



Wilberforce Falls

Hood River 2004

Text and photos by John Girard

In the Canadian Arctic's summer season, there's only a small tent screen of opportunity for canoeing. The short paddling season, combined with the remoteness and prohibitive cost of access, would hopefully limit the impact of recreational river use, especially on the more frequently paddled rivers of the north. Remote and unspoiled were some of the trip characteristics I was hoping for when I finally decided to paddle the Hood River in Canada's newest Territory, Nunavut. However as I researched this trip, I began to realize that it was right there, in the vicinity of the Hood River, that some of the Arctic's most enduring mysteries are now suddenly being solved, the result of increased

human activity in the Arctic: The 50 year old riddle of the tragic disappearance of legendary Bush Pilot Chuck McAvoy and his two geologist passengers, the 185 year old mystery of the lost Franklin Expedition cache, and the million year old secret of Arctic diamonds, have all come to light in recent years.

The Hood River, with it's historical link to one of Canada's most fascinating and well-documented exploration tragedies in John Franklin's search for the North West Passage, is now the canoe trip of a lifetime for wilderness and whitewater enthusiasts. My hope was to experience this great Arctic river and its environment, before its essence is changed forever. News of the



Wolf Lake

Echo Bay Mines' proposed construction of a winter road to the Hood River was a clue that I had better go now.

Saturday July 3/04

The flight north from Yellowknife, with traveling companions Jim, his son Daniel, Paul, our guide Andrew and my paddle partner Peter was interesting. Crammed tight in a Twin Otter, among our three canoes and other gear, we flew north over an increasing number of frozen lakes. From the air, the land doesn't appear to have much relief except for the occasional esker, but there is a noticeable abundance of water.

Lake Tahikafaaluk, the headwaters of the Hood River was our intended destination, however it too was completely frozen over so we landed about 38 km downstream, in a stretch of open water on Wolf Lake. The landing approach was a carnival-like three lap downward spiral, as the pilot confirmed the suitability of the waters below for landing. The steep

angle of the Twin Otter's banking turns made the view out our windows an attention grabbing cycle of ice, rock, water, ice, rock, water...

After unloading our gear, we watched the plane taxi away and take off. As the drone of the plane faded in the distance, we paused and let our senses try to absorb our new surroundings. For myself, I never imagined that this great, open expanse we'll be living in for the next two weeks would have an impact so humbling, almost threatening. You immediately get the sense that this place won't be too forgiving with an error in judgment.

Early explorers called these the Barrens and barren it appears to be, with a noticeable absence of trees, although the low brush growing in protected areas may well have been shade trees in a more hospitable climate. The dominant feature of the land is the many lichen covered rocks and boulders strewn all over the landscape where the retreating Wisconsin

glacier left them ten thousand years ago.

The overall view is remarkably desolate. Life here must be harsh.

We loaded up our canoes and paddled the length of Wolf Lake with the benefit of a light tailwind, to our first camp at the top of the Blackfeather Rapids portage. We had paddled along the perimeter contours of the ice covered lake, where the heat of the sun has warmed up the shore rocks enough to produce a continuous lead of open water for us to travel on. The exposed edge of the ice floe is all candle ice that clinks like a giant wind chime or glass chandelier as the wake of our canoes agitates it. The wonderful aroma of Labrador Tea permeates the air. Unfamiliar sensations.

After setting up camp, Jim spotted 5 muskoxen on the far side of the lake. We paddled around the lake ice once again to try to get up as close as we could to the herd. Their prehistoric appearance added strongly to the impression that we've paddled our Time Canoes back to the end

of the last ice age. I noticed that my bowman, Peter, has the paddle stroke pace required to achieve time travel, and I dropped a subtle hint that I'm glad there's a power house in the bow that can turn it up when required...but this isn't one of those times.

The temperature has dropped quickly to cool. We enjoyed a bug free dinner, then some mosquitos joined us as the breeze died down. Everyone was surprised when a robin flew into camp, and we all thought it strangely out of place, probably off course. Tonight I opened Robert Hood's journal from the Franklin Expedition and found in it a picture he had painted of a robin that they had encountered on their 1819 - 1821 journey, so our robin is not the anomaly we originally thought.

I've never been this far removed from the familiar day/night cycle of southern Canada, and I'm enjoying the fact that it's now 10pm, and the sun is still high in the sky. What an absolutely beautiful day...I can't believe that I'm actually here.

Sunday July 4/04

Today started off with a 1km portage around Blackfeather Rapids to Cave Lake, giving us a good chance to get a feel for the terrain and the weight of the load. A welcome breeze off the ice floe, which covers over most of the lake's surface, moderates the temperature of a hot sunny day for a group clad in a bizarre combination of toques and sandals.

Other than a weekend whitewater workshop at Palmer's Rapids on the Madawaska River, our group had never met before this trip, however it seems that almost everyone in the group has some common connection or a mutual acquaintance in the paddling community. I happened to mention a 1993 canoe trip on the Missinaibi River where I had come upon the floating debris of a tragedy at Thunderhouse Falls. Paul says that he was actually there the day the tragedy happened. (See Jim Morris' article in the Autumn 1994 issue of *Nastawgan*). Many similar coincidences recounted during the day's paddling made interesting conversation as we pad-

dled the flatwater stretches of the lakes.

We scouted and ran our first rapid, a short but exciting Class 2. It was a novelty being accompanied down the rapid by large slabs of thick ice, which bobbed and pitched in the fast current alongside us. We then paddled about 13km to this campsite on Lentz Lake below Willow Rapids. While setting up camp, a lone caribou cantered along the far shore. After supper we went for hike and climbed high above the river, where we saw nine distant muskoxen.

I'm beginning to realize that the Arctic isn't barren at all. It's a very subtle landscape; beautiful, but not the in-your-face kind of beauty like the Rockies. You have to look down to find it. There's a wide variety of plant life and brightly coloured flowers, all of it low to the ground to benefit from the warmth of the earth. Everywhere among the rocks and flowers are sun bleached antler and bone fragments, most of which appear to be from large and small prey animals, but there are also those of the predators. Near our camp, Daniel found a wolf's skull.

Monday July 5/04

The day started out again sunny, hot and bug free, but ended at today's camp, between Kapolak Lake and Esker Lake,

just sunny and hot...the mosquitoes have hatched.

Judging from their annoying numbers, there should have been an audible "HATCH!" sometime during the day. From what I've read about traveling in the Arctic, this is just a sign of things to come, and the best remedy for this airborne plague is the wind. As thankful as we were for the little wind we had today, it did introduce us to a new navigational hurdle. It had pushed the lake's ice mass on to shore, blocking our route, and happily forcing us into the unusual situation of having to pull the canoes up over the lake ice. Our fully loaded canoes glide like three sleds over the thick lake ice.

We scouted and ran Kapolak Rapids, a long, straightforward set of rapids with no problems. I photographed the two other canoes as they came down, and then Peter and I enjoyed our run down.

The water is crystal clear, making it considerably easier to read the rapids, and icy cold too, adding incentive to read them carefully.

We paddled past two of the eskers of Esker Lake, and saw more muskoxen and a caribou along the way. Paul reported seeing 16 muskox on a hike he took tonight, and there is no question that they are the dominant land mammal we've seen so far.



Paul and Andrew on Cave Lake



Kapolak Lake ice route discussion

Tuesday July 6/04

The group are good traveling companions, taking all things in stride. We traveled a total of 21km today, under some conditions that are unique in my paddling experience. I'm enjoying the novelty of paddling the narrow passages of open water between the ice covered lake and the rocky shore; at times having to get out and drag our canoes behind us over long stretches of hard water, and other times pushing and pulling the canoes between us as we leapt from one large ice slab to another. The gentle tilting of the ice slabs as we applied our weight was enough to keep us on the move.

At a point where the river opened up ice-free for a long stretch, we were able to hold the canoes together, set up a tarp for a sail and relax for a few kilometers while moving at a good clip. When the wind gusted, our tri-maran sailed beautifully. It's been another hot and sunny day,

with a coolness by the ice floes and swarms of mosquitos when the air is still. The warm weather has brought a few new varieties of insects and flowers, all of which will have long days in a short season to get their business done.

Jim spotted an Arctic fox snooping around the perimeter of our camp today, and we figured it will be in for a closer look tonight. Although our wildlife sightings have been sparse, we've seen lots of animal signs: wolf footprints in the river beach sand paralleling a set of caribou tracks, muskox wool (called qiviut) clinging to the low brush, a Richardson ground squirrel (sik-sik) burrow excavated in huge swaths by an apparently hungry grizzly bear, a berry and hair filled turd the size of my computer keyboard dropped by an apparently full grizzly bear, animal bone and antler fragments everywhere. They're out there. Daniel caught a nice lake trout that was added to our supper, with meat as pink as

a salmon. After supper, I went for quick and bracing skinny dip to get cleaned up. The ice sheet is on the river less than 50m from where I swam, making that my coldest dip ever. This has been a tiring but fulfilling day.

Wednesday July 7/04

We heard sounds of thunder during the night, but now I'm questioning whether the thunderous sounds we heard weren't actually ice sounds. Over night the ice had been blown to shore, cutting off our route which had been clear the day before. Four times we had to drag our canoes over the ice floes today. We stopped to do some hiking around an esker at the end of Esker Lake. The high sandy glacial deposit is contrasting to it's rocky surroundings, and the amount of plant and animal life it supports is impressive. Here the river narrows down, and soon we came to another portage, around Skull Rapids. The river runs furious

through the portage stretch, about 1-1/2 km long, and we took the opportunity to hike around a bit and have our lunch.

Along the portage there was a raven's nest on the cliff over the rapid, guarded by two ravens. While portaging our gear, we disturbed the ravens, and unfortunately that caught the attention of a nearby Peregrine Falcon which attacked one of the ravens with lightning speed and agility. A brutal but impressive sight. After the portage, we paddled through a short rapid, and found a good campsite for the night below the rapid. Jim and Daniel caught 11 trout in very little time, some being kept for dinner. Paul and I went for about a 4km hike, and en-route we saw another massive grizzly bear turd, a sight that will sharpen the senses every time. We returned to camp very alert.

Thursday July 8/04

We started the day by paddling a short



Jim and Daniel in Kapolak Rapids

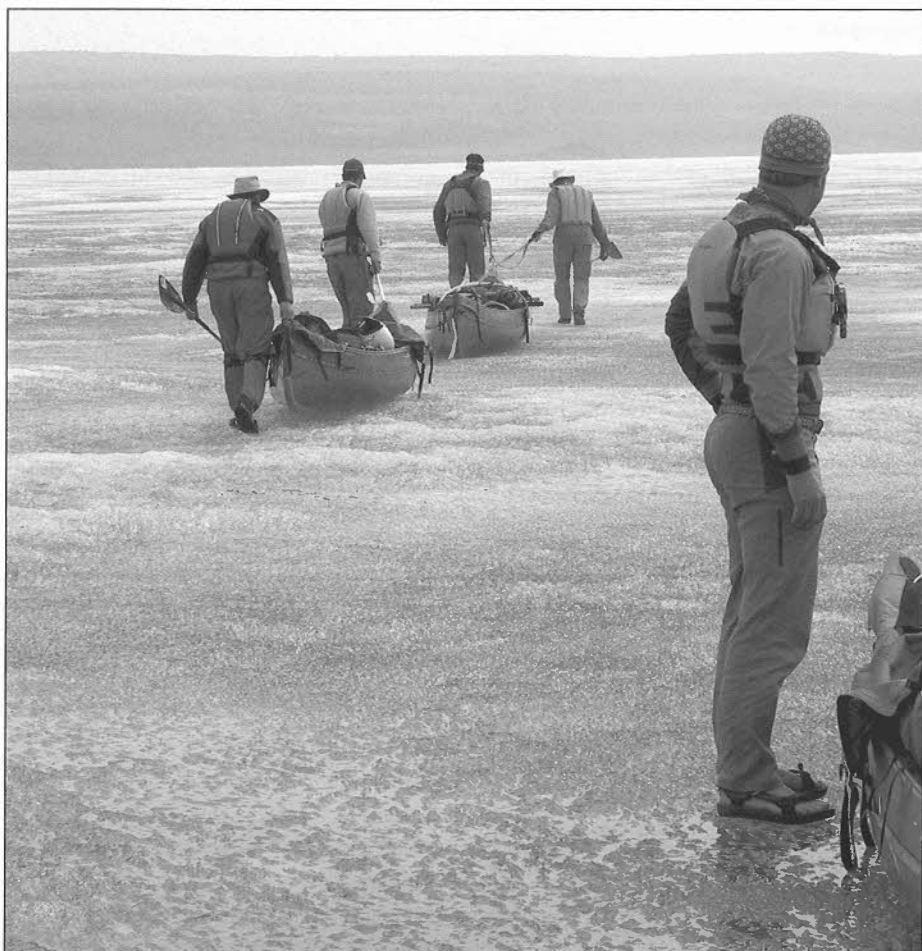
distance to the top of Class 3 Black Rock Rapids and scouted down both sides to pick a route. Peter and I stayed behind at the bottom of the rapid to photograph the

others running down. These rapids are a about 1km long and have some large standing waves and boulders.

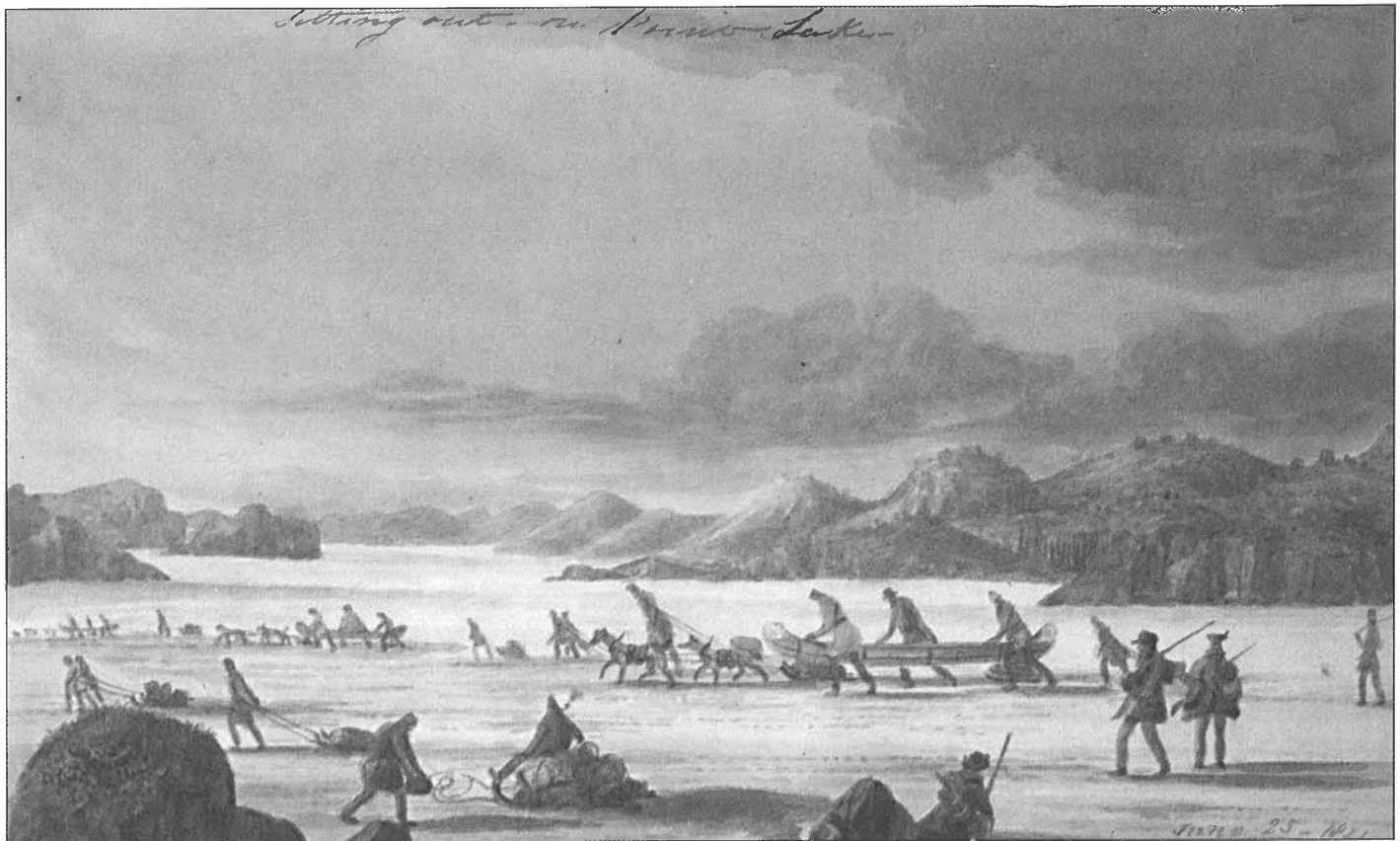
After photographing the others enjoying their run, Peter and I walked back to the top of the rapid where our canoe was, discussing our planned route along the way. "Left of the first standing wave, maneuver right to go between two large standing waves, stay just to the right of the two holes, then maneuver left through the rock garden and eddy out left to join up with the others."

We launched the canoe and, as planned, went left of the first standing wave. That was the end of the "As Planned" part of our journey down the rapids. We went through the second standing wave, sending Peter skyward, then the canoe's bow submarined through a third wave, plowing Peter's upper body and head through a wall of ice cold water. Then something caught my attention. I noticed that the holes which we were supposed to be skirting just to the right of, were not where they were supposed to be. We had strayed off course somewhat and were in some pretty big stuff. Peter was bobbing up and down like he was on a trampoline, and ice water was constantly washing over him. Thank God for that spray skirt. Thank God I chose stern!

Riding low due to the quantity of water we had taken on in the upper



Esker Lake white water



Setting out on Point Lake – June 25 – 1821. George Back.⁽¹⁾

stretch, we bounced over a few submerged boulders, then continued on to eddy left with the others. As I baled the river out of our canoe, Peter sat quietly in the bow, summing up his thoughts on the

last run: a slightly acerbic sounding “Big Surf Johnnie!”

After our mid-river floating lunch, intended to keep us out of the bugs, we had a long, unpleasant portage around

Mason Rapids, starting off with a good distance of shoe sucking muck. I was completely wiped by the end of it. Then came an interesting double chute called Kingaunmiut Chutes that we scouted then ran ducky style. Despite my best efforts to follow Andrew’s lead through the chutes, we again hit a few large standing waves that must have confirmed in Peter’s mind that I’m trying to drown him. We’re now camped between the last chute and 80’ high Kingaunmiut Falls. Tomorrow will be a layover day, giving us a chance to recover and hike around a bit. In our tent tonight, I managed to get Peter to laugh about today’s events, although I’m not certain he wasn’t just laughing at the sight of me in tears.

Friday July 9/04

This day was spent hiking around Kingaunmiut falls, which is a pretty impressive sight. Peter and Jim think the landscape here is similar to that of Northern Scotland, and from conversations over the last few days, I’m guessing



Black Rock Rapids

that they've traveled enough to know. (-4 words this page)

Shortly before dinner, the northern wind put a chill in the air and it started to spit rain. The temperature continued to drop while we ate dinner, and we started seeing our breath. By the end of dinner, long trails of breath accompanied every word spoken. It's going to be a cold night.

Saturday, July 10/04

It was a cold night. I slept fully dressed in three layers of clothing, and was still cold. Morning was overcast but quite a bit warmer, and the day warmed up considerably as time went by. It didn't take too long to unlock the grip that held my muscles after a night spent curled up in the fetal position trying to keep warm. After an easy portage around Kingaunmiut falls, we paddled about 30km through a series of Class 1 and 2 rapids, drifted with the current on several

flat water stretches. We are now camped approximately 15km into a 40km stretch of continuous Class 1 and swift section of river.

Before every canoe trip, I go to downtown Toronto for a day, and take a mental picture of all the concrete, geometric shapes, cars, noise and zillions of people. Today, as we drifted, I reflected on that image and enjoyed the stark contrast of six people on a fluid highway drifting through a world of random shapes, with only the sound of birds and moving water to break the silence. It was so peaceful.

Sunday, July 11/04

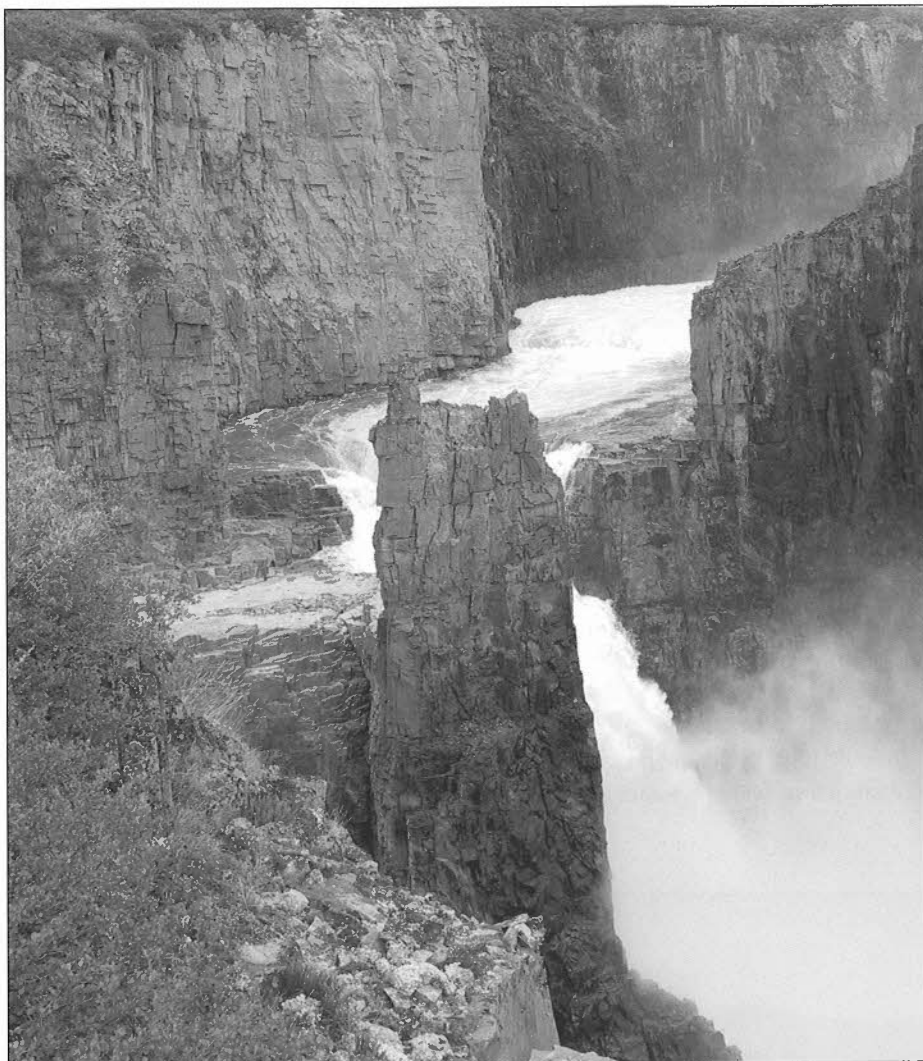
While we ate breakfast this morning, a large white wolf loped along the ridge behind our camp. They are truly beautiful animals. Today we covered 34 km, most of which was rapids of some form of Class 1, 2 or 3, and all great fun. While drifting in the swift currents of a flat stretch of water, another white wolf

climbed out of a burrow dug in the river bank and casually walked to the top of the bank. This wolf clearly communicated to us that it didn't consider us a threat, taking the time to do a good long K9 stretch, and then a few short steps later, taking a dump. Many sik-sik have been seen along the way as well, sitting bolt upright on their hind quarters, looking like sentries as we passed. Our campsite has all kinds of tracks in the sand and mud. There's muskox tracks, caribou tracks, wolf tracks and grizzly tracks. A white wolf is now pacing back and forth across the river from us.

Sometime during the day, we passed the spot where the Franklin party left the Hood river to make tracks overland back to Fort Enterprise. Though they had already endured many months of hardships, from here on, their journey would take a horrific turn for the worst. Interesting for me to paddle along the same route of this part of Canadian his-



Kingaunmiut Falls



Wilberforce Falls – first drop

peared to be the only safe passage down the rapid, but it was obvious that this was going to be an intense ride. I've never been able to accurately determine the true size of standing waves in a rapid until I'm at river level, watching the antics of my bowman silhouetted against the oncoming wave, but these things looked disturbing even from shore. Oh well.

We put in at the top of the rapids and committed ourselves. As we progressed down the rapid, the magnitude of what lay ahead began to register. Just before impact I was surprised to hear above the roar of the rapid, a heart-felt "Whoa...shit!", as the first of many icy waves swept over our canoe's bow and bowman. I laughed so hard that my stomach hurt. Stern turned out to be an excellent choice.

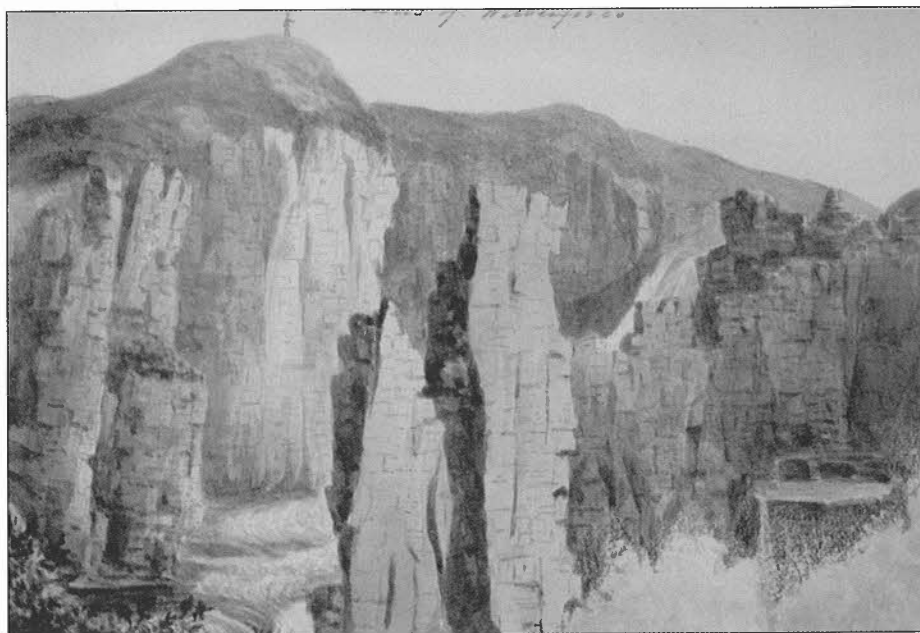
After paddling past yet another herd of muskox, we hiked up a large conical hill that the river winds around. The view from the top was impressive, giving us a good view of where we've been and where we're going. We ended our day paddling through another Class 3 rapid, complete with towering waves. We were in a cross action set of waves that curled over at the peak, and several of Peter's paddle strokes were just scooped air. Watching our run from an eddy, Andrew

tory, although our group enjoys the benefit of traveling with the current. I can't imagine the mental and physical strain of hauling that expedition's gear upstream from the Arctic coast in those fragile canoes.

Monday, July 12/04

Today was another fantastic day in rugged scenery, Class 1, 2 and 3 rapids and great sunny weather with a welcome wind to keep the mosquitoes away. We scouted Caribou Crossing Rapids, a solid Class 3 Plus rapid that looked very intimidating. Outwardly, we were all discussing the merits of the proposed route down through the rapids, but inwardly, I was thinking to myself: "Holy Crap!"

There was a wild but clear run we could see down river right, and it ap-



Falls of Wilberforce. George Back.⁽²⁾

joked that there were two completely different facial expressions in our canoe: sheer joy in the stern, and sheer terror in the bow. Peter issued another “Big Surf Johnnie!”, although I think it was more intended as humour this time.

Tuesday July 13/04

There’s no way my journal entry will do justice to this unbelievable day. The weather was good, the mosquitos were bad in the morning, but seemed non-existent in the afternoon, and the scenery was incredible, spiced up with a couple caribou sightings. We arrived early at Wilberforce Falls and spent the remainder of the day hiking around the magnificent falls and canyon. It is awesome! In his own trip journal, George Back, Midshipman of the Franklin Expedition described the falls beautifully:

Monday August 27th, 1821 ...” On following the tops of the cliffs about a mile and a half we came suddenly to a fall of upwards of 70’ breaking over a narrow space, between two very singular rocks. On descending a little, we were more surprised at beholding the spray of two others so far beneath us that we could not see the bottom but which is estimated at 100 feet. From one view, we could see the upper fall, rushing over the steep between immense rocks and falling with stunning noise into a narrow basin below, whilst the spray rose in clouds about it this drove violently in one white foam to the lower fall which was curiously divided by a pillar in the center but here the sight is lost in mist and spray that rose from the falling and overwhelming force of this stupendous torrent. On the opposite side and high in the rocks there was a small pool from whence a stream fell. Altogether it was by far the grandest scene of the kind in the country and the whole height from the lowest part to the summit of the highest hill was considered to be 250 feet perpendicular.”

It is here that the Franklin party cached some equipment to lighten their load:

Thursday August 30th, 1821 “Day fine. Employed about the canoes – the hunters have returned having killed three

muskoxen – sent for one – at night the canoes were finished. A number of books – guns etc. were left here. The night was cloudy with light rain.”

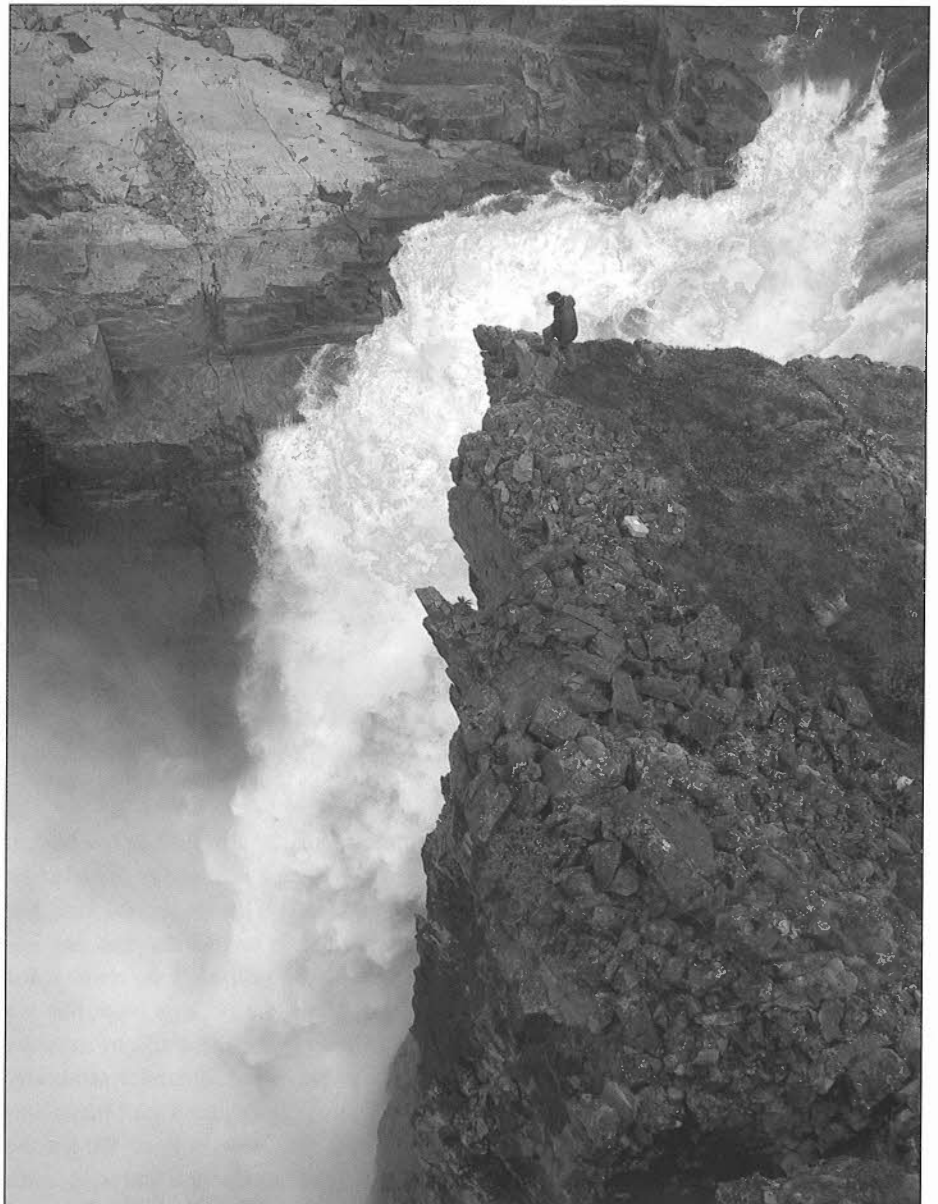
While hiking around, near the second drop, a peregrine falcon took a few close dives at my head as it defended it’s nearby nest. The closeness of the aerial assaults suggested that I’d better keep moving.

It was seismic activity of the Bathurst Fault Zone that decided the Hood River’s course at Wilberforce Falls. At some point in time, a fault diverted the lions share of river water, allowing a comparative trickle to pass over the original falls.

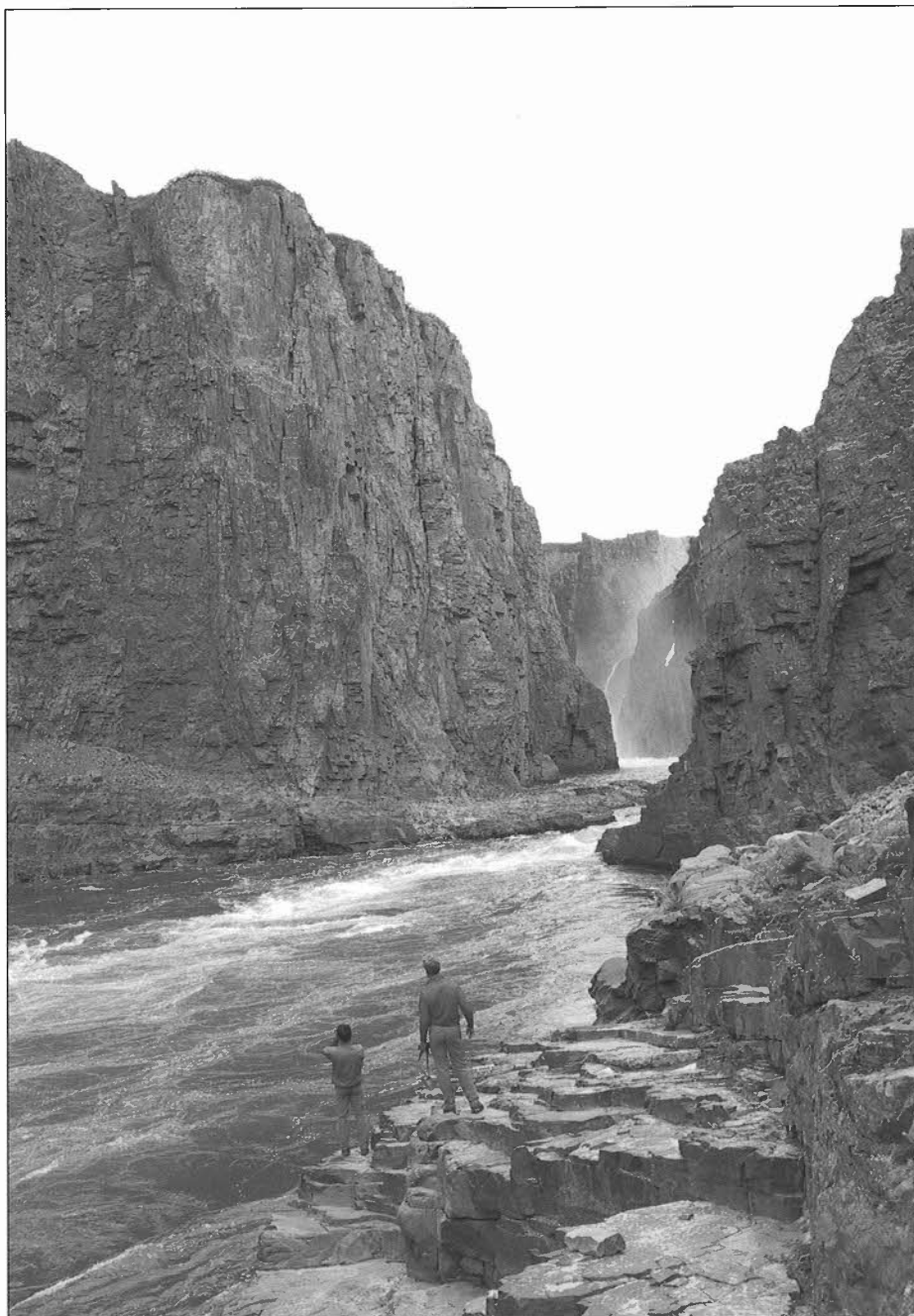
Peter’s observation that the twin falls looks like the combined before and after pictures of the effects of a river damming project is disturbing.

Wednesday July 14/04

Today was a bitch. Beautiful, but a bitch just the same. We portaged from breakfast to dinner, and in that time I gave birth to a bilateral hernia. Ouch! Mind you, we couldn’t have picked a better day to portage around Wilberforce Falls and canyon. Hoisting our heavy packs up on our shoulders, we began the 7km march around this spectacle of nature named by John Franklin in honour of William



Wilberforce Falls – second drop



Peter and Andrew in Wilberforce Canyon

Wilberforce, the 18th century British Parliamentarian who abolished slavery in England. The wandering trail over rolling countryside made for an interesting walk as we slowly moved our burden.

Once at the end of the portage, we rested and it occurred to me that I may be slightly out of shape. Still, it's a beautiful day and in short order we start the 7km walk back to the rest of the gear for another load.

The mosquito population has now

found us, and the arm flailing has begun. I for one, am not as rested as I would like to be as I load up for the second time, but it's preferred to be moving than just sitting in this bug cloud. I figure that for the most part, the portage route that we are following are the trails of muskox and caribou, which meander aimlessly across the countryside. Can't these animals walk in a straight line? We get the second load across the portage, with more frequent stops than the first tra-

verse. The labyrinth of trails means we don't necessarily walk the same path as the first traverse, and this time the trail lead us to an extensive wet section. Another short rest, then back 7km to get the rest of the bleeping cargo. Frequent stops on the final traverse. William Wilberforce may have helped abolish slavery in Britain, but it seems to me after today's 35km march, that there were still isolated pockets of it here in the colonies. Feet have blisters. Good night.

Thursday, July 15/04

We entered the river above Wilberforce Rapids, and after running them, the river calms down into a slow, meandering pace. The wildlife seemed to be more abundant today, and we saw a black fox, bald eagle, golden eagle, a moose, and dozens of molting geese which thrashed clumsily across the waters surface. We portaged around Ragged Rock Falls, another camp location of the Franklin party, and then continued on to this camp at the end of Hepburn Rapids, the last rapid of the trip, and the first rapid that the Franklin party camped at after quitting the Arctic Ocean.

At this evenings camp, we were visited by a couple who had ended their trip earlier today, a few kilometers downstream from us. The sterns man recognized my bowman Peter, from paddling the Mountain River together a few years ago.

As Barry Lopez wrote in *Arctic Dreams*: "*Human beings are so few here and their errands such a part of the odd undercurrent of knowledge that flows in a remote region that you half expect, too, to know the stranger.*"

After another meal supplemented by a few trout from Jim and Daniel, we paddled a short distance downstream and then hiked over a peninsula to see Arctic Sound. Paul and I decided to stay on top of the hill while the others went to the ocean. It was late, and it seemed that we were going to see the sun go down after all. Paul began to talk about the beauty of sun sets in the Caribbean and, not having an exotic sunset location of my own to describe, I mentioned a friend's trip

down to the Caribbean where they saw a strange emerald green spark before the sun dipped below the horizon. Just as I finished relating that story, Paul blurted "Look at the sun!". In one of the freakiest of coincidences, there was a brilliant emerald green beam at the top of the setting sun we were watching, that made it's impression then disappeared. I'm not sure how Paul felt about that particular sequence of events, but I know it really messed with my head. (Unbelievably, the freakiness reached new heights when we returned to Yellowknife. I was sitting on the toilet at Eva and Eric's B&B, when I randomly opened up their "Uncle John Plunges into the Universe Bathroom Reader" at page 14, and there was an article about The Green Flash, an atmospheric refraction phenomenon which shows up as a short green flare at the upper rim of the sun, and is seldom seen with the naked eye because it requires special conditions to appear.)

Back on the arctic coast, there was

something else that was messing with my head, in a different way...the clouds of mosquitos. We headed back to camp for the night.

Friday July 16/04

Up early, packed, and paddled to the take out point where the Twin Otter was waiting for us; the end of an amazing canoe trip, through a landscape seemingly unaltered by the hand of man. A canoe trip which was all that I had hoped for.

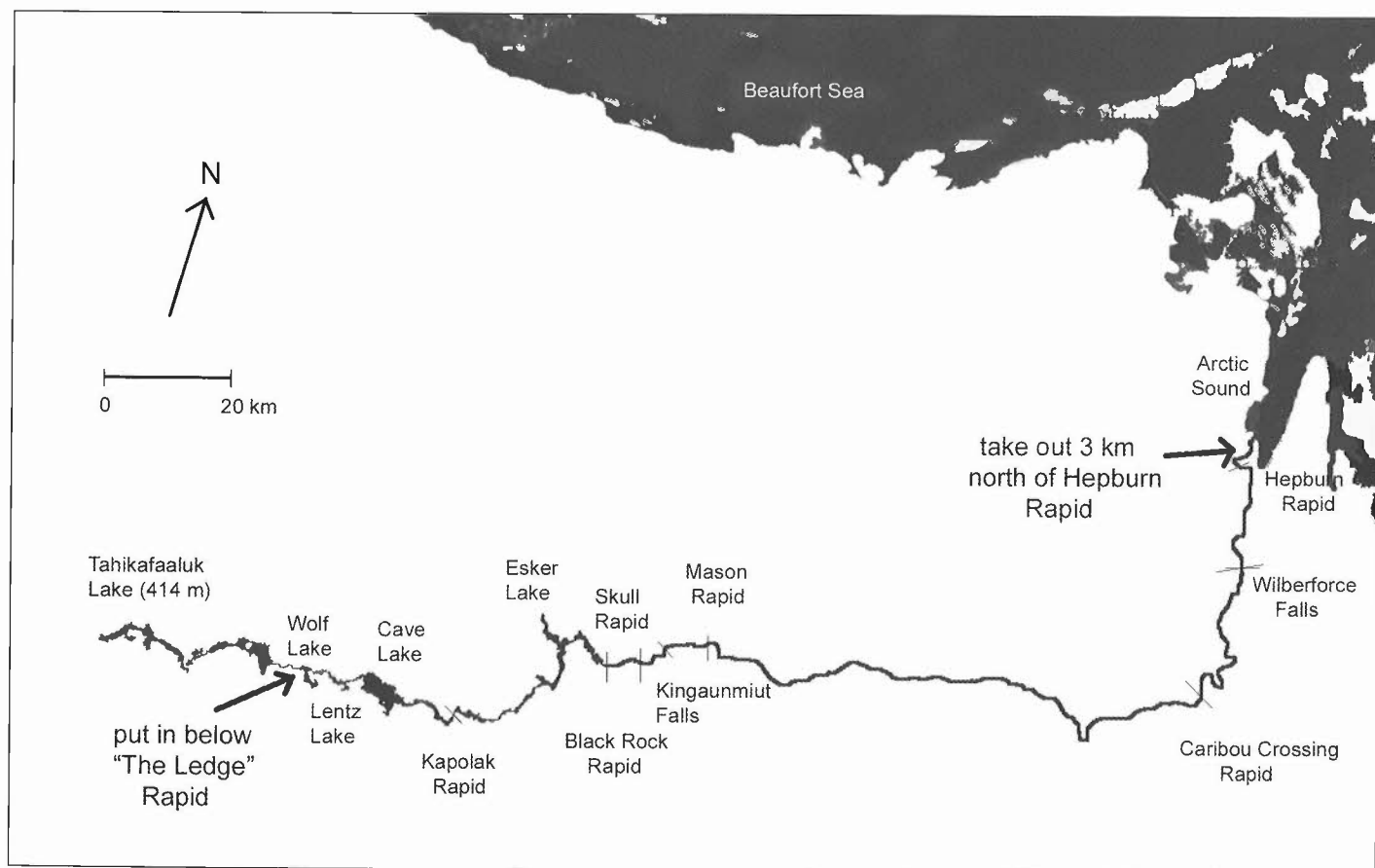
I recall many years ago, during my first canoe trip in the Temagami area, the sad realization that there was daylight from crown to base behind the trees on the ridge lining several of the waterways, suggesting that something was very wrong. A short hike to the height of land revealed a completely stripped landscape beyond. Clear cut. I felt that this wilderness façade was a betrayal by those managing the balance of tourism and harvest, and it effectively eliminated any sense of a true wilderness experience. I wonder

how much consideration will be given to the land, The People of the land and the wilderness traveler, when Pandora's Box is fully opened in the Arctic? Unfortunately, time, distance and cost are no obstacles to those in the business of resource development, which threatens the well being of the rivers that flow through this fragile environment.

On the flight back to Yellowknife, our pilot followed the course of the Hood River for a portion of it's length, where we had an aerial view of the spectacular Wilberforce Falls. After circling over the falls, we continued to fly south above the river, and then something caught my eye that stood out like an abscess on the land below. An excavator.

(1). Houston, C. Stuart, *Arctic Artist – The Journal and Paintings of George Back, 1819-1822*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, Kingston, London, Buffalo, 1994; Figure 5

(2). *ibid*, Figure 34



Hood River Map

Making Friends on the Yukon

Article: Sarah Lawson

Photos: Sarah Lawson, Jagger Smith and Mark Wong

Many of us go canoeing to escape something – a busy life, city smog, our daily routine. We may also go canoeing to return to something – wilderness, a Garden of Eden, our childhood playground. Another important reason we go canoeing is to build our friendships through adventure. This is a story of a month on the Yukon River – the bonds of friendship strengthened with canoeing partners and the new friends we made along the way.

We were four Ontarians on our first trip to the Yukon Territory, portaging across the street in downtown Whitehorse to launch our canoes into the mighty Yukon River, about to embark on the trip of a lifetime, the longest canoe trip any one of us had ever experienced. Mark, Joanna, Jagger and I had all met while working at Lake Superior Provincial Park in Ontario. We had lived and worked together at “the park” for many summers but had little experience canoeing together. The trip was conceived by Mark, Jagger and I one after-

noon on the shores of Lake Ontario and came to fruition a few years later. Joanna was a last minute addition to our group. With a spot to fill Jagger and I drove to Jo’s tree planting camp near Hearst, Ontario to ask her to join our trip; we all were on the river just four weeks later.

The Yukon River is over 3,000 kilometers long and flows into the Bering Sea. We planned to cover a third of the length, about 1,100 kilometers, from Whitehorse, Yukon to Circle, Alaska, in four weeks. The river starts crystal clear and gradually becomes muddier as tributaries add silt; the most dramatic example is the White River, which carries great amounts of glacial silt and ancient volcanic ash into the river every day. The Yukon moves swiftly, 8-12 kilometers per hour and because the river flows so quickly, it is necessary to plan stops well in advance to avoid last-minute crossings (which leave paddlers drained and feeling pretty silly.)

The swift current can make visiting difficult. One sunny afternoon I notice a

canoe and an old man on shore up ahead. We exchange hellos as our canoe zips by, too late to stop! Luckily Ben catches up with us at 17-mile wood camp where we have stopped for lunch. Ben is 72 years old and has traveled the river from Whitehorse to Dawson City 20 times. He gives us a wonderful gift: a hand drawn map of the river with lots of great little hikes and views noted on the edges. The map never lets us down; every view is excellent and would have been impossible to find on our own. Thanks Ben.

One rainy evening, a few days into our trip, we arrive on Shipyard Island and meet Lars, a student of medicine from Germany. Lars is traveling solo from Whitehorse to Dawson City, his second trip on the Yukon River. Wet and tired, we don’t make the best first impression but before long he is sharing his fire and then a space under our tarp. Because of the speed of the river it is easy for paddling groups catch up to each other and tend to hop-scotch down the river. We would meet up with Lars many times but by far the most memorable was the night at Fort Selkirk when he joined our group for the remainder of his journey.

We had left Lars two days earlier resting in a hammock at the Coal Mine Campground in Carmacks planning to write postcards and rest for the day. We were shocked to see him catch up to us at Fort Selkirk at 9 o’clock that night, 120 kilometers downstream. It had taken us two days to get there – if Lars had been resting for one of the two days he must have covered the distance in record time. As he put up his tent he shared his story. After traveling about 60 kilometers downstream from Carmacks, Lars landed on an island to see if it was a good camp-



Campsite on Lake Labarge

ing spot for the night. As he pulled up his canoe and jumped out to look around he came face-to-face with a grizzly bear. Naturally, he didn't waste any time. He jumped back in his canoe and paddled another 60 kilometers - all the way to Fort Selkirk. He later told us he had chosen the island because while he knew bears could swim, he didn't think bears swam very often: "Maybe once a year" he said. Nervous at the prospect of meeting any more grizzlies on his own Lars joined our group for the rest of his trip; he became an excellent companion on hikes and helped us eat the enormous amounts of food that Jo—accustomed to cooking for 40 tree planters all spring—was cooking for four lazy paddlers.

Dawson City, an ubiquitous gold rush town, (the current gold rush being tourism) was the approximate half way mark of our trip. Gold mining is ongoing in the region and continues to draw investors from around the world. We arrive at the Dawson City River hostel, set up camp, and head across the river to Bombay Peggy's, the Yukon's only fully restored brothel (in architectural terms only.)

After a few beers our dinner arrives, along with a dozen or more attendees of the Gold Anti-Trust Action Committee's Gold Rush 21 conference. Drawing speculators from as far as Switzerland, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates the crowd is diverse and, well, RICH. A real bunch of characters: a young man from Switzerland has just been married by the ferry boat captain to a Yukon girl he met yesterday. A group from the United Arab Emirates, dressed in tailored shirts with cufflinks, is buying rounds to celebrate the union. Jagger strikes up a conversation with a near-by conference-goer, an American who will come to be known as "the \$20 man." From what we can gather this group wants to restore the gold standard (a monetary system in which the standard economic unit of account is a fixed weight of gold.) After prodding the American with a few questions Jagger



Circle City

says to him: "What I really want to know about you guys is how I can get you to buy me a drink?" The American laughs out loud and gives Jagger a \$20 bill. Later in the evening Jo and I convince the \$20 man to give our over-worked waitress a \$10 tip for a \$5 drink.

The next few days on the river are a lot quieter. A thick blanket of smoke from Alaskan forest fires has settled over the river and even the Yukon Queen II (a cruise ship that travels between Dawson City, Yukon and Eagle, Alaska) is temporarily docked. We settle into the dull grey landscape; everything seems grey: the sky, the water, our dirty clothes. As we approach Eagle, Alaska, we pass over

a clear stream that enters the murky Yukon; the multi-coloured pebbles of its bed are the most beautiful and refreshing thing we have seen in days.

Eagle is about 13 kilometers downstream of the actual Canada/U.S. border but it is the first American settlement along the river. Actually a combination of Eagle Village (a Native American community) and Eagle proper, the small town is home to a general store, restaurant, inn, post office, museum and a National Park Service field office for the Yukon-Charley Rivers national preserve. Our first stop is the general store. We let the store owners know that we are Canadians and would like to make our border cross-



Coal Creek Dredge



Joanna watches Mark filet a fish



Kandik cabin

ing official; they call up the border guard who puts on his uniform and meets us outside. We have heard stories of travelers waiting outside the church for the service to finish so they can get their passports stamped and even waiting a few days in town for the border guard to return from a hunting trip! To our surprise, he is carrying a Tim Horton's coffee mug and is probably the friendliest border guard in America. He opens his briefcase on a big rock, stamps our passports and sends us on our way.

Our last week is very relaxing. The park service in Alaska maintains a number of cabins that are available to travelers on a first-come, first-served basis. We stay at the Nation Bluff and Kandik River cabins and then at Slaven's Roadhouse, traveling to one cabin and then staying two nights at each, exploring the area, and enjoying the warmth of the woodstoves on the chilly August nights. To celebrate the final week of our trip we have a gift exchange at Nation Bluff cabin. Jagger has made a piñata for Jo out of a paper bag, decorated with my water colour paint set and filled with candies. Jo gives me a massage ball. I give Mark a collection of Yukon paraphernalia: fireweed seeds, a patch and a sourdough recipe book. It would seem that the last gift should be from Mark to Jagger but Mark says he had forgotten whose name he drew and hands Jagger a very thoughtful gift addressed to Joanna: women's gloves to warm her cold hands and handmade oatmeal soap to sooth her dry skin. We all have a good laugh and we all benefit from the soap.

Just before we arrive at our final destination, Circle Alaska, we witness dozens of sand hill cranes congregating on a sandbar. We float past and soak in the view and our last moments on the river. Our first destination in Circle is the general store where we shop for snacks and dinner. Overwhelmed by group decision-making over the tiniest detail: corn

chips or potato chips? Jagger decides to step outside. We have spent the past month in tight quarters but have not only avoided conflict, we have strengthened our friendships. I am reminded of something Lars said about our group "you guys never fight!" We are surprised by this comment and when asked to explain Lars told us that every other group he met on the river was constantly bickering. I'm not sure what our secret is: careful planning, sharing in cooking, or maybe it was Jagger and Mark's beard growing competition? Whatever the reason our friendships are stronger than ever after a month on the Yukon and our

canoe trip was enriched by the interesting people we met along the river.

Sarah Lawson is an avid canoeist. She recently married her favorite canoeing partner, Jagger Smith. They currently live in Peterborough.

Trip Planner:

Trip length and difficulty: 1100 km, 20-30 days, three sets of rapids, no portages. For more information about the route read Mike Rourke's map books.

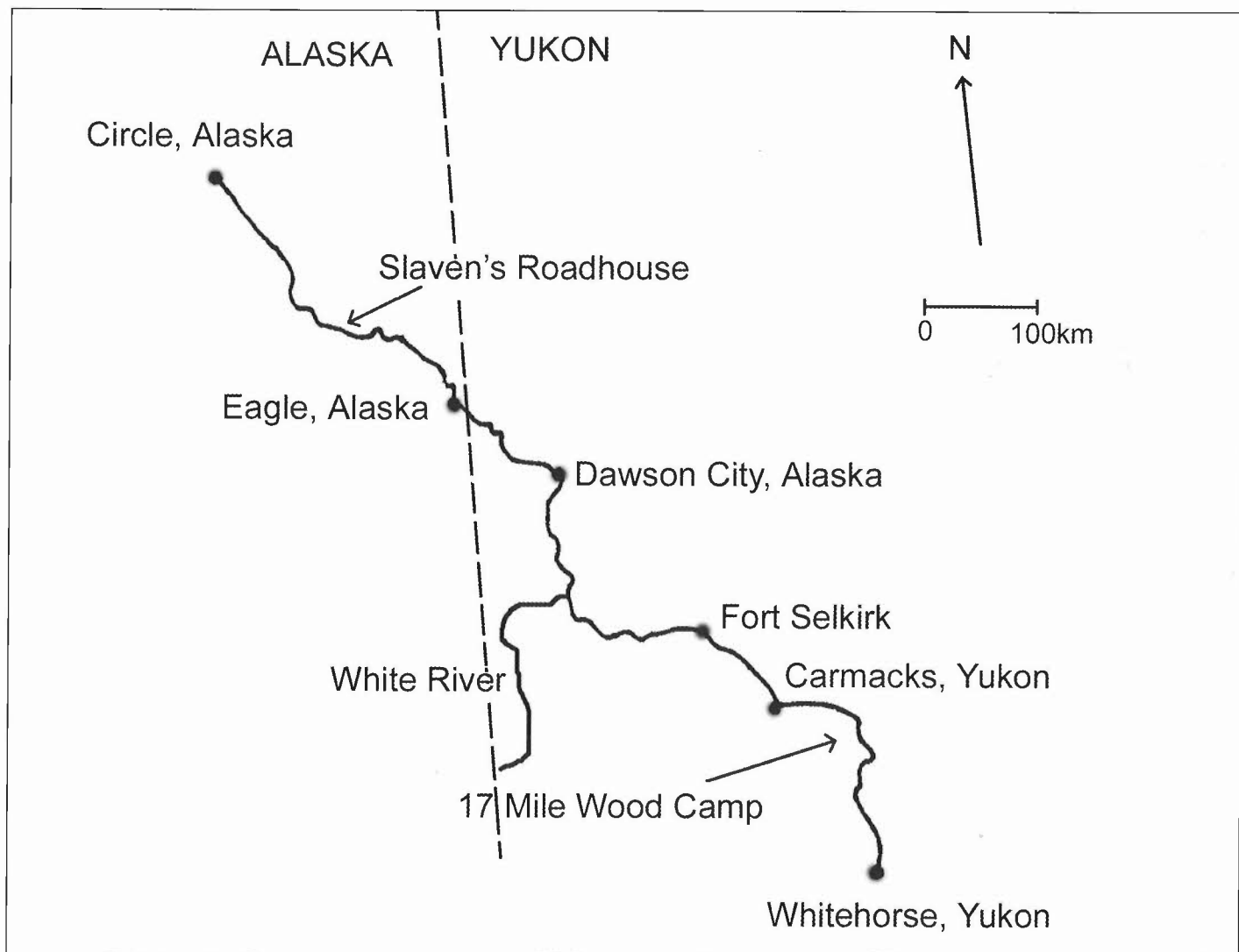
Rapids: Minimal whitewater – keep right at the notorious Five Finger Rapids, as well as at Rink Rapids. There are no portage trails.

Access/egress: Access the Yukon River in downtown Whitehorse or Lake Labarge. Nature Tours of Yukon will provide shuttles from Circle, Alaska.

Resources: Yukon Books is a great source for books and maps (1-800-661-0508 or www.yukonbooks.com).

Nature Tours of Yukon will rent canoes and provide shuttles (867) 667-4868 or <http://www.naturetoursyukon.com/>

For more information about the U.S. Park Service cabins visit the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve website: <http://www.nps.gov/yuch/index.htm>



Yukon River Map

Buffalo to Dundas – the Unusual

Tom and Paula Elliott

I met Nastawgan Resource Editor Bob Henderson in an unusual way. It was early May 07, the end of my solo trip from Buffalo, NY to Dundas, ON (west end of Lake Ontario). In a beautiful area called Cootes Paradise, with no other watercraft to be seen anywhere, there he ap-

peared, out for a day paddle in his kayak, exploring. Bob is the author of *Every Trail Has A Story – Heritage Travel In Canada*. He researches and explores unusual canoe routes and was intrigued by the one I was just finishing. He asked that I write about it.

It's not unusual to do a multi-day solo canoe-camping trip. What's unusual is where I did it. The idea of traveling the Niagara peninsula – Buffalo area began four years ago when I paddled from my house near Brantford ON to my mother's house east of Buffalo. (Nastawgan, Spring 05, Vol. 32 No. 1) That solo trip was 160 km and took nine days. This recent trip, also solo, was 140 km plus 25 km by truck to get past Niagara Falls, and with ideal weather it took seven days. I used my 17-ft Miller kevlar canoe and a 9-ft Mohawk two-bladed take-apart paddle.

My mom played a role in this venture. She is 100 years old, lives alone, travels, drives, sings in a seniors' group, uses a computer with fingers in the right place, had an obstreperous dog, etc. When I went to her house in early May to start the trip, the creeks were very low. I was about to postpone the trip when she, who has never canoed, said "Why don't you start downstream where the water is deep enough?" Great idea! So, with a forecast of excellent weather, she dropped me off in Cazenovia Park (Cazenovia Creek) in south Buffalo, took my picture and I was off. Smart Mom.

That first day began with a short portage around a falls in Cazenovia Park, right past a group of guys on shore, just hanging out, probably unemployed, some fishing. They were curious and asked where I was going. Then in Buffalo River two men in a small boat were moving an oil slick containment boom near storage tanks. They said there was no spill. Further on there were lots of waterfowl, dilapidated docks, old rail tracks, and abandoned storage elevators which formed concrete canyons in a quiet harbour.

The waterfront at Buffalo has been beautifully renewed with fine modern architecture, parks and residential areas. Fortunately Lake Erie was calm before entering the Blackrock Canal. The exposure there to west winds could have been hazardous. The Peace Bridge looked majestic from the canal and there were kids training in racing skiffs on the canal.



Entering Port Dalhousie

Their coach was zooming around in a power boat, and with a megaphone, was screaming instructions at the kids. He yelled at me for being off the proper course, whatever that is.

It was getting dark. The police said not to be around downtown Buffalo at night, so I hired a guy with a pickup truck to do a quick portage at the end of the canal to get over to the Niagara River. As I started paddling again, the smell of grease and garlic wafted across the river, I assume from Happy Jack's Chinese restaurant in Ft. Erie. It was getting dark, and in fast current, I raced downstream and across the river to the "safety" of the Canadian side. I headed toward lights a few km ahead and was very lucky to find ideal camping on the lawn of a well-lit marina, not yet open for the season.

I joined Nexus to facilitate three border crossings between countries. Watercraft are to report to Customs and Immigration by phone. I went to a phone booth outside the locked and fenced-in marina, not easy to get to. I didn't know where I was. The nice Canadian Immigration lady needed to know, so I put the phone down and in the dark started looking for signs. There were a few hard-to-see signs. The sign that said NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION MARINA solved the problem. The Immigration lady knew exactly where I was.

One must get off the river at Chippewa, a village just above Niagara Falls. I arrived there on Day 2. A local chap came out of a bar and insisted on taking my picture at the James Cameron monument. Using my throw-away camera, he took two to make sure I had a good one. He was very proud of Chippewa's native son, the innovative filmmaker who made "Titanic" among other films. I hung around in the village square, asking guys for a lift and hired a man with a pick-up truck. He hauled me and my outfit about 25 km around Niagara Falls to a boat launching spot at Queenston, ON. I camped there in the company of fishermen, who kept coming and going all night.

The next day, I could see some of the spectacular Niagara gorge and bridge to Lewiston, NY. On the river going out to Lake Ontario, there are very few visible buildings. It is beautiful. I visited Ft.



James Cameron monument, Chippewa, Ontario

Niagara on the US side, an interesting fort with a lot of history, and being made of stone, it was never burned.

Later that day, I paddled into the Port Weller Marina, I met a guy, probably wealthy, about my age, looking overweight and in not good health. He had just bought a yacht and was preparing to do a trip through the Welland Canal and on through the Great Lakes. His reaction to my trip was, "Better you than me."

A thankyou to Leon at the marina at Port Weller. When I scouted part of the route a few weeks earlier by car, he said there was a fee for camping. When I arrived there, he got one look at me and my outfit said, "Take your stuff over there, I won't know you are here. Just eat at our restaurant," which I did. No fee.

The rest of the trip along a calm Lake Ontario included setting up my kitchen and eating supper under the QEW highway bridge at Jordan while waiting out a heavy rain storm. The roar of traffic overhead and lots of garbage, which had been thrown off the bridge were a part of the dining ambience. Continuing westward I hiked through an abandoned amusement park; visited an historic building at Grimsby which was having a music and dance class for tiny children; and spent a day waiting out windy weather at 50 Point Marina, a most impressive facility operated by the

Hamilton Region Conservation Authority. Their office was also most considerate in allowing me to camp at a nice, convenient spot out by the lake rather than in their designated camping area.

The shoreline of Lake Ontario from Jordan to Hamilton is not nice. It is mostly developed in sprawl fashion with homes decorated in bad taste and of no architectural significance. And the bigger and more expensive the homes, the more noxious they become. It is unfortunate that this came to be on a shoreline, where such development impacts a beautiful lake.

On the last night, I again camped in the dark, this time on the Burlington Beach strip at Hamilton. To avoid wind, I needed a quick get-away early the next morning, so I didn't put up my tent. I slept out on the sand beach with rollerbladers whizzing by on a nearby path. Just as I was dozing off I felt an animal walking onto my sleeping bag, a familiar feeling. When I raised my head to see who was there, a cat ran away. A touching moment it was. I wanted him to stay and curl up and sleep like my cats at home.

On the last day I enjoyed seeing the Burlington Bridge from the water, steel factories, and kids sailing lots of small sailboats in Burlington Bay. Then there was lunch and a short portage at the fish

barrier into Cootes Paradise, under the scrutiny of fishermen. I picked up lots of garbage there to haul out. On my way through Cootes and up Spencer Creek, there he was, Bob Henderson. He had just come from an event introducing Herb Pohl's book.

Canoeing these routes is not only a challenging adventure, it is for me a very strange, quiet, sort of other-worldly experience. My dress, mode of travel, and life style are different from everyone else. I feel disconnected from the real world which itself seems unreal. It's like being a ghost, observing it all as I journey, but not really being there.

From the water, one experiences the beauty and natural features of the

Niagara peninsula and Buffalo areas. It is not as ugly as one might think. I appreciate and feel more a part of it all having paddled there. Meeting people along the way is fun. They are helpful, curious and impressed with my journey--it blew their minds when I said that I was going from South Buffalo to Dundas.

With close proximity to getting help if needed, going solo is low-risk and creates more of a challenge. Scouting before a trip can be done by driving parts of a route and talking to local people. I have never needed to use my water filter. On this trip I bought drinking water at Chippewa. Four years ago, I cached jugs of drinking water near home and at Ft Erie and Buffalo.

I have never had a problem, but I usually chain the canoe to a tree at night. I worry about being bothered by people or evicted from a camping place. Before the busy summer season, camping on public and private property has worked out fine. No one seems to care. There are a few campgrounds, but they have only been useful for two nights on this recent trip.

The off-season is the time to go. In early May, it is nice to see buds opening and a variety of birds. There are few people around and rarely another boat of any sort on the water. I was often startled by what sounded like an approaching powerboat bearing down on me, only to find that it was a lawn mower on shore. There are lots of those in early May.

Boundless, MKC and the Paddling Community team up to support the Madawaska and the Dumoine

Boundless and MKC are organizing the paddling community to serve as guardians of the Lower Madawaska, and to a lesser extent, the Dumoine rivers.

Government authorities have put their best foot forward in maintaining the pristine condition of these rivers, but alas, they often lack the financial and human resources to keep the rivers, access roads and campsites in pristine and safe condition. With the support of the authorities (MNR in Ontario and ZEC in Quebec), Boundless and MKC are spearheading a project that strives to protect the beauty of these treasured natural resources.

We are rallying the support of the paddling community. We hope this project shall thrive for years to come.

Our first order of business is to improve the access roads on the Lower Madawaska - Aumond Bay and Buck Bay roads. We plan to bring people, chain saws, shovels and machines to repair and grade the roads. Campsite maintenance is also on the top of the agenda, replacing and building outhouses on key campsites. Regular garbage pick-up and removal of debris in the wake of severe thunderstorms and spring runoff also tops the list of priorities.

Boundless, a registered charity, shall collect donations from the paddling community, issue tax receipts for donations over \$50, and administer the project. An annual report on outcomes will be posted on our website every fall, with a complete financial accounting of the money spent.

We need your help! Please visit our website www.dontmess-withthepad.com and donate to the cause. Together, we can take responsibility for these wonderful rivers, and set up an enduring system for keeping these treasures in wonderful condition for all to enjoy safely.

If you require any additional information, please contact Steven Gottlieb, Executive Director of Boundless, at boundless@on.aibn.com

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The Pressure to Go Light: Reflections on a Subarctic Summer Storm

By Brian Johnston

It was July and we were two weeks into our Kunwak-Kazan River canoe trip:

One of the numerous benefits with teaching canoeing is meeting course participants. Last year, one student spoke about the book he was reading, *A Death on the Barrens*—a title that I had often meant to pick up and his enthusiasm for the book rekindled my desire to read it.

We were below Kazan Falls, not camped, but pinned down. We were not fighting for our lives but we were close to the edge, about as close as one wishes to be.

In *A Death on the Barrens*, Chapter 19 is titled *Blizzard*, and it is where the author, George Grinnell, talks about how one of the guys “had already rolled up his sleeping bag and was sitting fully dressed on his air mattress, as if he were ready to abandon the tent” (p. 127). This brings back the vivid image of my wife in exactly the same predicament some tens years ago and is not far off the mark for us, for I had stuffed my sleeping bag, dawned on much clothing, and was anxiously sitting on my Therm-a-rest. Grinnell continues. “During the peaks, the heavy nylon sides of our mountain tent snapped like the tip of a bullwhip” (p. 127). This continues to describe our situation.

Although we had three good quality brand name four-season tents, their walls and ceilings were leaking as a result of the wind compressing and tensioning the fabric. We had used every tent fly tie down patch and guideline in an attempt to maintain the tent’s shape. And, even though we also utilized our clothes dry bags to prop up the tent walls by supporting the tent poles, at times, we still had to push on the inside of the tent to reshape the inverting poles. The force on the tent was intense enough that when the tent shell whipped inwards, water freely flowed through at a rapid pace and we had to actively work at maintaining our individual fortresses. My tentmate and I used a pack towel and sponge to soak up the endless moisture. We would read three pages in our books and then stop to mop up the water on the floor as well as the moisture on the walls.

It was a long night and day.

We were tent bound and content with controlling water and snacking on GORP, dried fruit, and energy bars, while reading the odd page or catching moments of sleep. We ate and drank little for fear of having to venture out to face the elements. No hot food or drink was prepared. It was 3 degrees centigrade outside, and all of 6 degrees inside the tent. Our distance made good (DMG) was 0 km. The distance to go (DTG) remained unchanged. It was as life is sometimes in the north—“that’s the way we like it” become our trip motto.

At one point early in the morning, I took stock of our situation. As I ran hunched over from tent to tent, I gazed at the land from the security of a vestibule. I could see the water forming almost continuous puddles, pools, and ponds on the tundra. This was not normal but it was what it was, and we were prepared to wait it out. The result of my tent visitations revealed tent #1: 30% infiltration of water, 70% dry; tent #2: 40% infiltration of water, 60% dry; tent #3: more than 50% infiltration of water. As the storm continued so did the water infiltration and the wet to dry ratio deteriorated.

Grinnell’s blizzard continued. “We agreed to strike it [the tent] in order to salvage what remained and to then head out into the blizzard to seek shelter under the canoes” (p. 129).

Similarly, we left one tent flattened to the ground because after 24 hours of non-stop wind and rain, it became too saturated, forcing its occupants to take shelter under our Mantis kitchen tarp, which easily converts into a cave-like shelter. One of the trip members wrote, “When we made the decision to abandon our by now soggy sleeping bags and flattened tent for the Mantis tent [tarp], while wearing wet clothes, it was probably out of real concern for our well-being, not just our comfort.”

I have focused on the similarities between Grinnell’s blizzard and our experience but there are important differences. In *A Death on the Barren*, the canoe party experienced the coming of winter, a September blizzard, with snow and below

zero temperatures, whereas we experienced a summer storm with rain and near zero temperatures.

Recently, I have felt an increased pressure to go light, to travel with less, or even possibly to do or go without. And, it is after such as a far north summer storm experience that I reflect on the pressure on to go light, ponder alternatives, and envision possible ramifications.

There are numerous reasons to go light. For instance, cartoonists have made light of the subject, which attests to its value. Perhaps you know of a tale such as the Hudson Bay Expedition that commemorated the 75th anniversary of the St Cloud to York Factory Eric Severeid canoe trip where the paddlers flipped their canoe at the start because it was severely overloaded. Maybe you want to single trip portages. Although here are many reasons to go light, for me, the main reason is the airline luggage weight restriction; it is now more difficult to get all of our gear onto commercial flights.

First I need to stress that paddling is not a one size fits or method works for all. What I find appropriate may or may not be suitable for you. It is important to explore your options and make your own decisions. What follows is some of my ideas on the pressure to go light. Let this be the impetus for reflection and discussion.

The motivation to go light is many-fold. I have already indicated that it is cheaper and easier to fly with less. In addition, there is less concern worrying if the extra baggage will arrive. On a previous trip I met a canoe party in Baker Lake who ended up waiting five days for their last piece of kit to arrive. I would not take the loss of five days lightly. Another reason might be it is better for the environment to own less just as it is cheaper to have less. There are age-related factors such as, the less gear you bring, the less you have to portage. Maybe you wish to feel young and travel carefree. Carefree could be seen more as a lifestyle than age issue.

Some may suggest that if you are getting older, then lighter makes sense, but only to a limit, sometimes older means

wiser or the desire to have more comforts. Maybe with age you will see the value in packing less, working less, sweating less, and eating less. Moreover, this approach may be easier on your body.

You start to question, this trip has limited whitewater, do we really need to bring spray skirts? What about all the clothing that we pack, some of it seldom sees the light of day. Should we cut back on the extra clothing? And, last year we never put up the tarp, can we forgo the heavy and bulky tarp this year?

What are the options to explore? Can you switch to lighter gear because there are many new innovated products oriented towards lightness. What about thinking of multifunctional items, for instance can a paddle also serve as a pole for your tarp? Another idea, is it possible to choose your route carefully with due consideration for non-fly in options or non-portage routes? Other strategies might include planning for less mileage per day, shorter trips, or multi-day camps. My longtime tripping partner has twenty some years on me, did he choose me because I am younger and physically capable? Consider the health and ability of the trippers, the objectives and goals of the trip, as well as the style of the trip. Think about the expected conditions of the route. All of these options and conditions may reduce the pressure to go light.

Several strategies that may assist you in reducing the weight of your gear follow but I caution you to be aware of the law of diminishing returns and to keep your safety in mind at all times. While bearing in mind safety, also use an experienced eye to decide on what is appropriate for you.

Before a trip, develop a list of items and use a scale to weigh each piece of gear. Perhaps use two columns where you can note lighter alternatives. Pay special attention to the main items that represent the bulk of the gear weight, for example the tent, pack, sleeping bag, sleep pad, canoe, and food. Is there merit to replacing some of the gear with lighter materials, for instance titanium, down, or silicone nylon? Bear in mind that lightweight or ultra lightweight comes at an expense. Titanium will lighten your pocketbook as well as your pack.

There are numerous resources to seek. Try picking up some canoeing gear literature such as a canoe camping book or a gear review magazine. Search out and find retailers that are dedicated to ultra light

travel. Similarly, investigate manufacturers that specialize in lightweight gear such as Integral Designs, Platypus, Jetboil, Anti Gravity Gear, or Granite Gear's air bags (stuff sacks). There are welcoming and helpful Internet forum such as the Canadian Canoe Routes, which maybe searched for posts and threads on lightweight gear. Another outstanding resource is the hiking and climbing communities because they are inherently interested in keeping gear weight down. Ray Jardine is the one name that immediately comes to mind. He is a rock climber who is also well-known in backpacking circles because he advocates lightweight and ultra-light hiking.

Once you commence packing, try to control what you pack. For example, restrict your gear to a size limit such as a 30L dry bag for personal clothing. While packing, if you repeat, "it is only a couple of ounces" enough times you'll end up with many extra pounds—not only a couple of ounces. I often pack by categories, such as on the water, off the water, sleeping, bad weather, cooking, group, personal, etc. I find packing by categories keeps my mind focused on the task.

During the trip, keep track of what gear and items you use as well as what you do not use. Over time, this technique can be used to refine your gear list. However, be forewarned: you may go on canoe trips for years before experiencing your first summer storm. Another member of our canoe party wrote, "I think we were all aware of the potential hazards of our situation but never the less reasonably confident in our abilities to withstand the conditions." Be prepared. Have the right gear.

I believe much learning occurs because of the interaction between persons and the environment. Sometimes I prefer the environment to be controlled (while teaching moving water canoeing) whereas at other times I prefer the environment uncontrolled (forming wilderness canoe tripping values). While I place great value on experience, there is the memory versus journal dilemma. I readily recall all the good times but I had to refer to my journal for the details of the summer storm experience. My memory is selective and smoothes out details, leaving a kind of romantic image and landscape, whereas a journal may capture and record the richness, nuance, and complexity of the experience. My advice is to jot down your thoughts during the trip and to reflect upon them afterwards.

Some people take reducing gear weight to the extreme. If it works for them that is okay but extremists is not for everyone. Will you enjoy the trip if you only boil water or bring one pot? Will a power bar for lunch suffice? Are you interested in cutting off tags and labels or using a finger with toothpaste powder for brushing teeth? Are you planning a canoe trip or a mountain summit attempt? Canoeing more easily affords luxuries and comfort that are not feasible when mountain climbing.

For years, I have taken time to think about what I pack and sincerely believe that I do a decent job. That is not to say that I am not in amazement at what comes out of fellow canoe tripper's packs and I fully admit that I am often equally surprised and glad to see what they pull out. Overtime, your experience and your comfort level may change so be prepared to adapt, modify, and improve upon what you pack. For instance, this year I'm considering shipping some gear early to alleviate the pressure to go light.

Reference

Grinnell, G. (2006). *A Death on the Barrens* (revised ed.), N. Ferrisburg, VT: Heron Dance Press and Art Studio.

WHEN TO GO

Into the barrens? August. August by far. In places where warmth is more than a fleeting moment, summer is a season that rises in a gentle incline to a hilltop and then follows the same gentle slope in a slow descent into autumn and winter.

Not so here. Summer is sharp here. No gentle slope to a hilltop, but a knife edge rising straight from the icy darkness of winter to pierce the sky and then plunging just as sharp back into the icy darkness. The uphill slope of the knife is tormented by black flies and mosquitoes all the way to the cutting edge. The downhill side is fear loaded with the rush to get out of the country before the onset of winter.

The knife edge is August. Enough warmth and sun to enjoy the wildness that you are surrounded by. The cold breath of winter is just a hint on the breezes of August. Present, but not yet strong.

In the barrens, winter is always lurking close by. But in August, not yet strong. No, not yet.

Greg Went

Have you SPOTted something new lately?

When I first read about the SPOT in the recent winter Che-Mun packet, I was immediately hooked. Imagine - the world's first satellite messenger! That's just what I need for the canoe trip to Mars, where the water flows, after all. My next thought was, "how come I didn't think of this myself?"

I reached out to Michael Mulley, Globalstar's Distribution Manager, the very next morning. The "loaner" unit arrived at my desk a few days later. Frankly, I'm not sending it back.

There are people who paddle remote lakes and rivers precisely to get away from gadgets like this. The last thing they want is someone at home tracking their progress over morning coffee while watching breakfast TV. However, most trippers who venture out beyond the reach of mobile phone networks carry one kind of communication device or another. Heck, even *Survivorman* does!

The size of a regular GPS unit, SPOT packs several features that may appeal to many users. Its bare-bones interface offers, besides the ON/OFF button, the choice of three other buttons: OK, HELP, and 911. There are small LEDs above each button. The buttons are recessed to make accidental tripping difficult, albeit not impossible.

SPOT's GPS receiver works like any other GPS, by triangulating the unit's location via the network of global positioning satellites. The transmitter uses Globalstar's Simplex data network to communicate with the commercial satellites. They facilitate the downlink to the network of ground antennas connected to the internet servers.

Pressing OK triggers a message that, once it reaches the ground servers, generates an email to the recipients on your "I'm OK" list. The message has the time stamp and your location, as well as a hyperlink to the Google map with your location pinned down. How cool is that!

The HELP button does the same thing, except the message is more ominous: I need help at this location. You maintain the separate "I need HELP" list of email recipients via the browser interface. Of course, you must make plans with your buddies prior to the trip, so both you and they know exactly what to do in such a case.

Activating 911 brings the cavalry (and a sizable invoice if you're not careful!). You can cancel the 911 message.

While I like the simplicity of the interface, it does take some time to get used to the rhythm of flashing LEDs. Not having the LCD screen display the message status will worry you in the beginning (was my 911 ALERT really transmitted?), but your confidence will grow as you get to know SPOT better. Just think how much juice you're saving by not having a display. Besides, you should never rely on any single device to bail you out, think backup!

On top of all that, SPOT is waterproof, runs on two lithium AA batteries, and is available in different colors, as long as it's a bright orange. The suggested retail price is \$169 plus tax, but you should shop on the web for better deals. Annual subscription starts at \$99. If memory serves, that's how much I paid for the one-week PLB rental last year.

While no substitute for the satellite

phone, SPOT will become mainstream by the time you read this article. Backpacker magazine announced last week that it bestowed upon SPOT the prestigious 2008 Editor's Choice Winner Award for the coolest new gadget. With the rapidly increasing proliferation of new outdoors toys aimed to satisfy our insatiable thirst for more, I believe this one will make a real difference. Watch carefully next time on the river; you'll likely spot the bright orange SPOT passing you on the portage trail. In the meantime, check it out at www.findmespot.com.

Aleksandar Gusev



NOTICE

The 2008 AGM, 2008 was held on Saturday March 1st amongst the backdrop of the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg Ontario. The format, similar to previous years, was the business meeting in the morning followed by a tour of the gallery and a guest speaker. The tour consisted of a self-

guided walk through the gallery to view the extensive display of Canadian Art and, in particular, the works from the Group of Seven.

The guest speaker was Katherine Suboch who amazed us with stories and photographs of her adventures in extreme landscapes including Ellesmere Island, Labrador, and Barren Land rivers.

A special presentation was made to

Erhard Kraus for his dedication and role as the Environmental Chair for over nine years. A plaque was given to him in recognition of his contribution to the association.

Overall, the meeting was a great success and ended with positive feedback about the program and location in which it was held.

Doug Ashton

Canoe Resume

By David Atkins and Cheryl Stoltz

One thing that a trip organizer may not think about when putting a trip together is that the participants may have different expectations for the trip than they do, or may have a different style of tripping. We are so often just happy to have people wanting to go along. While there's no need for everyone to be in lockstep, there can be problems or at least disappointments if the people on the trip are too incompatible.

When I first began to trip for longer than weekends, the main leader in our group seemed friendly to all, but really he was selective, carefully checking out behind the scenes the many, many people who wanted to go on his trips to make sure that the group was compatible. He liked to trip with all variety of people, as long as they all got along. As paddlers in our original group began dying, or dropping off the paddling holiday, I was paddling more and more with people that I did not meet until we got to the put-in. Ninety nine percent of the people I paddled with were just super but I quickly learned to be more selective about partners and groups—no more Lazy Larry's or Whining Winona's for me. Now organizing trips myself, my EPP'Y (Excellent Paddle Partner – now for life) and I have learned the hard way that the vacation we dreamed about all year, and worked so hard to plan has sometimes turned out not to be a vacation at all, given the wrong group dynamics. We end up very tired, with good stories and a lot of resentment.

The better way, for us at least, was to make sure that both the organizers and participants of our trips know who each other are and know what to expect. To do this, I made up a resume of sorts about us and an Expectation's Outline that could be tailored to send out to interested trip participants. We would use different versions for different types of trips – family, short term, long term, etc.

The Resume (or Expectation Outline) has opened the door for all on the trip to get their expectations out on the table, so that a trip can be planned that will meet the needs of all involved. Or, if their expectations are too different than ours, then

perhaps our trip is not for them.

Below we give you a sample Outline we did up with some of our real quirks to give you an idea of things you might like to consider when organizing a trip. And if you are not into leading trips yet, then you can use it to consider things you might want to know or bring up when you go on someone else's trip. This sample has been for use for various week-long river trips in south western Quebec.

Dear Interested Paddler:

Please find below the following: our standard resume or expectation outline (i.e. what we hope to get out of this trip), followed by a "canoeing resume" to introduce ourselves.

Expectation Outline:

We don't want to put anyone off, but we have learned a few things over the years from the people we have tripped with, and from discussions on myccr.com. After reading this over, consider if there is anything that concerns you about paddling with us, and consider if *your* style of tripping and personality fit. If there is anything that concerns you, then please discuss it with us. If we can work out the differences, great. If not, there is no harm done, perhaps this particular trip is not for you, and we can try again another time. This is our one real holiday of the year (without kids, that is), and we are out to enjoy it fully.

We are volunteer trip organizers, NOT Trip Guides. We are not providing guiding services to the trip participants.

Any costs incurred will be shared equally by all, including us.

Everyone needs to pull their own weight and move their own gear, although everyone should be willing to help pitch in if needed to make things go smoothly. We gave up trying to one-carry portages a long time ago, but we do pack efficiently. Everyone should be able to get themselves and their gear over a portage in 2 trips max.

Take a look at the attached day-by-day trip plan. On this trip we would generally like to be on the water as early as we can,

but always before 9:00, and off the water in mid-afternoon (4:00) if possible. However, there may be some shorter or longer days depending on how far we need to travel on any particular day. We don't take an extended break at lunch time unless it is going to be a very short day.

The group should generally stay together as within calling/whistle distance. It is difficult to be with a group of people where you are either always waiting for someone, or trying to catch up to them. There is no problem if you want to go ahead or lag behind at times, just let us know that that is your plan.

A decision to stay on one particular campsite can be a group decision (unless there are reasons why it is not practical to move to another site).

When we arrive at camp, we expect everyone to pitch in and get the site organized for the group. This includes: putting up the tarp/bug tent, creating the communal toilet area and cleaning/building the fire pit if needed, picking up garbage around the site, setting up the kitchen area, getting water for cooking, pumping water, putting up drying lines, finding a place to hang food (if anyone needs this) and prepping the ropes; setting up the grey water station, making the canoes secure etc. etc. If everyone pitches in, it will all go quickly. The same goes for taking down and closing the site.

When arriving at a site, we decide as a group as to which tent is going where. That way others do not get stressed if one canoe puts on a push on to reach the site at the end of the day. Also it means that everyone has a least one night on the most level spot!

People are free to do as they like at the sites. We enjoy reading, swimming, sunning, sleeping, cooking, exploring, and playing in the rapids. If anyone is up for a game of crib or euchre, that is fine too, but no one should be obligated to entertain anyone else. We do not bring anything electronic other than our camera, and a GPS stashed in our emergency kit. We are congenial and social, but will not talk you ear off.

We prefer to minimize our affect on a

site, so we: bury waste in an extended trench communal cat hole/biffy or whatever method will have the least effect on a site, burn our toilet paper in an old coffee can we bring for that purpose; do not as a rule wash in the river unless we have a proven "soap" that dissociates in water to harmless soluble particles; do not bring glass or cans; enjoy a small fire for enjoyment and to boil water; will do most if not all of our cooking on a stove; and like to leave a site cleaner than we found it and ready for the next users.

Each canoe should plan on bringing and preparing their own food, unless as a group we decide to do something different (i.e. do one or two communal meals; have a pot luck night or dessert night; each person or canoe cook for the group for 1 or 2 suppers and we each do our own breakfasts and lunches etc.) It is always nice to sample other's recipes. David will bring a small flask of something good, and Cheryl does not drink at all. If asked we can help with advice for planning a menu, recipes, and how to dehydrate, as well as advice on what personal gear to bring.

Except for group gear, everyone should plan to bring their own canoe, gear, etc. Group gear (ex. fire pot and irons, saw, tarp(s), bug tent, large 1st aid kit, etc.) will be sorted out prior to the trip and all will be expected to share in carrying it.

We strongly suggest you carry your own maps with you, and keep an eye on where we are. If something happens to us, you will need to know this. If you don't, then please trust us to get you to the days' destination without asking the dreaded (for us) "where are we" and "when will we be there" questions. At dinner time we usually discuss and review plans for the next day, and that is the best time to ask questions and give input.

We appreciate that many people like some private time, but this is a *group* trip. If you are on a personal quest, or looking for isolation, perhaps you should consider another trip. Everyone enjoys their time alone, but if the site is small your tent may have to be located right beside another, and there may only be one hunk of rock to sit on (so be prepared to share).

Cheryl spends on average 100 hours or more in dreaming about, researching, planning etc. each trip. If you have an idea/suggestion or can otherwise help

with the planning, we're glad, but once we are out there is not the time to complain/question about the Trip Plan.

It bears repeating: this is our *holiday*, but we are delighted to have you along. "Characters" are welcome, people who do not consider others first and conflict are not.

Trip participants should be current WCA members.

At no time will we require that a participant travel on water they do not feel comfortable on; travel on water above their capabilities, or allow one participant to put others at risk if so they have to perform a rescue on you.

Although we like to run our trips on a "group consensus" basis we reserve the right to make an executive decision that none of the group will run certain rapids if we feel that the risk is too high. We may also decide that the group will be stopping at a certain site, moving on to another site, etc., etc.

We follow these guidelines:

Trip Organizers have \$2,000,000 liability coverage under the club policy. However, we don't want to have to use it. Insurance is one of those things like first aid kits. Trip participants should be current members.

On a club trip the organizer determines the nature of the trip – easy paced vs hard days, conservative about running vs aggressive whitewater-playboating style. The Trip Organizer has an obligation to seeing that everyone on the outing has a safe, fun time. The Organizer sets the tone and pace of the trip, and they will determine the standards. Anyone who is not comfortable with the Trip Organizers plan, is expected to remove themselves from the trip and organize their own trip.

At no time should any of the Participants be put into any of the following situations by the Organizer, or the Organizer require that the Participant: travel on water they do not feel comfortable on; travel on water either above their capabilities OR allow one Participant to put others at risk if they have to perform a rescue.

As trip leaders/organizers we would prefer not to have to make an executive decision that none of the group will run certain rapids if we feel that the risk is high enough to endanger the rest of the

group in a rescue. No paddler has the right to go on a trip if they are not qualified or do not fit in with the rest of the group members due to tripping style (this is not an insult, sometimes just a reality of group dynamics).

Resume: These are the types of things we want the people on our trips to know about us. Your list may be completely different. If you are looking at a trip leader or participant, experience counts, but if you have any certification or experience was obtained is the date it was obtained is important, as well as if it was a recognized course!

Standard First Aid and CPR; Wilderness First Aid/Anaphylaxis Workshop/Basic Life Support Skills Water Activity, Training Scouts Canada; Tripping I, Tripping Level II; Swift Water Rescue – River Rescue; MW I, MW II; Lakewater I

Started tripping in: Employment info and job related experience; Club Involvement; Personal Activities that may have a relationship to the trip or perhaps a kindred spirit. Tripping info: Trips Organized.

To sum up trip organizer or not, once you have made a resume, you can represent yourself well, and get your needs met by laying your information on the table. We need to communicate well on trips, and preparing and presenting this info helps you get there. To some, this information will seem like overkill, but the reality is, we started with just a few point form notes never thinking about some of the "interesting" people we would meet. With each experience our resume has grown from just a paragraph to what you see now. Most of the expectations are implied, but to be honest, there are those who need to be hit over the head with a paddle to bring the point home that a group trip means being in a compatible group. Last year we really got this organized to send out, and our last few trips have been fabulous, with people, who even if they were not quite like minded, understood us and we them before we left. When we got out there, everyone was bending over backwards to help each other and be pleasant the whole time! So go forth and give it a try!

Another's Land

by Damir Kusec

The river was starting to meander here, on its way to the estuary. It was calmer, rapidless on this stretch, as the sunny mid afternoon somewhere above the 58th parallel was slowly advancing. We were going east, closer to the vast body of water where in its midst Captain Hudson's exploration and madness ended long time ago.

Ahead on river left a beach appeared. It was a welcomed break for our bodies from sitting in tight quarters and countless paddle strokes. As we explored the narrow sand edge with dense bushes occasionally pushing us closer to the water, a friend's voice ahead broke the calm! A track in the sand, day old! It was surprisingly large as we compared our hands to it by placing them into the depression. We were some twenty miles away from the cold waters of the Bay. No doubt a female polar bear had gone inland to den, someplace in the appropriate terrain that surrounded the river.

A nervous composition came over us. The rifles will have to come out and be handy, loaded.

If polar bear thinks of us as lunch, we are! No bear bangers, whistles, pepper spray or fast sneakers will prevent the feast!

Hours later, close to the arriving dusk we set up camp on the inside bend of the river, beside a five-foot high edge of a boulder field and with sun-illuminated view of the high banks on the opposite shore.

While some of us were accomplishing the usual camp chores, one of our two rifles had to be assembled. During the process of gathering it into a whole, a part sprang loose and flew into the boulder field. A concerned scramble took place among the large rocks with hundreds of places to look in. Without the lost part we might as well use bottle corks for bullets, so effective would our bear lunch denying tool be!

On this enchanted day's end Mr. Murphy and his laws were not present. We located the missing part.

After a hearty meal and sock drying ritual by the fire, we were ready for slumber with a rifle in each of our two tents. My knife and bear spray were placed on

top of my hat, beside my head, close for comfort. I slowly sank into silence. The camp was shutting down for the night.

A deep low noise in the night awoke me. Close, only a few feet away! Raspy, grunt like sound! My pulse quickened as I shot up from my sleeping bag. The bear pepper spray can was already in my hand. Only the thin red nylon of our shelter was separating me from the ominous sound just outside. I envisioned the white fur, hot breath and yellow teeth, hovering on the beach beside the tent. I felt so helpless! The pepper spray would not work inside the tent. I would have to cut the two layers of nylon or exit quickly from the tent and then hope that in the darkness my aim was true.

Seconds seemed like hours, as my heart raced and sweat burst out of my pores. I shook my tent mate awake! Listen! It is outside! In his partially out of sleep state he grabbed his magnum, ready to go! We listened nervously. The sound had stopped. Silence! Fearful silence! Did it go away or is it waiting, getting ready to jump onto the tent, in which case there would be nothing we could do to defend ourselves effectively.

Then the sound returned! My tent mate heard it! He turned towards the noise, rifle in hand, ready! He listened intently. Then he spoke with a cracked voice: "That is Frank snoring!" My relief was intoxicating. Slowly my pulse slowed. The helpless feeling subsided.

Our tents were always pitched far apart. This time I had forgotten that we were close, only feet away. I had placed my head in the opposite side of the tent, something I usually never do, closer to Frank's head. The break in my routine and large paw prints on the beach did me in!

I lay down on top of my sleeping bag, relieved, placing the pepper spray can back beside me. Partial slumber began to creep in. A few short minutes later my eyes sprang open, the heartbeat increased again and the sweat returned. A light trigger finger in a stupor of semi-consciousness and Frank's explorations of the north might have very easily ended in this land of little sticks, like Captain Hudson's did!

LAKEFIELD CEDAR STRIP CANOE

At the recent WCA annual Wilderness and Canoeing Symposium, organized and presented by George Luste on 8 and 9 February in Toronto, a wonderful example of superior craftsmanship was exhibited that attracted an admiring crowd of paddlers and non-paddlers alike.

This 16-ft wooden canoe, owned by John Jennings who had brought it with him to the enthusiastic delight of many present at the Symposium, was built by Walter Walker in 1978 on a nineteenth century Thomas Gordon form, one of the earliest and best-known canoe forms of the Peterborough area. Gordon began building canoes in the late 1850s.

Walter Walker, former foreman of the Peterborough Canoe Company, and considered by many to be the foremost builder of cedar strip canoes in the world, celebrated his 100th birthday on November 4, 2007.

Walter intends to build one more canoe. An exact replica of this one, which will be donated to the Canadian Canoe Museum by the museum's Royal Patron, Prince Andrew.

Toni Harting

FOR SALE

Swift Mattawa kevlar canoe with full cherry wood trim for sale.

John Newton, Ph.D., P.Eng.

Telephone: (416) 929-3621

E-mail: j.newton@utoronto.ca

SOLO PLAYBOAT for sale: Esquif Zephyr, http://www.esquif.com/2008/canot_en.php?id=11) Factory outfitted with vinyl gunnels, no airbags. New last year. Price: \$1750. Contact mary.perkins@sympatico.ca 905-725-2874

MOISE RIVER

I'm planning to paddle the Moise River starting on August 8 of this year. I'm part of a larger group but need a paddling partner for the trip expected to take about two weeks. Good basic white water paddling skills and tripping experience a must. You can reach me by email at dcrosby@bmts.com or call 519-369-2850.

Don Crosby

WCA Annual General Meeting

March 1, 2008

McMichael Art Gallery

Kleinburg, Ontario



Guest speaker, Katherine Suboch, talks about her Arctic adventures

Chairman's Report

(modified for Nastawgan)

Friends and WCA members,

A year ago the Board elected me as your Chairman. Looking back over the past twelve months, I can honestly say that I got more than I bargained for! I believe George Drought would be hard pressed to remember a year so full of excitement and challenges, but also many rewards.

I'll take a few minutes to review several important events that figured prominently on many Board meetings during

the past year.

Shortly after last year's AGM, our long serving Treasurer, Howard Sayliss, resigned. Following some vigorous bush beating, as Bill King would say, we were very fortunate to have found a very capable person to take over - Barbara Young. She now has the keys to the bank.

In his introductory speech at the last year's Board meeting, George talked about a long standing WCA member and past Chairman, a friend to many of you here today - Herb Pohl. Sparked by our Board's initiative, Jim Raffan has put together a wonderful book based on Herb's

writings and diary entries - *The Lure of Faraway Places*. Book was successfully launched at the Canadian Canoe Museum on May 12th. If you haven't read it yet, I would strongly encourage you to get a copy. You'll get many chuckles from Herb's unique sense of humour.

Acquisition of CCR from Richard Munn was an event of great significance, easily the most discussed item at every Board meeting during the past year! Martin Heppner provided an update at Wine&Cheese event in November. I'll only mention that this undertaking required an incredible

amount of Board's energy, none more so than Martin Heppner. He and Erhard Kraus worked very hard to make this happen. I'm incredibly proud of dynamic duo of Allan Jacobs and Marilyn Sprissler who are in charge of CCR day-to-day operation. There's a lot of work ahead in order to capitalize on the exciting opportunity that CCR presents.

Digitization of Nastawgan's back issues was another notable event that took considerable effort. This project was made possible through co-operation with Knowledge Ontario, whose focus is to connect Ontarians with digital content to support their information and learning needs. This, too, is a work in progress and will continue throughout 2008 until all issues are cross-indexed and searchable by meta-tags.

In early March we provided members with the opportunity to participate in the *online survey*, which consisted of 12 questions across a range of website related issues. Mike Law provided a summary of the survey in the summer issue of *Nastawgan*, so I'll mention only 3 key points. From members that participated (25% response rate):

Eight-two percent felt that the WCA website should contain a routes database, ideal for trip planning. (this will be accomplished by combining CCR Routes database and digital issues of *Nastawgan*).

Sixty-four percent of the membership would like to see is an online forum for trip planning. This, too, will be handled through WCA-only Forum at CCR.

Over half of the respondents expressed interest in having the back issues of *Nastawgan* available online for review and trip planning (already available)

We offered 3 *WFA courses* in co-operation with Paddler Co-Op – in April, June and November. Over 50 members attended and each was a great success. Another course will be scheduled in early June in Palmer Rapids.

Each *2007 social gathering* was well-attended and provided members with quality speakers – the likes of like Robert Perkins, George Luste, Wendy Grater,



Erhard Kraus is awarded for many years of service to the WCA as Conservation Chair.

Mark Scriver and of course our guest today – Katherine Suboch. A special mention goes to the Fall Meeting held at the MKC – not because I organized it but because everyone truly relished the experience. We'll do it again this year!

I saved the best for last – through the efforts of Michael Law and other Board members, WCA applied for, and was granted the 3-year Trillium Grant in the amount of \$50,000. WCA will utilize the grant for:

Professionally integrate WCA and CCR websites, creating the most powerful source of paddling-related information with several live Forums.

Outsource technical support

Complete digitization of *Nastawgan*

Address the decline in attracting younger paddling members

Support more outings programs by hiring paid and highly experienced ORCA instructors (what Bill Ness and Jon McPhee did in July)

This grant is conditional on meeting certain milestones and our progress will be reviewed at the end of each year during the 3-year term. This is where you come in, dear reader!

In order to see all those exciting initiatives through to their completion, we must enlarge the number of contributors well outside the small circle of Board members. Our projects for 2008 offer excellent opportunity for personal development and growth, but may also require the ultimate sacrifice of time away from paddling (sometime!). Therefore, please spread the word – we need more hands on deck! Projects will be managed professionally and the Lead for each project will report to the Board. The will be very defined in terms of time and scope, ranging from several weeks to several months. Please contact myself or any Board member if you can help!

Lastly, none of this would be possible if it wasn't for our dedicated Board members! On a personal note, a very special thanks to George Drought who showed me how to lead by example and provided invaluable counsel whenever I was in need for one – which was often! This was George's last term on the Board and I'd like to express our appreciation for the great work that he's done! Thank you, George.

Aleksandar Gusev

WCA OUTINGS

SPRING - SUMMER 2008

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

For questions, suggestions, proposals to organize trips, or anything else related to the WCA Outings, contact the Outings Committee: Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca; Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@utoronto.ca; Scott Card, 905-665-7302, scottcard@sympatico.ca; ✓, scottcard@sympatico.ca, Mary Perkins, mary.perkins@sympatico.ca, 905-725-2874

**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.**

Congratulations, we've made it through one of the longest, snowiest winters on record in southern and central Ontario. Finally we can put away the skis and snowshoes, and dust off the paddles. With the large snow pack melting, it should be a great season for river running. For lake padding, high water levels will mean less dragging up dry stream beds, though we'll definitely want the high rubber boots on the portages this spring. Let's also not forget that high water and cold temperatures create special risks for paddlers and we should be prepared with properly outfitted boats and suitable clothing for the types of trips we are undertaking.

This season, with the generous help of our volunteer organizers, we've put together an extensive and varied outings program that offers something for everyone. If you're a new member, we want to welcome you aboard. If you've been with us a while, it's great to have you back. Either way, we invite you to join us on our club outings. Just find some trips or activities that interest you and contact the organizer to register. There's no better way of meeting new paddling friends and enjoying new outdoors activities. If you would like more details about particular trips or the requisite skills to safely enjoy them, just ask the organizers and they will be pleased to help you. If you have any general questions about our outings program or are interested in becoming an organizer, kindly get in touch with us.

We also want to take a moment to express our sincere gratitude to those members who have been willing to put something back into the club for the benefit of us all by volunteering to organize outings, educational workshops or social events. While we're at it, we would like to remind you to take advantage of our WCA Outings Organizer Recognition Program. If you have organized a minimum of three outings in the previous one to three years, you could be eligible for reimbursement of between \$50.00 and \$200.00 a year off the cost of approved outdoors education courses, plus reimbursement for recertification of courses previously taken. Please see the section on the website for full details.

We wish you all a safe and enjoyable paddling season.
Scott, Gisela, Bill and Mary
Your WCA Outings Committee

All Season **HAVE PADDLE WILL TRAVEL**

Scott Card, 905-665-7302, scottcard@sympatico.ca —
- I paddle whitewater nearly every weekend all year through, as long as I can find water that's liquid. If you want to get out on a river any weekend, just call me to find out where I'm headed. I go wherever there's good water. Longer trips also a possibility. Trip difficulty levels vary from intermediate to advanced. Open canoe, C1, or kayak welcome.

All Season **HALIBURTON COUNTY**

Ray Laughlen, 705-754-9479, 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.

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 **UPPER MADAWASKA #2**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672 jhackert@sympatico.ca ----- Book as soon as possible. See description above.

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 gen-

tle 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.

April 27 LOWER BLACK RIVER-TWEED

Jon McPhee, 905-640-8819, book by April 13 ----- See Black River - Queensborough at <http://www.boatwerks.net/whitewater/running.php>. This is not the same river as the Black River at Washago.

This Lower Black runs from Queensborough to Hwy #7, north-west of Tweed, and east of Madoc. It is 10.5 km of grade I to IV rapids. The more serious ones can be and at least one will be portaged. The river is primarily pool and drop, but a number of the rapids are longish and narrow and require the ability to maneuver a canoe at an intermediate level in whitewater. There will be some eddies that you must hit, and some definite lines that you must run. The book 'Eastern Ontario White Water Rivers' ranks this river as the next step above the Moira. If you are not comfortable running the Lost Channel section of the Moira, you will not be comfortable here. On the other hand, it is a fun run on a pretty section of river. There will probably still be some snow in the bush and the water will be cold. Tandem canoes must have a center airbag. Wetsuits or drysuits and helmets are required. Limit 5 canoes.

May 3 UPPER MADAWASKA #3

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672 jhackert@sympatico.ca ----- Book before the end of April. See description above. The water should be a little lower, making it more technical, but still cold, so the usual cold-water gear is necessary.

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 9-11 NOIRE RIVER

Jay Neilson & Frank Knaapen, 613-687-6037 ----- Book as soon as possible. Beautiful scenery and lots of Class II and some Class III rapids all with portages. The Noire is accessible by vehicle. We will put in at Lac Farant and take out at the Black River Inn. Participants can stay in Pembroke or at our house Thursday night for an early start. The Noire will be running high and cold. Cold weather clothing and fully equipped whitewater boats are mandatory.

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 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 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 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 17 - 19 BIRDING AT POINT PELEE

Anne Bradley, 519-855-4835 ----- Book by May 9. Enjoy spring migration, especially the warblers as they pass through en route to breeding areas. We will camp at Wheatley Provincial Park and wander the trails of Point Pelee and Hillman Marsh. No canoeing involved in this excursion. Binoculars mandatory.

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 to August SHUMAGIN ISLANDS, ALASKA

Allen Hill, Allen Hill, allenrhill@yahoo.com ----- I'm will be taking weekend trips to the petrified forest on Unga Island, a blocked salmon lake on Korovin Island, as well as an exploration trip to Nagai island in June, July and August. I understand there are some large petrified trees on Unga. The lake on Korovin was blocked by a tsunami years ago I'll be working to clear the blockage to enable salmon access again to spawn. Nagai is a seldom visited island that we can explore. I'll be climbing the little mountains, fishing, and taking wildlife and wildflower pictures. I would like to document the trips in meaningful ways to pass on. To get an idea of what the islands are like, just type in "Sand Point, Alaska" on Google and then choose maps when the search results come back. You'll want to look at the Google satellite images, too. I'll be going out in my 21' canoe with a 15hp motor and towing a 16' Old Town for near shore and lake exploration. I can take up to 2 passengers with me. There are no bears on the islands. Weather could limit the ability to make trips. I would be very pleased to have some WCA members join me on my trips to these very special places.

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.

June 7 GRAND RIVER

Doug Ashton, 519-620-8364, doug.ashton@rogers.com I'm not sure if the success of this annual trip has been due to the exceptionally enjoyable paddle without any portages or the social barbeque that has followed. Regardless, this is a wonderful day to enjoy an easy moving water river and to socialize with other WCAers. The trip will start in south Cambridge where we will put in and then paddle to Paris. We will pass through scenic farm country, negotiate some easy Grade 1 water, and stop for lunch along the way. Those interested are welcome to join us back at our house in Cambridge for some food, beverage, and social time.

June 14-15 BASIC LAKE WATER INSTRUCTION

Jeff Haymer, 416 635 5801, jhaymer@ionsys.com This is an introductory canoeing instruction session to be presented to members of either the WCA or the Outing Club of East York. Participants will learn the basic paddling techniques for tandem canoeing on lake-water and canoeing safety. The location will be Frenchman's Bay in Pickering for each of two days. We will meet at 9:30 a.m. and continue to about 3:00 p.m. each day. Participants are responsible for their own equipment. Each pair of participants should have a canoe, either their own or rented. Each canoe should be equipped with a bailer, 15 meters of floating lifeline and a signaling device, e.g. a whistle. Each participant should have a paddle and a life jacket or PFD. Participants should also be able to swim. Bring a lunch for each day. Also, some wading shoes and a change of clothing are recommended. Experienced paddlers are welcome to assist instruction.

June 21-22 WILDERNESS FIRST AID TRAINING

Aleks Gusev, aleks@gusev.ca, or Paddler Co-Op at info@paddlerco-op.com ----- Book as soon as possible. This course is customized for WCA members by CWMT (Canadian Wilderness Medical Training). This 2-day program is offered at Palmer Rapids on 21/22 June - for those who'd like to combine some paddling on the Madawaska with WFA training. Cost \$160.00 (plus gst) includes course manuals, certification and of course excellent instruction. Course details available at www.paddlerco-op.com under Rescue & First Aid.

June 21-22 OTTAWA RIVE SELF-RESCUE PRACTICE SESSION

Jay Neilson & Frank Knaapen, 613-687-6037 ----- Book as soon as possible. We will be practicing basic self-rescue on the Ottawa River, where the huge boils and strong current below McCoy's Rapid and Black's Rapid are a good preparation for huge northern rivers. Being fit is im-

portant as these maneuvers are strenuous (a great incentive to get out to the gym!). Your self-review will determine whether you and your craft, fully loaded, are outfitted suitably to allow you and your partner to stay with your boat and rollover a fully loaded tripping canoe with ropes/carabiner rigging that can be attached to any rental canoe. Floating in a strong current you will access and deploy your baling pumps, then climb aboard, assisting each other, as well as solo, in the event one paddler becomes separated from the boat. Test your equipment accessibility: baling pumps, ropes, carabiners, life jacket, knife, survival pack & SAT phone, accessible spare paddles, etc. You will also practice swimming and maneuvering a dumped craft in strong current, where suitable rigging and your paddle as a swimming assist is essential! We will line fully loaded boats down the middle channel experiencing the difficulties of lining powerful chutes and scrambling along ugly rocks, testing ropes, footwear, and communications. On Day 2 we will be rafting 2 canoes together to practice tough paddling on northern torrents... Wilderness Tours River Rafting is an option. Assuming all your gear has remained dry, you will enjoy camping at Wilderness Tours which can also provide canoes, helmets, air bags and wetsuits-which are all mandatory. Camping & meal plan at Wilderness Tours can be arranged for \$40.

June 28-29 **RIVER SAFETY & RESCUE FOR TRIPPERS**

Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca ----- Contact me by May 15. Those of us who have taken the wilderness first aid course taught by Paddler Co-op have been very impressed with the quality of the program and professionalism of instruction. We are looking at expanding our offerings through them with a weekend river safety and rescue course. The WCA customized course will specifically focus on the needs of canoeists who must deal with problems in remote locations with limited equipment. We think it will provide valuable skills and greater self-confidence for both trippers and playboaters; anyone who ventures in a canoe down a swift river. This is a paid, professionally taught course. Amount including tax is \$183.75. If interested, please contact me ASAP so we can determine if there is sufficient interest. A minimum of 6 participants is required for the course to go. No maximum. (P. S. This is a great opportunity for our WCA trip organizers to take advantage of their club educational credits!)

June 28 – July 6 **RIVIERE LIEVRE**

Blair Richardson, 905 825 2497, Blair.Richardson@sympatico.ca ----- Book as soon as possible. This is an exciting whitewater river, a tributary of the Ottawa River, which is suitable for experienced paddlers only. It is located in Quebec, about 75 km northeast of Mont Laurier, which is about 100 km north of Ottawa. We will put in at Lac Adonis and paddle about 70 km to the confluence with the Riviere Mitchinamecus. This stretch has many rapids and ledges, from RI – V, and features a class III rapid over a km in length on the last day. There are few portages and much

scouting is required. Depending on water levels, this trip will take 5-7 days on the river. Maximum four boats, properly outfitted.

June 28 -July 1 **OTTAWA RIVER**

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, jhackert@sympatico.ca ----- Book before June 21. We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practice your skills before attempting this river. Fully outfitted whitewater boats are required. Limit six boats.

July 5-6 **INTRODUCTION TO TANDEM MOVING WATER**

Jon McPhee, 905-640-8819, and Bill Ness, 416-321-3005, bness@look.ca, book as soon as possible ----- This is a two-day workshop for flatwater tandem paddlers who want to develop basic moving-water skills. It should be of interest to trippers who want to become more comfortable negotiating the moderate moving-water they often encounter on river trips, and to canoeists who want to determine if whitewater paddling could be for them. We will focus on the basics of moving-water boat control and manoeuvres, water reading, and safety. Both tandem and solo paddlers are welcome. The weekend will be spent at Palmer Rapids on the Madawaska River, one hour northeast of Bancroft. The location offers some of the best novice to intermediate whitewater in Southern Ontario. In order to be able to work closely with participants, registration is limited to 5 boats. Jon is an ORCA certified instructor, and participants successfully completing the course will receive an ORCA 1A certificate. There will be a fee of \$20.00 per person for this certificate course.

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

July 23-28 **PUKASKWA SHORELINE PADDLE**

Mark and Susan McCabe, 231-941-8729, mrugbym@charter.net ----- Book as soon as possible. We will get a powerboat shuttle from Hattie Cove to Otter Island and paddle north back to Hattie Cove. This stretch of Superior shoreline has many islands, coves and bays to shelter paddlers from the big lake. The pace will be relaxed as we will have six days to paddle 75km. We may want to start further down the coast if the weather outlook is good. We like to be on the lake when it is enjoyable to paddle and be on shore when it is rough. The ideal group

size would be 4 or 8 as the powerboat can take up to four boats and four paddlers per shuttle.

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.

Aug 2-4 OTTAWA RIVER

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, jhackert@sympatico.ca ----- Book before July 26. We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practice your skills before attempting this river. Fully outfitted whitewater boats are required. Limit six boats.

August 14-23 GEORGIAN BAY – KEY RIVER TO SNUG HARBOUR

Don Andersen, dhandersen@aol.com, 716-873-4476 ----- book before July 10. This trip is a repeat of the first one that I took with the WCA. We will be visiting a number of beautiful islands in this part of Georgian Bay including; Roger's Island, Cunningham's Island, Inside Head Island, Lookout Island, McCoy and Franklin Islands and points in between them. We will be exploring back-bays and sheltered waters whenever water levels will permit including the Mud Channel and the Naiscoot River Middle Channel. No trace camping methods will be strictly observed. Suitable for competent novices who can manage windy conditions and waves. An appropriate canoe and camping gear are needed. Please be prepared for some hiking and photo opportunities. Please book and commit as early as possible.

Aug 30-Sept 1 OTTAWA RIVER

John & Sharon Hackert, 416-438-7672, jhackert@sympatico.ca ----- Book before August 23. We are fortunate to have access to the most beautiful campsite on the river. The Ottawa is big water and many of the rapids are quite

difficult. You should be at least a strong intermediate paddler to safely enjoy it. We recommend that you join us on some of our spring trips to develop and practice your skills before attempting this river. Fully outfitted whitewater boats are required. Limit six boats.

September 25 – 28 FALL IN KILLARNEY - CANOE/HIKE COMBO

Gisela Curwen, 416-484-1471, gisela.curwen@gmail.com -----Book before September 11. Killarney is at its best at this time of the year with gorgeous fall colours, white quartzite rocks, and sparkling blue lakes. We will spend Thursday night at George Lake campground and stay Friday and Saturday nights on beautiful Topaz Lake near Baie Fine. We will explore the surrounding hills on foot, and maybe even have the last few swims of the season. Part of the group will get there on the Silhouette Hiking Trail, while the others canoe and portage from George Lake through Killarney, OSA, Muriel and Artist Lakes. On our way back on Sunday, those who canoed in can hike out, and vice versa - this way we all can get the most of my favourite place in fall. Limit eight people.

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

Further Notices

Algonquin Rhapsody – a DVD of Algonquin sights and sounds by jNeiLson – available soon.

Nastawgan On-Line (spring issue) will be available on the WCA website as a scalable and printable document. The usual printed version is available to all WCA members who wish to receive them. For more information, watch for an e-mail message with information on how to access the current issue on the website. Contact the editor for information.

Where it is...



...in this issue

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Hood River 1-11 | 5. The Pressure to go light 19-21 | 9. WCA Annual General Meeting 25-26 |
| 2. Making Friends on the Yukon 12-15 | 6. Have you SPOTted something new lately 21 | 10. WCA Outings 27-31 |
| 3. Buffalo to Dundas 16-18 | 7. Canoe Resume 22-23 | |
| 4. Boundless, MKC team up 18 | 8. Another's Land 24 | |

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