailto:rlaughlen@gmail.com) —  
- Paddle/Backpack/Ski/Snowshoe Haliburton County area. There are many canoe routes and great trails here plus thousands of acres of crown lands to bushwhack through. Anything from a bowl of chili by the wood stove to some winter camping. I'm willing to provide help with organization, guidance, logistics, equipment etc. I get out often both week days or weekends so if you like join me. Suitable for novices.

### January 19 **PADDLERS' PUB NIGHT**

Join other paddlers for an evening of food and drink and good cheer to chase away the January blahs. It will be a great chance to get together and plan next season's adventures and re-live last summer's outings, or just watch a few paddling films running on the big screen in the background. As in the past, we are organizing this evening together with members of the Ontario Voyageurs Kayak Club. Meet 7.00 pm at Toronto's Bow & Arrow Pub, 1954 Yonge Street (second floor), just north of Davisville subway station. Please contact Gisela Curwen 416-484-1471, [gisela.curwen@gmail.com](mailto:gisela.curwen@gmail.com) by January 10 to register so we can book sufficient room.

### January 25 – 27 **KILLARNEY CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING**

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, [gisela.curwen@gmail.com](mailto:gisela.curwen@gmail.com), book before December 30.

I always wanted to experience Killarney in winter. After a number of years enjoying snow weekends in Algonquin and Silent Lake Provincial Parks, we will find out what

Killarney's lakes and mountains are like covered with snow and ice. We will stay two nights in a toasty warm electrically heated yurt, and cross-country ski or snowshoe from our base at George Lake. Limit six intermediate skiers.

### February 8-9 **WILDERNESS AND CANOEING SYMPOSIUM**

Get rid of the mid-winter blahs and prepare for the next paddling season by joining fellow WCA members and paddlers from across the continent for George Luste's 23rd annual Wilderness and Canoeing Symposium (8 and 9 February, Monarch Park Collegiate, Toronto). Detailed information is available at <http://www.wcsymposium.com>, or from Allan Jacobs: [allan.jacobs@sympatico.ca](mailto:allan.jacobs@sympatico.ca), 416-424-1871.

The symposium offers the companionship, for an evening and a day, of hundreds of persons who share the passion for our wilderness and the joy of experiencing it first-hand, mostly by canoe and kayak, but also by foot and snowshoe. The symposium's three main threads are the landscape (including its fauna and flora), the experiences of those who visit there, and the native peoples and their history. Presentations at this year's symposium include the discovery of the Hornby tragedy, locating the sites of Group of Seven paintings, descriptions of trips in our North, photography, reflections on the boreal forest and the barren lands, saving our wilderness canoe routes, and a canoe atlas of north-west Ontario.

### February 9 **CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING FIVE WINDS TRAILS**

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, [gisela.curwen@gmail.com](mailto:gisela.curwen@gmail.com), book before January 20.

Come out for a day and explore a winter wonderland on Five Winds marked, ungroomed wilderness trail system in the scenic Gibson River area. Varied terrain. Limit six intermediate skiers.

### March 1 **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg Ontario. In addition

to our business meeting we will have an opportunity to visit the gallery and listen to the experiences of Katherine Suboch. For further information and registration check the back cover for details

March 14 **PADDLERS' POTLUCK EVENING**

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@gmail.com, book by March 1.

This is an occasion to get together at the end of the winter and swap tall tales of past trips, exchange information with other paddlers, hikers or skiers about that specific adventure you always had on your list, or just have fun seeing old and new friends again and plan an outing together. Bring along pictures, stories and food to share with others.

March 21 **MOIRA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, jhackert@sympatico.ca ——— Book before March 15. This is our Good Friday season opener and a chance to recover our skills after a long winter. We will start at Chisholm's Mill and finish at Latta in the morning, eat lunch in our vehicles and run Lost Channel in the afternoon. This is a good opportunity for new spring paddlers to introduce themselves and demonstrate their competence. The river is not particularly technical and we will only be about an hour from our cars. This trip is open to anyone who doesn't mind swimming in ice-cold water. Tandem canoes must have a centre airbag. Wetsuits or drysuits are required. If winter is later and weather/water conditions are unsuitable, we will postpone the trip. Limit of six boats.

March 21-24 **KAWARTHA WHITEWATER WEEKEND**

Jay Neilson & Frank Knaapen 613-687-6037 ——— Book by March 14. We plan to run a couple rivers in the Kawarthas, probably Beaver Creek and the Moira or Black, weather permitting. Our trips are slow paced with lots of time to portage and check out the rapids. However, you should expect high, cold water, with ice on the river. For advanced whitewater paddlers with proper cold weather attire and fully outfitted boats.

March 24 **LOWER CREDIT RIVER**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca, book before March 17 ——— Join me on this classic early spring favourite of Toronto area paddlers. We'll catch the Credit in Streetsville and run down to the mouth at Port Credit. The river is a delightful continuous class 1 to 2 with lots of play spots. However, as sweepers can present a hazard and the water will be cold, participants should have solid basic moving water skills, and wear a wetsuit or drysuit. Limit of six boats.

March 29 **MOIRA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, jhackert@sympatico.ca ——— Book before March 15. This is a repeat of the March 21 trip.

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

Andrea Fulton, 416-726-6811, 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.

April 26-27 **SPENCE'S CELEBRATED SALMON-MOIRA WEEKEND**

Glenn Spence, 613-475-4176, book after January 25 ——— Just north of Belleville, these two rivers offer exciting whitewater and fine scenery. The Salmon is the more gentle run, with some small rapids for you to practice your skills. The Moira has larger rapids possibly up to class 3. You can bivouac at my house and enjoy a potluck dinner. These are two of Southern Ontario's finest spring rivers. Intermediate paddlers welcome. Limit six boats.

April 26-27 **SPRING IN MUSKOKA**

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@gmail.com, book before April 10.

We will paddle some lakes yet to be decided and experience the returning birds and discover other flora and fauna emerging from hibernation. Maybe we will find the first turtles or cranberries from last Fall, as on previous outings. We'll hike and explore the surrounding area and clean up portages and campsites along the way. Limit four canoes.

May 3-4 **OPEONGO RIVER**

Jay Neilson & Frank Knaapen 613-687-6037 ——— Book before May 26. The Opeongo River will be high at this time of year, with some class III fun stuff and lots of class II. The Wilno Polish Heritage Beer Festival takes place on Saturday so it should make for a fun weekend both on and off the river. This is a day trip for good intermediates or better. We will take a leisurely pace on the river with time to scout significant rapids, and our camp will be at a lovely site where we can enjoy listening to tree frogs. On Sunday we can run Opeongo again, or go over to the Madawaska. Cold weather gear and fully outfitted whitewater boats are required.

May 10 **MINESING SWAMP**

Ray Laughlen 705 754 -9479, rlaughlen@gmail.com ——— Book by May 3. Join us for this slow-paced trip downstream from the Willow Creek put-in to Edenvale. We can check out the heronry, osprey nest, early spring migrants and maybe some furry critters. Suitable for any paddler.

May 17-19      **LOWER MADAWASKA RIVER**

Larry Durst, 905- 415-1152, ldurst@devoncommunications.com ——— Book as soon as possible. Join us for the 8th annual spring paddle/wine and cheese party and find out first hand why mostly sane, reasonably intelligent and somewhat mature persons subject themselves to the vicissitudes of spring camping. We paddle from above Aumonds Bay to the take-out at Griffith, a distance of only 28 km. The pace is leisurely with only the Sunday being a full day of paddling and most of that spent on the Snake Rapids section of the river. Lots of time to play, chat and nibble! Rapids will range from Grade 1 to 4 and there are a couple of short portages around falls. The water will still be cold, and the water levels are likely to be quite high. In the past we have had sun, rain, hail and snow...all on the same day, so participants will need to dress and pack appropriately. Suitable for intermediate level paddlers. Limit six boats. Book early as this trip "sells out" every year.

May 16 -19      **MAGNETAWAN RIVER**

Alan James, silvernerd2004@yahoo.ca ——— Book by May 9 (Mention the trip in the subject line.). I will be paddling on the Magnetawan River for the long weekend in May and would enjoy some company. This is a four day trip suitable for experienced whitewater trippers. Participants must have properly outfitted boats and cold weather camping gear/experience.

May 17-19      **PETAWAWA RIVER**

Jay Neilson & Frank Knaapen 613-687-6037 ——— Book by May 9. The Petawawa River is an awesome fun run on the long weekend. Stay at our place, arriving late Friday night, and we'll be sure to get you off the river by 11 am on Monday for your drive home. Lots of Class II, and some Class III/IV. The more serious rapids can be avoided by portaging. Suitable for intermediates or better.

May 24 -25      **INTERMEDIATE WHITEWATER CLINIC**

John & Sharon Hackert, jhackert@sympatico.ca ——— Book before April 19. This is the eleventh year of our clinic, which is designed to help improve your basic skills. We will paddle the Lower Mad on Saturday and practice our basic skills at Palmers Rapids on Sunday. The emphasis will be on front ferries, eddy-outs, and peel-outs. Your paddle strokes will be critiqued. You will also have an opportunity to practice self-rescue techniques. Open to properly fitted solo and tandem canoes. Wetsuits or drysuits will be needed. We will camp at our cottage.

June 2-4      **Level 1 WRT (Whitewater Rescue Technician) COURSE**

Gary James, Mary Perkins. We are auditing this course having taken it last year. It is delivered by Esprit <http://www.espritrafting.com/swiftwaterrescue.html#wrt> and will be on the Ottawa River. If you have ever thought

of taking this course, why not join us. Good skills to have if you are a tripper. Gary.james@sympatico.ca; mary.perkins@sympatico.ca

June 5-8      **DUMOINE ANYONE?**

Jay Neilson & Frank Knaapen 613-687-6037 ——— Book as soon as possible. When other rivers are past their spring runoff, the Dumoine is still lots of fun. There are portages for all the real ugly stuff, but some Class II rapids are mandatory. This is a classic four day whitewater river trip that would be enjoyed by intermediate paddlers.

July 28- August 14      **SPATZIZI AND THE STIKINE RIVER**

Jay Neilson & Frank Knaapen 613-687-6037 ——— Contact as soon as possible. The Spatzizi has some of the best mountain hiking you could imagine. We will go up Red Goat Mountain, also called Spatzizi Mountain; and also hike from Hyland Post, where "luxury" cabins can be rented. There is a lodge above Jewel Rapid which may offer us dining! Participants must be prepared to run the upper Stikine as a back-up in case of problems with fly-in scheduling or weather. For detailed information on the area, please see Jennifer Voss' book The Stikine. Hiking on the upper Stikine is across strenuous scrub through the lower slopes but this avoids any put-in portage and the Upper Stikine Lakes are gorgeous. Telegraph Creek (below the highway) offers excellent accommodations, hiking, hydrofoil rides into the Canyon, sight-seeing tours on the Lower Stikine & horse riding. If interested in finding out more, please call us.

Summer- Date to be determined      **BAZIN AND GATINEAU RIVERS**

Alan James, silvernerd2004@yahoo.ca ——— Contact me as soon as possible (Mention the trip in the subject line.). I am looking into paddling the Bazin and Gatineau Rivers in Quebec this coming summer.

The trip can be done as a two to three week trip, depending on people's preferences. However, we'll most likely do it as a two week trip, going for the first two weeks of July. Please contact me as soon as possible if interested. Participants must have solid intermediate to advanced whitewater tripping skills experience.

**ADDITIONAL TRIPS**

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

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