



2009 Crossing of the Algonquin Park from West to East

A Tale of Two Trips: Crossing Algonquin West to East, and North to South

Story and photos by Jamie Dietrich

Crossing Algonquin: West to East

In 2009, for a variety of reasons, Rob Coulas and I were the only two Summer School Brotherhood members able to paddle for any length of time. The Summer School Brotherhood is a collection of Midland, Ontario teachers who have been paddling as a group every summer since 2000. Rob proposed we paddle across Algonquin Park, a journey made by his Uncle Dowdall “Doc” Coulas in the late 1970s. The idea of the journey had been on Rob’s mind for a long time. It would take longer to complete than a normal Summer School trip, but we were both game.

Most canoe trips in Algonquin Park today are two to four days in length and as a result, don’t extend very far from any of the access points. We were interested in exploring the inte-

rior of the park, the areas infrequently visited, and testing our luck at summer trout fishing in the fabled Lavielle-Dickson area. I was also interested in photographing other canoe trippers who ventured deep into the park. It turned out that we were alone, for the most part, for the majority of the trip. Fishermen visit the interior in the spring, and summer camps spend weeks criss-crossing the interior, but other paddlers are few and far between in early July.

We single tripped all portages by keeping our gear to a minimum, and by drying all of our meals. Our planned rations ended up being too lean given the difficulty of the trip and we both lost eight pounds en route. We used a reflector oven daily, making bannock to supplement our dehydrated meals. We covered approximately 210 km in total.

We carried a tent and a Cooke Custom Sewing Tundra Tarp. In hindsight, we could have left the tent at home. Algonquin campsites are consistently maintained and suitable for the Tundra Tarp. It proved comfortable, weather proof, and conducive to early rising, especially when pitched facing the sunrise.

I adapted the following text from Rob's trip journal, written on his set of laminated maps with a Sharpie marker.

Day One - July 1, 2009

We put in at Tim Lake in rain. Good time was made on the water and we passed our first intended stop, Rosebary Lake, by 2:30 pm. We stopped at the Pine River Farm portage and campsite when the rain finally stopped. The site was in good shape but there were a tonne of mosquitoes. We quickly made some barley soup

and took shelter for the first and only time in the tent.

Day Two - July 2, 2009

We left the mosquito-infested Tim River campsite early. Lots of wildlife was sighted including six moose, one whitetail deer, and lots of herons. We reached Big Trout Lake by 1:00 pm and were thankful to be off the buggy, rainy river. I made some bannock with the reflector oven to eat later with supper. We set up the tundra tarp and spent most of the evening there due to rain. Rob won the first game of Grandma Lily's Rummy of the trip. Grandma Lily's Rummy, named after my Scottish grandmother, is the game that has replaced Euchre on Summer School Brotherhood trips because any number of players can join in. We decided to sleep in the tundra tarp as well.

Day Three - July 3, 2009

We were up early after a rough night in the tundra tarp because we hadn't perfected our bug proofing methods yet. The tundra tarp has no floor, but sides that extend to the ground and a cuff around the inside perimeter. We laid a simple tarp as a floor, over the cuff, and piled gear and packs along the screen front to keep the bugs out. We were fine once we fine-tuned our method. On our trip into Longer Lake, we met a summer-camp group at the north end who was seven days into a 12-day trip. With a little confusion finding the 40 m portage, we hopped into the next set of rapids and ran them without a bump. The long 750 m portage into Lake LaMuir had mosquitoes, deerflies, and horseflies, but was manageable. We arrived at Lake LaMuir, our destination for the night, but decided



Our route on the map, done!

to keep moving since the weather was ominous. We trolled with steel line unsuccessfully for almost the entire length of the lake. The sun shone and the wind kept the bugs at bay while portaging to the next lake. We traveled through the cattail marsh on the west side of Hogan Lake and had to fight waves as it opened to the lake proper. We made our way to the first campsite we saw. Luckily, the breezy, open hemlock-island site had minimal bugs, and lots of room for the tundra tarp. It also had plenty of deadfalls that we used for baking. We dried everything, made a stir-fry, and mentally prepared for the 3750m portage that started the next day.

Day Four - July 4, 2009

A light mist and rain greeted us on the water early the next day. At least the rain and cool weather kept us from overheating on the long portage to Big Crow Lake. The plan was to walk in 15 minute shifts, switching between one carrying the heavy pack, and the other carrying the light pack along with the canoe. We switched loads six times over the length of the portage and found some sunglasses and a rain jacket. The whole portage took us an hour and a half. When we arrived at Big Crow we had the wind at our backs and decided to look for the crew who may have lost their equipment. I spotted four canoes on the southwest side of the lake who looked like they were leaving so we paddled furiously for about 15 minutes before we could get their attention. Unfortunately, the equipment was not theirs, but they said that they would drop it off at the Ranger's depot on their way out. Rob and I paddled to the west side of the lake for lunch and quickly decided to move on since Big Crow was very open and windy. It would have meant setting up camp before noon without being able to fish or relax due to poor weather conditions. After a quick lunch, we started down the Crow River. The river had seven portages, displayed good brook trout potential, and surprised us with two bull moose, but we just wanted to get through the river portion. We decided to paddle to Lake Lavielle, where Crow Bay empties into the main basin, and found a picturesque campsite. So, after approximately 25 km (6 km of portages), we set up camp and decided that we would rest for a while, and hopefully catch some fish.

Day Five - July 5, 2009

We were tired. We didn't get to sleep until 11:00 pm but we woke at 5:00 am to a glorious sunrise. I spent 30 minutes getting eaten by mosquitoes capturing the sight. It was a leisurely day with us trolling along the north side of Lavielle without one single bite. By the time we had paddled to the east side to find another campsite, the wind had picked up and the lake was rocking. We trolled once around the largest island on the east side of the lake and settled on a campsite on the northwest side which was sheltered in a bay, but still received the northwest winds to keep the mos-



2013 Crossing of the Algonquin Park from North to South



Moose and calf on Big Trout Lake

quitoes away. Since we were awake so early that morning we started setting up this camp by noon. Both Rob and I were exhausted. After a three-hour nap Rob made a dinner. Still windbound and un-

able to fish, we relaxed and read.

Day Six - July 6, 2009

We woke to a windy morning on Lavielle and battled waves that lasted for 7 km on

our way to Dickson Lake. The portage to Dickson was effortless, but buggy. We had a difficult time finding the portage entrance to Little Crooked Lake, but finally managed to decipher an unmaintained trail that lead through a muddy marsh. The bugs were crazy on Little Crooked and the campsites poor. The temperature became noticeably colder. We decided to fish and see what the lake was like and within a half hour, we had our first brook trout. Rob caught the first fish and I caught two more on steel line. We decided to fish until noon and after a quick lunch on the water, we drifted around and managed to catch two more trout, one weighing three pounds. We kept the first three fish for dinner and portaged back to Dickson to find a campsite. Amazingly the rain, hail and windy weather that was so good for fishing on Little Crooked dissipated into cloudy, partly sunny weather on Dickson. By 3:30 pm we found a spacious, well maintained campsite on one of the northern islands, and enjoyed our trout with



4:25am on Lake Lavielle

some lentil soup. We baked some bannock and poppy seed cake for the next day's lunch and breakfast. Rob and I spent some time looking at our options for the next few days. We were considering whether to stay on the big lakes or smaller ones. In the end, we decided that we would play and make our choices on the fly.

Day Seven - July 7, 2009

This was a busy day. We were up early, ate lemon poppy seed loaf for breakfast, and then fished for about an hour without any luck. We broke camp and set out to see how far we could get. The lake was calm and the sky overcast. We crossed from Dickson to Little Dickson Lake, and had an early, buggy lunch on the water. The bugs motivated us to tackle the 2750m portage to Sundessa Lake. We met a solo canoeist on the Little Dickson portage who said that the big portage was not bad for the first half, but that the last bit into Sundessa was rough. We thought we could shave 1 km off the portage by putting into the unnamed lake halfway through, but we were wrong. We paddled across the unnamed lake but could not find an exit. After an hour of running up and down the portage route trying to find the exit, we gave up and carried our gear the entire distance. We were drained and exhausted. After Sundessa we did a 905 m portage into White Partridge Lake. The lake was calm, allowing us to cross to the east side with little effort. Shortly after setting up camp, the rain and wind picked up and Rob and I decided to nap and recoup our energy. We cooked hamburger and black bean enchiladas with salsa. We also had some chocolate pudding which was supposed to be chocolate brownies. Finding it too rich, I left it to Rob to finish.

Day Eight - July 8, 2009

We were on the water by 9:20 am and started a hard day of portaging. Overall, we covered approximately 14 km in distance, 7.4 km of which were portages. The first was a light 485 m uphill, the second, a 1135 m into North Branch Lake which looked to be a beautiful



Trout for lunch on Little Crooked Lake

brookie lake. Next, we faced the biggie, a 4775 m into Loonskin Lake. We had a good system of trading between the canoe and our packs and it took just over two hours to complete. The last portage into Barron Lake was a light 150 m, and by the time we got to camp we were exhausted. The day continued to warm up allowing us to attempt to dry out our clothes from the previous day. After a dinner of barley soup and cheese bannock, the rain started again,

and our clothes never did dry out. The evening was beautiful and calm with mist rising on the west side of the lake. Songbirds provided a soundtrack. Tranquil, peaceful, perfection.

Day Nine - July 9, 2009

We left Barron Lake feeling fairly well rested after the last few hard days. There was a beautiful mist on the water, and the sun shone. The first portage of the day started right next to our campsite. The



Camp on Dickson Lake

terrain was quite a bit rougher and the trails had not been cleared for some time. There were lots of crotch grabbers, or ticklers, along the way. At one point I was pinned on the ground after losing my balance wearing a pack, a canoe, and a fallen jack pine – too low to go under and too high to climb. We ate lunch at an old Ranger cabin on Wenda Lake, and recharged for the hot and sultry afternoon. We planned to camp on Upper Spectacle Lake, but discovered the campsites to be poor and buggy. We kept moving and camped on a beautiful site just outside of Carcajou Bay on Grand Lake. After a quick late afternoon nap and swim, I made black bean soup. Afterwards, we paddled over to Achray outpost where we met the staff member responsible for the poorly maintained trails. There was no pay phone at their office to check-in with Rob's family, so we had to beg to use their satellite phone. Rob managed to have a brief talk with his mom to give her our revised itinerary

– one more full day, and then out.

Day Ten - July 10, 2009

We awoke to a beautiful, sunny, clear morning, with the birds singing. Most of the campers with their motor boats were not awake yet on Grand Lake. We spent most of the day paddling for a change, and we enjoyed the leisurely tour down through Stratton Lake, St. Andrews Lake, and then through High Falls Lake, with only a few short portages. We arrived at Opalescent Lake, our planned destination, by noon, and enjoyed lunch on the water. Most of the sites were already taken so we decided to move on. After an easy 750 m portage into Bingham Lake we realized that we would be in a major traffic zone if we decided to stay, so once again, we moved further on down to the Barron River. After a few short portages, we cruised on down through the Barron Canyon, which left us in awe of the grand cliffs. The Barron River represents an old geological fault

zone with cliffs that are close to 400-500 m high. Halfway down the river we stopped and scrambled up to the Barron Canyon Trail that follows along the top edge. We took some photos and managed to get a cell phone signal so I could leave a birthday message for my wife, Kelly. We found a site and enjoyed our last evening in the park with the last of our rations, some soup and rice for dinner. Amazingly, all of our garbage fit into one ziploc bag.

Day Eleven - July 11, 2009

The storybook finish to the trip was not be, as we heard the rumblings of thunderstorms at around 5:30 am. We decided that we would push up our pickup time from noon and, instead of waiting through the rain, we would quickly finish the last 4 km of the Barron River and walk 2 km to the gate to phone Rob's wife, Lori-Ann, to arrange an early pick up. By 10:00 am Lori-Ann and Rob's dad were at the gate and we were on the road



Rob Coulas at 4,775 m portage on Day 8

before the rain really started again. We drove to Barry's Bay to recoup, eat, clean up, and visit Rob's family for a day and a half. We then were back on the road to travel across the park on Highway 60 to get my vehicle, and make our way home.

Crossing Algonquin: North to South

In the final days of the West to East trip, Rob and I light-heartedly spoke of crossing the park from north to south. In 2013, Rob Coulas, Ryan Dalziel, George Luck, and I set out to see how difficult a north to south crossing would be.

We knew the route would pass through some of the busiest areas in the park so the search for solitude was not a priority. We also knew we would pass through the least travelled section of the park, the southern panhandle, with few options for travel, unmaintained black portages, and warnings of impassable water levels. The pace of the trip would allow little time for fishing so only one trolling rod was brought along. We were interested in comparing the geography and flora of the north with the south, and determining why the south is so seldom visited.

We rented two light-weight Souris River Quetico canoes from Algonquin Basecamp Outfitters in Kearney to ease our portaging burden. Most of the portages, 40 km in total, were completed by leapfrogging in pairs. The pair further ahead would come back for another load while the pair behind would carry a load ahead. We used the Cooke Custom Sewing Tundra Tarp for sleeping and only were limited on Sproule Lake's small sites.

Rob and George planned breakfasts, Ryan and I planned lunches, and each of us prepared two suppers. I brought enough ingredients for ten bannocks, but only baked five with the reflector oven due to windy conditions. Unlike our first, we were not short of food.

We began most days paddling by 7:30 am, and chose campsites by 4:30 pm. Weather and temperatures were conducive to paddling. Our rain jackets and fleeces rarely saw use. We covered approximately 160 km in total, and were



Spider web on Barron Lake



Rob Coulas paddling on Barron River



Rob and Jamie at the Park map



Entering Petawawa river

exhausted most evenings. The following account is based on Rob's and my journal entries.

Day One: July 5, 2013

Wanting an early start, we camped at Kiosk, the access closest to the northern border of the park. Our route ran east to Brent paralleling the old rail bed, and then south. After an anxious and light sleep, we set out on a glassy Kioskokwi Lake at 7:30 am. We drifted and ate lunch on Little Cauchon Lake. On Little Cedar Lake, a cow and calf moose greeted us in the middle of the narrows. We reached Cedar Lake, our destination, after 31 km and were exhausted. Rob prepared supper, and after a well-needed clean-up swim, all were ready to sleep by 8:30 pm.

Day Two: July 6, 2013

Not being used to the exertion of paddling,

we slept late. We crossed Cedar Lake and began our first portage on the Petawawa River. 3600 m of portages this day helped us find our leap-frog portage system. We covered 11 km in total. We camped on an island at the south end of Catfish Lake. The lake name refers to an 1829 description of the fish caught here. Still tired, we discussed our progress and plan for the next day. We realized at this point that the weather and our fatigue levels could impact our completion of the route.

Day Three: July 7, 2013

Motivated to cover some distance, we were on the water by 7:30 am. Our day's set destination, Hogan Lake, was reached by 10:30 am, so we had a restful lunch on a campsite and made the decision to carry on to Big Crow Lake. The 3745 m portage began with a grueling 200 m long climb. Two hours later and plenty tired, we reached Big Crow Lake. The

wind was mild and the campsite selection poor, so we paddled to Little Crow Lake where we found a nice west-facing site. We covered 19 km, 7.5 km of portages. Rob made gnocchi, the last heavy meal, and we played Grandma Lily's Rummy. I won this round.

Day Four: July 8, 2013

Eager to tackle Opeongo Lake without wind and to escape a mosquito infested site, we set out early. We soon looked down a glassy Opeongo Lake. Three hours and four breaks later, we rested at the south end of the lake and contemplated the 3415 m portage ahead of us. Happy to get even further ahead of our schedule, we portaged to Sproule Lake. The trail started in a dense spruce lowland and climbed to a deciduous highland. We covered 28.5 km this day, 4810 m of portages. George and I selected a site while Rob and Ryan fished. Ryan

caught a splake which George added to his jambalaya. I baked a giant blueberry bran muffin. We spent the evening reviewing our progress and planning our next move.

Day Five: July 9, 2013

Now almost two days ahead of our original plan, we felt energized, but anticipated poor portages, low water levels, and fewer choice campsites in the south end of the park. We came up with three scenarios: complete the park crossing; make it to Cauliflower Lake and take out at Hay Lake; or back track and take out on Mud Lake. The last two scenarios would involve having Rob's father meet us to shuttle Rob back to our vehicle parked at Kingscote Lake. We were on the water early after a breakfast of Holy Crap, which tastes marginally better than it sounds. Five portages took us from a remote highland lake down to Kearney Lake Campground and busy Highway 60. From Kearney Lake, we crossed the highway and put in facing a headwind on Whitefish Lake. We stopped on a Whitefish Lake site for lunch. Another old rail bed, now a busy bike trail, ran behind the site. This busy portion of Algonquin Park was certainly a contrast to the solitude we found a few days earlier. We paddled south, through a narrows dotted with old cottages, into Rock Lake, past Algonquin's only pictographs, and continued south to Pen and Clydegale Lakes. On Pen Lake, we met a camp group who needed to borrow George's satellite messenger to make arrangements to evacuate a camper. We wished them luck and raced to a site on Clydegale Lake to beat oncoming rain. Fortunately, the storm missed us and we were able to clean up and enjoy Shepherd's Pie for supper. This day, we covered 24 km, 4.5 km of portages. We relaxed on our site looking south down the Madawaska River valley. This was going to be the first section of the trip with very little information available to us. The pressure was off as we had built up enough time to face any unknown challenges. We were in the tundra tarp early and heard wolves howling down the

river valley.

Day Six: July 10, 2013

We woke up to high winds and threatening rain. Excited and on the water by 8 am, we took two attempts to find the mouth of the river. Once travelling up the river, we relaxed and enjoyed the new scenery. The portages were marked and had been travelled recently, at least by moose and wolves. The 1300 m Cauliflower Creek portage eventually turned into an ATV trail. The creek, however, was too narrow and low for easy navigation, so we took the advice of Jeff's Map (found online) and portaged around it on the logging road. The extra 2200 m saved us some time. We sat for lunch by the road, and continued down the creek to Cauliflower Lake. After a rest on Cauliflower Lake, we portaged to Hay Creek where we met two fishermen who shared some knowledge of the area. By 5 pm, after portaging 8300 m, we reached our campsite on Hay Lake. The site had been recently burned, probably by a campfire on a windy day like this one. Due to the winds, we didn't bake, but did play a round of Grandma Lily's Rummy. George put together a wipeout with jacks to steal the win from Ryan.

Day Seven: July 11, 2013

We were on the water early to start the most anticipated portion of the trip. Four portages totaling 4150 m in the morning brought us to Billings Lake. The trails were seldom used, but long ago, many sections may have been busy winter logging roads. We floated and ate lunch on Billings Lake. Billings Lake was named for Game Warden Jack Billings of Barry's Bay. In January 1926, he and Warden Joseph Stringer patrolled what was then known as Sand Lake in search of reported poachers. The Warden's remains were found in the burned out cabin at the north end of the lake. The cause of their deaths remains a mystery. The much-anticipated York River began at a massive beaver dam. Hesitantly, we slid the boats down the most open area and were pleased to have more than enough water to float. Before we knew it, the river widened into Branch Lake, which flowed into Byers Lake, our final night's destination. The total of 18.5 km were covered; 6600 m portaged. We ate four freeze-dried meals, played frisbee golf, skipped stones, and even fired off a jubilant bear banger. The last game of rummy went to Ryan.



Ryan Dalziel in hammock on Catfish Lake



Setting out from Catfish Lake

Day Eight: July 12, 2013

We awoke to a beautiful morning and packed one final time. Our paddle strokes were strong and true as we made short work of the last two portages and lakes. By 10 am, we climbed out of our boats at the Kingscote Lake Access, all pretty darn proud of our accomplishment. We assembled the canoe racks, loaded Rob's van, took one final photo, and were on the road. A quick stop at the permit office was followed by a Hungry Man's Breakfast at a Wilberforce diner. Muted news televisions on each table let us know what we had or had not missed while away. We wove through Haliburton and up to Dorset, catching Hwy 60. An hour later, we dropped off our rentals and Ryan in Kearney. George, Rob, and I continued on to the starting point, Kiosk, to retrieve my truck. We stopped for supper at Legends in North Bay and set a course for home.



Approximately 5 km from Waubashene,

Crossing Hwy 60



Grandma Lily's rummy in the tundra tarp

my canoe trailer blew a tire. Spurred on by the desire to get home, we had the tire changed in 15 minutes, and continued on. We parted ways at Waubashene and all went home to rest. In retrospect, on the longer west to east trip, we encountered

fewer people, more wildlife, and faced fewer but longer portages. The route could be paddled in all but the worst of drought seasons. On the shorter north to south trip, we encountered people almost every day, lots of evidence of the rich

human history in the park, and many more portages. Low water levels in the southern section would certainly impede the trip. The Algonquin Park founders of 1893 would be pleased to know such expeditions are still possible and done.



North end of Billings Lake



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Published by the Wilderness Canoe Association
Nastawgan is an Anishinabi word meaning “the way or route”

The WILDERNESS CANOE ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization made up of individuals interested in wilderness travel, mainly by canoe and kayak, but also including backpacking and winter trips on both skis and snowshoes. The club publishes a quarterly journal,

Nastawgan, to 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.

Recognition Program for Outings Organizers

The WCA greatly appreciates the contribution that our outings organizers make to the success of our club.

In recognition of the personal contribution of these members who organize outings for the club on a regular basis over extended periods of time, the WCA will reimburse these organizers for fees to complete outdoors and paddling related courses that improve their outdoors technical and leadership skills, and contribute to the enhancement, enjoyment, and safety of our outings program in general.

Examples of courses that would be eligible for reimbursement are:

1. Basic First Aid
2. Wilderness First Aid
3. River Rescue Courses

Outings organizers would be eligible for reimbursement on the following basis:

- An organizer who has organized a minimum of three listed WCA outings in the previous calendar year can qualify for a single flat payment of \$50.00 as reimbursement towards fees paid for any approved course passed.

- For a minimum of three outings per year in each of the past two years, the payment is increased to \$100.00

- For a minimum of three outings per year in each of the past three years, the organizer can qualify for the plan maximum of a \$200.00 fee repayment.

The program is for reimbursement of course fees only and the payment amount cannot exceed the cost of fees paid. Should the applicant choose a course

with fees exceeding the reimbursement amount for which the organizer qualifies, then the payment is a partial fee reimbursement.

There is a limit of one course per member per year, with the exception of re-certifications. For example, one could qualify for reimbursement for a first aid re-certification, plus a first-time river rescue course.

Currently there is an annual budget of \$1,500 allocated for payments under the WCA Outings Organizer Recognition Program, and payments are on a first-come, first-served calendar year basis. However, organizers who complete courses after the year's annual budget has been used up can apply for payment in the following calendar year.

Applicants should apply to the Outings Committee to confirm course reimbursement eligibility. After course completion, they must provide a copy of the receipt for fee payment, along with a copy of the certificate showing successful course completion.

More Articles Wanted

Consider submitting your story – they are all worth sharing, no matter how “big” or “small” your trip was. Glad to help, if help is needed. Reach out to Aleks Gusev, Editor, for encouragement, tips & tricks!

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

Events Calendar

Wilderness and Canoe Symposium will take place on 23-24 February 2018. Location remains the same – Monarch Park Collegiate at 1 Hanson Street. Details at www.wcsymposium.com

WCA AGM is planned for Saturday, 3rd March, 2018. Visit WCA website for more details.



Northern Style

By Robert Perkins

Claire and I ventured North for our honeymoon in 2008. We drove from our home in southern Utah to Yellowknife. Being English, she had not seen much of the West. We took two weeks to drive the 2,700 miles, and finally arrived to stay in Yellowknife with friends Pat and Ray Weber. It felt good to stretch our legs. Along with other friends, they were as curious to meet Claire as she was to meet them. They asked what rivers she had canoed? They asked how many years she had been paddling? They asked a lot of questions and were surprised by her an-

*On a day without bugs,
she put on what she thought
was an improvement
right there at the side of the
Baillie River.*

swers. She said, I've never canoed a river. I have never paddled before. Rob asked me to spend four days with Laurie Gullion, a canoe instructor in New Hampshire. Other than that, I've had little experience in a canoe. My friends became concerned for her and said, "Why not stay in Yellowknife? Let Rob go on his own. That's his thing. You stay with us, where you'll be safe."

Our plan was to canoe the Baillie River, a sweet one-hundred-and-ten miles of tributary to the Great Fish, or Back River. The Baillie doesn't have many dangerous rapids or portages. Mostly single lines, the rapids are easy to pick your way through. The river is sandy and good denning for wolves and bears, and the bird life is phenomenal. We planned to travel three weeks. I was confident Claire would be fine.

The first evening of our honeymoon on the Baillie River, Claire and I stayed where the floatplane dropped

us. We set up the tent, secured the canoe. I found a protected spot to build our fire. While I sorted through our bags, getting out our first meal, Claire went to collect kindling. I said stay near camp. Don't wander off.

In Yellowknife, we talked about what to do if a bear appeared. Claire wore bear spray strapped on a belt outside her parka. I said, stand your ground. I said you have to wait until the bear is very close to spray him in the face. Otherwise, the spray carries off on the wind. The bear can outrun you, no matter how fast you move. Make yourself look as big as possible. Blow the whistle you carry tied around your neck. Blow it in a threatening manner. We reviewed all this after the plane left us.

When I heard the high-pitched frantic whistle blowing, I was bent over the wannigan and looked up and saw the bear with its head in the air, sniffing, inland from Claire. She was running toward camp, blowing the whistle and waving her arms. The bear lowered itself on all fours, and then, more curious than fast, began loping after her.

I jumped over the wannigan. As I ran toward Claire, fumbling with the safety on my bear spray, I yelled and yelled again. As I approached her, Claire slowed to a walk waiting for me to reach her. When I flew right by, her eyes widened and her look was disbelief and then horror. Yelling and flapping my arms, I ran straight at the bear, madly hoping to change its mind.

Bears in the tundra are not used to people. They're not sure what we are, but they're curious. Running away and acting frantic tips the scale toward you being something to eat. It's an automatic response. However, something running right at you? Something waving its arms and making threatening noises? The bear stopped and sat

down. I kept coming. This was the moment. The bear had to decide between attacking or running away. The bear chose to run. Twenty yards from Claire, I watched the bear bound off. Hands on my knees, breathing hard, I keeled over. I was so afraid, I began to shake and laugh, rolling side to side on the ground. Claire walked up and looked down at her newly-minted husband lying on the ground, maniacally laughing. In her mind, a bear had almost eaten her. She fell to her knees and gave me one long, hard kiss.

Later in our trip, she surprised me. She came from London and cared about what she wore. She hated canoeing gear. She felt it was demeaning to the feminine form, and not attractive: the loose pants, the layers of bulky gear, the boots. On a day without bugs, she put on what she thought was an improvement; right there at the side of the Baillie River.

She was right.



Finding Meaning in Quetico

Story by Iori Miller

Photos by Iori Miller and Gary James

(with quotes by H.D. Thoreau)



Negotiating the first of many beaver dams

There is magic in how things somehow fall into place. In January of 2017 I found, online, a reference to a Wilderness Canoe Symposium soon to be held in Toronto. At that time, I was in Guatemala and had to ask for help signing up because I am a little bit luddite. When at the symposium I listened to many speakers sharing their adventures and thought, “Hey why not get back into canoe tripping?” I retired from teaching a few years ago, bought some waterfront acreage north of Bancroft on the York River, given up the shackles and grind that go with having a career, and was

spending a lot of time in the bush on my new ‘wilderness property’ (130 acres on the York River surrounded by the Egan Chutes Provincial Park). But my canoes had been hung up in the log barn I inherited when I bought the property. I was busy working on the land but I wasn’t paddling. So, I attended the symposium and became inspired to join the Wilderness Canoe Association (WCA). Everything seemed to change with that and I haven’t looked back.

The wonderful thing about the WCA is that you can go online and find other people who want to be outdoors. Within

a month of the symposium I had signed up for three trips. The last of these was an August trip in Quetico Provincial Park. On this trip, I found myself reflecting on ‘why we as humans love to journey into the wild’, and ‘why does the mere mention of the word wilderness cause me to pause.’ I’d like to share some of these reflections here.

In 2016 Ontario Parks posed a challenge for Canadians to visit 3 specific parks in three summers. One member of the WCA read of this and answered the challenge. He posted on the WCA website his desire to form a group to begin



Jeff Haymer and his thoughts on Pictograph Meaning

with Quetico Provincial Park in the summer of 2017. The eight people interested, by pairs, included: Bernadette Farley and Gary James, Agata Wisniowska and Marcin Komorowski, Meir Bester and Jeff Haymer, Fariya Doctor and myself. It's a marvel that 8 people who know little of each other can gel into a tripping community. But that's what happens on a wilderness canoe trip. You can begin as strangers, work out your differences, and often end up with lasting tried and tested friendships. There are few activities that can boast the same results.

Friends... they cherish one another's hopes. They are kind to one another's dreams.

The trip began with numerous meetings to plan food and gear. The second stage was a day-and-a-half to the Quetico environ. Then we met outside of the park at the Quetico College for our final pack-



A quiet paddle between the many big lakes



Agata and Marcin on one of many lift-overs

ing, a great steak dinner and had a few wobbly pops, and finally an early morning shuttle with a local outfitter. We launched from the Nym Lake access point and paddled to our first portage – 830 m to Batchewaung Lake. Our first day featured sunshine and gentle breezes. Immediately it became apparent to me that Quetico is gorgeous. Everywhere are

metamorphic and plutonic rocks cradling a flora of majestic red and white pine forests. Before the trip I'd heard Quetico described as Algonquin West. Yet the fact that it is big, easily accessible, and chockablock full of canoe routes and camp sites is where the comparison ends. While Algonquin's portages and sites are all clearly marked, Quetico's are not. And



Fariya, Marcin, Agata, and Bernadette keeping a smile on!

there are no thunderboxes to give you a civilized excretory experience. You need to come better prepared and be a little bit more hardy. Quetico is less busy than Algonquin, and with less signage and campsite amenities you get a little more of a wilderness experience and a lot more privacy.

“I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself than be crowded on a velvet cushion.”

On our first night we experienced our first group challenge – setting up camp. Who does what? Will everyone pull their own weight? And our first testy moment – how to organize dish washing! Do you really need potable water just to wash dishes? Do you really need a final Dettol rinse? But after that night we became a finely honed machine. Compromise is communication.

Quetico is significant in that it is near the southern edge of the Canadian Shield, an exposed 1000-mile expanse of ancient Precambrian rock. Some of the oldest exposed rocks in the world inhabit this landscape. Few reflect that while you paddle the Quetico waters the rocks about you were formed under many kilometers of mountains that have long ago been eroded away. These rocks are ancient! Most formed at a time when life on Earth was nonexistent and the cratons of the continents were in their infancy. Atop of this now exists a large number of “young” (oligotrophic) lakes (only tens of thousands of years old) rich in their ecological diversity yet not in nutrients. The Ojibwa peoples who occupied the area at the time of the European invasion found plenty of food in the forests and in the waters of what is now known as Quetico. To paddle this ancient landscape for two weeks left me with a sense of being wholly alive. There is a synergetic relationship between the natural flow of water and how we move in wilderness.

“Life in us is like the water in a river.”

There is little evidence today of the fact that the forests of Quetico once sup-

ported a rich population of native peoples. Yet on day three of our journey as we paddled west out of McAlpine Creek and into Quetico Lake we had an opportunity to take a peek into history. Upon a south facing concave outcrop, protected from the elements, we found a rich display of ancient pictographs. With the higher water levels found this summer, we were able to paddle right up to them and closely see the details left by the ancient artists that still lived naturally on the land only a few hundred years ago. The contents of those pictographs appear at first to be little more than the scribbles of neophyte artists for they are only stick figures of animals, canoes, and their own peoples. But truthfully many of these images held significant meanings to their makers. They were made out of reverence to the spirits and realities within their existence. They were painted as their creators made meaning out of their experience of Quetico, their whole world. On my third trip this summer I found myself less focused on the news, social media, bills, and more on the rhythms of our daily activities — waking, packing, eating, paddling, making camp, preparing meals, sleeping. Repeat.

On Quetico lake we took a day to rest and soak up some of the ambiance of one of the biggest lakes in the Park. There were other canoeists around us but thankfully no power boats to destroy the silence. A few of us tried fishing but had little luck there. In fact, it was the first grey day we had on our journey, and we had a chance to bake a cake with the wild blueberries we'd picked and drink an extra cup of coffee in the morning!

The next day was a full day of big lake paddling, across the east – west expanse of Quetico Lake. Knowing the prevailing wind directions, we had talked many times of sailing our canoes on this day. Nope. It was dead calm; we were caught in the mid-Quetico doldrums and we had to paddle it all under a hot sun. Our lunch stop that day provided a memorable wildlife sighting we'll never forget. Already on the trip we had seen quite a few bald eagles, most far away and soaring high in the sky, but while stopped

for lunch, we sat on a sunny peninsula across from an outcrop where an eagle stood with a large fish. To our surprise it was soon joined by four others ... and all of them began to show interest in the fish! We had a front row seat for a good 20 minutes and watched the eagles perform various aerial maneuvers. Knowing that my point and click waterproof Fuji camera wouldn't get a close up of the eagle activity I chose to capture the camera activity of the humans on shore before me. Suddenly, Jeff spun around and aimed his camera over my head ... one of the eagles had landed in the tree right above us!

During the middle days of our trip we made our way through a series of smaller lakes. Other than our first portage, all our portages to this point were less than half a kilometer in length. Though a little muddy from recent rains, all of these portages were very easy to navigate with no extreme elevation changes. The weather was good, the water was warm, the bugs were agreeable, the food was yummy. Repeat.

While making our way east and south from Quetico Lake to Sturgeon Lake, two of the larger lakes in the Park, we passed through some smaller lakes and through some marshy rivers adorned with some Beaver dams. These were taken as 'pass overs' as this year's higher waters allowed us to avoid some of the smaller portages. Here I remember en-



A bald eagle checks us out

joying the sight of rich littoral zones rife with diverse plant and insect communities. I have noticed in southern Ontario where these areas are diminished by the wakes produced by overpowered motorboats. In Quetico they see canoes but no motorboats (I think native peoples can still use them on the bigger lakes), and they are accentuated in extent by the action of beavers. It made me sad to think of how our governments still allow motorboats in many of our provincial parks. It makes you wonder, 'why are people in such a rush to get out into nature?' By



Canoe yoga



Evening sun

looking for the easiest way to enjoy nature we often cause it and ourselves to deviate from our natural states.

“The path of least resistance leads to crooked rivers and crooked men.”

I remember also that while we paddled in these narrow waters we came upon some groups of young American paddlers (one

was a Boy Scout troop) who had come up from the Boundary waters and were going to finish their routes on Canadian shores. I personally had a little fun pulling up beside them and with a straight face I asked them to show their passports, and also if they wished to declare if they were bringing any alcohol or cigarettes into the country. I got a few smiles as well as a few confused looks.

Coming into Sturgeon Lake two things struck me. First, it’s important to be playful and enjoy the camaraderie of the group experience. Here we took the time to practice our canoe yoga, for which Agata and Marcin won the award for the most limber and creative displays. Second striking realization was that the whole north shore was recovering from a fire that had ravaged the forest perhaps a decade ago. The forest there was almost entirely composed of short, dense Poplar. And popping up through this were the sad, blackened sticks of the pines that formerly comprised the forest. Sure, fire is a reality in the Boreal forest biome, and should be tolerated in the Park, but it’s still a little sad to see the extent of the damage it does to a natural forest. It struck me at that moment that through our experience of witnessing five normally solitary bald eagles fighting each other over a fish meal, or witnessing the significant damage of a fire on a forest, we witness wilderness more in its real state than in the postcard sunsets that we all strive to capture on our trips. It’s the furiousness of raw nature in all its forms that makes me feel alive when I witness it.



Best part of the day – feasting after a long day of paddling.

Paddling the length of Sturgeon Lake took another full day and a half, but after that we paddled south and east into Russell Lake for we were setting ourselves up for another layover day. To do this we had to paddle up Russell Rapids. Some of us had little white water experience and so this was a bit of a challenge. On our day off we paddled empty canoes south to Chatterton Falls, and a few of us played in the wave train below to get a bit more experience with white water. The wave train here is pretty uniform and big enough to practice crossing back and forth across an eddy line. With our PFDs on this was a fun and safe experience. Chatterton Falls itself is actually three sets of cascading rapids. Definitely not novice material, although I suspect whitewater kayakers would love it! There is an area on the middle section where large pine logs hung up on the river edge some time in the past when logging was still active in the Park. This verdant green mass of mossy confusion is a real experience to walk over as there is a serious amount of water still flowing beneath and through the chaotic log jam. The logs are slippery and falling through would be scary. This was the only time in the trip where I found myself rubbing shoulders with poison ivy. I didn't notice it at first, but luckily I survived it unscathed.

Marcin and I caught our first fish at Chatterton Falls. And so we added a bit of fresh pike and smallmouth bass to two dinners while we were there. I also started to take stock in the quality of campsites in Quetico. A plethora of beautiful, majestic rocky peninsula campsites are found among tall red and white pine. The sites truly seemed to be getting better and better as the trip progressed. I also began to appreciate knowing that these forests don't just exist on the rims of the lakes, as they do where logging still occurs in many other Ontario Parks (Algonquin, Missinaibi, etc.).

Unfortunately, as there are no thunderboxes in Quetico, some minefields of toilet paper are found in the forests just beyond the better and highly used camp-



The Quetico doldrums

site boundaries. It struck me that often when we leave our homes we seem unable to cope with our own wastes. What do we do when we can't just put it to the curb, or flush it?

“Our houses are such unwieldy property that we are often imprisoned rather than housed by them.”

After leaving the Chatterton Falls area we were in the last few days of our trip and were swinging back up north to our takeout near the main highway. From then on it became apparent that, as a general rule, we were making our way up-

stream. In retrospect, considering Quetico is adjacent to the US border it is interesting to note that throughout the entire extent of our trip in the northern half of Quetico we were in the southern most extent of the Hudson Bay watershed. All the waters we paddled would eventually escape the Canadian Shield into Hudson Bay. I also noticed that while the weather had become a bit cooler the mosquitoes were becoming a bit more feisty. Fortunately, we also had more breeze. In fact, we actually were now concerned about becoming windbound on our last big lake, Pickerel Lake. Yet it turned out that we were just experiencing local wind



Hiking along one of the cascades at Chatterton Falls



The last of our clean clothes

tunneling affects and the breeze on Pickerel Lake was harmless in intensity. We were still seeing a lot of bald eagles but they were more solitary.

We took out on Stanton Bay, 154 km and 12 days after our start on Nym Lake. As only ten of those days were tripping days, we had averaged 15 km/day. By the end I really noticed how routine our camp organization was and in truth, how simple and easy things became. We generally shared all the camp routines, and the patterns were simple. I reflected on this a lot. I felt stronger and stronger as the trip progressed. The portages were long and frequent enough that I was able to really push myself. Also, the meals were nutritionally satisfying and big enough that I never felt hungry. In fact, on occasion, I had to ‘take one for the team’ and finish the seconds so that there was nothing left that would have had to be disposed of or burned. Our days became routine; we arose about the same time every day and each night I was tired enough from the day’s activities that upon turning in I fell asleep immediately and slept like a baby. And most importantly there was enough coffee to

have a healthy cuppa every morning throughout the trip, with a second on the layover days.

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to confront only the essential facts of life...”

Dare I suggest that canoe tripping is a mirror of the life we want to live? To live with simplicity, with purpose, where every day has a modicum of challenge. You keep all your stuff, all that you need, organized and immediately available. All of your entertainment is immediately in front of you, all your responsibilities are easily taken care of as long as you tackle them right away. And it’s cheap. But above all, when else in your life can you claim you ‘have everything you need’?

“Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail.”

I began this trip with my partner of nine years (who had never spent more than two nights consecutively in a tent) and a group of strangers who, truthfully, I barely knew. Now I have a whole new

group of friends whom I know honestly and genuinely, and my relationship with my partner is far richer from this Quetico experience. Wilderness paddling affords one the satisfaction of living simply and deliberately, with time to make meaning of our actions and their consequences. If only the rest of our lives were that simple.

Final Thought

Present-day wilderness adventuring is very planned. Participants have a map for every moment, know where every rapid and the according portage around it will be, generally know where their tent will be every night, and even before the trip know pretty much what will be traveling down their throats every meal moment of the day. I might argue that organization and safety has lessened the opportunity for surprise and wonder on a trip. I would further argue that a neophyte tripper experiences more wonder and ‘goose bump moments’ than a seasoned one. For me, all this planning sometimes seems like too much of a good thing.

“Not till we are lost, in other words not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations.”

Photographing French River

Story by Ron Mantay

Photos by Marilyn Sprissler, Fred Emery and Ron Mantay



A large Inuksuk spotted on the shores of French River Main Outlet



Marilyn in her high performance solo boat



Marilyn paddling to the portage above Dalles Rapids and observing the remains of an Alligator Steam Engine on the shore

A corporate restructuring in 2017 allowed me to plan a carefree fall for the first time in decades. I recalled how much fun my wife and I had on canoe trips with other members of the Wilderness Canoe Association back in the early 1990's and thought it might be a great idea to rejoin the WCA to find paddling partners on relatively short notice. Since my wife, family and friends were busy in their jobs, I posted a WCA canoe outing called "Photographing French River" planned for July 17-22, 2017.

This was, for me, a leap of faith, since I'd organized and led many canoe trips, but only for friends and family to this point. What would it be like paddling and camping with total strangers? Would it be fun? Might I regret it? I was not in my "comfort zone", but in the spirit of exploring, I felt this opportunity was worth a try.

Thankfully, two outstanding WCA members signed-up for my trip within a couple of weeks, and we got straight into planning mode. Although I paddled the French River many times since 1980 (and got engaged to my lovely wife on the French River in 1990 while paddling with friends), Fred Emery and Marilyn Sprissler had never paddled the French River, but were interested to tick that checkbox on their lists. And since French River was Canada's first designated Heritage River, it seemed like a great canoe route for Canada 150.

During our trip planning discussions, Fred and Marilyn very quickly impressed me with their responsible, knowledgeable and very mature approach. We all brought plenty of experience, gear and good food to the trip as well as healthy doses of humor throughout. Marilyn and Fred were especially great at preparing healthy and tasty dehydrated food for the trip. All of us were members of photography clubs and brought our interchangeable lens cameras and tripods along.

We met at my cottage on the French River (on Eighteen Mile Bay), and the next morning we drove to the canoe launch point. Thankfully, Marilyn surveyed the French River before arriving at my cottage, and expressed concerns about the water levels and associated strong currents in the narrows of the French River where highway 69 crosses the river. And although we had planned to start and finish our trip from French River Supply Post on July 17, we all agreed to revise our trip, such that we would start and finish our trip from Hartley Bay Marina. We weren't the least bit concerned at the reduced kilometers and portages that this trip revision presented – it would allow for more time to relax and photograph French River! Our trip was the classic "figure of eight" trip along



Fred taking photos below Dalles Rapids



Fred captured this great image at dusk on Obstacle Island at Campsite # 718



An Inukshuk near Obstacle Island

French River Main Outlet, the shores of Georgian Bay and French River Eastern Outlet.

Marilyn paddled in her solo canoe, while Fred and I paddled in his tandem canoe. We left the dock at Hartley Bay Marina at about 11am on Monday and paddled about 14 km to our first campsite at The Elbow (campsite #622). It was during this first day that we learned to adapt our paddling speeds and camping procedures in a way that optimized group dynamics, performance and morale.

On Tuesday, we paddled along the French River main outlet and portaged Dalles Rapids, a scenic and dangerous rapid, which has taken a number of lives over the years. Dalles Rapids is a great spot for photography, and one could easily spend several hours scouting various shooting angles under various sun angles. While here, we photographed the rusted remains of a steam engine used in Alligator Boats during the French River logging era (1870 to 1920). Indeed there are several places along the French River where historic artifacts can be explored.

We continued towards Georgian Bay and then south-east along the very scenic and island-studded shores of Georgian Bay. Although I navigated this section some 27 years ago with relative ease using only topographic maps, it felt more difficult this time. Perhaps we relied too much on a Garmin GPS, which acted erratically. Perhaps our declining visual acuity was a factor. Perhaps we were more focused on photography than on navigation. In any case, we found ourselves on an island trying to coax the GPS into behaving normally, and carefully reviewing the maps again. The GPS eventually provided enough guidance to confirm our map reading conclusions, and we continued along towards campsite #718 on Obstacle Island.

We camped for 2 nights on Obstacle Island and enjoyed a full day of relaxation, exploration and photography in the area. Perhaps Wednesday, July 19 was the true highlight of our trip – perfect weather, amazing scenery, carefree paddling, great food and some nice social time with new friends. It was wonderful to have such an aimless day, with ample time to smell the air, absorb the views, listen to nature's sounds, reflect on life and dream about future adventures.

On Thursday, July 20 we paddled up the French River Eastern Outlet via two short portages (instead of the tramway, which is now on private property) and through Bass Lake, before stopping for lunch on a small island. While dining on the rocks, we were treated to a bald eagle soaring overhead for a couple of minutes – but our expensive cameras and lenses were safely stowed in our canoes, of course! We then paddled past Canal Island and arrived at campsite # 611. We camped for 2 nights at this location, and enjoyed another full day of relaxation and photography. Once again, our relaxed and aimless pace

was heavenly – I felt like a kid again!

This trip reminded me how wonderful it can be to take risks, share wilderness adventures with new people, take the time to be at peace in nature, and to schedule some carefree time into our busy lives. I believe that this be-

comes even more important as we become empty nesters, semi-retired, or fully retired from paid work. As Max Ehrman wrote in Desiderata – “Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence”.



Peacefully reflecting on life and future adventures



A perfect morning for exploring and photography at Campsite # 611



A beautiful place near the Tramway – a short paddle from Obstacle Island



One of hundreds of Water Lilies next to Campsite # 611



The Tramway, now on private property, is no longer available for public use



Paddling and shooting along French River Eastern Outlet

The Green River: A Trip Back in Time

Story and photos by Mike McClelland



Green River from the canyon rim

The Green River is about as green as the New River is new, (it's the third oldest river in the world). The only green you'll see is a thin ribbon along the banks of the river which consists of a few cottonwoods, willows and a lot of tamarisk or salt cedar. The tamarisk is a non-native invasive species in the American Southwest brought here from Eurasia for use in streambank stabilization, a bad idea to say the least. There is only one dam on the Green in its 730 mile course from the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming through Colorado to Utah. It is the major tributary of the Colorado River which eventually flows through the Grand Canyon.

We canoed the last 97 miles (156 km) of the Green to its confluence with the Colorado this year between September 12 and 21. Our team consisted of Hunter and Devi Sharp from North Carolina, Lisa Benish from Virginia and my wife Susan and I from Tennessee. September is considered the month for canoeing the Green due to cooler temps and still-good water levels. Spring flows cover many campsites located on sand bars and summer temps are unbearable. If you ever consider this trip apply for your permit early in the year. We applied in late March and had a choice of only two put-in dates left.

We used Tex's Riverways, Moab, Utah as our outfitter for drop-off, pick-up and groover rental. I would definitely use these guys again. They were very professional and entertaining as well. Canyonlands National Park, through which half of the trip passes thru, recommends carrying one gallon of water per day per person to be carried due to heavy siltation in the river and possible agricultural contaminants from upstream. We carried 50 gallons and poured out 18 at the end of the trip. We used collapsible buckets to settle out the sediment for dish washing and solar showers. Also of note, we carried a small bottle of alum to help with settling suspended solids in the river water. If you haven't tried this before it really speeds up the process.



Group photo



Hunter solo under cliff wall

Flow is decent, we averaged paddling roughly 4 mph or over 6 km/h. There is really only one rapid of note and it's a class one riffle. Based on the advice of Hunter and Devi who had done this trip 10 years ago, we took our kevlar Wenonah Champlain and Spirit II. Both canoes proved excellent for this river. Headwinds can be significant in the afternoon as temperatures rise in the canyon. We always had an early start getting those miles in early which also gives one the choice of best campsite. Due to the permitting system, on some days we saw only one or two parties but depending on layover days and scarcity of campsites in some areas we saw as many as six or seven parties.

Signs of ancient civilizations here are amazing to say the least and very well preserved. Petroglyphs are viewable at several locations along the river and the granaries used by the Fremont Culture



Bonito Bend petroglyphs



Cliff dwelling



Turks Head



Granary

from the 7th to 12th centuries are numerous along with a couple of cliff dwellings. Be sure to pick up a copy of Belknap's Waterproof Canyonlands River Guide so you don't pass by any of these up! Exploration of these canyonlands by foot really makes this float trip extraordinary, another reason we took ten days to do only 97 miles.

Exploring Anderson Bottom was interesting for me due to the history of early settlement here. It seems Mr. Anderson attempted (emphasis on attempted) to settle here between 1909 and 1911. A spring flows in a large rock arch on the cliff wall and can be reached by a pretty good rock climb. Here he had chiseled out of the cliff face a rather large hole for water to collect in. You could easily fit a dozen people in there. He then drilled a hole in the low end for a pipe from which he could gravity flow the water to where it was needed. It still flows today and would be a good resupply point if you need it. Other than a dozen old horseshoes under a rock and the spring, I didn't see any other signs of Mr. Anderson or the few other ranchers who followed after him. The last was in the 1960's just before Congress established Canyonlands National Park. I did wonder how he could have herded his livestock here due to the surrounding cliffs. A trail down supposedly exists but we did not find it. Petroglyphs are found here also on the rock face at the west side of Bonito Bend. A huge overhanging cottonwood tree on the west bank provides an excellent campsite. The evening light on the cliff walls and the night sky were magical at most of our campsites.

The Turk's Head formation is a do-not-miss stopping point. We camped just downstream at Deadhorse Canyon to explore this area. A small cave here in the cliff at camp provides a commanding view of the river upstream and Turk's Head. This overhang also provides welcomed shade and in general is just a nice place to sit and think about it all!

The amount of red chert in this area was unbelievable. Flint chips literally covered the ground. Native Americans prized this rock for arrowheads and it must have been a destination point for them to collect it in this area. From here one can hike to Newspaper Rock, so named due to the amount of ancient graffiti found on one large rock set a part from the rest. Continue on from here past the Turk's Head to the end of the river bend where numerous ruins of old granaries and small cliff dwelling structures are found down close to the river bottom.

We stayed two nights at our last camp to do some exploration of the area. This was one of the few places you can climb out of the canyon and see the surrounding country. Aptly named Water Canyon it proved to be the only side stream with flow into the Green though it disappeared in places. This area of Utah has been in a drought and a fire ban was in effect. High up in this side canyon following the rock cairns we found a pool of sufficient size for a cool skinny dip. We hiked to the rim and took advantage of this oasis on the way down.

Up early as always, we begin our short last day of paddling down to the confluence of the Colorado with a quote by John Wesley Powell who passed here on July 17, 1869 – "Late in the afternoon the water becomes swift; an hour brings us to the junction of the Grand and the Green. These solemn depths, more than 1200 feet below the general surface of the country."

The Grand River? If you like rivers and you love maps you must dig a little deeper on that one! It seems in 1921 Congressman Edward Taylor of Colorado succeeded in petitioning Congress to change the Grand to the Colorado River. Most geographic conventions would not condone this with the Green being the longest tributary. Wyoming and Utah objected but the Congressional committee composed entirely of members east of

the Mississippi approved the measure and so it remains.

A Grand trip it was, unique among canoe trips. So if you are interested in extending that canoe season due to cool weather or as here in Tennessee where there is little flow this time of year, check the snow pack in the northern Rockies for the previous winter and head on out to Moab, Utah for the fall.



Hiking Water Canyon

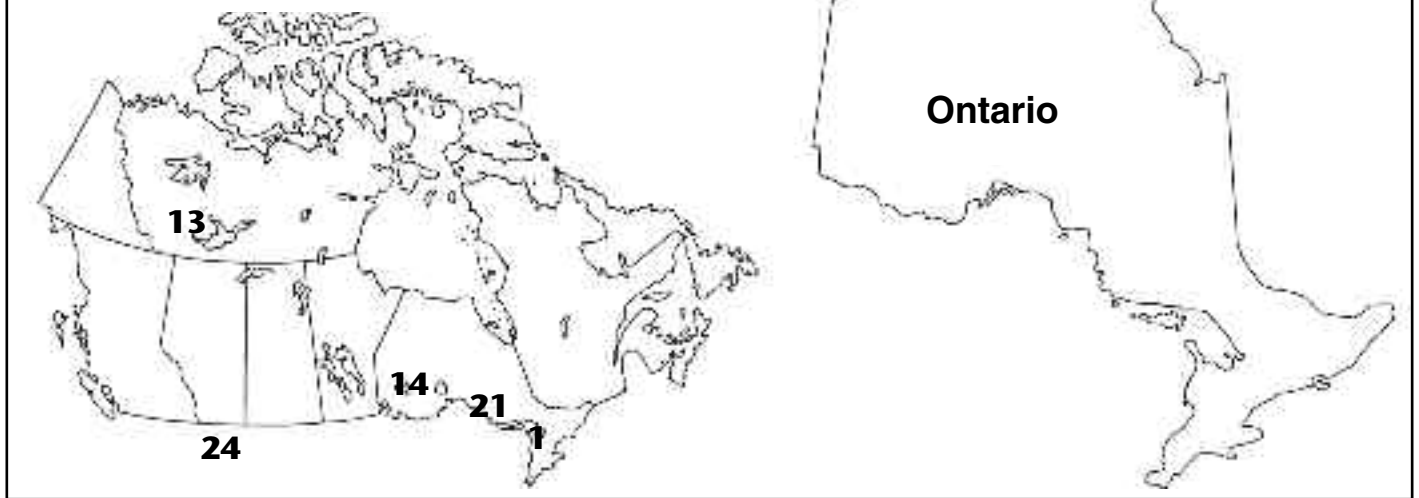


The girls seated by ancient structures



Jet boat shuttle at pickup on the Colorado

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