Wilderness Canoe Association
WCA
nastawgan

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Sarah Hooper from the UK getting airborne at the bottom outflow of Palmer Rapids

Palmer Rapids – a home away from home

Aleks Gusev

Hard as I tried, I couldn't keep myself out of this story. This is as much a story about the Madawaska River and Palmer Rapids as it is a story about the last 10 years of my life. There was a life before Palmer Rapids, followed by the glorious life lived in the aftermath of its discovery. The year is 2004. Having lived in Canada for 15 years, I only just discovered the world of paddling. Finding the Palmer Rapids map had a similar significance for me as having been on a first trip abroad as a youngster living in the socialist republic of Yugoslavia. My horizons expanded exponentially. Not being a youngster anymore, I pressed the pedal to the metal. Remembering Bill Mason's lament about feeling depressed every time he thought of how many rivers he'd never get to paddle, I revved from 0-200 km/h in no time. From a novice

The Palmer Rapids as seen by Google Earth

on the White River trip with Scott Card in 2005 to an ORCA & PC whitewater instructor in 2009, I paddled a lot.

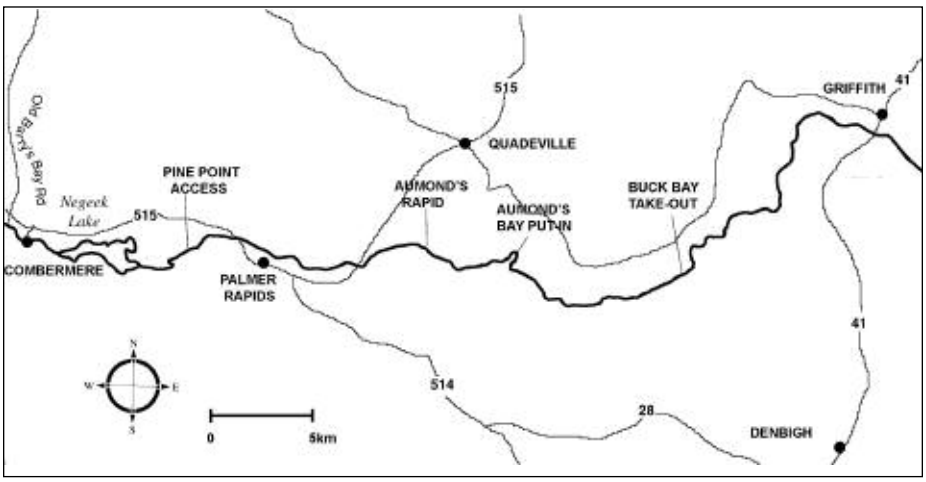
I first became aware of Palmer Rapids while taking my first whitewater training at the Elora Gorge near Guelph. Walter, the instructor, had an old copy of *Nastawgan* lying creased and dog-eared across his windshield, all parched by the sun. I read it breathlessly, from cover to cover, during our lunch break. There was this guy, I soon learned, Bill King, who apparently had many more nuggets from this gold mine in his garage. Not wasting any time, I located Bill and raided his collection. Little did I know at the time that I would visit with Bill countless times over the next decade, enjoying many fine conversations over cheese and crackers in his living room. You see, Bill King is WCA Secretary, permanently joined to that illustrious post at the proverbial hip for over 25 years. A few years later, at the suggestion of then-Chairman George Drought, I became a member of WCA Board of Directors.

Local history

Palmer Rapids, on the Madawaska River, is a beautiful stretch of river favoured by many whitewater enthusiasts. It's probably the finest location to learn whitewater paddling in Southeast Ontario. The village of Palmer Rapids is on Hwy 515, 12 km east of Combermere. The actual paddling destination is located a few kilometres upstream of the village, at the site of the original settlement of Palmer Rapids. The settlement was founded in 1847 and existed at this location until 1900. This beautiful spot is nowadays commonly referred to as the Pine Point, in honor of the elderly stand of stately pine trees that tower over the river-left portage around the bottom set of rapids.

In the 1840s, the settlement was known as the Palmer Farms. Palmer was believed to have been a Loyalist from Vermont who settled in Leeds County. According to Vivian (Palmer) Elliott, who is a granddaughter of Andress Palmer, the Palmer name originally meant a "pilgrim," one who bore palm leaves as evidence of a visit to the Holy Land.

The remnants of the old bridge, which spanned across the river, can still be seen today. A lumber mill was located at the end of the rapids. Some tools and artifacts were recovered from the river at this location and can be seen on display at Mission House Museum and Gallery in Combermere.



Lower Madawaska River; used with permission from the Friends of Algonquin Park

The River

The river and the rapids can be accessed from both sides. Access to the river left is easiest from Pine Point or Paddler Co-op locations. As you drive along Hwy 515 east from Combermere, look for the Palmer Rapids Dam Road sign on your right. It's the first road on the right as you drive past the Jewelville sign, approximately nine km from Combermere. Follow the gravel for 250 metres and look for the MNR sign where the narrow bush road veers to the left and leads to the Crown land Pine Point. Camping is not permitted at this site.

The Madawaska is a dam-regulated river. A dam at Whitney controls the outflow of the Upper Madawaska as it pours out from Algonquin Park on its way to Bark Lake, where it's joined by the Opeongo river. This stretch of river from Whitney to Bark Lake is known as the Upper Mad. It's a delightful Class I-III run with a couple of Class IV-V chutes that must be portaged by most paddlers. Typically, it can be run only in the spring, during runoff. For a detailed description of this section of the river, or any rapids described in this article, refer to the excellent guide book, *Madawaska River and Opeongo River Whitewater Guide*, by George

Drought, published in 1996 by the Friends of Algonquin Park.

The outflow of Bark Lake is regulated by another dam that typically keeps the summer water level to 24-26 cms between 10 am and 4 pm Monday-Thursday. This is done to accommodate the Madawaska Kanu Centre, Canada's first whitewater school, founded in 1972, and ensures adequate summer level of Kamaniskeg Lake below. Outside of those hours, as well as all day Friday-Sunday, water is too shallow in Bells' Rapids to paddle.

Kamaniskeg Lake presents one of the finest views of the surrounding countryside. If you're heading south on Hwy 62 towards Maynooth, you'll see this beautiful lake on your right. The growing vegetation blocks most of the view, but as the road climbs a modest incline, watch for the Kamaniskeg Lake sign. Just as you pass it, turn right to have a look – the glistening water sparkles in the afternoon sun as westerly winds push the waves across the lake. Two islands grace this splendid view and add immeasurable drama to the scenery. If you look just long enough over the larger island, a crack will appear in an otherwise dense far shore and a channel of water will stretch far towards Barry's Bay. The famed Mayflower came from this direction on a stormy, snowy night of November 12, 1912. This last run of the season was transporting a coffin (with an occupant) and 12 people from Barry's Bay to Combermere. The boat went down very fast and finally came to rest some eight metres under the surface in the relatively shallow water close to the larger island. Of the 12 passengers aboard, nine perished. The remaining three survived by holding on to the floating coffin. This story of how one dead man saved the lives of three was recorded in Ripley's "Believe It or Not."

Hinterland Beach, located on the western shore of Kamaniskeg Lake, is one of the finest sandy beaches in the area. After prancing and jumping over Staircase, Chalet, and Gravel Pit rapids, the Madawaska flushes out into the lake a few hundred metres north of the beach. Back in 1947, a handful of local residents stood on that spot to witness the last log drive that went by. Heavy cast-iron rings, embedded in the shore bedrock, can still be seen today as you paddle up the river.

Sea-kayaking on Bark Lake

Driving through Combermere towards Palmer Rapids, you'll cross the bridge where the Madawaska morphs again into the river from the waters of Kamaniskeg Lake. In the old days, when water flowed freely and unregulated, you could have walked across the river here during dry summer months. There are still sandbars in Blackfish Bay, north of the bridge, where water was so shallow that local farmers drove cattle across on the way to the slaughter house. On Saturday mornings, this is a busy place. Just left after the bridge, the Farmers Market is abuzz with vendors, local residents, cottagers, and tourists. Local green produce, home-baked bread, pies, donuts, arts, crafts, furniture – they are all there for you to see, touch, taste. Dave Smyth, a local musician, usually entertains visitors from his perch in the middle of the field.

South of the bridge, County Road #517 (Dafoe Road, so named after John

Young paddlers line up for a swim through the bottom set at Palmer Rapids

Splendid view of Kamaniskeg Lake; famed Mayflower sank just north of the two islands

Wesley Dafoe, famed journalist and sole Canadian press representative in 1919 at the Paris Peace Conference, and born in this area), will take you past the Madonna House, Stevenson Lodge, and on towards Carlow. Look for the sign for the Craigmont Road where the #517 makes a sharp right turn. A paved road gives way to gravel as it twists and turns on its journey towards Conroy Marsh. When I saw this ecologically important wetland for the first time, I couldn't believe that such a different world existed a rifle shot from Palmer Rapids. Part of the York River basin, the Marsh is also fed by the Little Mississippi River and is a maze of countless channels and home to a great variety of waterfowl and furbearers. If you feel adventurous, paddle up the Little Mississippi to the Burnt Bridge road or all the way up to McArthurs Mills. David Kelley, the curator of the Mission House Museum, explained the origin of the name Burnt Bridge Road. The local lore claims that the Burnt Bridge was so named after an event that took place in the pioneering days of the first settlers. A woman left her man and went with another. In the act of revenge, the man burnt the bridge in front of their farm, so she could never return. Talk about burning bridges behind you!

On the a still summer night, with the moon out and bullfrogs signing, there's no better place for a quiet evening paddle. If I had a sea kayak, this would be my playground.

Camping

For camping facilities, continue along Hwy 515 after the Jewelville sign for another 200 m to reach the Paddler Co-op, a non-profit paddling school located in the uniquely preserved growth of tall pines, stretching all the way to the river. There are onsite toilets and running water, as well as paddling gear for rent. Paddler Co-op is renowned for the quality of the instructions and a laid-back atmosphere. They also run the Kids Active program, the Palmer River Fest, and community-based leadership programs. This site is located ½ km downstream from the bottom set of rapids. Camping is $8 per person or $20 per family.

If you continue further along Hwy 515, you'll come to the bridge over the Madawaska. Cross the bridge and turn right on River Road, immediately after the bridge. Follow the road for 1.5 km. At the place where the road makes a sharp left turn, continue driving straight through along the dirt road. A painted sign with a red arrow above a canoe pictograph will cheer you on. You're entering the fabled domain of farmer Harold Jessop, owner of the most coveted piece of real estate on the river. There are plenty of places to pitch your tent, but don't look for the office or hot water because there ain't any. Harold will dutifully appear to collect his $20 per tent (at the time of this writing), plus $10 surcharge per person if three or more are staying in the same tent. Firewood's extra, all payable in cash.

I'm often asked if I prefer to camp at Jessop's or at the Co-op. They are both at beautiful locations; Jessop's is right at the rapids, the Co-op, a little downstream. I prefer to camp at the Co-op for many reasons. Instead of having a dozen individual fires, one in front of each tent at Jessop's, one communal fire ring at the Co-op is more much conducive to meeting new people. Facilities, running hot water, the boathouse, access to rental gear are other reasons. But above all, I want to support a non-profit organiza-

tion that gives back to the communities, both local and paddling in general, and is ecologically responsible.

Rapids at Palmer Rapids

One of the great appeals of the Palmer Rapids section of the river is the variety of choices it provides. At different water levels, new features appear and disappear. There is enough to do for every skill level, particularly for novice and intermediate paddlers. Starting below the dam and above Jessop's campsite, the river splits into three channels. The left and centre channels are not often run as there is usually not enough water in them. The right channel is a short and steep chute and is run very often throughout the year. If you're an intermediate paddler pushing your limits and looking for a challenge, this channel is a perfect place to hone you micro-eddy-catching skills. From top to bottom, there are at least six and sometimes eight eddies, depending on the water conditions. Access to the top of the chute is easiest from the campground on river right. Look for the path in the bush at the edge of the large open field, where it slopes towards the river. You'll often catch an irritated glance from the angler who also covets the spot where you'll put-in.

As you ride the standing waves below the chute, the current slackens off and the river widens, forming a small lake. There is plenty of room to safely recover from an errant run, or just sit on the Jessop's beach and watch the spectacle as it unfolds in front of you. On a typical summer weekend, this is a busy place. Several paddling schools and camps from the area bring their canoeing and kayaking students here to hone their skills. Dozens of individual paddlers put in at Jessop's beach or at Pine Point and head up to the famous Piano Rock. Generations of paddlers have gotten to know this piece of Canadian Shield well, many intimately. The rock itself is not visible during Spring run-off conditions. It starts to appear when the water level below Palmer dam drops below 80 cms, which is usually around the middle of May. The visible rock resembles anything but a piano. Some say that folks who capsize regularly in the turbulent water above the rock have a much better view of what lies below the surface. Apparently, a piano is what it looks like.

New friendships are forged all the time

Regardless of how Piano Rock got its name, it is located in the perfect place. Upstream is the river-right chute, with its boils, angular waves, and river-left hole. All this water is flushed downstream in a procession of somewhat orderly standing waves, brushing against Piano Rock, which stubbornly guards the entrance to the calm eddy in front of the beach. Across from the rock and the main current is the large, calm body of water that stretches all the way to the far left shore, punctuated by the middle and left chute outflows.

It is here, in this 10-metre-long stretch of the river, that we find the micro-cosmos of everything we need on a river. Warm-up starts below the rock,

MKC organizes the annual slalom race at Bell's Rapids

Paddler Co-op organizes the Palmer River Fest on the May long weekend

where paddlers practise ferrying back-and-forth across fast-moving water, which has enough bite to flip you if you lose concentration or the edge. As paddlers gain confidence, they move further up, inching their way towards Piano Rock, where the current and waves are less forgiving. For the coup de grace move, the Piano Rock S-turn, you start two boat lengths above the rock, on river left. The idea is to ferry some ways into the current, initiate the S-turn, and plant two solid forward strokes as you aim to tuck in just below Piano Rock. The Holy Grail of the move is to eddy out a few centimetres below the rock, but not hit it. Oh, if Piano Rock could talk! How many of us have seen the river bottom below and choked on a gulp or two of its friendly water. After you have sufficiently recovered, ferry across and join the line-up on the other side. Then do it again. And again. If you can confidently execute the Piano Rock S-turn, you can run most rivers.

The next section of rapids, or "the bottom set," starts about 200 metres downstream. The portage is on river left and offers perfect spots for scouting. Here you'll find many fine opportunities to practise your skills. The best part is that you can do it again and again, just carry your boat up a short distance and put in above the bottom set.

The Madawaska really widens below this rapid, although the current is perceptible as you float down towards the campground of Paddler Co-op, on river left. There is a nice pebble beach here and a great place to watch paddlers surfing the bottom wave, or kids swimming through the rapid. Often, you can catch a whiff of barbeque as gentle breezes push the smell downriver from Pine Point.

Aumond's Rapid

If you ever get bored at Palmer Rapids, or don't want to contend with the lineup of boats in every eddy, consider driving east along Hwy 515 for approximately 12 km downstream to Aumond's Rapid. Look for the Homestead Road after the hamlet of Latchford Bridge. It will be on the right just where the main road makes a sharp left turn. Drive down the dusty lane and turn left where it meets the

Traffic jam at Paddler Co-op

Mandatory portage for most open boaters on the Upper Madawaska

river. There are several places to put in. This rapid has three sections, but you'll want to play at the first one. Here the small island splits the river in two, with a ledge extending on both sides. This is the perfect place to practise your ferry, S-turns, and surfing techniques – without large crowds. There is a nice campsite on the island.

Lower Mad

Another great paddling option, if you're looking for more excitement and a downstream run, is to paddle the Snake Rapids on the Lower Madawaska. To arrive at the put-in, continue east on Hwy 515 from Palmer Rapids to the village of Quadeville. Make a right turn at the stop sign. After 200 m the main road turns left in the direction of Foymont but you drive straight through. Here is your last chance to get gas at the General Store on the right. Across from the store is a popular chip truck where you can fuel up yourself on the way back. Head up the hill and enjoy beautiful scenery. The paved road will give way to the gravel about five minutes later, just as you drive past the last farm. Watch for the first road on the right and a sign for Aumond's Bay (UTM 313400E 5015600N map 31F/6 Denbigh, 45 16'00"N 77 22'50" W). The sign keeps appearing and disappearing over the years but if you see the old hunt camp on the left you've passed it. Turn around and keep your eyes open. There is plenty of room to park the vehicles at the put-in, and you'll likely see other cars.

This is an all-day affair, necessitating shuttle arrangements between the put-in at Aumond's Bay and the take-out at Buck Bay (UTM 319500E 5010900N 31F/3 Denbigh, 45 13'45"N 77 18'00" W). If you like to combine bicycling and paddling, leave the boats and gear at Aumond's Bay and drive to the take-out. Leave the car but take the keys, and bike along the winding gravel road back to the put-in. Hide the bike in the bush and get ready to work on the biceps and upper torso. The flatwater section to Island Rapid, the first rapid you'll encounter on this run, is about a half hour long. You'll notice the absence of kayakers on this section – they don't fancy the flatwater part and will put in at Hass Hole instead.

If you push off from Aumond's Bay at 11 am, plan to be at Buck Bay around 4 to 4:30 pm. That includes scouting time on all major rapids and a lunch break. Of course, this is just an approximation. Bugs at Buck Bay are voracious

Beach at Jessop's campground at low water

at all times – do yourself a favour and be ready for them as you climb up the steep bank and walk a short trail towards your parked vehicle.

A detailed description of Snake Rapids can be found in the previously mentioned *Madawaska River and Opeongo River Whitewater Guide* by George Drought, available at Paddler Co-op in Palmer Rapids or Pilgrim Reader Books in Combermere. The latter is owned and operated by John and Sandy Lynch and is located on Farmer Road, behind the Home Hardware store in Combermere. This lovely bookstore is my favourite place, and I've spent hours there browsing or just talking with John and Sandy. John is likely to tell you a few stories from his youth when he worked all over the North for the Geological Survey of Canada. He paddled rapids you and I never will – they are buried deep under mountains of water in the artificial lakes above hydro dams. Last summer, shortly after returning from my trip on the George River, Sandy was proud to show me the paddling books section. There, tucked in between two Kevin Callan books, I found Robert Perkins' book, *Against the Straight Lines*. Perhaps the book found me, quenching the thirst I felt for more Labrador landscapes, water, and rocks.

If you take Farmer Road back to Hwy 62 and drive straight through the intersection along Old Barry's Bay Road, after a few minutes you'll come to Crooked Slide Park. If you're interested in local history and lumber drives of the past, you'll like this 66-metre restored chute, boardwalk, and the adjoining control dam.

Perfect Palmer weekend

This is what the perfect Palmer Rapids weekend looks like. Arrive at Paddler Co-op campground Friday night. Join the folks around the campfire for a night cap and finish your evening snack. Get the scoop on the water level. Sleep in on Saturday morning. Eat an apple as you paddle up to Pine Point. Paddle for an hour before crowds appear at 10 am. Head to the Farmers Market in Combermere for coffee and donuts, or home-made pie or jerky. Mingle and look local. Buy salad and bread for supper. On the way back, stop at the Pilgrim Reader Bookstore and buy a good used book. Back on the river, people are heading ashore for lunch – the perfect time to paddle. Burn the donut calories. As people return from lunch break, run the right chute and eddy-hop downriver to avoid the crowds. Play at the bottom wave. Portage up and eddy-hop down again. Look for micro-eddies you missed the first time. Park your boat at the beach and go for a swim. Find a nice rock and watch the kids run the rapids. Saddle up for the last hurrah, surf the wave, and drift downriver towards the Co-op campground. Practise-roll a few times before calling it a day. Stop by the office to greet Jodie and Carly, while dinner is cooking. Read the book you bought earlier before it gets really dark. Enjoy a glass of wine and the company by the campfire.

Up early the next morning. Lower Mad today! Eat breakfast at Hometown Restaurant. Ask Brenda for the hungry paddler special. Head to Aumond's Bay, drop your gear, and run down to Buck Bay. Park the car, close the windows, and hide the key in the bush. Bike back to the put-in or catch a ride on a Boundless truck. Apply sunscreen. Dream about your next big trip as you labour down the flatwater stretch. Island Rapids in sight! It's all fun and games from here on. Look around and take notice – it's stunningly beautiful. Avoid Canoe-eater Rock at all cost. Take out already? Too quick! Apply bug dope and head up the hill to the car. Remember to pick up the bike on the way back. If you're starving, stop at the chip truck in Quadeville and grease up. Back at the Co-op, throw the tent in the car and head straight for Tim Horton's in Bancroft. Last tip – Foodland in Bancroft is open 24/7 now, so I do all my shopping here on the way up.

My Paradise

Yes, life is perfect here. This is where new friends are made and old acquaintances found. One of my favourite places is the campfire at Paddler Co-op. High up on the river bank, it affords a nice view upstream and downstream. From a distance, the continuous growl of rapids can be heard. At dusk, a beaver can be seen busily plodding to and fro, its nose parting the water in a signature triangle wave reflecting in the setting sun. Someone has the fire going, smoke drifting downriver lazily. People start appearing, clinking beer or wine bottles in their hands, relaxed in the aftermath of a fine day of paddling. Many stories have been told around this campfire. As it grows dark, we huddle closer to the fire, recounting past adventures, and dreaming up the new ones.

And so, my family and I keep coming to Palmer Rapids weekend after week-

end, year after year. One time I ran a phone cable from the boathouse to the table outside and connected it to my work laptop. This was in the days of modems, before high speed internet arrived in Madawaska Valley. But, it worked! The significance of this was enormous as I realized I didn't have to drive back to the city on Sundays. A few years later, we bought a piece of Canadian Shield near Bark Lake with a log cabin on top. You can imagine the rest.

Palmer Rapids feels like home now. I call the Madawaska my river. Many of our paddling friends live in the Valley. Looking back, I often recall reading the paragraph in George Drought's Madawaska guide book about some people being so familiar with Palmer Rapids, they are rumoured to run them at night under moonlight. It seemed like a preposterous idea at the time. Now that I know their every rock, wave, nook, and cranny, I've done it myself.

Information

Paddler Co-op, Palmer Rapids, www.paddlerco-op.com 1-888-233-3929
Madawaska Kanu Centre, Bell's Rapids, http://owl-mkc.ca/mkc/ 1-888-652-5268
Mission House Museum, Combermere, http://www.missionhousemuseum.com/ 613-756-2259
Pilgrim Reader Books, Combermere, http://www.pilgrimreaderbooks.com/ 1-877-585-5355
Greater Madawaska Canoe Rentals/ Shuttle, Griffith, 613-333-2240
Hometown Restaurant, Palmer Rapids, 6222 Palmer Road, Palmer Rapids, 613-758-1264

Familiar sign gracing the entrance to Jessop's campground

Playing around Piano Rock at low water

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

The WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization made up of individuals interested in wilderness travel, mainly by canoe and kayak, but also including backpacking and winter trips on both skis and snowshoes. The club publishes a quarterly journal, Nastawgan, to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas of interest to wilderness travellers, organizes an extensive program of trips for members, runs a few basic workshops, and is involved in environmental issues relevant to wilderness canoeing.

WCA Annual General Meeting 2012

We are pleased to be holding our next AGM on March 3, 2012, at the Koffler Scientific Reserve at Jokers Hill. Located on the Oak Ridges Moraine just north of Toronto, Jokers Hill is owned by the University of Toronto and focuses on a sustainable future through research and education on the environment, in the environment. In addition to our business meeting, where we encourage everyone to learn more about the workings of the WCA and help plan for our future, we will tour the property and participate in an organized hike (snowshoeing and X-country skiing may be possible). Most of Jokers Hill is blanketed by a mosaic of wetlands and forests, including Ontario's largest remaining stand of old-growth hardwood. We'll also learn about the cutting-edge research they're conducting in biodiversity, ecology, and conservation biology. Please check the WCA website for details on how to register, or contact any of the board members.

Geri James
416 643 4060
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WCA Activities

Want to view all club activities, learn more about our extensive outings program for members, or organize and post a trip? It's easy! Visit the Outings section of the WCA website:
www.wildernesscanoe.ca

Wilderness Canoe Symposium

The 2012 Symposium will be held at the usual place, Monarch Park Collegiate, in Toronto, on 17 and 18 February 2012. For information and registration, go to www.wcsymposium.com

Contributors' Guidelines

If you are planning to submit any material for possible publication in *Nastawgan*, you would do the editors and certainly yourself a great favour by first consulting the *WCA Guidelines for Contributors to Nastawgan*. These guidelines should be followed as much as possible by all contributors, so that the editorial team can more effectively edit your contribution to make it fit the *Nastawgan* style. The latest draft of the guidelines is available on the WCA website.

Deadlines

The deadline dates for submitting material for the four issues we publish each year are: the first days of February, May, August, and November. If you have questions, please contact the editor; addresses on the last page.

WCA Fall Meeting 2011

This year's WCA Fall Meeting was held on September 30 to October 2 at Boundless Adventures Camp in Palmer Rapids. Though the turnout was lower than expected, those who came were treated to great facilities where we felt we were guests in someone's home. Attentive staff, a two-level lounge with couches, two wood-fired saunas, amazing food with an inexhaustible supply of home-made cookies, and great companionship all combined to make a thoroughly enjoyable weekend.

Some who arrived early on Friday (in spite of the faulty directions, sorry) hiked up to a lookout on the 600-acre Boundless property. On Saturday, after a hearty breakfast, half the group paddled the Lower Madawaska, Snake Rapids section. The water was low, the lines were new (as were some of the newly exposed drops), the eddies were numerous (five on Split Rock Falls), the day was sunny and beautiful, and the wind was at our backs. It doesn't get any better than this. The other half of the group paddled on an exploratory flatwater trip to the Conroy Marsh, and explored a reconstructed late-1800s log chute. Sadly, the wind was at their backs for only half the trip.

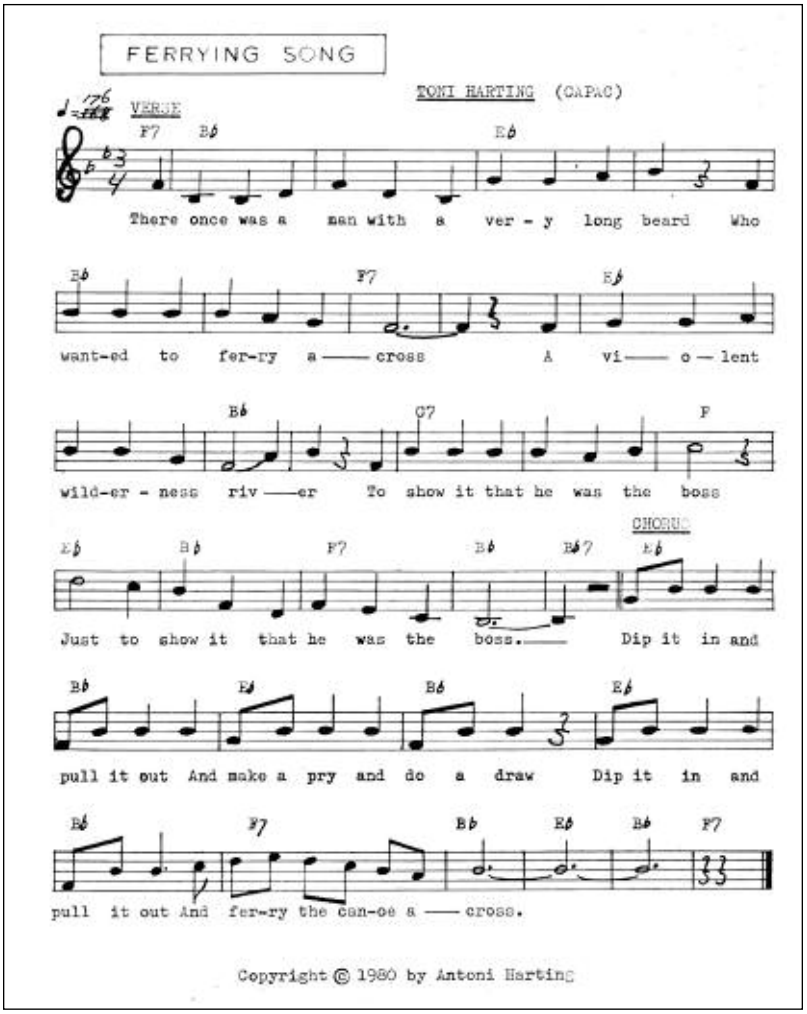
Returning to Boundless, everyone enjoyed hot showers and saunas and then gathered in the central lounge for hors d'oeuvres, refreshments, and conversation before being called to the dining room by Chef Vince for a delicious roast beef dinner, followed by Black Forest birthday cake (no mention will be made of Cheryl's actual age!). Dawne and Dave Robinson wrapped up the evening, sharing slides and stories of their summer trips.

On Sunday, Aleks Gusev had arranged for Dave Kelley, curator of the Mission House Museum in Combermere (worth a visit) to take us on a guided tour of the abandoned Craigmont town site and the associated Corundum mining and milling operations. He showed us the foundations of the abandoned site and then, during a climb up the mountain, the foundations of the mill and the open pits and tailing piles of the mine. Finally, the bravest among us (those wearing rubber boots to wade through the deep, cold water) kept heads down to avoid the bats and ventured into a mine shaft that had been driven 800 feet into the mountain.

The 2012 Fall Meeting will be held the weekend of September 29 and 20, 2012; location to be announced. Join us; you're guaranteed a great weekend.

Jon McPhee

Ferrying Song



verse 1
There once was a man with a very long beard
Who wanted to ferry across
A violent wilderness river
To show it that he was the boss
Just to show it that he was the boss

chorus Dip it in and pull it out
And make a pry and do a draw
Dip it in and pull it out
And ferry the canoe across

verse 2
It all went OK till about halfway
He tried to get back to the shore
But the very long beard, wild woolly and weird
Yelled out "I can't take it no more
That's enough, I can't take it no more!"

chorus

verse 3
It panicked and tried to get out of the boat
Quite sick of this whitewater challenge
But the man cried "No, no, stay inside, do not go
Be careful, we'll loose our balance
Sit down or we'll loose our balance

chorus

verse 4
The beard wanted out but the man wanted in
They fought like two fools on the water
Committing some horrible safety sins
Trying to strangle each other
Yes trying to strangle each other

chorus

verse 5
But then the canoe was fed up with those two
And suddenly slipped from their grasp
Down under they went, the beard and the man
The terrible cold made them gasp
Oh the terrible cold made them gasp

chorus

verse 6
Well the man and his beard, wild woolly and weird
Both drowned for their chances were slim
So if you want to ferry make sure that you carry
A whitewater beard that can swim
Yes a whitewater beard that can swim
So if you want to ferry make sure that you carry
A whitewater beard that can swim
Yes a whitewater beard that can swim

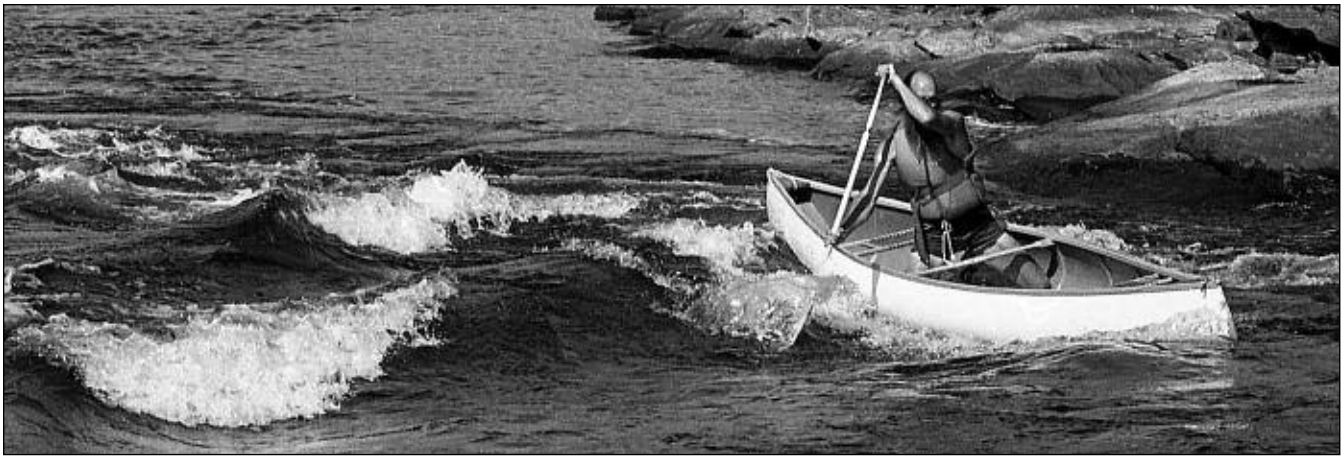
chorus

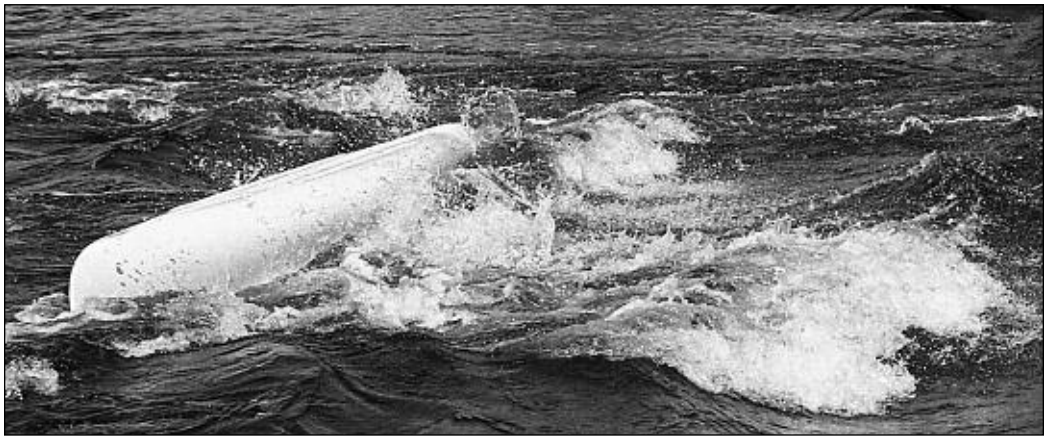
extra chorus
When the ferry is complete
And you're still dry and all is neat
Once again get off your feet
And ferry the canoe across

chorus

****

To hear the complete song performed by its creator, please go the WCA website www.wildernesscanoe.ca and then open the digital version of the Winter 2011 issue (Home/Journal/DownloadCurrentIssue) and click on the title of the song located on page 12.





Previously published in
The Wilderness Canoeist,
Autumn 1980

Photos made in June 1977 at Palmer Rapids by Toni Harting

The Saugeen River

Once again, we canoed a stretch of this handy, user-friendly river, the Saugeen, which flows into Lake Huron just south of the Bruce peninsula. This time, instead of putting in at Hanover 20 km further up-river, we avoided the three very short portages and started at the canoe-friendly Lobies Town Park in Walkerton for the 80 km, portage-free paddle to the take-out on river left at Denny's dam in the eastern outskirts of Southampton.

This was one of many trips organized by the Seniors For Nature Canoe Club, a group of experienced outdoors folk, somewhat over-the-hill physically, immune to weather, oozing compatibility, conviviality, nary a complaint, and with that knowledge that can only come with age and wisdom.

This river is used throughout the canoeing season. Its water levels, controlled by Denny's Dam, vary from a straight run down a good current with a few riffles to a ferrying exercise, as the river narrows to a meandering flow.

There is real wilderness and there is illusory wilderness; the Saugeen qualifies as the latter. The river runs mostly through farmland and mixed forest, but in a trench, so the surrounding land is not visible, which creates an appearance of remoteness. Instead of the loon call, there is the occasional moo-moo.

This is a suitable river for paddlers seeking an early season workout, as well as families travelling at a more relaxed pace. A few road bridges cross the river, so there are several put-ins/take-outs, with access to stores in Hanover, Walkerton, and Paisley. Short day or longer trips are convenient. The full 102 km from Hanover can take about four days, although for a workout, it can be done in just a couple of days.

Rob Butler

Letter to the Editor

Hi Toni,
Just back from Kilimanjaro. Did it – climbed to summit, through snow, sleet, gale-force winds. Brutal but mission accomplished.
Bernice Slotnick.

That's how we keep our Associate Editors in shape!

The old firehall near Paisley ***Photo: Norman Erickson***

Mike Wevrick

01/19/1964 – 07/23/2011

Mike and I met in winter 1994 on a backcountry ski trip in Ontario, organized by the WCA. The day we met was my lucky day: that same day I was accepted into Harvard graduate school. In the following summer the two of us alone went on a two-month canoe expedition in Canada's remote North West Territories (now Nunavut) where we found vast lakes, powerful rapids, a life-threatening forest fire, and true wilderness. It was the beginning of an adventurous life together:

http://news.ourontario.ca/Nastawgan/123418/page/2?n=

http://news.ourontario.ca/Nastawgan/123420/page/2

We moved from Canada to the US and in the subsequent decade we spent all of our free time outdoors. We paddled whitewater all around the northeast US (while living in MA, then NJ, then DC), and we continued to go on many remarkable canoe trips in northern Canada. Mike and I married in 1998 and our honeymoon trip for the month of August 1999 was on northern Quebec's cold, rainy, treacherous, waterfall-filled Swampy Bay River out through the Caniapiscau to Ungava Bay: http://tinyurl.com/3nyc87f. During 1995-2005, our energetic dog Tuktu was our best friend and joined us on almost all of the trips. Indeed, the remote wilderness trips encompass my most intense and best memories of Mike. Back in the US, Mike was such an accomplished whitewater paddler he was one of the few open boaters to make it upright down the Colorado River's powerful Lava Falls. Mike also assisted the *Nastawgan* editor for a while by editing the text of a number of articles for the journal.

In our second decade together Mike and I accidentally became more conventional with jobs, a house and mortgage, and children. We eventually moved back to MA and returned to friends and the rivers and hiking trails from the first part of our life together. The boys took us in new and unplanned directions.

Mike was diagnosed with cancer in February 2010, following major surgery. After three different chemotherapy regimes Mike ran out of options and stopped all treatment in March 2011. Mike was so tough and courageous that his oncologist compared him only to the Marines and war veterans. The home hospice staff had simply never seen anyone with Mike's level of mental and physical strength and endurance.

There is a saying, "people die as they live." This was true for Mike who was brave and tenacious right to the end. I am really pleased that I was able to join Mike so closely on his final journey by taking care of him at home in the final weeks, days, and hours. Mike died at home on July 23, 2011, with me by his side. We always lived our life and treated each other in

such a way that we had no regrets and this gave both of us a remarkable sense of closure.

Sara Seager

THE GRIM REAPER

Late. Very late. No moon tonight so it is almost pitch black. It's been another tough day on the river. I know because my body is reminding me with every movement that I ask it to do. It's telling me that it is tired. Very tired. Trying to remember where we were 12 hours ago. Near as I can figure, we were 23 kilometres and two portages upriver. Now sitting around the campfire. It's one of my favourite things to do in the wilderness. Probably my most favourite. I think it's because it's the only place where my soul, my body, and my mind are all at peace at the same time. This complete peace is what keeps me coming back every year for another wilderness canoe trip.

We as human beings spend our lives searching for this peace. Some find it in material things—expensive cars, big homes, stuff for the big home. Others find it in religion, in sports, in great literature, in hobbies, in travel. Probably as many answers as there are people. Me, I find it sitting in the dark at a campfire deep in the wilderness. It's how I want to spend the rest of my days.

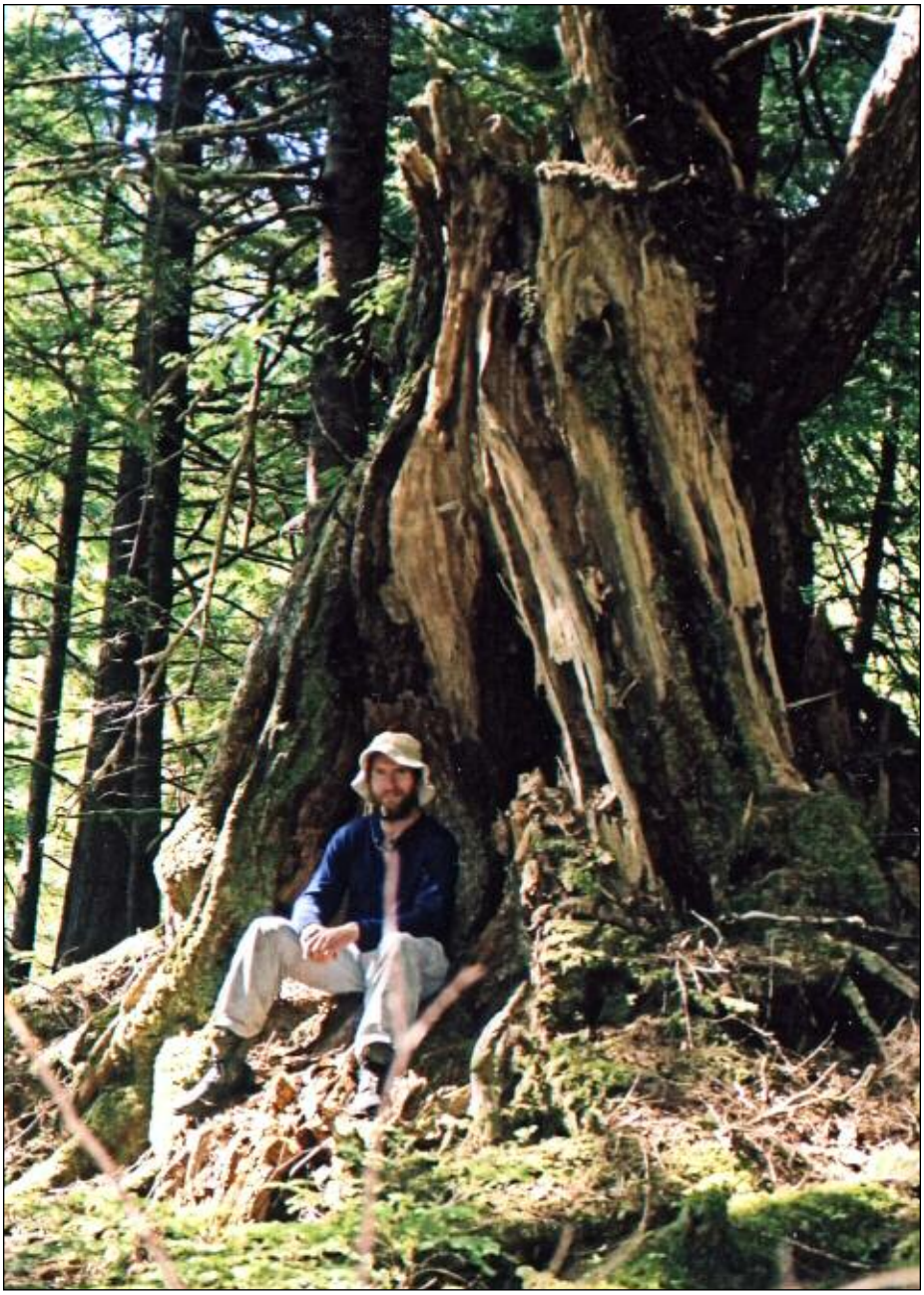
When the grim reaper comes, and he comes for us all, how will we greet him? Will we ask for more time? Will we still have regrets about things that we have done and things that we should have done? Will we still have issues with those whom we love that we have not yet resolved? Will we feel that our lives here have made a difference? I could tell the grim reaper that I have not yet found all the peace that my soul needs for me to agree that it is my time to go. He'll probably say that in his line of work he hears that a lot. He'll say that he always replies that there is a schedule to keep and you have to go when it is your time.

Maybe the grim reaper will be more understanding if I tell him that I just need more campfires. I'm betting that he doesn't hear that a lot.

Greg Went

Canoeing in Haida Gwaii

Brett Hodnett



Haida Gwaii. A temperate rainforest with 1000-year-old, 70-metre trees, some with a diameter the length of a canoe. A place with a fascinating and rich, living, native culture where you can paddle amongst whales, seals, dolphins, and sea lions while eagles soar overhead. This was obviously somewhere we had to paddle. Gwaii Haanas is the name of the lush national park, rich in biodiversity, that makes up the southern portion of Haida Gwaii.

Being time-rich and cash-poor, I came up with a plan that avoided the cost of all the usual flights and kayak rentals involved in a trip to Haida Gwaii. I would strap our canoe onto the roof of the car, drive to Calgary for a long overdue visit with a friend there, then pick up Karen from the airport and leisurely drive through Banff and Jasper parks, and then across northern British Columbia to Prince Rupert. From Prince Rupert we would take the ferry to Skidegate in Haida Gwaii and drive to Moresby Camp. Once there, we would take the zodiac shuttle from Moresby Camp to almost the south end of the park, and then paddle the approximately 150 kilometres along the coast back to the car.

The best part of this plan was that we would get to paddle Gwaii Haanas in our canoe. Most people we talked to didn't seem as enthusiastic as us about the fact that we would be in a canoe rather than a kayak. Are you sure it's safe? Can you paddle that coast in a canoe? These were the usual concerns they would raise. This seemed a little peculiar to us, because the Haida were known specifically for their use of canoes. In the end I don't think the fact we were in a canoe rather than a kayak limited us in any way. Due to rough water, we did miss out on some places we would have liked to go. But we're not as comfortable in a kayak as in a canoe, and the water was rough enough that I don't think we would have paddled it in a kayak in any case.

The trip begins

After a long and enjoyable road trip, we arrived by ferry in Haida Gwaii on June 26, 2006. We drove the few kilometres to Queen Charlotte City and stayed at a small campground just out of town. The next day we took the park's mandatory orientation, which is required before you can enter the park. It was given by a friendly and knowledgeable 21-year-old Haida woman. It was really just a chance to explain the rules to us, and they didn't care if we brought a radio or not, contrary to what we had heard. We found it funny when she told us that the bears were friendly and we didn't need to worry about them. We just shouldn't feed them. We then took the ferry to Moresby Island, which only took 15 or 20 minutes, and then drove the 45 kilometres on logging roads to Moresby Camp, a creepy kind of place. Absolutely no one was there, although there were ten or so parked cars. There was no indication that this was the right place, but we assumed

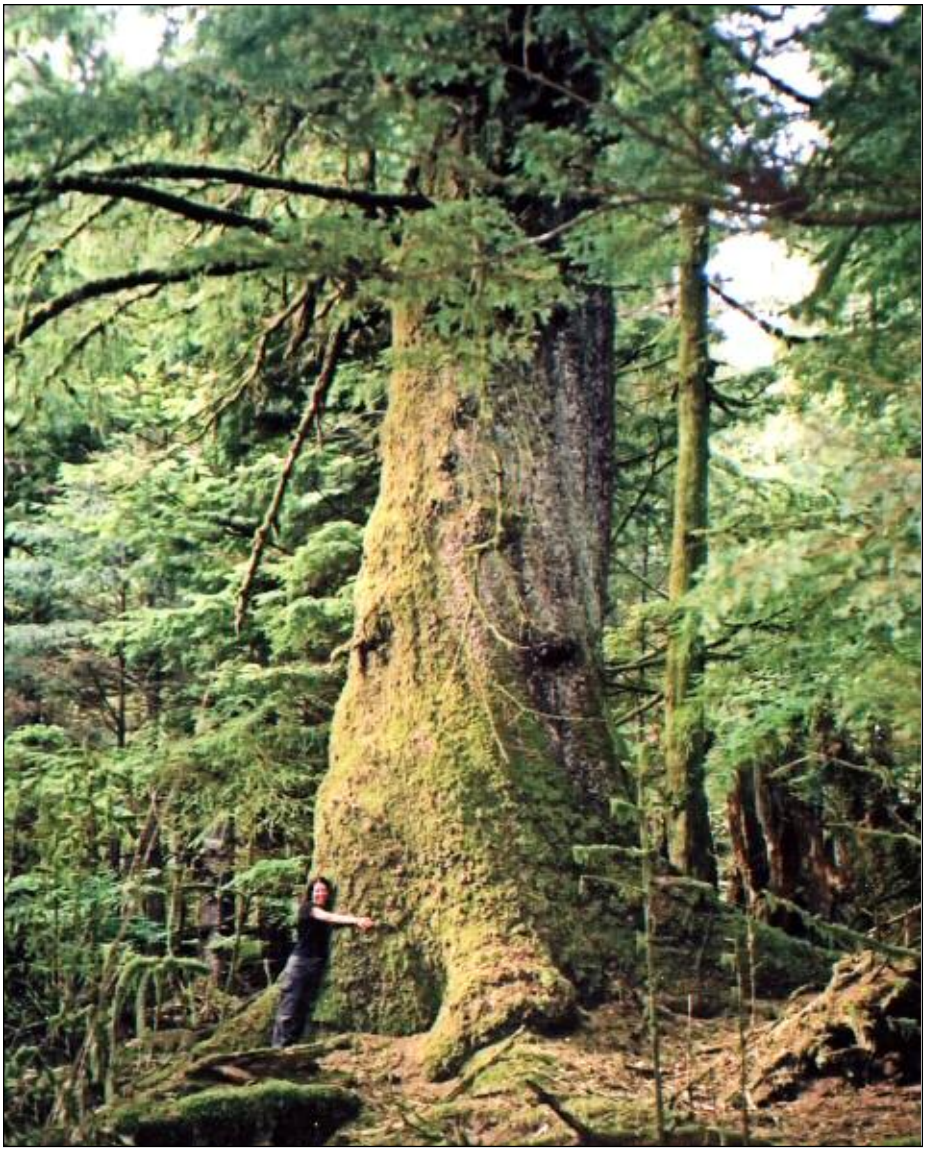
it was and set up our tent at one of the small campsites along the side of the road. The rainforest was really pretty, however, and the bay was surrounded by treed slopes with a snow-covered mountain in the background.

June 28, 2006

At about mid-morning, our zodiac driver showed up and gave us long, thick, slicker rain jackets and told us to put all of the warm stuff we had on underneath them. It seemed like a bit of overkill on such a warm, calm day, but we really needed it. It was freezing for the full four hours going 50 km/h over the cold water. On the ride we saw black bears on two beaches in the distance, and also a school of black-and-white dolphins.

He dropped us off at Raspberry Bay, across from Rose Harbour. We were ready for a hot meal, so we made lunch and got the canoe organized. We then paddled west, towards the western coast of Haida Gwaii, for about six or seven kilometres to Fanny Creek. The waves were quite big rounding the corner beyond that, so we decided to stay in the bay by the creek and camp there for the night. Our plan was to spend the next day visiting the Haida site of Ninstints on the west coast before starting our trip back north along the east coast. Paddling to our site, we saw an amazingly bright, very yellow jellyfish that was bigger than a dinner plate, and floated with it for a bit trying unsuccessfully to get pictures. The giant kelp was also very cool. Once we were on shore, we set up our tent amongst the driftwood on the beach, which seemed to be above high tide. At our site, we saw black-tailed deer and numerous bald eagles.

But the most interesting thing is when the tide goes out and leaves little tidal pools full of water on the shore. It's a rocky shore and there are lots of crevices that catch the water. There are tons of anemones as well as hermit crabs and other crabs. We saw a couple of chitons, a fractured sea urchin, and two sea stars which were at least 25 centimetres in diameter. Even the different plants and algae in the pools are fascinating. Unfortunately, the black flies are also quite abundant.



We really hoped we would be able to make a successful crossing to Ninstints the following morning. Karen's undergraduate degree is in Native Studies, and she had been hoping to go there for years. Ninstints is routinely described as a magical place, and to walk among the ruins is said to be a fabulous experience. It has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1981. My own interest was mostly with the amazing biological richness of Gwaii Haanas, but we both hoped that Ninstints would be the cultural highlight of our trip.

June 29

We got up at 5 a.m., spurred on by Karen who was anxious to get to Ninstints. We headed out with a slight breeze and some swells that were nonetheless much calmer than the day before. We paddled around the corner and to the tiny island just off Cape Fanny and started to cross to Ninstints. Offshore the water was pretty spooky with big swells and much rougher waves. Before we got halfway, the water was just too rough and we decided to turn back. Most of our trip would be on the east side of the island, facing the mainland. But Ninstints is on the west side, directly on the Pacific, and the water felt huge. It was probably a good choice to turn back because it got windier as the day wore on and we wouldn't have been able to get back even if we had made it there. Would we have made it in kayaks? It's really hard to imagine. I'm sure someone would have crossed it in a kayak, but I'm quite sure it wouldn't have been us. We paddled back the way we had come, into the wind with the tide working against us. We passed close by a beach where a deer and a raccoon were foraging. Both are introduced species and watching them gave me mixed emotions. Although they seem to have developed the relaxed harmonious attitude of the local wildlife, they are actually ruining the balance of the place, having a large impact on the endemic species.

We very slowly made our way up to Rose Inlet and with some stress and difficulty managed to cross it. After that it wasn't bad, as the wind became more of a tail wind. We stopped to have a snack at one of the beaches at Forsyth Point where a seal jumped off a rock into the water. We watched as its head bobbed in the water looking at us as we ate.

Back in the canoe, we paddled towards Point Langford. This is the first point that would start us coming around to the east side of the island. We saw a lot of red sea urchins on the ocean bottom and also lots of sea stars. On shore, most of the beaches we passed had a deer or two eating seaweed. There was a strong wind from the north-east and the swells were big when trying to get around Point Langford. We had to fight our way to the first beach around the corner.

It was only noonish when we reached the beach, but since it was too rough to paddle, we had to plan on spending the night there. We spent most of the day exploring and hanging out on the pebbly beach. We went for a walk along the rocks to try and get a view around the corner. There were lots of splits in the rock, which would form a sort of crevasse. You needed to climb down into these splits and then back up the other side in order to continue along the coast. Karen stayed at the first corner while I continued to the next corner, hoping to be able to see what lay ahead. One of the splits in the rock that ran from the forest to the sea was quite steep and I was trying to determine how I could climb down it and back up when I noticed a big black butt walking into the woods at the end of the split. I watched the forest above the split for a minute before the bear showed up walking along a fallen log. He casually glanced down at me, and as odd as it

sounds, I must say that the bear did seem friendly. He didn't act like he was scared. He just seemed as though he was being courteous to me since I was a guest. It was as though he realized that I wanted to be there, and he didn't want to bother me. I have a background in biology and consciously try not to anthropomorphize, but I really did get a sense that he had friendly intentions. I've seen a number of bears in northern Ontario and Quebec, and although they weren't particularly malevolent, this bear seemed to have a whole different feel to it.

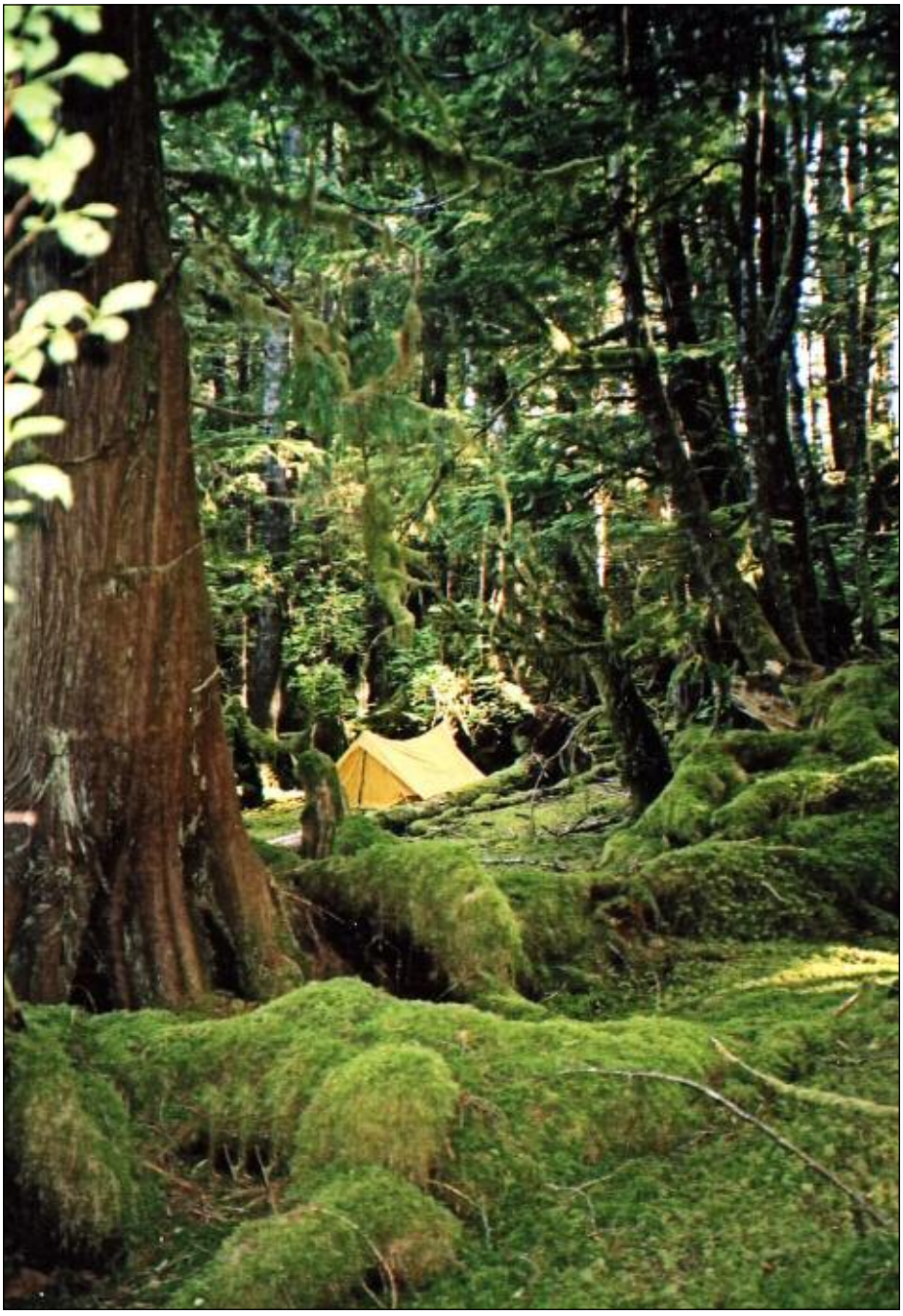
We didn't set up our tent until later in the day in the hope that the wind would die down and we would be able to get a bit further. When the wind didn't calm, we set up a bit into the forest because it was too windy on the beach. The forest was absolutely amazing with many extremely large moss-covered trees.

June 30

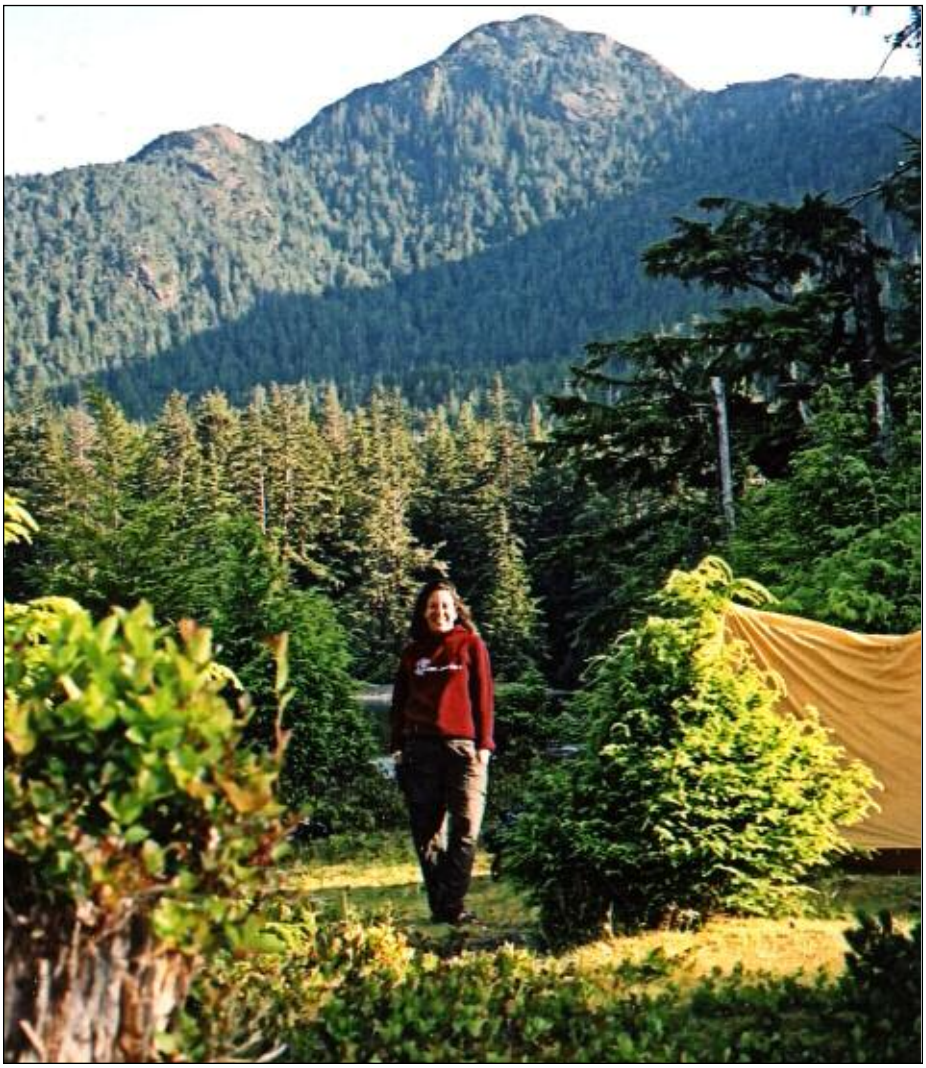
One thing I'm not making enough of is that the days are soooo long. It's light at 4:45 a.m. and isn't dark again until 11 p.m.. So we didn't even try to sleep until after 11, and then it was difficult to sleep past 5:30 or so. The sun is hot from almost sun-up to sun-down.

We woke up at 4 a.m. hoping to get on the water before the wind started. A quick look outside made it clear that the wind had already started and the water was rough, so we went back to bed. We woke again at 6:30 and it seemed quite calm, so we hurriedly got up, ate a breakfast bar and got on the water. We only got to the next point, Koya Point, less than two kilometres away. By then, the water had become very rough, so we surfed into a tiny entrance to a beach just beyond the point. We were only on the water half an hour, but at least we had made some progress. It was very hot and sunny all day, except in the wind where it was cold. We mostly just hung out in the sun all day, but it was amazing to walk along the rough rocks on shore and investigate the tidal pools. The outgoing tide would leave a huge variety of different-sized pools full of sea life. We saw lots of sea stars, as well as some sea urchins and chitons. In one of the tidal pools we saw a sea otter. It dove into the water when it saw us, but before long popped his head up and started yelling at us.

Later, quite far out in the water, we saw dozens of gulls and five eagles all diving into the water while moving along at a fairly good pace. We figured it must have been a whale or whales scaring up fish. There were lots of bald eagles around our site as well. We waited all day again before setting up camp in the hopes that the weather would get calmer. After dinner, at about 6 p.m., the wind and waves seemed to have improved so we packed up the canoe and gave it a try. It was still windy but we made it down to the cove at Benjamin Point, another half-hour paddle. It seemed too rough to attempt to round the point, and as this was a Haida seasonal camp it made a good stopping place. The paddling is quite intimidating in this wind. The swells are really large and they crash up onto the steep rocky shores leaving no doubt about how well we would stay afloat if we were thrown into them from our canoe.



Where we had stopped it is a fairly narrow point, and we realized that we could actually do a short portage and not have to paddle around the point. So I carried the canoe over while Karen set up the tent. The forest here was again absolutely amazing. At the far end of the portage there were three or four adult deer, as well as a young one. They are so unafraid that we walked around talking within seven metres of them.



The bay we camped in was so calm that it seemed like a different place. When we first arrived, there was a seal in the water, and later in the evening there were dolphins in the kelp beds in the bay. It got so calm that it seemed a shame that it was too late to paddle.

July 1

Canada Day and we celebrated by actually getting somewhere. We got up at 4:45, ate quickly and portaged our stuff to the canoe. Paddling around into almost ten-kilometre-long Carpenter Bay was challenging but we managed. We paddled deep into the bay to where it narrows before attempting to cross it. The far side was calm and we paddled along the shore and around the corner into the next bay. It was getting really rough so we rode the swells to the big beach at the end of the bay, which had lots of places for a tent. We weren't there long before two double kayaks showed up, the first kayakers we'd seen. They were two couples from Seattle and they had been dropped off the day after us just around the corner in Carpenter Bay.

We followed our usual routine of having a look around and just hanging out for most of the day. We saw numerous bald eagles again, some diving for fish in the bay. We also saw a dead bald eagle on the beach, which I'd never seen before. Something about it didn't allow me to take a picture. It felt disrespectful. This place really gives you the feeling of reverence for nature. The islands' other abundant bird, the ravens, were also hanging around the camp, making lots of noise.

By 4:30 the wind seemed to be calming a bit so we decided to eat dinner, pack up, and paddle to the next point where we would decide whether to try to get around to Collision Bay. The paddling turned out to be great, the best we'd had. There were still swells but they were smooth and it didn't seem particularly scary. Before long we were starting to relax and feel comfortable in the ocean for the first time. This calm was not to last. It was abruptly broken when we saw the spray from a whale blowing a few hundred metres ahead. As we got closer

its back arched out of the water in front of us. It was difficult to see its colour in the light, but it looked to have a large fin on its back and so we immediately thought it must be a killer whale.

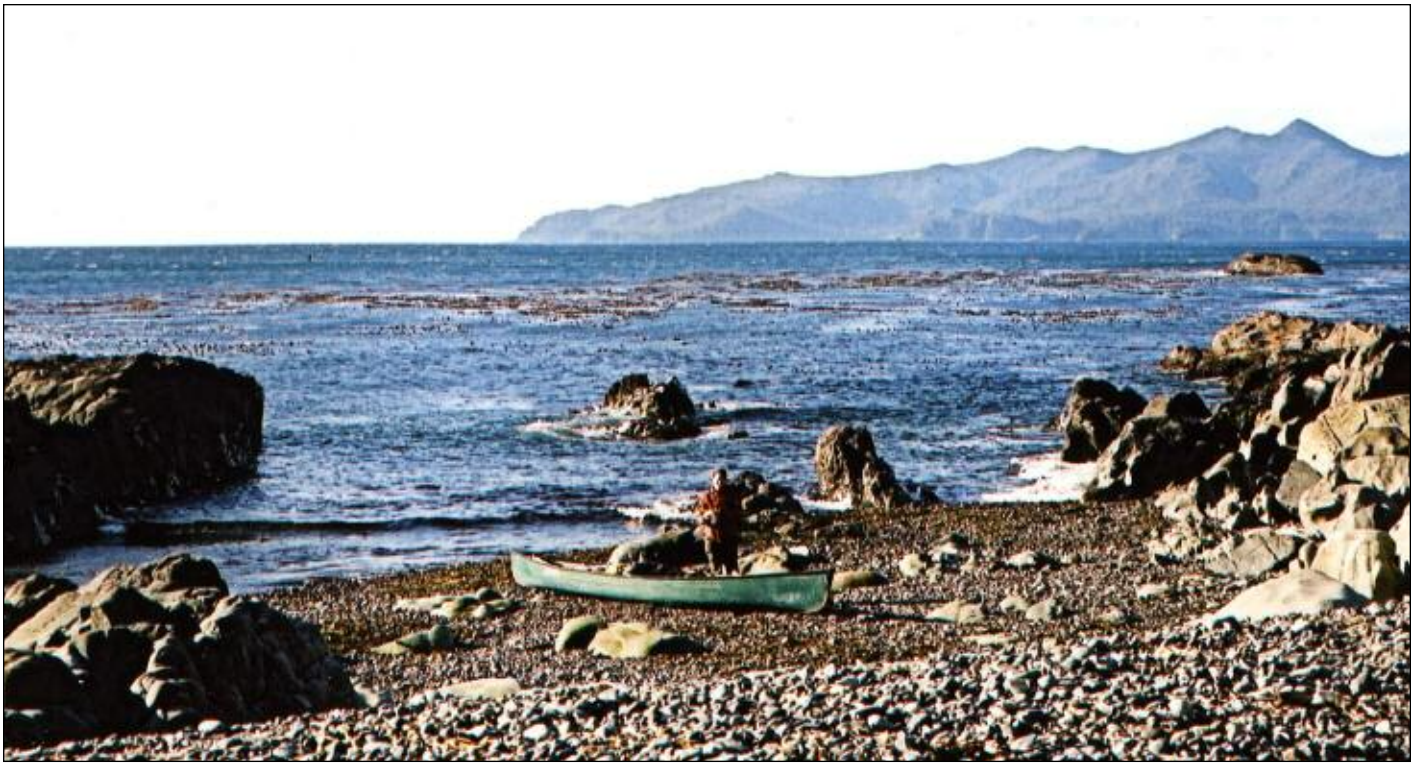
We'd heard about killer whales following kayaks and knew not to expect harm, but somehow it's still nerve-racking being in a position where your survival rests on the whims of such a large carnivore. It's an amazing feeling, though, to see something like this from a canoe. We considered that perhaps it wasn't the whale's back, but that it was a side fin. Shortly after, a seal popped up near the canoe and we decided that, if it was a killer whale, the seal wouldn't seem so relaxed. Again we started to relax and enjoy the relatively calm water and the numerous small white jellyfish that looked like little white doilies floating just under the water surface. We paddled on these nice waters for three hours, past Collision Bay and around the next several points to Harriet Harbour, which got us past the most exposed of the shorelines. We stopped in a bay behind a point where the water was totally still.

Unfortunately, scattered around the shores was what looked like old mining equipment. The whole point and shores around it looked as though they were clear-cut in the recent past. The trees are aspens that look maybe 20 years old. It was all very junky looking, the first ugliness of the trip. What they say about being able to feel the "spirit" of Gwaii Haanas has really been true. Apart from this area,, which had a very negative feel, everywhere else had felt "as it should." You get the sense that the animals are friendly and all is well. It's the only time I've ever felt that way about a place.

July 2

Another hot, sunny day. We'd been very lucky with the weather. Gwaii Haanas is known for being rainy all of the time but we hadn't seen a drop. We were on the water by 7:15. It was perfectly calm, which was nice for a change. We paddled quietly through the bays to Burnaby Narrows. The mountain scenery here is great, but the shores are more abrupt and there didn't seem to be as many of those cool tidal pools. The bays are full of jellyfish. Thousands of the white doily ones, and a lot of big yellow ones as well. Burnaby Narrows is highlighted because of its rich diversity of marine life. Although this is true, the marine life didn't seem richer or in higher density than many other places we'd seen. There were, however, lots of different sea stars of different shapes and sizes. Some were dark green and black with many octopus-like arms; some had particularly pointy arms, and some were fuller looking, almost just a pentagon shape rather than a central body with arms. There were also a wide variety of anemones. We paddled slowly through the narrows and just beyond to Island Bay where we stopped for a leisurely lunch. After lunch we paddled and explored for a few more kilometres, passing more sea creatures and a few raccoons on shore. We also saw three more kayaks across the strait. We stopped to camp at a great location on a peninsula perched between two bays.

It was low tide when we arrived, and we had to carry our gear quite a ways up the shallow beach to get to shore. I lay down and slept for an hour under a tree,



which turned out to have an eagle's nest with chicks in it. There were a bunch of young crows, screaming all day as well. We camped on a grassy section, which the deer, one of them still present, had kept like a lawn. Oddly, there was an old Caterpillar, parked and rusting, where we camped.

At about 8 p.m. we saw a couple of whales out in the bay. They were quite far away but were jumping in the air and playing around. At one point, one started splashing its tail, almost like a metronome, every two seconds or so for a few dozen times. Later, one of the whales came right into the small bay on our other side to within 15 metres or so of us. We could hear the whales occasionally splashing and calling until after 10 p.m. For most of the evening, a couple of seals bobbed in the water watching us as we watched the whales. I wonder how mysterious our actions seemed to them.

July 3

Well, it was another hot, sunny day. We left at about 7:15 a.m. on extremely calm waters with a whale blowing across the strait. It got windier as the day progressed. While it wasn't like it had been before, we still had to stay close to shore and not cross any big bays. We stopped in Hutton Inlet to get water a young couple from Portland was camped there who were very friendly. We continued to Haswell Bay, but campsites weren't as easy to find along this stretch due to the beautiful topography with the Christoval Range in the background. So we paddled into the middle of islands and inlets in the next bay and found a tiny place deep in an inlet where it was calm. The view was the best yet, looking to me like the Andes Mountains in South America. Coming into the inlet, we scared three basking seals into the water. Two of these were really young and followed our canoe. They were curious about us all evening, sticking their heads up and watching us, and then "discussing" their findings.

July 4

We woke early despite the fact that we were both really tired from all of the short nights. It was foggy and calm when we left at 7:30 a.m., and it stayed so calm all day that our wake made the biggest waves around. The young seals were waiting for us and followed us out of their bay. Many times in the day seals, young and old, would follow us curiously for a while. On a tiny island, closer to the far shore, we could hear a lot of seals barking and grunting. Early in the day, we also saw a whale at a distance, blowing and occasionally jumping which was really neat on the perfectly calm water. Apart from the seals and whales, it was mostly a grinding day with just long hours of paddling to put some distance in. I think we were against the tide most of the day because the going seemed to be really slow. At one point we heard a sound like the whooshing of a jet fighter when, out of nowhere, a bald eagle crashed into the water next to the canoe and grabbed a fish.

We eventually reached Lockeport, an abandoned settlement in Klunkwoi Bay. The last stretch was quite wavy so we had to stay along shore. The site seemed very small for a settlement, but the forest was really nice and the mountains were snow-capped and clearly much bigger than the ones further south.

We went to bed before dark to catch up on some sleep so that we could wake up early and make it around Tangil Peninsula in the morning calm. Tangil Peninsula marks the end of Gwaii Haanas Park, and would also be our last point facing directly onto the open ocean.

July 5

The weather again started out foggy and calm and eventually became sunny and windy. We left at 7 a.m. and paddled in the calm to the tip of the peninsula that marks the end of Gwaii Haanas Park. On our way, we saw a whale jumping around off in the distance. We also had a couple of curious sea lions have a look at us. These were the first we'd seen. They are bigger, browner, and not quite as cute as the harbour seals.

We rounded the point where the swells and waves were only slightly intimidating. The far side of the peninsula was blocked by an island and the water was immediately calmer beyond that. It was sad to leave the park, and once we reached the end of Dana Inlet, and particularly after Dana Passage, we could really tell the park had ended. There were lots of clear cuts, as well as silt in the water in some places, which we hadn't seen before.

We reached Pacofi Bay, which appeared on our map as an ancient Haida site, and were surprised to find a large lodge and two smaller houses there. The place looked deserted and we pulled up on shore to have a look. We were barely out of the canoe when a guy yelled from the house asking, in a very unfriendly way, if we wanted something in particular. He then came down to talk to us and became friendlier, at least in his actions, if not his manner. He said we could stay for free at the lodge but that we would only have power for a while. He also offered to lend us some movies to watch, but said that he didn't want to be bugged. We didn't really want to spend our last night watching TV, particularly not in the Bates Motel, so we continued on to Cecil Cove.

When we walked back into the forest at Cecil Cove, it was clear that it had been logged. Whether it was 20 or 50 years ago was hard to tell. Most of the forest had more even-aged trees than in the park and the forest seemed less dense. Anywhere else, it would still have been a nice forest with lots of deadfall and moss, but here you could tell it was not as rich as the original forest.

We set up our tent on a patch of grass near the shore. Karen had the pleasure of walking through some stinging nettle, perhaps another sign of the degradation of the original flora. Two loons were out in the bay in the evening, the first we'd seen on the trip.

July 6

We woke up at 5:30 a.m.. It was a calm ocean, heavy with mist, rain, and fog when we left. We were finally going to get some rain on our last day. We paddled through the calm inlet and saw two sea lions, independent of each other, both of which approached the canoe. There were also huge numbers of jellyfish, both the little white doily types and large orange ones. We made a brief stop on shore in the chilly rain before the narrowing of the strait at Carmichael Passage. While we were standing next to the canoe, we saw a strange object moving across the water. It took us a while to figure out that it was a deer swimming across the inlet. The deer caught sight of us and changed direction to actually head straight for the canoe. He came out of the water just the other side of us until he was only up to his ankles in water, maybe one metre away. He was shivering all over and looked at us like he wanted reassurance. He just stood there shivering for several minutes until eventually he started to very slowly walk across the rocks, stopping every couple of steps to shiver. By the time he reached the woods, he had eaten a bit of algae and seemed to be shivering less and I presume he was fine.

We paddled through Carmichael Passage, which got quite narrow, and saw a lot of sea stars of different types. After Carmichael Passage opened up into the bigger water of Cumshewa Inlet, the rain got heavy and it seemed like an interminably long paddle back to the car at Moresby Camp. We were still in the canoe and already missing Gwaii Haanas, trying to figure out when we would return. I think we were very lucky to have had so much sunny weather. It might have been a different trip if it had rained the whole time. Nonetheless, we will be returning to Gwaii Haanas one day.

For information about Gwai Haanas National Park, visit:
http://www.pc.gc.ca/pn-np/bc/gwaiihaanas/index.aspx

Another article on Haida Gwaii is presented in *Nastawgan*, Spring 2009

Food for Paddlers

Last March, Dave and I went cross-country skiing at Stokely Creek Lodge near Sault Ste. Marie along with Rick Sabourin, Diane Lucas, and Bruce Bellaire. We had a great time and while there we met Anne and Terry Greenlay. It seems that cross-country skiers and paddlers have lots in common. We found out that Anne and Terry are paddlers as well as good friends of long-time WCA members Jan and Bob Bignell. Since I'm always on the look-out for recipes, a discussion with Anne led to her sending along several recipes, which I've included below:

Orzo with Parmesan Cheese and Basil
(adapted from Best of Bridge Cookbooks)

3 tablespoons butter
1½ cups orzo (rice-shaped pasta)
3 cups chicken broth (3 cups water and Oxo packets)
½ cup grated parmesan cheese
6 tablespoons chopped fresh basil or 1½ teaspoons dried basil
Salt & pepper to taste

Melt butter in skillet (or in bottom of pot). Add orzo and sauté two minutes until slightly brown. Add stock and bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer until orzo is tender and liquid is absorbed (about 20 min). Mix in parmesan and basil. Season with salt and pepper. Feeds two hungry paddlers

On the Nahanni: Sue Vajocki, Linda Gordon, Bob Bignell, Jan Bignell, Anne Greenlay, Terry Greenlay

Quinoa Salad
(from Janet Lambert; this is a favourite recipe on Anne's kayaking trips.)

Rinse 1 cup quinoa (pronounced "keen-wa")
Cook in 2 cups of liquid. It is cooked when the little "rings" start to fall off the grain.
Fluff when cooled, then add:
1 bunch of grapes (halved)
1 tin of shrimp
2 stalks of celery (chopped)
Freeze-dried peas (rehydrated)
Bunch of mint (chopped)
1 cup of cashews
Juice of 1 lemon
Mix together and enjoy!
Anne included the following information: Quinoa is a historic cereal grain that originated in the Andes of South America. It was a staple of the Incas, who called it the "mother grain." A balanced set of amino acids makes quinoa a good source of protein for vegetarians and vegans. It's also gluten free, easy to cook, and a perfect substitute for rice, barley or almost any grain.

Dutch Ginger Cake
This cake is really like shortbread …and very yummy!

1¾ cups flour
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup sugar
4 ounces preserved ginger (in syrup) chopped
1 egg
4½ ounces butter
2 ounces blanched almonds
1 teaspoon ground ginger

Sift flour and salt, add sugar and chopped ginger.

Melt butter over a gentle heat, allow to cool slightly, mix in beaten egg, reserving one teaspoon for glazing.

Add butter to flour mixture, mix well.

Press mixture into a greased 8-inch round loose-bottom tin.

Brush top with remaining beaten egg and arrange whole, blanched almonds decoratively.

Bake in a moderate oven 350 deg. for 45 minutes or until cake is golden.

Allow to cool in tin, turn out, and cut into wedges.

If you would like to share your favourite tripping recipes, please contact Barb Young, 12 Erindale Crescent, Brampton, Ont. L6W 1B5; youngjdavid@rogers.com.

Freedom

What is more delightful, after a day of hard, sweaty work in the canoe, on the trail, and the campsite, than finally taking off all your clothes and jumping into the lake for a well-earned, refreshing swim? What indeed! It is one of the supreme joys in our tripping lives, this daily ritual we gratefully call 'the blessing of the waters.'

And how lucky you are as the photographer of such an intimate event to have friends who do not object to being photographed in the nude, just as they are under their grimy tripping clothes (which they obviously wear not for decoration, but only for reasons of practicality and protection against the bugs and the elements). Nudity and nature go hand in hand, inseparable as canoe and paddle. It is so good to see these two grown-ups enjoy their precious freedom and play like children having innocent fun trying to push each other into an out-of-the-way lake in Killarney Provincial Park.

Some people have problems accepting nudity as an integral part of the outdoors, but few can deny the beauty honest images such as these can provide. This woman, drying her hair with gentle gestures, creates an innocent and appealing silhouette, the tree tenderly reaching down and caressing her with its leaves. An enchanting image.

Make such photos discretely and always consult the people about their intended use; get permission if you want to show the pictures to others.

Excerpt from *Shooting Paddlers* by Toni Harting, Natural Heritage Books, 2000.

Miracle boats in Northern Scandinavia

Cliff Jacobson

When Alv Elvestad, CEO of Pakboats (www.pakboats.com), invited me to join him and three friends on a canoe trip in his native Norway, I was thrilled. After all, I'd done the Canadian shtick for decades; it was time for something new. Alv proposed a trip of around 100 miles on three connecting (with portages) rivers: the Poreno, Latiseino, and Kautokeino, in the far-north region of Scandinavia where Norway, Finland, and Sweden meet. We'd start in Norway close to the border with Finland, cross the border and paddle in Finland on the Poreno and Latiseino rivers, cross over into Norway, and paddle on the Kautokeino River to Kautokeino. The border crossings were very simple: no passport control; just scoot under the reindeer fence!

Alf said the route was extremely remote (wilderness canoeing is largely a curiosity in Scandinavia) and advised that "…paddlers should be competent in technical Class III rapids that may run for miles." Alv had done most of this route years ago, but in tandem canoes. This time, we four would use solo PakCanoes—three 15-footers and one 14-footer for the little guy, me. Alv brought an untried canoe—a Darth Vader-black experimental 15-footer which weighed 38 pounds, about six pounds less than standard. He said that if the lightweight fabric held up, it might eventually find its way into the Pakboat line. Every boat carried a repair kit, but these were never used. We didn't put a single hole in any of these canoes.

Our put-in was a high tundra lake located near the Finish border and 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle, a three-hour drive from Alv's boy-hood home in Storslett. The final leg required us to ascend a tortuous Class IV gravel road to the top of a mountain. In the U.S. this road would be marked for dedicated four-wheel drive vehicles only. But in Norway, 4WD's are as uncommon as coo-coo birds, and are replaced instead with two-wheel drive know-how. Tore, Alv's brother, didn't blink when driving his diesel Mercedes Benz station wagon and snowmobile trailer packed with canoes and gear, right to the top of the mountain. Bets were made that he couldn't turn the rig around at the put-in. Wrong! In less than a minute the Benz was headed home.

Our first day was a tundra portage from hell. It wandered on for 12 hours, uphill all the way. We didn't have proper yokes for the canoes so we dragged them like dogs on a leash. No damage. Camp came at 10 p.m. that night.

Day two began with three hours of portaging followed by a 200-yard-long Class II rapid that we actually were able to paddle. Then the water ran out and the dragging began again. I would pull my canoe with all my strength and it would move maybe six inches. Heave again, and six more. This pull, sweat, and cuss routine continued into the afternoon. It was nearly three when we found water we could paddle. Naturally, it rated Class III and was a mile long. Norwegians don't downgrade the classification of their rapids!

Camp came at 9 p.m. (it never gets completely dark at this latitude) and we were dead tired. The mosquitoes weren't; thank goodness for our CCS (Cooke Custom Sewing) netted tarp. It began to rain, a daily event. Fortunately, we were usually camped before the first

drop. We checked the boats for damage. Some scratches on the bottom, that's all.

In Canada, a Barren Lands trip usually begins before the treeline, then descends to the tundra. In Norway, it's the other way around. So for the first few days there was no wood for campfires and we cooked exclusively on a gasoline stove. By day three, scraggly trees appeared and we built fires every night.

Our route was highlighted by near-continuous rapids, punctuated by frequent dragging, occasional lining, and more portages. Lining here is more meticulous than in Arctic Canada where shorelines tend to be clear of vegetation. Twenty-five-foot lines are usually long enough on a Canadian river. Not so in Norway where trees (big trees!) grow right to the water's edge. I scoffed when Alv suggested 50-foot lines. I'm glad I took his advice.

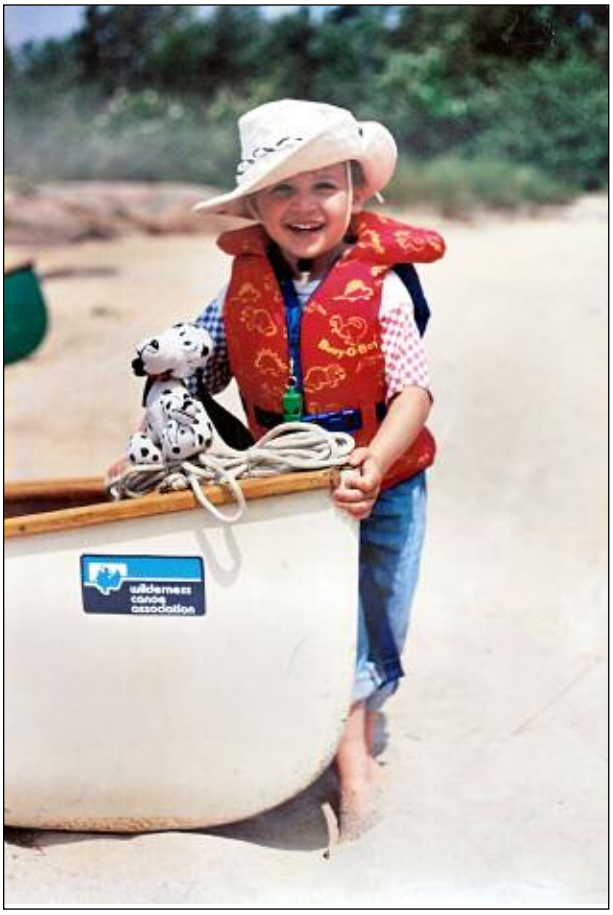
Our starting elevation was 3500 feet; the take-out at the Sami town of Kautokeino, 700 feet. Average drop for the 100-mile route was close to 30 feet per mile. Our most notorious rapid, on the Kautokeino River, dropped 62 feet per mile over a distance of about seven miles. It rated a heart-throbbing technical Class III! There was just one resting eddy along the way—the descent took an hour and a half. It was the most difficult rapid we paddled and no one made a clean run. Rocks were often just a metre apart and clearing them required strong leans, braces, and 90-degree turns. Fortunately, our boats turned instantly, like pure-bred slalom canoes. Again and again we slammed full-steam into rocks, occasionally broaching on them, then going waist deep in the flow to save the day. Admittedly, I have become a klutz in my old age and thus had wet feet nearly every day. My friends, with their usually dry feet, took frequent occasion to poke fun at my misfortune.

Tired of dragging and grounding on rocks, we embraced a new policy: "Just give us some water to paddle—damn the drops! Clear channel ahead? Take it! We are running bigger and bigger drops. Ahead is a four-foot ledge. Over we go. The bow breaks upward to create more rocker. Our canoes are running nearly dry, maybe a gallon of water gets in. Amazing!" A hard boat this size would swamp and sink. We were so stunned by the durability of these canoes and their competence in rapids that we began to call them "miracle boats." On his Pakboats.com website, Alv Elvestad makes a strong case for the portability of these canoes. Disassembled and bagged, they ride easily in an airplane, bus, or car. But I would beg the high note of durability and whitewater performance as their first prize. In the Piragis Northwoods Company catalog (www.piragis.com) I am quoted as saying that these canoes are "Much more durable than any hard boat I've paddled." Now, I would underline the much more!

But more importantly, when loaded with two weeks of camping gear, they handle big, complicated rapids better than any similarly-sized hard boat I've paddled. This is not idle talk. They run nearly dry in big rapids, even without a spray cover, because the hull creates additional rocker as it rises to the waves. Another plus is that when the hull broaches on a rock, it bends slightly around the rock and creates a more streamlined shape to the current. This results in less force on the hull, which makes the hull easier to dislodge from the rock. I had a couple of close capsizes on this trip but none materialized. I don't think I would have been so fortunate in a hard boat. Pakboats are also lighter than equivalent-sized hard boats, and in the unlikely event you hole one, they can be repaired in less than 10 minutes with the supplied repair kit, even in cold weather.

These Pakboats really are "miracle canoes." I just can't say enough good things about them.

Once a Paddler, always a Paddler!



Tyler Ashton at three (summer 1994) …

… and at 19 (summer 2011)

Book Review

Canoeing by Ray Goodwin, published by Pesda Press, Great Britain, www.pesdapress.com, softcover, 227 pages, £16.99 (also available at Amazon) Review by Toni Harting

It is very rare for us to receive a book to review that does not originate in North America. So, it is a special pleasure to have a look at the present book that has come to us from far-away, across-the-deep-waters Great Britain. And indeed, a great delight it is to hold this excellently produced book and thoroughly enjoy the high quality of its text and illustrations. The author is probably the UK's most prominent and influential canoe coach, who presents in this book a wide-ranging discussion of the many aspects of traditional open canoeing, supported by numerous excellent colour photographs that explain clearly what paddling open canoes is all about. Practically all aspects of the open canoe are covered in this thoroughly modern book, from design to wilderness tripping, with the focus on canoeing techniques, and it is done in a number of well-layed-out and profusely illustrated chapters: The Traditional Canoe; Portaging & Transport; Getting Started; Flat Water & Lakes; Strokes; Rivers; Lining, Tracking & Poling; Swims & Rescues; Canoe Country. The book will be mostly of interest to novices and intermediate paddlers who still have something to learn about the art of open canoeing, but also old hands at the game will surely enjoy — and learn a thing or two from! — the huge amount of intriguing information this book has to offer. Indeed, a gem of a paddling instruction book!

Something to prove

Allan Jacobs

Some of my reports warn about tripping with someone who has something to prove. Much of the motivation for that warning comes from the events described below. I must confess, though, that I have been afflicted with the disease myself.

Before the main trip, four of us had paddled five days in Temagami with Joe, a short, stocky guy who had been in the Forces. Joe behaved oddly on that trip and also in Sudbury where we met the others. On the portages, Joe would slap on his backpack, pick up the canoe, and jog to the end, trying to prove something, I guess. And he would make comments regarding secondary sexual characteristics of the females.

Fast forward to our third campsite. After setting up, we went for a swim. Joe, quite proud of his endowment, not only went skinny dipping but walked around in the altogether, again proving something or other. After supper, we got the packs up into the trees, something we did in those days, no mean feat in the boreal forest. Joe went at it again, this time climbing at least one tree like a bear to get the packs up. We were getting ready to hit the tents when someone noticed a blotch on his pants. He peeled off, revealing a swollen leech on the right buttock.

Well, this was clearly man's work and so the three women gracefully retired to the tents. The salt was in the packs and the packs were in the trees; we hadn't heard then about using bug spray to remove leeches and I still don't know whether it works. But the campfire was still going so I grabbed a branch with a burning end and applied it to the leech, carefully; the response from the leech was a little motion but no release. Hmm. All this time, the mosquitoes were out in force; Joe was rather uncomfortable and couldn't help making that fact known. The delicate, almost surgical procedure was not helped by high-pitched tittering from the tents, which were not far from the scene. Well, I eventually got the leech off by squeezing it between two sticks and pulling, and off we went to bed.

The next day, after a portage, we started down a lake. Lynn and Joe pulled over to shore and change places, odd but no big deal it seemed at the time. The other three canoes kept going. Shortly thereafter, we heard Lynn calling to us; Joe had passed out, or nearly so, and was sitting in the bow with his head over the gunwale. We got their boat over to an island, fortunately one with a campsite. We got Joe out of the boat and onto dry land. I can't remember the sequence of events, but he stopped breathing twice (Lanny brought him back each time with mouth-to-mouth), he started yelling and going around the campsite on hands and knees, and other scary stuff that I've forgotten. Eventually, he calmed down.

This was clearly the stuff for an evacuation; of course this was well before satellite phones, SPOT, and the like. We decided to send two of us through a few lakes and over to a logging road; since we might have to get by foot from there to a logging camp 20 km away, we chose Ron (who was running 4,000+ km a year) and me (running, but not nearly so hard). We had barely reached the road when a car came by; we flagged it down and got the driver to turn back to the camp. There, Ron spent an hour and a half on the phone, convincing the emergency people to send in a float plane to pick up Joe. I know few people who could have done that sales job; certainly I could not have. On our way back to the campsite, we heard a float plane. As we pulled in, the others applauded us.

They told us that Joe had come around and was back to normal. He didn't want to be evacuated but Lanny convinced him to go, or so he thought. The plane came in and the pilot (there was also a medical person on board) asked where the victim was. Joe, wearing his backpack, jogged down to the plane shouting "Here I am" and said that he was staying. The pilot reacted understandably: "\@$$%^&! I came in for a body and I'm going out with a body; now get on that &^%$# plane!" And so they left.

We headed out again the next morning; Lanny was paddling solo but making almost as good time as the other boats. We were on the chain of height-of-land portages when a float plane passed overhead; our hearts sank with foreboding. On its second pass, the plane dropped a medicine bottle into the pond. We paddled over to it and found a note saying that Joe would meet us at the far end of the portages; our spirits plummeted. And as we neared the lake, we heard Joe shouting. Oh boy, there goes the trip!

At the reunion, Joe told us that the plane had taken him to Gogama. From there, an ambulance drove him toward Timmins; partway, he was transferred to an ambulance from Timmins. He told us that the diagnosis was an allergic reaction to the leech. The doctor's name (I am not making this up) was Leach. Joe had slept on someone's porch. In the morning, he paid for a float plane to take him back to us.

The unwritten rule among those who chronicle paddling trips is that what happens on a trip, at least regarding personalities, stays on the trip. I have observed that rule until now; indeed, I know of only two writers (one is Alex Hall) who have not. I leave it to the reader to judge whether the above justifies breaking the rule. I'd like to point out, though, that these events took place over 20 years ago, that I believe that only one person on that trip will ever see this report, and that paddlers' names are fictitious.

REMEMBER ---?

WCA Seminar on Packs and Waterproofing, 20 April 1983 *Photo: Toni Harting*

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