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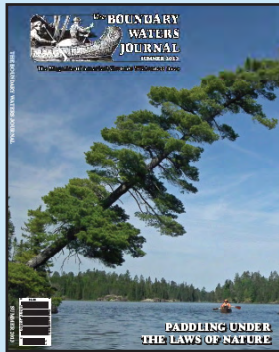


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COVER PHOTO: Montgomery Lake White Pine
By Darryl Blazino

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The Magazine of America's Favorite Wilderness Area



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□ by Tim Maas

Back to Bentpine

Canoe trips should have a purpose and are rarely random events. The purpose of our 2012 family canoe trip was a return to Bentpine Lake in the heart of Quetico. We would retrace a route traveled in August of 2000; that was the last canoe trip that Amy and I would take before our son Ben was born. The August trip was actually our second venture into Bentpine in 2000, and that June we had met BWJ Publisher Stu Osthoff and his two sons on the Maligne River. Stu's boys were ages 7 and 11 when we met them that day. For our return in 2012, Ben and his sister Alice would be 11 and 7. Amy and I wanted to share and relive some of our special Bentpine memories with our own children.

Actually, 2012 was not our first attempt to take Ben into his namesake lake. When Ben was still in diapers, Amy and I went from Beaverhouse Lake to Badwater Lake and camped on Your Lake. We decided that was far enough with a baby, and Bentpine would have to wait. In July of 2010, we left our home in Wisconsin determined to make it there. Ben had signs of a head cold, but not nearly bad enough to stay home. Nine hours later we were thirty miles from International Falls and Ben's cold became much worse. From the backseat, Ben said "Dad, my stomach hurts and I have to use the bathroom now!" We made four more emergency bathroom stops for Ben, who had full-blown stomach flu. We decided to continue to Atikokan and see what

tomorrow would bring. That evening, Alice complained of not feeling well and Amy began to feel congested. I lay awake all night, worried about my family's health. Did we dare venture into Quetico? The next morning I turned on the Weather Channel and learned of tornado and high wind warnings. A canoeist in the parking lot told me heavy rains had flooded many of the portages on our route. Ben felt a little better, but Alice and Amy were not well. Everything seemed to be going wrong for us, and we had to cancel our trip. We sadly climbed into our truck and drove 550 miles back to Wisconsin.

In 2011 we secured a permit for Beaverhouse Lake, hoping to return to Bentpine. Unfortunately I hurt my back three weeks before the canoe trip, and despite my efforts to get better, the pain was too intense to safely take my family on an adventurous canoe trip. I was very disappointed when I called to cancel our July permit. Our plans to return to Bentpine Lake had been foiled again. We would try in 2012.

Children have an amazing ability to sense the feelings of their parents, and both of our kids understood the significance of canceling a trip. They were very disappointed too. My occasionally pessimistic son repeatedly said, "We are never going to get to Bentpine Lake." I have to admit I was having doubts when my wife strained her upper back and I had a bad

sinus infection during early July of 2012. Our canoe trip was again in jeopardy. Is someone trying to send us a message? Is it simply bad luck? Those thoughts entered my mind, but our health improved and we would stubbornly try again.

It was late July, and this would be our first real canoeing of 2012. We would enter Quetico on the same date as twelve years ago, hoping the blueberries would be at their peak. For years I had told the kids about a small island on Bentpine Lake that is so loaded with blueberries you can sit in one spot and pick all you can eat. I told the kids about catching so many big walleyes my arm hurt for two days. I told them about a five-star camp on Bentpine where we are certain to hear the wolves at night. We were ready to make this canoe trip happen.

Everyone was eager to get the trip started as we unloaded our gear in the Beaverhouse Lake parking lot. We paused for a few minutes to chat with a young Canadian couple who had driven from Toronto with their kayaks. They had a few questions about canoeing with kids that we patiently answered. I could not help but think Amy and I were this couple twelve years ago. At the landing, the young couple was impressed with our efficiency. We knew our portage responsibilities: Ben would carry the BWJ Guide pack, Alice would carry a couple paddles and a kid-size



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backpack, Amy shouldered a forty-pound pack, and I would make two trips to carry our canoe and our two other packs. Our quest to return to Bentpine Lake finally was happening!

Day One

One of the finest, most beautiful paddling days I can remember, with light, westerly winds and ideal temperatures. We were quite grateful as we made our way across the sometimes hazardous Beaverhouse Lake crossing to arrive at the Quetico Park Ranger Station. My thoughts drifted to a decade ago when we pulled into the dock with a thirteen-month-old baby who surprised the ranger waiting for us at the dock. Ben stood in front of his mom to peer over the bow of the canoe. The Ranger told us Ben was the youngest Quetico Park visitor she had ever seen. She, like Ben's grandparents, may have

also thought we were crazy to take an infant into Quetico. But we were prepared to take baby Ben canoeing. A decade later, I was watching the muscles in Ben's back and arms work as he pulled an adult-size paddle for the first time. I paused, set my paddle across my thighs, and looked into the blue skies. I reminded myself to slow down and enjoy every minute of the adventure.

There was a tremendous amount of joy as we pulled ashore to portage into Quetico Lake. As we paddled out onto the big lake everyone except me removed their boots and socks for the fifteen-mile paddle down Quetico Lake. Before the trip we had briefly studied our route, and our kids probably remembered it would be at least five hours without a portage. Neither of their parents had to tell them what to do on a calm, sunny day.

Our kids know how to safely enjoy a canoe trip, and for me that is very rewarding. During the long paddle I thought of the many challenges of our early canoe trips with our kids—trips with packed diapers, child carriers, and formulated milk. It certainly becomes easier as kids get older.

We made great time paddling Quetico Lake, and by four p.m. we had portaged into one of Quetico's gems: Jean Lake. Alice asked the question of the day, "Where is that sandy beach?" I had taken the risk of promising to camp at one of the greatest swimming spots in the park. Half an hour later, we arrived at an empty five-star site offering a beach only nature could construct. We had two very happy kids who could not wait to put on their swim suits. We swam for an hour in the crystal clear water. This Jean Lake campsite is

incredible and is located on the south side of the lake after entering from Conk Lake.

We ate a quick supper and found enough energy to go fishing. We trolled deep diving Rapalas under cloudless skies and a light west wind. A bright yellow sun was getting ready to call it a day. We were chatting about our good fortune to have a five-star camp when Ben's pole suddenly bent with the weight of a fish. Ben immediately let us know by enthusiastically yelling, "Hey, I have a fish on!" After some tense moments, Ben landed his first Quetico, lake trout—a fat, 24-inch fish. It was a beautiful trout, and we were thrilled for Ben. It was getting late, but everyone agreed there was time for a bedtime snack. We paddled back to camp to bake the trout over a campfire. Ben helped fillet the trout, wrapped it in foil with clarified butter, and topped it with a parmesan cheese mixture. We baked it skin-side down over low flames for about ten minutes; it was some of the most delicious fish we have ever made. My thoughts harkened back to the summer we had three-year-old Ben on McIntyre Lake in Quetico. He was not feeling or eating well during the first few days of that trip, but we caught a nice trout, which Ben ate most of during the next two days, signaling his return to good health. It had been a fantastic family day on Jean Lake. Amy and I felt as though our persistence and desire to do this trip had been rewarded.

Day Two

We awoke to clear skies and a stronger west wind to push us down Jean Lake. By nine o'clock we were paddling toward our goal of camping on Bentpine Lake. We were soon portaging into Burntside, and the fisherman inside of me wanted to camp here because I know this lake is one of Stu's favorites. The trapper's cabin at the end of the portage from Jean

could no longer be seen from the trail, unlike twelve years ago. In another twelve years it will be reclaimed by the forests of Quetico. Lunch was on a Rogue Lake campsite, and we filled our water bottles prior to entering the swamp water of Jean Creek. If you like a variety of paddling environments, this canoe route certainly provides that by going from big lakes to tiny streams.

Every canoe trip has its challenges, and Jean Creek was the most challenging part of the trip. It was getting quite warm as we completed the second, short portage and entered a small pond created by the many beavers that make Jean Creek their home. There seemed to be plenty of water to paddle the creek, but it could be a problem during low water years. We looked across the pond and there appeared to be a clear exit into the creek. Our big Bell Northshore easily slid into the opening, and we paddled onward without obstruction for the next fifteen minutes until we had to pull over a small beaver dam. We confidently pulled over a second beaver dam thinking this must be Jean Creek. Twenty yards later there was a third beaver dam, and the creek was noticeably smaller. We stopped to discuss our options. At this third dam, it appeared the water was flowing the wrong way! Could the beavers have created so much havoc that water was flowing north instead of south? I decided to remove my boots, put on my Keen sandals, and walk up the creek to see what lay ahead. Alice said, "Dad, you are crazy! You're going to sink in that mud." She was right. In the creek it was thigh-deep, but I could walk on the side banks and on the hummocks. I walked and slogged up the creek for five minutes until it became a trickle of water. We should have circled the small pond to look for the correct exit.

Everyone laughed as I returned to the canoe full of mud from

my waist to my shoes. The smell was terrible as I entered the canoe and kids, of course, love to state the obvious and tease their father. "Dad, you stink," was repeatedly heard between bursts of laughter. Turning the loaded, twenty-foot Northshore in a four-foot wide creek was impossible. To solve the problem, we turned in our seats and paddled stern-first to retrace our mistaken route. It was a dumb mistake that cost us an hour of time and energy.

Once back in the beaver pond the portage to the real Jean Creek became obvious after we paddled around a fallen bunch of trees. Lower Jean Creek was passable, but not exactly a joy to paddle. We were happy to see it finally open to the expanse of Sturgeon Lake. A headwind slowed our progress on one of Quetico's biggest bodies of water. However, a short paddle leads to a very lightly traveled section of the park—Bentpine Creek. The remnants of the 90-year-old steamboat on the creek were nearly gone. The above average water levels allowed us to easily paddle to the first portage. We were four short portages from Bentpine Lake! Despite being tired, Amy and I had a real sense of excitement about a destination that had eluded us for so long.

The portages along Bentpine Creek are narrow paths with dense vegetation, nearly engulfing each trail. There were many trees across the path, but the park's portage crews apparently had been through earlier in July. The evidence of chainsaw work surrounded us as we stepped closer to Bentpine Lake. We very much appreciated the crew's work, and were happy to have followed them. The kids were hungry, so we paused for a quick supper of sausage, cheese, and crackers on the portage into March Lake. We had passed many relics of the



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Manzanita Lake, CA • Photo by Willie Cox

logging era: chains, big steel rollers, twelve-inch spikes driven into solid rock, and evidence of dam building. On March there lies a clearing that once housed many lumberjacks in crude log cabins. I have read that one of the cabin's walls was three logs high. Those were some big white pine! We ate our dinner next to the remnants of a dam that would have raised March Lake high enough to allow the pine logs to float down stream when the dam was removed. It must have been quite a sight. For generations my father and his relatives were loggers in Wisconsin. I grew up in the logging business, and have a real appreciation for the work and danger that comes with the job. I can't imagine logging without modern equipment; it is truly amazing. We picked a few berries in the clearing and soon were back in the canoe.

The portage into Bentpine Lake is unmarked on most maps, but if you follow the northernmost bay of March Lake to its terminus you should find it. We shouldered our packs and walked together over a small rise of land and peered into the waters of Bentpine Lake. I saw no evidence of footprints in the mud as I helped my son remove his small pack. Ben said, "So, this is the lake that I'm named after? I don't know if I like it yet." I can't blame him for his skepticism—it had taken eighteen hours and two days of adventuring to get there. I lifted Alice into my arms and we had a much-deserved family hug. I must admit, I felt like shedding a tear. We paused for a quick photo, paddled through a weed-choked channel, and looked for the island campsite. Amy and I raised our arms and yelled with joy when we

saw the unoccupied, five-star campsite. It would again be our home for the next four days. We set up a basic camp and then swam to clean ourselves of the day's labor. The kids were very excited to be at this beautiful camp with plenty of room to play and explore. Ben could sense some sentimental feelings about finally returning to this lake. We entered the tent, tired but with a real sense of accomplishment.

Day Three

We slept later than usual and decided to set up a proper camp by cutting wood, rigging a tarp, baking in the reflector oven, and hanging the hammocks. At about noon we went swimming, and I suggested to Ben that we swim to "Blueberry Island," about a hundred yards from camp. Years ago, Amy and I had picked two gallons of blueberries here without much

effort, and we had told the kids about it numerous times. With lifejackets secured, dad and son began the ten-minute swim. Ben was a proud young man when we made it to the little island. Unfortunately, it was a dry year and the berries were scarce. Our trip back to camp completed the first of six swims to Blueberry Island over the next two days.

By mid-afternoon, we were ready to fish for the big walleyes of Bentpine Lake. The canoe was loaded, but as we looked to the west, ominous clouds were approaching with the rumble of thunder. Moments later, we were under our tarp seeking shelter from a full-fledged storm. When the rain subsided, Ben and I fished from shore and caught six small walleyes to break the ice, and then we launched the canoe to fish in front of camp near a small weed bed. We immediately began catching walleyes and pike on jigs and Northland Tackle's Impulse Grubs. The action was fast, making it hard to leave when more storms approached. Supper was served under the tarp as the rain poured down. An hour later, the sun emerged and the clouds dispersed as two canoes rounded the corner, obviously disappointed to see our camp. In my journal that night I wrote, "The camp already has a feeling of home. The kids are having lots of fun. We are so glad to be here."

Day Four

There were more storms during the night, and we waited for some good weather to paddle to "the eagle's nest" fishing hole near the eastern end of the lake. Our goal was to catch a walleye lunch, and by mid-morning the weather seemed stable. Twelve years ago, Stu had marked that spot on our map and we caught so many 3-5 pound walleyes that our forearms hurt the next day. Our kids had heard our stories numerous times, and they were excited to fish and to

TIM MAAS



Those years when the whole family can canoe trip together seem all too fleeting. Get out there and see what you can discover.

see the mother eagle and her eaglet. I doubted that an eagle would be in the same tree but there she was waiting for our arrival with one offspring in the same nest. Considering the lifespan of an eagle, it is likely the same bird.

The fishing was exciting too. We easily caught enough

walleyes for lunch, but the bigger walleyes seemed to be absent. During the 30-minute paddle back to camp, we were caught in a downpour before we could don our rain gear. We were soaked as we arrived back in camp, but nobody cared. It was a warm summer day, we were on Bentpine

Lake, and we had walleyes on the stringer! I fried the fish in my usual manner, and everyone agreed they tasted a little better on Bentpine Lake. The weather cleared during the evening, and we fished the weed bed in front of camp. A few bigger walleyes—typical for Bentpine Lake—were caught that evening. It simply was a great day for the whole family.

Day Five

The morning was blessed with clear skies, and everyone wanted another fish fry for supper. We fished some other spots that were productive years ago but did not have much success until we returned to the weed bed near camp. The action was fast, and I was spending more time unhooking fish than actually fishing. Most of the walleyes were smaller than what we had caught twelve years ago, but Mom and Ben each caught and released 24-inch walleyes—our biggest of this trip.

While starting a fire, our fish were closely watched by a giant snapping turtle. Later, Ben and Alice took a few fish scraps and fed our new friend. It was the biggest and boldest snapper I've seen, and our kids enjoyed their time watching the ancient creature that they named "Frank." The encounter became one of those wildlife moments in Quetico that will not be forgotten. Our walleye dinner was great, and we had two hours of daylight remaining after a very busy day. I convinced everyone to continue fishing while the walleyes were actively feeding. It will be a "sure thing" to paddle back to the spot where we caught dinner and the fish certainly will be biting. Right? Well, we spent nearly an hour in the same spot catching nothing until Amy suggested moving shallower toward the shoreline side of the weed bed. "But it's only six or seven feet deep," I reminded her, "and it's the middle of

summer." We anchored a mere thirty yards closer to shore and then proceeded to catch walleyes as fast as we could make a cast. The fish had moved into the weeds and closer to shore in just a couple of hours. I like to believe that I understand fishing, but that night was another example of its unpredictability. We ended another terrific day on Bentpine Lake with an hour of family fun and excitement catching wilderness walleyes as the red-orange glow of the summer sun set in the western sky.

Day Six

It was time to leave after four wonderful days. We broke camp by 8:30 a.m. knowing it would be a full day to the big beach on Quetico Lake. In 2000, Amy and I had broken camp on Bentpine early one morning and made it back to Atikokan by 6 p.m. That is making good time through a tough route. We were young and thought nothing of it at the time. Today, we moved slower because of the wind and the kids, but we wouldn't have it any other way. Our canoe trips have become more fun and more fulfilling with our children along. There were times when I didn't believe that would happen, but it does get easier as they get older. For new parents who read this article, you probably don't need to take infants canoeing, but don't miss out on those elementary school years. You will have great canoeing partners and continue the legacy of wilderness canoeing for the next generation.

It was a pleasant paddle across March Lake and a short portage to Trail Lake, but Trail Creek was an in-and-out affair. The creek is slightly wider than a canoe as it meanders through a swamp. It is prime country for beaver, with three dams to obstruct our passage. We were very glad to leave Trail Creek and enter Snow Lake. It appears most canoes pass through Snow,

a good size lake with few places to camp. The half-mile portage to Your Lake can be wet and muddy, but we all stayed dry this time. Our plan was to eat lunch at the beautiful island camp on the western end of Your Lake. We had stayed there when Ben was just over one year old, and our short visit certainly brought back memories. I thought of the rapid passage of time as our children have grown. I felt thankful for two healthy kids who are willing to leave their electronic world behind to do canoe trips with their parents. I hope it stays that way.

From Your Lake, there are three short portages to Badwater Lake, and it appears beaver activity has drastically changed this section of the route. I remembered a relatively easy passage, but that was twelve years ago and, as you may know, water levels, portages, and landings will change. To exit Your Lake we had to pull the canoe through a large patch of reeds growing in very shallow water. The portage had very muddy landings, and the water passage to Fair Lake could be real trouble during low water. Fair Lake was about three feet lower than normal due to the breakage of a huge beaver dam. Finding the next portage required some inspection due to more beaver dams and a flooded trailhead. We arrived at Badwater Lake at three o'clock, just in time for a major-league westerly wind. With good conditions, it should take an hour to paddle the length of Badwater Lake; it took us three hours of hard labor. Midway across Badwater Lake we stopped to eat some food and to drink water, looking towards the infamous Badwater Portage—one mile of rocks, roots, mud, hills, bogs, corduroyed logs, and a really bad landing at the Quetico Lake end.

I was concerned about

getting to camp before dark, so we wasted little time. I consolidated our gear into a regular size *BWJ* pack and one very heavy extra-wide *BWJ* Ultimate Pack. Mom took the lighter pack, Ben had the *BWJ* Guide Pack, Alice had a small personal pack, and I'd make two trips to carry the canoe and the heavy pack. We completed the portage in about seventy minutes. Amy and I were very proud of our son and daughter; both safely completed the long portage without a break and kept their feet dry. The portage actually was not too bad, although I slipped off the cordwood stacked across the bog, sank to my knee, and dropped the canoe. But there was no harm done, and waiting at the end of the portage was my family. We tapped the last of our food supply, paddled another hour into a dying wind, and finally reached the five-rod liftover that leads to a huge, sandy beach. Alice sprinted to the other side to see the great camp she'd heard about all day. She returned as we unloaded the canoe and said, "Wait until you see what is on the other side! It looks like Heaven." At the request of our kids, we put on our swim suits, held hands, and ran into the water as the sun began its westward dive below the horizon. We were carefree, spontaneous, tired, and sore. But it felt so good to be alive. By the time the last tent stake was pounded into the sand, the moon and stars provided the only light in the sky. Everyone slept well that night on the shores of Quetico Lake. Tomorrow it would be a short paddle to the truck on Beaverhouse Lake.

Day Seven

We slept later than usual, mostly due to the exertion of yesterday, and also because we didn't want this trip to end. We met an interesting group

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of veteran fishermen who make a yearly trip from Iowa to fish Quetico Lake. We chatted for over a half an hour as we took our sweet time to cross the short portage. Without being told, our kids helped the older gentlemen carry some of their gear across the portage. Amy and I are convinced that our many canoe trips have helped shaped the character of Ben and Alice. It was wonderful to see a seven-year-old help a seventy-year-old portage his gear. Later, the gentleman gave Alice and Ben a short history lesson about the portage, he showed them the old car that sits beside the trail, and he passionately spoke about the value of Quetico Park. We said our goodbyes and paddled into Beaverhouse Lake.

The wind was increasing out of the west but that did not stop my plan of trolling across the lake in an effort to catch a trout to take home. I rigged two rods with deep diving Rapalas and

began the one hour paddle to the canoe landing. Ben held one pole and I put the other in an aluminum rod holder that clamps to the gunwale. About halfway to the landing, we rounded a point of land and turned toward a more northerly route. The drag on my reel suddenly released line as the rod tip deeply bent toward the lake. We had a fish on! I handed Ben my rod and reeled in his lure. The fish fought hard, but Ben managed to land a 21" walleye. It was a nice way to end a canoe trip that was made to honor him and that wonderful, little lake called BENTpine. Bentpine Lake will always be a very special place to our family. □

 **Route Finder**

 Fisher: F-24, 28, 29
 McKenzie: 30, 34, 35



The North American Beaver

□ by Doc (Jim) Spindler

On the way back to camp at Upper Basswood Falls, something catches my eye in the water up ahead. I'm in the bow of our Wenonah MN II with my son-in-law, Rob, in the stern. The canoe is slowly gaining on a beaver dragging a branch in its mouth. Further down the shoreline I spot a beaver lodge. Paddling as quietly as possible, we inch closer and closer. There is no time for a photo. Suddenly, with a powerful swift slap of its tail, the beaver whacks

the water. The sound and the splash startle us. Only the branch remains floating on the surface as the beaver disappears into the dark water. As the canoe glides by the lodge, the beaver is nowhere to be seen.

While paddling the lakes and streams of the BWCAW/Quetico, beaver dams, lodges, and ponds are frequent sites. The North American beaver (*Castor Canadensis*) can be found as far north as Alaska and as far south as Mexico.

Their range covers the entire region of the lower 48 states with the exception of Florida, the desert southwest, and a portion of southern California. One estimate states that there were once 90 million beaver in North America prior to the fur trade era. By the end of the 19th century, beaver were so heavily trapped they nearly became extinct in what is now known as the Quetico and the BWCAW. Conservation and controlled trapping seasons has allowed beaver populations to



PAUL SUNDBERG

The mainstay of a beaver's diet is the green bark off aspen and alder.

return to healthy levels. The North American beaver has come full circle from limitless abundance prior to the fur trading era to near extinction and back to abundance. The current number of beaver in existence in Canada and the United States is estimated to be 10–15 million.

Beaver and their fur were responsible for the exploration, development, and settlement of much of the United States and Canada. In 1975 Canada officially designated the beaver as its national animal. The beaver is depicted on the Canadian five-cent piece and was on the first pictorial postage stamp issued by the Canadian Colonies known as the “the Three Penny Beaver.” Early settlers around 1855 declared Minnesota as the “the Beaver State.” A spirited debate ensued, and in 1857 Minnesota was re-designated the “Gopher State.” This occurred primarily because gophers greatly outnumbered beaver at the time. Many towns, schools, rivers and lakes were named after the beaver not only in Minnesota but all over the United States.

During the boom of the fur trade in the 18th and 19th centuries, Europeans possessed a desire for fashionable hats and coats made from beaver pelts and under fur (felt). French fur traders began trading with Native American and First Nations People for beaver pelts. As they pushed further and further west and north, beaver populations were devastated. About the time choice beaver pelts were being obtained from the more northern climates, the French Montreal Fur Company was taken over by the British and became known as the Hudson Bay Company.

The Ojibwe were one of the first Native American and First Nations People involved in fur trading. A flashy group of

French Canadian Fur Traders called the Voyageurs were employed by the French Fur Company to make contact with the Ojibwe and eventually, further west, the Cree and Assiniboine. The Voyageurs traveled great distances through what now includes Quetico and the BWCAW. They traded such staples as flour, salt, alcohol, metal pots, jewelry, blankets, trinkets, guns, and ammunition for beaver hides. Traveling from Montreal through the Great Lakes, the Voyageur trade route entered the inland lakes at Grand Portage, which has recently been declared a national monument. The route the Voyageurs took through Quetico and the BWCAW is much the same as what we paddle and fish today. The main route from Grand Portage on Lake Superior followed what is now the US/Canadian border, and, in fact, the border was largely defined by that route. This route would have likely included Saganaga Lake, Knife Lake, Basswood Lake and the Basswood River, Crooked Lake, Curtain Falls, Iron Lake, Bottle Lake, and Bottle Portage. Lac La Croix was a rendezvous point for the routes that reached into the interior.

Native American and First Nations People played a critical roll in the development of the fur trade. Without their skilled hunting and trapping techniques, knowledge of the land and use of snowshoes and birch bark canoes, the fur trade may not have existed. On the other hand, the thrust of European capitalism had a negative impact on native people. The introduction of new technologies and disease came too rapidly.

Despite the negative impact of the fur trade on both native people and the beaver, both have survived because of their ability to adapt. Once fur trading subsided, beaver

were able to reproduce and increase their numbers. A pair of beavers usually mate for life. If a beaver’s mate dies, it will eventually mate with another beaver. Beavers mate when they are about two years old, and usually between December and March. Gestation lasts about 106 days. Litters of three to five kits are born in May and June. A female beaver produces one litter per year, and kits weigh about a pound at birth. Kits stay close to their mother and nurse for about two weeks, after which the mother will offer tender leaf branches to the kits. Kits commonly stay in the lodge for their first month of life. Parents often have to chase kits out of the lodge. Kits stay close to the lodge and their parents for the next 2–3 months. They will continue eating leafy twigs until they are able to forage on their own. Yearlings are kits from the previous year’s litter and are not yet ready for independence. By two years of age beaver are able to live on their own.

The family unit is called a beaver colony. A colony can have as many as 10 members. Larger colonies are typically found in protected areas such as Quetico and the BWCAW where they are distant from human contact and interference. A beaver colony is made up of a male beaver, a female beaver, 2–3 surviving kits and 2–3 yearlings. Beaver who are 2 years old are also members of the colony until being expelled. Some 2-year-olds will voluntarily leave the colony prior to a new litter being born. Once on their own, these beaver will seek suitable habitat and a mate to establish their own colony. Beaver can live as long as 10–12 years.

The term “eager beaver” fits this rodent well as they always have a project. The male helps care for the young by maintaining the dam, collecting



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food, and guarding against predators. Usually, the entire colony is involved in repairing a breach in the dam, gathering food supplies for the winter, building channels, fortifying and cleaning lodges, patrolling their pond, or cleaning and preening themselves.

One of those "eager beavers" was spotted by my grandson, Thacker, collecting small limbs and bark from a tree along the shoreline of the Wagiag River. Entering the Wagiag River from Greenwood Creek, we were paddling with the swift current on our way to Kawa Bay for the night. I was in the center seat of our three man canoe while my grandson sat in the bow. As we rounded a sharp bend in the river, he spotted something on the shore. He slowly turned around and whispered, "There is a beaver on the shore." Sure enough, a beaver was sitting on its hind legs, supported in part by its broad tail. It appeared to be reaching up, collecting small branches from an overhanging tree limb on the bank.

A beaver's tail is 16–17 inches in length and 6–7 inches in width. A beaver uses its tail as a flat paddle and rudder while swimming. The tail helps support the beaver in a sitting position and is used to slap the water as an alarm to alert other beavers of danger in the area. A beaver's tail is scaled and serves as a storage

site for fat, and is a good heat exchanger, helping to maintain the correct body temperature of the animal.

Most Minnesota and southern Ontario beaver are 3–4 feet in length, tail included. They weigh between 44–60 pounds, with some weighing as much as 80–90 pounds. Their fur consists of 2–2.5 inch long guard hairs, which are various shades of reddish brown. The under fur next to the skin is about .8–1 inch in length and used to make felt. The under fur has microscopic barbs that make excellent felt hats. This largely unknown feature was why beaver under fur became the standard felt of the fur trade. Beaver have very dense hair, which is denser in northern climates—especially between December and March. This is precisely when pelts are most desirable for trappers. Beaver shed once a year during the summer months.

While the beaver's thick guard hairs and under fur protect him from the cold, small valves close over the nostrils and ears while the beaver is swimming underwater. A thin membrane also protects the eyes while beavers are submerged. Beaver generally have poor vision but have a strong sense of smell. Beaver use their sense of smell to communicate with each other by relying on olfactory clues. They can recognize

members of their colony by smell and differentiate them from strangers and intruders. They will build piles of mud called "scent mounds," which they cover with secretions of castoreum from anal glands. Castoreum has a distinct and unique odor peculiar to each beaver. Scent mounds are placed in raised, strategic areas around the pond and lodge. Beaver use their anal gland secretions to waterproof their fur. Castoreum, or castor, is also used in the perfume industry.

Another unique feature of the beaver's anatomy is that the skull and jaw are relatively large for its body size. The jaw and skull have to sustain relatively massive forces from chewing and chiseling wood. Teeth grow continuously, and the enamel has a yellow-orange color. Because teeth grow continuously, the beaver must constantly wear down their incisors and molars by chewing and chiseling. A single beaver can gnaw through a 6-inch tree in 15 minutes. The front and hind feet of a beaver are distinctly different in size and shape. A beaver's hind feet are webbed, which assists the beaver while swimming. The hind feet are clawed while the front feet are not. The front feet are much smaller than the hind feet. Similar in design to human hands, front feet can be used to dig, claw, grasp, and

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handle food.

North American Beaver prefer foods such as the water lily and other aquatic plants found on the bottom of lakes and streams. In northern Minnesota and southern Ontario, beaver also eat bark and leafy twigs of aspen, willow, birch, alder, and maple. As the summer draws near, beaver enjoy a broader diet of vegetation.

Beaver will forage for food at night. They typically spend most of the day in their lodges and out of sight. Beaver will come out during the day to repair a breach in the dam or to ward off an intruder. They do not wander off from the lodge too far during the day, as they are vulnerable to predators. Beaver communicate by sound as well as by scent. They often whine and hiss outside the lodge. Hissing is common when beaver are threatened. Gnawing on trees and branches can be heard for considerable distances. Beaver sometimes grind their teeth when sleeping giving off a characteristic sound. This has been described as "tooth sharpening." The tail slap is a form of communication warning others in the colony that danger is near. Following the tail slap, they will dive under water and swim away to safety. Utilizing their diving reflex, beaver can stay under water for 5–6 minutes, sometimes as

long as 15 minutes. This reflex includes vasoconstriction and slowing their heart rate, allowing the beaver to use less oxygen while underwater.

Beaver dams and ponds offer a safe haven for beaver. Dams and the ponds behind them protect beavers against predators such as bear, wolf, lynx, bobcat, and coyote. Beaver are master builders, using mud, small stones, saplings, logs, and wads of grass to build dams. Beaver are able to weave these materials together into tightly interwoven structures capable of retaining a large body of water, perhaps an acre or larger. They carry mud and stones in their forepaws and wood and saplings in their teeth. They can rebuild a dam that is damaged in less than twenty-four hours. It is not unusual for beaver to build a series of dams along a river. Lodges are built in the pond that forms behind the dam. The beaver dam also serves as a storage facility for branches and other vegetation. Dams have been reported to be as low as 18 inches to as tall as 9 feet. In Quetico and the BWCAW, dams are 3–5 feet tall on average. Beaver dams vary in length, depending on the local topography.

Beaver utilize the ponds behind dams as a storage area for branches and bark from trees on the edge of the ponds. They drag them into the pond

close to their lodges. When the pond freezes over in the winter months, beaver have a ready supply of food nearby. Beaver can literally eat themselves out of house and home. Once the food supplies are gone around the pond, a beaver colony must seek another site that will provide the food sources they need to survive. Generally, migration patterns are from upstream to downstream. Peg Robertsen, district biologist for Superior National Forest (SNF), says that wildfires and other forest disturbances are actually good for beaver habitat. The regeneration of new growth and new vegetation produce young forests, providing beaver and other wildlife with renewed sources of food.

Once, coming across a series of three beaver dams and ponds on the Duex Rivieres, we realized dinner at Russell Lake was going to be later than planned. The first dam was mostly submerged and appeared to be abandoned. We were able to easily paddle across and find the second dam, 3–4 feet tall with a pristine pond covering an acre behind it. Pointed tree stumps 4–5 inches in diameter could be seen at the edge of the water. Gliding up behind the dam, we were able to step out on top of the dam. One option was to portage around the dam, but we decided to pull our canoes over the leading edge of the

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untreated stream or lake water. Commonly, symptoms do not occur until two weeks after exposure. Beaver concentrate large numbers of cysts in their intestinal tracts and discharge them into streams and lakes. Visitors to Quetico and BWCAW should only drink water that has been boiled for at least one minute, filtered, or chemically treated. Anyone who experiences foul-smelling diarrhea, bloating, abdominal cramping, nausea, and weight loss following a trip to canoe country should see their physician for diagnosis and appropriate treatment.

Beaver are not only trapped for being a nuisance, but are still being trapped for their fur. Lisa Solomon, a biologist in Quetico Provincial Park, says that trapping beaver for fur is not generally permitted in Quetico by non-native trappers. First Nations People are permitted to trap beaver in the northern half of the park, and are required to report the numbers of animals trapped as well as any unusual activity seen that might impact the health of the beaver population. The Ontario Department of Natural Resources is slowly phasing out trapping by non-native people across the province.

Beaver trapping is permitted in the BWCAW. The trapping season in Minnesota is from the end of October to the end of April. Thus, trapping for beaver within the BWCAW occurs when most visitors to the BWCAW have stowed their canoes and fishing gear for another year. The MN DNR says that issuance of trapping licenses in Minnesota has increased in 2012 and 2013 because of the increase in the price for pelts. U.S. Forest Service trapping guidelines recommend trappers place traps away from portages and trails and avoid cutting vegetation or disturbing the landscape. Traps must be removed once

dam instead. My grandson got in the water in front of the dam and abruptly sank to his hips. As we lifted the canoes over the dam he guided the canoes into the water below. We were careful to not disturb the integrity of the dam. If we had and the beaver heard running water, they would be busy repairing the dam within a few minutes after our departure. We had to repeat this exercise about a half-mile downstream.

By building dams, beaver create and maintain wetlands as well as provide habitat for several species of birds and other animals. Beaver ponds improve water quality by removing sediment and pollutants from the water such as phosphates, nitrogen, carbon and silicates. Beaver ponds also prevent soil erosion. Ponds provide a safe place for beaver to build their lodges. Lodges are sometimes built along the banks of large lakes as well as

in beaver ponds. Lodges are mounds of mud, grass, rocks, and sticks, with at least two well-concealed underwater entrances. Inside the lodge there is a resting platform above the waterline where the female is able to birth, raise, and feed her young. Lodges are strong structures built to insulate beavers from harsh weather and predators. Black bear and wolves are often frustrated in unsuccessful attempts to tear apart a lodge in search of a beaver meal.

Beaver are often implicated as a carrier of a microbial cyst that leads to the intestinal infection in humans by a parasitic protozoan called *Giardia Lamblia*. This infection, *giardiasis*, is sometimes referred to as "beaver fever." *Giardia* infection is the most common intestinal parasitic disease affecting humans and is usually acquired by drinking



A beaver can chew through a 10" thick birch faster than most people can with an axe. When forced to feed away from the security of water, beavers are vulnerable to wolf predation.

the season ends in the spring. Minnesota's state game laws apply to all of the SNF including the BWCAW.

A retired forestry employee who currently traps beaver in the area says that access to central regions of the BWCAW is limited because of deep snow; snowmobiles are not permitted in the wilderness. Trap lines have to be set and checked by dog sled within the boundaries of the BWCAW. The prime time for trapping beaver is between December and March, when the area is covered with snow. According to MN DNR figures the average price for dried and stretched pelts in the spring is \$20. Prices have been reported to be higher by trappers in the area. Pelts sold "green" sell for less than pelts that are dried and stretched. Spring pelts sell for more than fall pelts, as the thickness and quality of the

fur is superior in the spring. Castoreum, or castor, is used in the perfume industry and can be sold for about 3–5 dollars per animal.

Lisa Solomon reminds us that misuse of any species can cause harm to the overall population. What happened to the North American beaver during the fur trade era is a prime example of misuse of a species that nearly led to extinction. Even though there are challenges managing nuisance beaver outside the parks, we must continue to protect and manage the overall North American beaver population.

One evening at our campsite just north of Lower Basswood Falls, I was reminded just how important the beaver is to our magnificent canoe country wilderness. A dinner of freshly caught walleye is consumed, the dishes are done, the campfire

stoked, and camp chairs pulled up in a circle. The sun is dropping fast. As I look up toward Wheel Barrow Falls, I see something in the water on the far shore. It makes its way up onto a flat granite rock still bathed in sunlight. I quickly focus my binoculars on the animal. It is a beaver lying on its back preening itself in the fading sunlight. No "slap" this time. The beaver seems to be comfortable and at peace in the beauty and silence of the magnificent canoe country wilderness that surrounds it. I feel a connection because I too feel comfortable and at peace. The trip ends in the morning, and I will leave canoe country with the vision of a beaver preening itself in the fading sunlight. I will leave knowing that the peace and beauty of this magnificent wilderness has penetrated my soul once again. □

here for the fishing

Canoe Country Grand Slam Series Part 2—Walleye



□ by Stuart Osthoff, Darell Brauer,
Darryl Blazino, & Tim Maas

Last issue, we kicked off our “Canoe Country Grand Slam” series with an in-depth review of when, how, and where to catch smallmouth bass in the BWCAW and Quetico. Next up this issue is the beloved walleye. In Minnesota, walleye is the undisputed king of game fish, and around Ely in particular talk of going fishing is synonymous with going walleye fishing. Here then, with an assist from three walleye experts, is the definitive *BWJ* article on canoe country walleye fishing.

Unique Appeals of Canoe Country Walleyes

When the Fishing Gods got together to create the perfect fish dinner, they made the walleye. Walleyes are relatively easy to catch, super-easy to carve into boneless fillets and the absolute sweetest meat that swims. Deep fried, grilled, or baked, walleye fillets are flaky and full of exquisite flavor. Show me someone who claims to prefer bass, pike, or lake trout, and I’ll show you someone who has trouble catching walleyes. I *never* kill a bass or pike. I consider these species sport fish. Their recreational value *far and away* exceeds their food value. Most canoe country waters can sustain some level of fish harvest, so I don’t despair too much over folks eating a bony, muddy-tasting hammer handle. All I ask is *please, please, pretty please* release all the larger breeding size bass, pike and lake trout that you catch. Catch and release of mature fish is the key to preserving this world class fishery. On my BWCAW/Quetico canoe trips, if it is fish for dinner, it’s 14–18 inch walleyes or nothing, and we limit ourselves to 1 or 2 meals per eight-day canoe trip. Think my tastes in fish flesh are eccentric? To this day, First Nations people largely disdain bass and pike and rarely pursue lake trout. They are all about walleye, with everything else a distant second. Always has been, and always will be.

While walleyes stand alone in the frying pan, their popularity runs deeper than just shore lunch appeal. Walleyes are a very beautiful fish to behold. Most feature striking gold streaks from the gill covers along the sides all the way back to the caudal fin. Hold a big, golden walleye up for a photo in the butterscotch light of sundown and it’s easily the prettiest fish in canoe country. Other individual walleyes will have all black sides. Still a third canoe country walleye phenotype is what we call “blue” walleyes. These fish lack the gold side panels and their backs all the way down to the white bellies are a pearly luminescent bluish color. I’ve caught blue walleyes in Bentpine, Sturgeon, Pooh Bah, Conmee, Brent, and William. Many anglers have reported catching blues from other Quetico waters. Nobody seems to know what causes the variation, but I can tell you we have caught all three color phases from the same spot on the same day.

Canoe country walleyes are both beautiful and tasty but they also bring plenty of sportfishing challenge to the table as well. Eater size walleyes are no great battle on rod and reel, but hook into a 26-inch-plus trophy and they can show some serious power. I for one think catching a big walleye is a lot of fun; 6- to 10-pound walleyes are really strong fish, and it’s always great to tie into a fast and furious batch of big walleyes. The typical canoe country casual angler might get lucky and catch a trophy walleye once in a blue moon, but consistently netting top end walleyes is a whole different ballgame. Walleyes can be easy to catch, *once you find them*. And that is the rub. It takes considerable knowledge, savvy, effort, and experience to find, catch, and release big walleyes trip after trip.

They can be downright exasperating, sometimes refusing to bite even when electronics show you right where they are. Some days walleye fishing is so discouraging it feels like we might as well be trolling on the moon. No doubt about it, walleyes provide plenty of overall sportfishing challenge.

Canoe Country Walleye Ecology/ Behavior

Unlike smallmouth, walleyes are indeed native to both the BWCAW and Quetico. Smallmouth are my favorite canoe country sportfish, and it matters zero to me that they are not native to the immediate area. (Smallmouth bass are indigenous to the nearby Mississippi River system). Some walleye snobs look down on the lowly smallmouth, even claiming they negatively impact walleye populations. To the best of my knowledge, there is no credible evidence that smallmouth displace walleyes on any kind of macro scale. Will a big bass gobble up walleye fry when the opportunity knocks? Absolutely. And big walleyes will pound down little bass as well. The point is, we have 75 years of anecdotal evidence that smallmouth and walleyes are coexisting just fine in canoe country lakes.

For the record, the overall distribution of walleyes in canoe country is anything but “pure and natural.” If you read canoe trip journals from the early 20th century, you’ll note that the catch was mostly pike and lake trout. Rare is the account of outstanding walleye fishing. I have encountered enough chatter over the years to believe that many a resort, outfitter, guide, and citizen angler “assisted” the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in their efforts to stock walleyes in the BWCAW. Today such independent stocking is completely illegal, but back in the day establishing

JOHN FORZENIOWSKI



Challenging to catch, beautiful to behold, and unmatched in the frying pan, walleyes are THE Grand Slam favorite. (Cirrus Lake)

one's own "secret walleye waters" was commonplace. Today, about 30-40% of BWCAW lakes hold walleyes—that number rises to 60% in Quetico.

Walleyes prefer to spawn in 42–45 degree water, which typically arrives in canoe country April 15–30. In 2012, area walleyes were done spawning in March. This year, it will be well into May before the ice goes out and the walleyes can spawn. Old Mother Nature always seems to balance things out over time. Minnesota's (BWCAW) walleye season always opens on the Saturday closest to May 15, while Quetico walleye always opens one week later. Most years, walleyes are done spawning before the season opener so, unlike smallmouth, anglers will rarely be able to fish spawning walleyes. These season opening dates are no accident. They are designed to protect the highly concentrated and vulnerable walleyes during the breeding ritual. In 2013 we are headed for the latest spring since 1996, so fishing season will be open for the BWCAW walleye spawning period. In late ice-out years like this, the MN DNR often delays the legal fishing opener on parts of Basswood and Saganaga Lakes to protect spawning walleyes. Wherever and whenever you go walleye fishing, always release the bigger breeding stock females. Take a photo, a few quick measurements, and order up a graphite mount of your trophy. Yes, you can have your trophy on the wall *and* let it go to thrill another angler someday.

Walleyes prefer moving water and/or gravel substrate for spawning sites. Unlike smallmouth, there is no real courtship period, no pairing up, no nest building, and no time or effort spent protecting the young walleye fry. Walleyes school up in large concentrations, eggs get deposited and fertilized by whoever, and the adults all swim off. That's it. It is a cold, cruel world for baby walleyes. No wonder such a low percentage ever survive to grow up.

As with most fish, female walleyes grow much faster and larger than the males. If you catch a walleye over 25 inches (5+ lbs) it's most likely a female. If you catch a

28–31 inch trophy canoe country walleye, it is definitely a breeding stock female so be sure to handle these fish with extra care and minimal stress.

The place to start in the quest to understand walleye behavior is with those big, luminous eyeballs. Walleyes are uniquely gifted with superior night vision which they use to their advantage to prey on baitfish during low light conditions. Walleyes are built to be formidable nighttime, sight-hunting predators. This is their unique niche in the aquatic food chain. They are so programmed to feed in low light conditions that they are difficult to catch in sunny, calm conditions. It is as if they are sensitive to bright light. Perhaps they know the baitfish can see them coming in bright conditions, so they just lay low until the sun sets and once again they have the upper hand. Many late-May smallmouth trips to Sturgeon, Crooked, or Kawnipi, I have gone down to the lakeshore to brush my teeth before bed and in the sweep of my headlight spotted "glow-in-the-dark" walleye eyeballs in two feet of water. Kind of a cool close-up view of nature in action.

Come sundown, walleyes become killing machines. Northern pike on the other hand are widely regarded as the most vicious freshwater predator that swims, but they don't possess the walleye's night vision ability. In fact, you will rarely catch a pike after sunset. They just don't see well in the dark and bide their time until daylight to begin feeding again.

In canoe country, the primary food sources for walleyes are small young-of-the-year perch, rainbow, fathead and shiner minnows, tullibees (ciscoes), suckers, whitefish, leeches, and aquatic insects (May flies). Walleyes don't resort to scavenging like lake trout; they like their food still wiggling when they catch it. Walleyes feed on minnows during low light periods, and you can count on two other constants: they like to feed on or very near the bottom, and they congregate in groups. Where you find one hungry walleye, concentrate on that spot because there are almost certainly more lurking nearby.

Finding these elusive, wander-

ing schools is really the essence of walleye fishing. You have to hunt down walleyes before you can catch them. Start your walleye search with your McKenzie Map (BWCAW) and canoe-rigged portable depth finder (Quetico). Walleyes like some kind of structure: drop offs, points, islands, sunken islands, humps, reefs, narrows, weed beds, and current areas. Precisely where walleyes will be on any given day depends on the stage of the season and daily weather conditions. Our discussion of how to fish walleyes will center round these two paramount variables.

May/June Walleye Tactics

Walleyes go into a notorious post-spawn funk and can be very difficult to find and catch. My personal recommendation for the mid-May walleye opener is to go lake trout fishing and spare yourself some grief. By the end of May, walleyes are settling into shoreline haunts and regular feeding patterns in 15–20 feet of water. Probably 85% of my serious walleye fishing happens in June. I have developed my own walleye approach and refined it over the course of a hundred something early summer canoe trips. That is to say, I now have a good handle on both finding June walleyes and the specific lures and presentations that consistently produce before most walleyes drift out to deeper summertime haunts. Come July, I switch my focus to guiding travel type trips, like around Hunters Island where we move every day and fishing is a bonus, rather than a priority. I know other anglers who excel at finding/catching mid-summer canoe country walleyes, and I have recruited three such individuals to share their "walleye words of wisdom" for July and August. (See below).

Early June is prime topwater smallmouth season, so if it's calm I prefer to cast the shorelines for bass all day long as they often hit even better when the afternoon sun heats up the water. If the winds are kicking during the mid-day hours, it is difficult to effectively work topwater plugs so I urge the guys to switch to lake trout or walleyes. Even if it is sunny, with a walleye chop you can still catch high noon walleyes.

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Here is how I do it.

First, eliminate all muddy, shallow bays and steeply dropping cliff faces. Walleyes prefer hard, rocky bottoms that slope gradually into deeper water. If the water is still less than 60 degrees, I would start my prospecting by trolling along an eastern shoreline where winds have stockpiled slightly warmer surface waters. Any inlet waters would be a potential "hotspot" to check out as well. I would troll a 1/8 oz. yellow jig with live bait in the BWCAW and that same jig with a yellow Impulse Grub Tail in Quetico. Trolling is the best way to "prospect" a lot of likely fish holding water. Of course if you hit a fish, troll back through there again and again until you're sure there are no more takers. Also, where you find fish, try still fishing and casting over that spot, or just let the wind blow you over it, paddle back up and drift through again.

If my guys really want a walleye dinner and our daytime effort comes up empty, I would have to sacrifice a primetime evening

of topwater bass for walleyes. I would start by trolling those same jig rigs in 10-15 feet of water. If they produce, just stick with it and work into the 10-foot-or-less zone as the evening wears on. If little action or you only hook small fish, I would have somebody switch to trolling a crankbait. After sunset at a depth of ten feet or less, my go to baits would be the Rapala Jointed Shad Rap (#7), Rapala Minnow Rap (#7), or a Reef Runner (Little Ripper). All three of these will dive and stay along the bottom at this depth while I slowly solo paddle from the stern. In the quiet calm of the bewitching hour of sundown troll shallow, troll slow, and troll with stealth. Ten feet deep is plenty, 1-2 mph is about right, and no banging or splashing around near the sweet spot. So that's my basic approach for June walleyes. Now let's look at some real world scenarios to illustrate how I move from walleye theory to consistent results on big fish.

Back during my college guiding days, my go-to walleye rig was a

1/4 oz. white jig with a 3" white Mr. Twister plastic grub tail. We drug those things through a lot of water when they came on the scene in the 1980s and 90s. Live bait was still allowed in Quetico back then and while preferred by many, I never messed with it on weeklong canoe trips. A couple years after establishing *BWJ*, I was finally able to get my Dad up here for his first Quetico trip. I was the "savvy guide," and I was going to show Dad the fishing trip of his life.

Dad rode shotgun between my friend Tony and I as we pointed the 80 lb. Royalex Old Town Tripper to a favorite campsite on the north end of Darky Lake. Only I had not counted on six straight days of dead calm, scorching ninety degree heat in mid-June. This was back when I was hell-bent on completely eliminating freeze-dried food from my canoe trips. I had a K-Mart plastic cooler with dry ice full of meat, cheese, milk, produce, et al. The heat wave zapped the dry ice in less than 3 days, and we were left

scrambling to catch fish for food. If ever I needed to catch walleyes, this was the trip.

Well you guessed it; we couldn't buy a walleye. We did manage to catch enough lake trout to fill our bellies, but that got old after a couple days. Even the "stone cold lock" Ballard Lake surrendered only enough for a meager walleye meal in this heat. Everyone we talked to reported the same thing—no walleyes.

On our final night we set up on the 5-star camp below Rebecca Falls, where I cooked up a meatless spaghetti dinner. Late in that day, a cold front swept through, doused us with a shower and dropped the temp from 90 to 60 in a flash. Dad was tired out by the day's travel, so Tony and I headed up to where McAree widens to a mid-lake "Y" and started trolling with maybe two hours of daylight remaining.

From the bow, Tony lowered a Mann's Deep Pig that ran about 30' deep. I drug a Silver Shad Rap #9 with a split shot which could stay down at 20' max. Suffice to say that this evening would be a textbook case in watching the walleyes "turn on" after a week-long heat wave of inactivity. Tony outfished me 2:1, some of that was because of my paddling handicap, but this night was exhibit A for the importance of fishing the right depth. I caught 30 something beautiful walleyes, a great night by most standards—except that Tony went on an extraordinary run. That Deep Pig got hammered almost instantaneously every time he got it back down into position. Together we boated close to 100 walleyes, and these were really hefty 20–24" fish. We had some serious fun and cracked part of the walleye code that night.

That prolonged heat wave created a situation with tremendous pent-up demand. Now, whenever I see this weather pattern about to break, I get the walleye gear rigged up and get out there. Old "marble eyes" will be actively feeding. You can bank on it.

The spot was *not* the key on McAree that night. We caught fish steady for over a mile long stretch up and back that southeastern bay. The key was getting a minnow bait down where the walleyes

were feeding. That extra 10' that Tony's plug was digging down was responsible for doubling his catch. This scenario proves the value of canoe partners working different lures at different depths until a "bite pattern" is discerned. The trouble that night was Tony had the one and only Deep Pig. Today, my tackle box is always stocked with Rapala DT 20s and 30s. That night on McAree really opened my eyes to just how deadly crankbaits can be on walleyes.

Dad was sorry he missed out on the spectacular walleye action that night. I was too, because after that trip he was diagnosed with cancer and never made it back to Quetico. Turns out I learned a lot of hard lessons on that trip.

As our boys got old enough to learn how to fish, I targeted what I call "kid-friendly walleye lakes." These are the canoe country lakes that are relatively fertile by Canadian Shield standards. Such lakes are known as eutrophic waters, meaning they have sufficient dissolved nutrients and oxygen to support rapid plant and animal growth. Most are dark, tannin-stained waters with fairly shallow basins (maximum depth is 25–35 feet). If a lake supports walleye and lake trout, it is probably not a "kid-friendly walleye lake." In June, the shallows of these lakes will be swimming with countless schools of minnows, plus swarms of perch and bass fry. These are typically medium-sized lakes, 500–1500 acres. We are looking for lakes with high pounds of fish/acre here. Most of these walleyes will be "eater size" of 14–18". A curious consequence of the sheer numbers of walleyes in these lakes is that the top-end quality seems to be limited. To me it makes no sense that a lake with tremendous biomass would not be able to produce high numbers of big walleyes. But the bottom line is that my kids caught a lot of 24–26" walleyes in these waters but never anything bigger. The trophy walleyes would have to come later, elsewhere...

We have experienced tremendous "kid friendly" walleye action, repeatedly, on Quetico's Bentpine Lake, Ballard, William, Pooh Bah, Burt, Sark, Reid, and Carp. In the BWCAW,

Lower Pauness Lake, Heritage, Stuart, Beartrap, Fourtown, Horse, Gabbro, Disappointment, Insula, Thomas, Ensign, Sagus, Pan, and Adams (See the "Walleye Lake Index" at the end of this article for more on where to catch canoe country walleyes).

During that decade from 1995–2005, our family made several walleye trips each year, and we always relied heavily on live bait—especially leeches. I would put a pound of leeches into a half-gallon plastic bottle and keep it on the ice in our *BWJ* Double Insulated Food Pack System until we made it to our chosen walleye waters. Once camp was established and fishing commenced in earnest, I would transfer the leeches to a leech locker, and they would keep fine the rest of the week during June trips at lake water temps. Besides allowing us to eat real, fresh food all week long on our canoe trips, having that ice gave us dependable preservation of our leeches for the 1–2 days we were paddling and portaging into those kid-friendly walleye hotspots. Plus, since walleye fishing is almost *always* best after dinner from 7:00 until dark, when we do want to keep enough walleyes for a meal I could fillet them under my headlight beam, seal them in a Ziploc bag, and keep them on ice until the following supper. No worrying about trying to keep delicate walleyes alive in a fish crib, away from thieving turtles or pounding against the rocky shoreline all night only to be dead and spoiled by morning. In the BWCAW, if you're serious about catching walleyes on your canoe trip, take leeches. The approach outlined here is the very best I have come up with for canoe trips into the backcountry. Minnows and night crawlers will definitely catch walleyes but both are far more problematic to keep alive for a whole week of canoe country fishing.

Once out on the water, rig those leeches on a yellow 1/8–1/4 oz. jig or a pre-made live bait spinner rig. With kids I found it was more tangle-free and productive to just put the leech on a plain #4 hook. I slid two yellow foam beads onto the line for a little color and crimped a 3/0 split shot 18" above

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the hook. With this setup, kids can catch walleyes whether trolling, drifting, anchored, or even shore fishing. Whatever is going on, they will be maximizing their chances of catching a walleye with this presentation. When they have enough interest and experience to start finessing things more, let them have at it. Until then, this method catches walleyes, period.

Top-End Canoe Country Walleyes

My clients and I have caught nice walleyes in over 135 canoe country lakes. One may conclude from this that we can go lots of places, fish with various techniques, and boat a lot of walleyes. The truth is, most of what I've learned about catching truly big walleyes has come from an area smaller than a football field, on a single lake with the same basic presentation, and just three types of baits. If you're really ready to take your walleye fishing to the highest level, here are the four game plan essentials for making it happen.

1. Not all canoe country walleye

waters are created equal

I have already noted that, surprisingly, most of those kid-friendly walleye lakes with high pounds of fish/acre rarely produce 28"+ trophy walleyes. Maybe they are down there and just hard to reach before lesser fish grab our offerings but nobody seems to catch them. Top-end fish are a product of genetics, nutrition, and age. Many lakes have the first two ingredients of this trophy recipe but the longevity component is often missing. Fortunately, the BWCAW and Quetico have enough backcountry water with low enough fishing pressure for walleyes to live 8 years, 10 and, even longer. Remote wilderness waters have limited entry permits, plus paddlers must endure all the challenges of wilderness travel to tap into this fishery: wind, rain, mud, bugs, and bruising portage trails. Plus, serious anglers are a vanishing breed; less than half of all canoe-trippers now consider fishing a priority on their trips. Also, the Quetico ban on live bait

and their barbless hook regulation is clearly producing more trophy fish—especially walleyes. Finally, I believe the single most important factor in top-end fish opportunity is a strong and growing catch and release ethic. Catch and release is much stronger in Quetico than the BWCAW. Hopefully, more BWCAW anglers will become more conservation minded. We have banned motorboats, float-planes, cans and bottles, portage signs, and canoe rests, and you can't even legally burn a piece of paper or cut a green alder branch to roast a lousy marshmallow. Yet, we continue to allow the killing of big, breeding sized sport fish. Just exactly why doesn't the "minimum impact" doctrine apply to our priceless wilderness fishery? The bottom line is that Quetico offers a huge big fish advantage for hard-core trophy anglers.

2. Timing is everything

If I had to pick the single best week for catching big Quetico walleyes it would be the three days before and after the full



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moon closest to Father's Day (June 19–26 in 2013). By the second half of June the summer food supplies are exploding in canoe country lakes while big walleyes have recovered from the spawn and are on a regular feeding pattern. That extra-bright full moon helps big walleyes see to feed without a corresponding vision gain to the baitfish. Walleyes jump all over this predatory advantage. The precise time of day to make your move on big walleyes really matters too. Even on our very best proven walleye spots, the hours of 8:00 p.m. until dark are worth the rest of the day put together. This is to say, when we really rock and sock 'em one night, then go back to this spot with the same everything first thing in the morning, we typically only boat a few fish. Then, later that night, the big girls show up again right on schedule at sundown. The key point to understand here is that cashing in on this narrow window of big walleye primetime action means we "camp" on these fish. Dur-

ing the day we cast the shoreline cover for bass or troll the deep for trout, finish supper and dishes by 6:30, and get our butts down to the walleye hole by 7:00. This is why those who plan short six-day trips where they move most every day are basically dreaming if they think they are going to consistently catch good numbers of big walleyes. If you don't know exactly where to spend those precious sundown hours when the big females move in shallower to feed, your chances of finding them on a new lake every night are comparable to winning the lottery. You're far better off "camping" on proven big walleye holes and working them religiously than rolling the dice on new water every day.

3. "X" Marks the spot for trophy walleye

I caught my very first walleye on my very first canoe trip dragging a #4 Mepps with one of those hokey looking rubber minnows while traveling full speed ahead on our way across Kawnipi Lake. That 28" beauty was a thrill at the

time. But of course it was blind luck, and by the time we made camp down by Kennebas Falls we were a good ten miles away. If that happened today, I would check into the closest ratty campsite and thrash that spot 'til dark. Dragging a random lure through random water as you paddle your way through a tightly scheduled "gotta do it all" canoe trip is not fishing; it is operating on a wing and a prayer. Wherever you hit a big walleye, carve that spot in stone and fish it hard at the prime time. If clueless about where to begin your own trophy walleye quest, start with the 26 years of *BWJ* fishing articles, the *BWJ* TRIPS Program and the lake index at the end of this article.

Loyal *BWJ* readers already know that the hallowed "football field" trophy walleye honey hole I referred to earlier lies on Conmee Lake. I did visit and fish Conmee several times in my early paddling days and never had any noteworthy action. So if you think you can just show up there and crank



Consistently catching top-end canoe country walleyes means understanding how, when, and where to make it happen. Start by “camping” on big fish water. (Conmee Lake)

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in trophy walleyes until your reel drag melts, think again. There are plenty of canoe country lakes with more walleyes. A lot more walleyes. Conmee is not on a natural loop route, it has no stately pines or waterfalls, no 5-star campsites, no sand beaches for swimming and in 20 something trips there I have not seen a single moose, bear, wolf, or deer. And yet some of my most precious canoe country memories have come from this water. Here is my Conmee Lake walleye story and I swear it is no fish tale.

In 2001, following the trail of a tip from a gracious *BWJ* subscriber, Michele and I took the two boys into Conmee on Father's Day. Using real leeches, we racked up the family Grand Slam on trophy walleyes right where we were told to fish. As darkness and a thunderstorm bore down on us, I told eight-year-old Alec, "One last cast," and he promptly caught a 30" brute. We didn't even dare take time to photograph his "fish of a lifetime," but now all four of us had landed a 30", and the legend was born. In June of 2004, *BWJ* contributor and walleye fanatic Tim Maas and I returned to work the honey hole over in earnest. We netted 61 walleyes (on real leeches and night crawlers) including: 29 > 24", 16 > 26", 8 > 28" and 3 > 30". We were definitely onto something. In 2005, the outfitter I guide elk hunts for in Colorado had a friend who wanted to catch a 30" walleye, so I again recruited Tim and we headed into Conmee in late June. We caught 23 walleyes over 24" including three 30" trophies. In 2007 the news came down that no live bait would

be allowed in Quetico starting in 2008, so Tim and I agreed we just had to take one last crack at the Conmee walleyes. I had also decided to get back into guiding wilderness fishing and hunting trips, so I set up the trip to include a video crew to film a show for the Outdoor Channel. My brother-in-law John is a walleye pro, so I asked him to man the third canoe. Conmee had been so good to Tim and I in the past, but would it deliver when the cameras were rolling? It did, in record-shattering style. Over 150 walleyes > 24", 75 > 26", 25 > 28", and 5 > 30". I have never weighed a fish in my life, and I always swoon when anglers "estimate" that they caught a 5-pound smallmouth or 10-pound walleye. I have been in on a slew of 20- and 21-inch canoe country smallmouth, and most are closer to 4 lbs. than 5. Same thing for walleyes. I believe most 30 inchers in June are closer to 8-9 lbs. than 10. I put a tape measure to all trophy caliber fish. It's stress free on the fish and leaves no wiggle room for the record. No doubt about it though, we handled some serious poundage of trophy walleyes on this trip.

Towards the end of that 2007 trip, in the midst of netting a slew of big walleyes, we started experimenting with Gulp minnows and leeches. The bite immediately dropped off substantially and so did our faith in ever repeating the likes of what we had just witnessed. From 2008–2011 I returned to Conmee at least once each June, and my clients caught a few decent fish on artificial baits but nothing to write home about. Before the 2012 season, I hap-

pened to eavesdrop on a walleye seminar while shopping at Cabela's. The presenter raved about a new product called Impulse from Northland Tackle. I figured "what the heck" and tossed a couple packs of 3" Sunrise Yellow Grubs with split tails into the shopping cart. Impulse baits have the taste and smell of other products, but they have far better action. On my first few trips we took a lot of nice walleyes with the Impulse Grubs on Ballard, Sturgeon, and Antoine. My fourth crew wanted to go after the big Conmee walleyes, so I figured we would give the new Impulse baits the ultimate test. We caught 16 fish between 25 and 30 inches in the old honey hole. These are not live bait era numbers, but it is pretty solid big fish action. The Impulse Grubs were good, but we also took nice fish on Rapala #7 Jointed Shad Raps and Rapala #7 Minnow Raps. This trip was a tremendous confidence boost, and I am looking forward to a return in 2013. Tim is also taking his family to Conmee the week before me, and I am hoping they can pull off the Family Grand Slam on trophy walleyes. There would be some beautiful symmetry in that.

4. *Playing the wind*

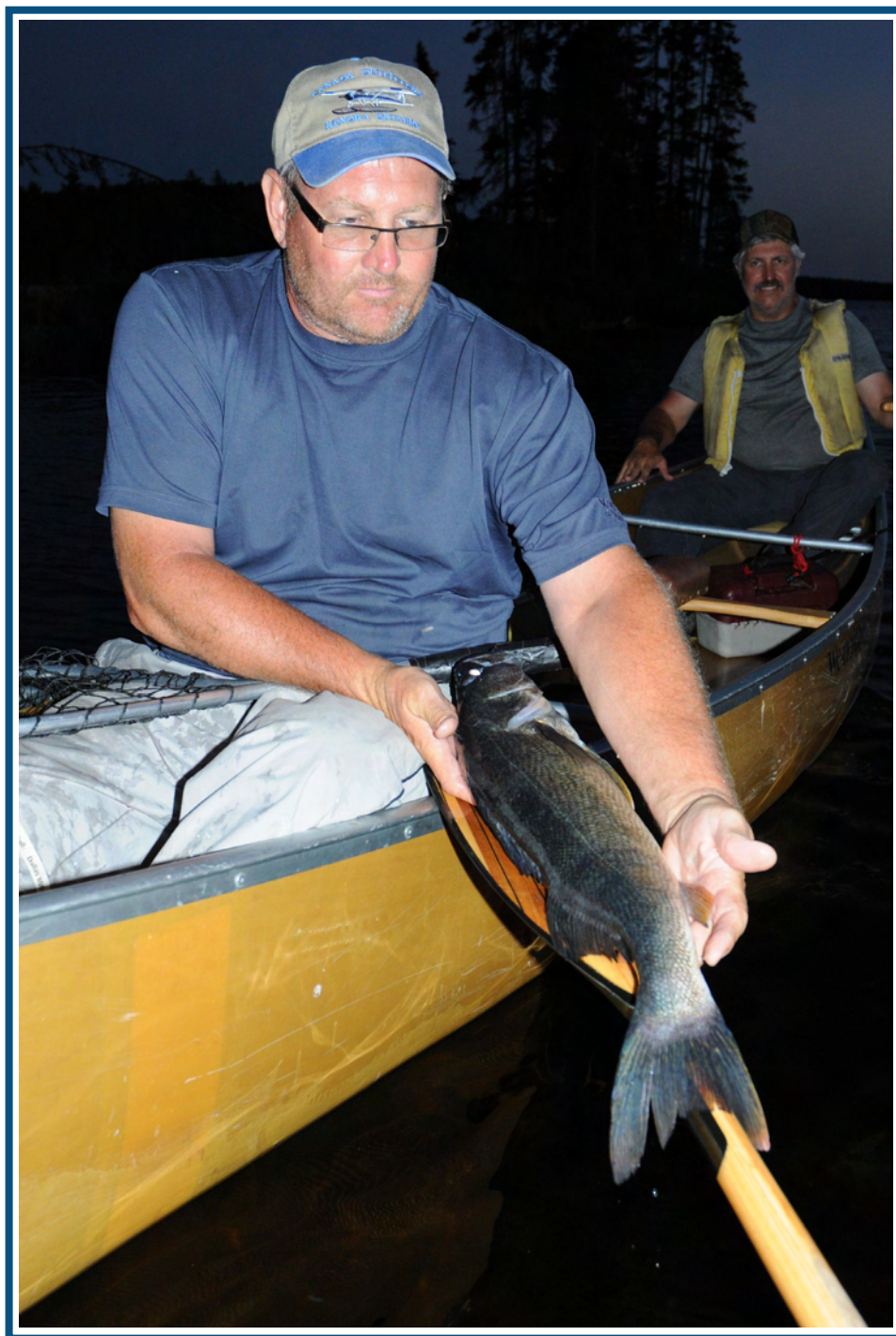
It took many years of fishing this same spot to put this last piece of the puzzle together. It turns out that on high-pressure days when the wind blows foot-and-a-half whitecaps the full length of the lake all afternoon, if the wind dies in the evening we have a hot, big walleye bite. I am no fisheries biologist but I have seen this scenario repeat itself so many times on so many lakes it has achieved reliable pattern status. My theory is that a west wind piles warmer water and phytoplankton along that eastern shoreline, which attracts baitfish and big, hungry walleyes. Conmee is a shallow, dark water lake, so we have caught some nice fish working other spots during the midday hours, but it's usually one here and one there. What you don't want is a dead calm, sunny hot day, because then the big girls don't seem to show up until just before dark. It makes for a nice evening of fishing but not much catching. The moral of the story here is windy afternoons are good for bathing, napping, reading,

journal writing, or bull sessions. I say bide your time until the winds calm and the sun approaches the treetops. This is the magic hour when the two-and-a-half footers come out to play.

Darell Brauer

If you are planning to fish unfamiliar water on your next canoe trip there are a few things you can do well in advance of your put in date to increase your chances for success. I call this doing your homework and have written about it in the past (“Walleyes for Dinner”, Spring 2009). The lakes you intend to fish may be new to you, but they are not new to everybody. Do your best to find and query fishermen who have been on these lakes before and might have knowledge of the species you intend to target, in this case walleyes. Even if their information is a bit dated or their trips occurred at a different time of the summer, it can still be useful as a starting point.

Sources for this information include the *Boundary Waters Journal*, local outfitters, and internet forums like QuietJourney.com. Michael Furtman’s book *The New Boundary Waters and Quetico Fishing Guide* is a great source of information about what species of fish are present in particular lakes within those parks (see p. 90). The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources can also be helpful. By spending time doing research you may discover valuable information that can make the difference between a fruitless 3-day search and 3 days of backcountry dream fishing. If you are a regular canoe country visitor, meaning you spend time vacationing in canoe country nearly every year, you should be building and maintaining a network of reliable people you can count on for information. It may be a little known fact that professional tournament fisherman and guides do exactly that. Yes, they are very good at evaluating unfamiliar water and assembling clues to figure out the day’s bite, but the real reason they are consistently successful is they maintain a solid reliable network of people and information that they can tap into



STUART OSTHOFF

When fishing big walleyes, the right tackle and precise spot is not enough. Trolling from 8–10 p.m. is critical. The black trim on my Bending Branches paddle is 27", so we can quickly measure and release fish with minimal stress.

whenever they need.

I regularly venture into new water on my trips and it’s a rare occurrence when I do not have some information that I’ve gathered prior to my trip. For example, I have never been on Poohbah Lake in Quetico, yet I have consulted with people that have been there and have caught walleyes there. I

have this information filed for the future when I eventually do get to Poohbah. I have also freely given out specific information when it is requested on QuietJourney.com or by readers of this publication. Stu Osthoff (publisher/editor of *BWJ*) does the same by way of the *BWJ* TRIPS Program. In my opinion, this initial info gathering

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process during the time leading up to a fishing trip is the real secret to quick success on new water. I know everybody is eager to get into the nuts and bolts of technique and lure choices but this information gathering process can yield valuable clues about specific lake characteristics and fish location, and it can be done from the comfort of home in the middle of winter. Good information can literally save hours or days on the water and miles of paddling.

Well before you are on the water is also a good time to study the maps, paying special attention to inlet and outlet flows, pinch points, islands, bays, points, and reefs. Topographical contour lines of shorelines can offer clues to offshore gradients. For mid- to late-summer walleye fishing I would say that in order of importance I would be most interested in the inlet flow areas, reefs, and points/pinch points. (See "Pinch Point Walleyes", Summer 2011). I would not spend any time at all with outlet flow areas or bays in mid- to late-summer.

So now you are finishing the last portage into the new water that you intend to fish for the next 3 days. After you load the canoe and push off from shore toward a campsite, turn on the fish locator and leave it on whenever you are on the water. You want to be studying the lake bottom contours looking for reefs, especially those humps that rise from deeper water—40 feet or more—to depths of 15–30 feet of the surface. Also pay attention to the bottom composition. Smooth top reefs are generally the least productive. Those reefs that are littered with gravel and boulders of various sizes are the best for attracting baitfish and the predator fish that follow. If you find a large boulder strewn hump rising to 15 or so feet from the surface, mark it by using triangulation (does anybody still do that?), a marker buoy, or GPS waypoint; you are going to want to fish this spot at various times of the day.

To begin fishing this new lake, your search should begin by visiting any and all areas that you have learned about from reliable firsthand sources. Also consider any reefs you may have marked during your paddling around the

lake. If you have no such info then proceed as follows.

If there is a major inflow to your new lake, you will want to fish that location first and then the shorelines and reefs close by. Fish the inflow current at all depths from 2 feet all the way down to 30 feet using both pitching and vertical jigging techniques while drifting in the canoe. Look for eddies created by the current and pay special attention to the seams between fast and slow water. Walleyes will hold and feed in heavy current, so make sure you get right up in the fast stuff before moving to the deeper water of the plunge pool. A pitched ball head jig or, my preference, a jig spinner and plastic grub work best for this. You won't need to spend a lot of time checking these areas, as the fish that are there will be aggressive and hit right away. To avoid the heaviest current, walleyes will sit belly to the bottom waiting to ambush bait that happens to pass by, so make sure that whatever lure you choose is presented as close to the bottom as possible without hanging up. Simply ticking the bottom occasionally with a moving lure is sufficient, any more contact than that will likely cause snags.

After the inflow has been fished, it's time to switch gears and do a more expansive search. Start trolling the shorelines spreading out from the inflow area and begin by using lures that run 10–15 feet deep and troll them so that each will occasionally tick the bottom. Rapala Deep Diving Shad Raps #7 and #9 or Berkley Frenzy or Flicker Shad lures work well. The Berkeleys run slightly shallower than the Rapalas, so be mindful which side of the canoe each is trolled if two paddlers are using different lures. I'm not too concerned with color or style of bait at this point. What I am trying to do is make contact with a walleye and then try to repeat that pattern until I've gathered enough clues to tell me where and how the walleyes are feeding in this lake at this time. Always remember that walleyes tend to be a very bottom oriented fish. Our goal is to present our baits within a few feet of the bottom at all times. There is an exception to this pattern that I'll

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talk about later.

If you've trolled shorelines or reefs near the inlet for an hour or more and haven't contacted a walleye, it's time to change lures and troll a deeper contour with deeper running lures. Rapala Taildancers in size #7 and #9 or Reef Runners that dive in the 15-25 foot range are what I use for checking deeper water. Spend an hour or so trolling this deeper contour in areas near the inflow, and always pay very close attention to the lure and the depth if you happen to catch a fish. These are clues to the puzzle that you will try to solve to catch more fish (see "Fishing Down Deep In Canoe Country", Spring 2011).

If you've spent a few hours working shorelines and any reefs within sight of the inflow at depths to 30 feet and still have not found walleyes, then it's time to begin the process all over and troll the shorelines and reefs in the

farther reaches of the lake. Begin with some shallow trolling along a section of shoreline, and then switch lures to troll deeper and deeper contours all the way down to 25-30 feet. Rapala Taildancers in size #11 are one of the few lures that will troll without modification or extra weight down to about 27 feet deep. Do not be concerned about trolling a lure that is too large at this time of year. All the while you are trolling you should be evaluating the bottom composition looking for boulder gardens, weed patches, or transition areas between mud and rock. These types of areas have far more potential to hold fish than the smooth rock which dominates much of canoe country. If you find a particularly good looking section of lake bottom in 15-30 feet of water, you may have found a walleye feeding area hotspot that is simply not being used at the moment. Mark it and make a mental note to return

and try these "fishy" looking spots at different times of the day.

In some lakes, walleyes can be finicky and feed almost exclusively during low light periods, especially in late summer. However, it has been my experience that if you can find especially attractive walleye feeding areas in deeper (15-25 feet) water you will have found a spot that walleyes will use almost anytime throughout the day or maybe when conditions change during the day. On those days when the walleyes just don't seem to be biting, it is usually just a case of not biting at the moment. If you have a mental library of those potential hotspots, come back to these areas and work them over until you find active fish (see "Fishing Where the Fish Are," Summer 2009).

If you've spent an entire day and maybe part of the next and have still not found a hotspot or walleye pattern, it may be time



MIKE TORMANEN

This is the perfect 16" eater walleye. Both texture and flavor decline in walleyes over 20".

to try a day trip to adjacent lakes. Check the map for key areas and then once on the water on the new lake begin the same process all over again—hopefully with better results.

There is one final technique that can be successful in late summer on large, deep lakes. On such lakes, as the water warms to peak temperature in July and August, schools of walleyes begin roaming the main basin of a large lake over deep water, feeding on pelagic baitfish. Trolling the deep basin of a large expanse of water is not nearly as interesting as studying shoreline and bottom structure, but it is effective in certain lakes that support huge schools of pelagic baitfish like shad, cisco, or smelt. This pattern is often most effective in the evening and early nightfall, but I have caught walleyes this way on big lakes during mid-afternoon in Woodland Caribou Park.

To target these roaming open water walleyes you simply need to troll over some of the deepest

areas of the lake and use baits that dive to and run in the 15–20 foot range. Rapala Taildancers and Reef Runners have worked for me. Color and pattern seem to be important using this technique, so change lures often, looking for one that will be the most productive. As you troll, you may see large clouds of baitfish on the locator. Pay attention to the depth of the baitfish and select lures that will run at those depths. If this sounds a lot like a typical lake trout pattern, it is, except that the walleyes will generally be higher in the water column than the trout. Don't be surprised when the bonus lake trout hits your lure.

Throughout this article I've suggested reference to previous articles that contain more detailed information about various techniques. I consider a fish locator to be a necessity if you are planning a trip to new and unfamiliar water, especially if you intend to target walleyes. "Fishing Where The Fish Are", Summer 2009, includes details about setting up and using

a locator in a canoe.

Darryl Blazino

Catching walleye during the dog days of summer can be a challenge, even for experienced anglers. For the most part, the same principles apply for walleye fishing in July and August as in the spring but with one crucial difference. It is important to always be mindful that by mid-summer walleye will spend the majority of the daytime in deeper waters.

I believe the reason most people catch fewer walleyes later in the season is that it is easier to stay in the strike zone when the water is cooler. By merely keeping the canoe a short casting distance from shore one can be confident their lure is from 6–15 feet in depth. Working deeper water, often necessary by July, means being farther from shore and therefore the margin of error is much greater, especially without a depth finder.

If I were guiding a group to new territory for walleye, I would do everything I could to research the lake beforehand. Even though the

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Beef Chili	Lentil Soup
Broccoli and Cheese	Pork Sausage Gravy
Camp Carrots	Refried Beans
Camp Peas	Red Quinoa with Wild Mushrooms
Camp Corn	Scalloped Taters with Ham
Cheddar Grits	Scrambled with Mushrooms
Cheddar Mac and Cheese	Shrimp Alfredo
Cheddar Mashed Taters	Shrimp and Grits
Cheddar Wild Rice	Sweet Corn off the Cobb
Cheddar Wild Rice Soup	10 Bean Soup
Chicken Alfredo	Trail Center Pancake Batter
Cinnamon Honey Couscous	Trail Centers Quick Bean Soup
Couscous Cheddar	Turkey and Dressing
Couscous Garlic Chive	Wild Mushroom A La King
Couscous Wild Mushroom	Wild Mushroom Gravy
Curry Ginger Carrot Soup	Wild Mushroom Soup
Fern's Apple Pie	Wild Mushroom Stroganoff
Fry Bread	Trail Snacks -Asparagus-Corn-Peas
Green Bean Casserole	



lakes are remote, many people are reluctant to share secret fishing spots. Utilizing the *Boundary Waters Journal* magazine articles and the *BWJ TRIPS* Program is the best place to start your canoe country fishing search.

Among my biggest considerations are determining what type of fish inhabit a prospective lake and the lake's relative clarity. Clear water lakes containing lake trout seem to be especially difficult for mid-summer walleye and in general would not be my first choice. That said, we had a fantastic August fishing trip a few years back on Cirrus Lake (a great trout lake) where my five-year-old son landed 23", 24" and 26" walleyes in less than fifteen minutes at high noon, and we had steady action around sunset every evening. As a rule early morning and late evening are the best times for walleye as their superior vision in low light gives them a predatory advantage. Naturally, walleyes feed when they have this edge.

As for the lay of the land, the perfect walleye destination would

be a lake with rapids or a waterfall at each end, plenty of islands or reefs adjacent to deeper water, narrows (or what Darrel Brauer refers to as pinch points where current can be expected), and a few weed beds.

It may upset a few people to hear me say this, but a depth finder can really pay dividends in this situation. Finding a "sunken island" with depths of about 5–20 feet adjacent to deeper waters can be like finding the "holy grail." We have had plenty of success mid-morning and in the late afternoon at such locales.

This past July my sons and I returned to Camel, one of my favorite big walleye lakes. Unfortunately the majority of our early June hot spots, such as the narrows, were unproductive. All of these areas had depths of less than twelve feet, and without a depth finder on this island-less lake, searching for productive structure would have taken considerable time and energy. We opted instead to reserve our angling efforts for the proven waters of Chatterton,

Russell, and Sturgeon with excellent results. There we concentrated on casting Gulp tipped jig spinners into the moving waters above the falls and trolling diving Rapalas and spinners approximately fifteen yards off the perimeter of islands and a few exposed reefs.

The most successful walleye expedition I have ever experienced happened to be in August when my brother-in-law and I caught and released a dozen fish or more on every day of the trip. On our first night we worked jig heads with twister tails and leeches (now banned in Quetico) below the falls where the Pickerel River enters Sturgeon Lake. We also had success along the edges of the weedy banks of the river heading back to camp.

The following night we did the same above the Split Rock Falls and in the central narrows in Keats, which has a strong current. Next we added 1/4 ounce split shots to the rig and landed several fish trolling around the islands and off of points on both



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Montgomery and Kawnipi Lakes. We were blessed with steady action and some good sized fish as well. As great as it was, the best was yet to come.

The fishing was so incredible on both Cutty and then Russell Lakes that we were able to experiment with various presentations. While there is a part of me that believes live bait will always be superior when it comes to walleye fishing, we were able to show conclusively on each of these lakes that Powerbait could attract as many or even more fish than the same jig with a plastic tail and a leech. When trolling, the same could be said about the perch-colored, deep diving Rapala.

The following summer while on Mackenzie Bay of Kawnipi, my friend Shawn out-fished me and my leeches 2:1 all evening long with orange tailed “pumpkinseed” Powerbaits. Had I not witnessed each of these events firsthand, I would have been more concerned when the live bait ban was introduced to Quetico.

When my crew finally reaches

our destination lake my strategy would be to split the crew in two with each trying a different approach until the walleyes are located. To do this I would set one canoe up with a diving crank bait (such as a perch Rapala or silver and blue Wally Diver) on one rod and a heavily weighted spinner rig on the other. My favorite spinners are either crimson colored with green beads or a green/orange chartreuse combination. This pair would utilize the depth finder and would guide their canoe around islands and points while targeting areas where the waters climb steeply from 30 or more to 15 feet. This tandem would also try to scout larger open areas for sunken reefs while travelling to and from their areas of focus.

In the other canoe I would set up casting rigs such as jig/tail combos of varying colors to work the outer edges of any weed beds and any areas containing current. My guess would be the latter would be the most productive and thus would warrant the majority of our attention.

As a final suggestion, I would strongly recommend returning to these prime areas about an hour before sunset even if these spots were unsuccessful during the day. As in our aforementioned trip to Cirrus Lake, it is not uncommon to catch 80% of the fish in the last hour or two of sunlight. Although at times it demands perseverance, fishing walleye during the dog days of summer can produce some of the best angling experiences of your life.

Tim Maas

As a boy I was taught that walleye are the ultimate game fish of the northern Wisconsin lakes. I remember my first “keeper” walleye and my father’s proud expression. I was also taught that the best time to catch walleyes is a few weeks after the fishing season opens in May. When I found the BWCAW during my early twenties, I brought along this belief that spring walleye fishing is the best. I held that belief for over a decade while making many canoe trips in June. Including our kids on our canoe trips changed our walleye fishing approach. Most of our canoe trips are now during August when the bugs are nearly gone. I can honestly report that the walleye fishing is just as good, if not better, in August as it is in June. We certainly have caught bigger walleyes during mid- to late-summer.

The key to finding summer walleyes is to stop fishing where you would during the spring and find those mid-lake reefs that are surrounded by deep water. I have always started my BWCAW fishing trips with detailed depth maps of the lakes, devised a game plan to fish certain lakes, and used my fish locator to find those spots once on the lake. Most BWCAW lakes have been depth sounded and the maps are readily available. I like reefs that rise to at least ten feet of water and some reefs will break the surface of the water. Look for the biggest reef with the deepest nearby water and you may have found a walleye gold mine. We know of a huge reef on Insula Lake that seems to hold 90% of all the fish in that part of the lake. I wrote a detailed description of fishing for walleyes in the Summer 2007 *BWJ* issue titled “Dog Days

A person is seen from behind, carrying a large, tan-colored canoe on their shoulder. They are walking on a dirt path through a forest with trees showing autumn foliage. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the person and the canoe.

Take along:
canoe, fishing gear, life jackets, paddles

Leave behind aquatic invaders:

- spiny waterfleas
- Eurasian watermilfoil
- rusty crayfish
- zebra mussels

Clean mud off footwear when leaving lake;

Wipe off rods & reels between lakes;

Drain lake water from bait buckets; and

Pack out live bait and **dispose** in the trash



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Walleye Strategies.” There you’ll find more specifics for catching walleyes during the summer, but here is a quick summary. You will want to find rocky reefs that have a mixture of gravel and all sizes of rocks. Smooth ledge rock that rises in the lake bottom usually is not productive. However, the reef can be small as a house or as big as a couple football fields. The bigger reefs are actually harder to fish, because it often requires the fisherman to find a specific “spot on the spot.” For either type of reef, I will have a couple buoys ready to mark the top of a reef or a specific spot on a large reef. If it is totally calm, I like to back troll with jigs. In a light wind, we drift until active fish are found and then we usually anchor. If the wind is too strong to drift, we’ll anchor using the buoy to position the canoe in depths of 14–20 feet of water, often within casting range of the top of the reef. Also, I firmly believe in fishing the windward side of reefs, and I’ve found that early morning fishing during hot, sunny days is the best time to catch walleyes.

So, the important question is: what should I use to fool the walleyes? We use different tactics in the BWCAW and Quetico because the rules dictate how we are allowed to fish. In the BWCAW, we will sacrifice space and weight to transport live bait to our base camp. Minnows will out-fish any other live or artificial bait. Sorry, but nobody can convince me otherwise. If you don’t believe me, examine the stomachs of the walleyes you keep for shore lunch. Walleyes live and die trying to catch smaller fish and would soon starve if forced to eat only leeches, insects, crayfish, or night crawlers.

We arrive in camp with our homemade leaders of seventeen-pound line tied to a floating jig, an eighth-ounce sinker, and a two-way swivel. The two-foot leader will prevent line twist, give you a fighting chance with a twenty-pound pike, and resist damage to your line as you drag the jig along the bottom of the lake. I like floating jigs with minnows and night crawlers because I believe it gives a more natural action to bait while

raising the bait off the bottom where the walleyes are on patrol. You will also get snagged far less with floating jigs. We will bring leeches for use with slip bobbers, or the kids simply hang a leech over the side of the canoe while anchored. I bring scented plastics as a backup if we run out of bait.

In Quetico, live bait has been banned, and I have changed our tactics to weighted jigs with spinner blades called Walleye Weapons (CapnRedBears.com). We tip these high-quality jigs with Northland Tackle’s Impulse baits that imitate minnows. Last summer that combination worked well on Bentpine Lake—maybe half as well as live bait. Trolling with deep diving Rapalas and Yo-Zuri lures along the edges of reefs can be successful, and I have caught a few trophy walleyes while trolling, but our kids quickly lose interest in that kind of fishing. I use two rod holders while trolling so that I can paddle and our son can watch his rod. It is also a good tactic for finding fish in new water and a way to use your depth finder

as you explore a new lake. If you paddle over a mid-lake reef as you troll, mark that spot even if no fish takes your Rapala. Then work it with jigs—it could be that honey hole we are all looking for. Good fishin' everyone.

So there you have the scoop on when and how to fish canoe country walleyes from May through August. Of course, walleyes don't vanish into thin air come fall and hard-core anglers willing to tough out some cold conditions can go deep and still catch BWCAW/Quetico walleyes into October. One thing is for sure, you'll have the walleye holes pretty much to yourself. Fall fishing is a subject for another day.

The following Walleye Lake Index is a listing of the (75) Quetico lakes and (60) BWCAW lakes where I have personally caught walleyes. There are many other lakes across canoe country that hold walleyes. I can only share what I have experienced with my own clients, friends and family. Each entry contains a synopsis of my personal observations and impressions while fishing walleyes on these waters. Some summations are based on 20+ trips to the same lake, some on 3 or 4 trips and others only a single visit. Finally, I rate the walleye fishing on each lake as: 1-fair, 2-good or 3-excellent.

Quetico

These 75 lakes are listed by map location, starting in the northwest part of the park and working back and forth from left to right, like reading a page, moving south until reaching the border.

QUETICO A clear water trout lake, widely regarded as tough to fish but we have had some good walleye action around the islands on the far east end and below the rapids coming in from Conk Lake. A beautiful lake with nice campsites, a perfect base camp destination with only two easy portages and enough fish for the casual angler. (1)

ORIANA A sweet, out of the way walleye lake with low pressure and plenty of 24" fish. Very good action with easy portaging. (3)

JESSE Lots of islands and walleye structure to work over in the midsection of this lake. Solid numbers with some bigger fish to keep it interesting. Nice camps. (2)

MARIA Start by working the islands on the western half of this pretty little jewel. One of those pass through lakes that is definitely worth investing some serious trolling time. (2)

ELIZABETH Troll up/back each side of this long, narrow, dark water lake. Should hit plenty of eater size walleyes. Worth a day trip if staying on Jesse or Walter. (2)

BADWATER Worth the mile-long portage. Lots of 20" walleyes. Like many of the east/west running dark water lakes in north-western Quetico, when there is a walleye chop you can get good midday action here. (2)

YOUR Nice walleyes right off the 5-star island campsite. If you can't go all the way on to Sturgeon, I would camp and fish here. (3)

SNOW Very few bother to fish this fertile walleye water. If camped on Your Lake, make a day trip over here. These fish are dumb and hungry. (2)

TRAIL Very similar situation as Snow. No decent campsites on either lake so nobody fishes them but the walleyes are here for the catching. Easy catching. (2)

MARCH Shocking numbers of 18–22" walleyes for a small, ordinary looking lake. (2)

BENTPINE Superb walleye fishery. Very fertile, dark water lake is loaded with baitfish. This is the kid-friendly walleye lake my kids learned to fish on. We dubbed one special spot "Alec's Island" because the kids could catch walleyes from shore as fast as I could re-bait their hooks. Very good average size of 18–20" fish, many going 23–25". In 10+ weeks of fishing here we have caught a couple thousand walleyes and zero over 26". Only two decent campsites on the lake, no smallmouth, and tough portaging keeps the fishing pressure down in here. (3+)

JACK A day trip option from Bentpine but the numbers don't compare. A few nice fish. Hard to pull away from the Bentpine action but we had to check it out anyway. (2)

CLAIRE I have not actually wet

a line in here and I have never talked to anyone who has but I saw an eagle working on a dead walleye while paddling through so I think this lake is worth checking out. It is surrounded by primo walleye waters.

JEAN A classic Grand Slam lake, usually able to quickly net a walleye meal after a long day of bass casting. My favorite locale is around the eastern end islands where the westerlies stack up the waves. A clear water trout lake—not as fertile as the smaller lakes to the west but still good numbers of 18–22" fish. (2)

BURNSIDE Darker water than Jean and more fish per acre. Work the islands in the middle of the eastern half. Watch for reefs barely breaking the water surface—these are evening walleye hotspots. We named one of these "Taryn's Reef" after she went on a magical catching spree here one night. We have taken a lot of nice fish up to 26". (3)

ROUGE A smallmouth gem, we have caught a few walleyes by accident. If you're a walleye chaser, I would at least troll a Rapala on the way through to Sturgeon. (1)

WALTER Some of my clients hit good walleye action where the creek from Elizabeth spills in while I was fishing bass over on Lonely. Nice lake, worthy of further investigation with a jig and Impulse. (1)

DRAPER I can't take my focus off the tremendous smallmouth fishing in here, but my clients have gotten into some nice 22" walleyes on the western end. Lots of big pike and plenty of average trout to round out the Grand Slam on a relatively small lake. (2)

LONELY This is a clear water trout lake that is the exception to the rule because it is the home of some truly top-end trophy walleyes. As with most east/west oriented lakes, let those west winds work for you and fish the eastern shore structure when the winds calm in the evening. This is not a lake for fast and furious walleye action. It is the lake for serious trophy walleye hunters. (3)

ANTOINE One of my very favorite bass and trout lakes, we always donate a few hours to the third string walleye, and we always seem to catch lots of nice fish.



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Good numbers of 20" walleyes plus definite trophy potential as well. On my 2011 trip in here, one of my guys caught a 29" walleye casting from shore while I was frying the eater walleyes caught earlier that day. Last year we caught a dozen 22-inchers in an hour of trolling Reef Runner Little Rippers around the mid-lake islands. This is a sweet lake for all four species, worth the "character building" portages to get in here. (3)

STURGEON I have talked to hundreds of avid Quetico anglers who will argue from their graves that this is *the premiere walleye lake* in the park. They can't all be wrong. Suffice to say it is in my top 10 for sure. Sturgeon has it all: big bays, river inlets, narrow chutes with current, long wind-swept shores. I have fished it on 20+ trips and not begun to cover it all. But I have seen enough to confirm it is an elite walleye lake for both numbers and top-end fish. Set up camp here for a week and get to know this place. It won't disappoint. (3+)

RUSSELL All my trips here have been in July so my lack of walleye success is likely linked to my June fishing methods. Others report good walleye fishing below Chatterton Falls and in front of Sturgeon Narrows. This lake is too popular a destination for my taste but it has a solid walleye reputation. (2)

TANNER I like to camp here my last night coming out of Sturgeon or Pooh Bah so we often just have a single evening to fish. Which usually means topwater small-mouth, but below the current areas on the east end just past the Pooh Bah Creek cutoff is a reliable walleye hole. The pools below Tanner Rapids (both sides) are also good. (2)

POOH BAH With the tow from Crane Lake to Twin Falls and moderate flow in the Maligne River, you can be camped the first night on Pooh Bah and set up to enjoy spectacular Grand Slam action including walleyes. We have caught lots of 22-24" walleyes all over this lake. Most lakes

have their sweet spots. Pooh Bah has oodles of honey holes. I gotta believe this place has a lot of fish flesh per acre. And it holds plenty of the big girls. In my top 10 walleye waters for sure. An ideal base camp for 5 species (largemouth bass too). (3+)

FRED Really just a back bay of Sturgeon, but just as good for walleyes as out on the main lake. Hit all 3 of the principal narrows—these are all consistent producers. A good place to fish on those days when the big lake is a bit more than a walleye chop. (3)

NAN A small lake with lots of eater walleyes. Easy to cover and find them. (2)

CAMEL Very good numbers of larger walleyes. Off the main routes so it is lightly fished. A classic canoe country wilderness walleye setting. Big enough to hold big fish and small enough to thoroughly cover it and find them. My kind of lake. (3)

CHATTERTON Lots of flow through this lake. Below Splitrock Falls is a must fish spot but try



First vertical row on left from top: Impulse 3" Smelt Minnow, Impulse 4" Jumbo Leech-black, Impulse 3" Swimmin Grub-sunrise, and box of assorted jigs of various types and weights (1/8 oz. thru 1/2 oz.) Note: The only color of jig I carry anymore is yellow. Second vertical row from top: Slurpies 5" Jerkshad-bluegill, Uncle Josh 3" Meat Minnow-black shad, Trigger 5" Jumbo leech. Third vertical row from top: Liqua Bait Locker Bottle for Gulp Alive—do not pack Gulp Alive in original containers as they are prone to leak and make a smelly mess—Gulp 4" Floating Minnow, Gulp 3" Minnow Grub-chartreuse, Gulp 5" Jumbo Leech and box of assorted walleye crank baits. Fourth vertical row from top: Gulp Alive 3" Minnow-chartreuse shad, Berkley Power Bait Power worm-4"-red shad, Storm 4" Wild Eye Curl Tail Minnow-shiner, Kalin's 5" Luncker Grub-chartreuse. With no live bait allowed in Quetico these are the best substitutes for the real thing that I have found for walleye. All are legal in Quetico. The Impulse line is my favorite.

above Chatterton Falls too. Very little traffic sees the top half of this lake. Fish up here. (3)

KEATS Lots of mid-lake reefs and islands hold plenty of walleyes. Be sure to fish the currents below Snake Falls. Grab one of the 5-Star campsites here and fish the primetime evenings. You can enjoy the great fishing most just paddle on past. (3)

SHELLEY I have only stopped to fish here once, and it didn't produce much. I have yet to find a decent campsite here, so I don't feel it's worth staying to work over. Other, better water nearby. (1)

KAWNIPI Forget Top 10. This is Top 5 water. Little did I know that my first ever walleye came from perhaps the ultimate walleye factory. Kawnipi is a huge, sprawling body of primo walleye habitat, almost 4 lakes in one. Start at the

many "pinch points" opening into the larger bays. Kawnipi is a relatively fertile basin with the nutrient-rich Wawig River and Falls Chain flowing in. Planning to "fish Kawnipi" in a typical weeklong canoe trip is a joke. The best you can hope for is to uncover a few hotspots and work them over. This lake has a ton of walleyes including plenty of top-end fish. (3+)

MURDOCH Really just another bay of Kawnipi, I stay at the 5-Star island campsite and troll all the prominent points within the bay. Interestingly, the walleyes in Murdoch are beautiful, golden sided fish, while out on the main lake most of the bigger walleyes run all black. (3)

MINN Fish the eastern shore where the Darky River spills in. A better smallmouth lake than walleye but enough action to put a

meal together whenever you want. (2)

MCAREE Here is a great base camp fishing lake with only one easy portage. You might encounter an occasional 10 horsepower boat operated by First Nation guides but take that as proof positive that this is a productive walleye lake. I fish the mid-lake islands and the current below Rebecca Falls. As I described earlier, when this lake is "on" it is a thrill a minute. (3)

DARKY This lake has a unique aura and mystique about it with Quetico's finest pictographs but its walleyes remain a mystery to me. Others report nice fish from mid-lake reefs found with electronics, but I fish Darky for bass and trout. If I am camped here and I want walleyes, I simply portage into the next lake on our list. (1)

BALLARD In my college guid-



First vertical row on left from top: Rapala Scatter Rap Shad 7 Shallow Runner, Rapala Scatter Rap 5, Rapala Jointed Shad Rap Shallow 7, Rapala Jointed Shad Rap Diver 7 Chartreuse and then same in Firetiger, Rapala Minnow Rap 7s in Perch, Firetiger and Shiner—all these are designed to run 5–10 feet deep. Second vertical row from top: Rapala DT-16 in Firetiger and then Red Crawdad, Rapala Shad Rap 8-Perch, Rapala Shad Rap 9-Crawdad and then Blue, Reef Runner Little Rippers in orange, yellow, and metallic—all these are designed to run 10–15 feet deep. Third vertical row from top: Rapala Tail Dancer 9–20 foot in Perch then Firetiger and Florescent, Rapala Countdown 9-Florescent, Rapala Countdown 11-Blue and then Florescent, Rapala Trolls to 20-Shad, and Trolls to 20 Minnow—all these will get down to 20 feet. Fourth vertical row from top: Rapala Tail Dancer 11–30 foot in Firetiger and then Florescent, Reef Runner 30 in orange, Rapala X-Rap 12, Rapala Husky Jerk 12, Yozuri Chrome Minnow, Rapala Suspending Runner in trout, and Rapala Clackin Rap 8 in Perch—all these will get down to 30 feet. When I take these out of the packages, I write the size on them with a Sharpie marker so I can remember what works and what to buy more of later. Also, I grind the barbs off all my lures at home with a Dremel tool so I am legal and ready to go when I get to that hotspot. I never miss a barb on a treble hook anymore. I use barbless everywhere I fish, even in the BWCAW where barbed hooks are still legal. You don't need them. Remember, we are letting 99+ % of these fish go anyway. Barbless causes less stress to the fish, and if you get a hook into your hand it backs right out.

ing days, this was my “never fail” walleye outlet when camped anywhere nearby. The Ely locals call it Jackie’s Lake, but I just call it an absolute gem of a walleye lake with both lots of eaters and high numbers of 26–28” fish and an occasional 30. This is a pretty small lake so, please everyone, don’t go in here and kill lots of fish. I am trusting you all to fish with the proper respect for this special fishery. We all owe it to the sport to leave this resource as we found it. One meal of 14–18” eaters is plenty for any given canoe trip. (3+)

ROLAND A lot like Darky, I consider this a good bass and trout

lake but never done much on the walleyes. (1)

BRENT I consider the next 7 lakes on our list as the “Murderer’s Row” lineup of Quetico walleye waters. They are all close together and connected by easy portages (except the “Death March” portages into Delahey). Brent is the exception to the rule that deep, clear water trout lakes are not good walleye lakes. Brent is not a good walleye lake. It is a superb walleye lake. I can personally only vouch for the western-half of the lake, but others confirm Brent is wall-to-wall walleyes. I consider Brent a (1) for small-mouth, yet I make it a point to do

at least one trip in here every year for the walleyes and trout. As a smallmouth fanatic, this should tell you something. Lots of bigger fish including top-end trophies. The beautiful golden variety. (3+)

WILLIAM If you want lots of 18–22” walleye action with an occasional lunker thrown in to keep it all interesting, William is your lake (don’t confuse with Williams Lake, which is off the northwest corner of Agnes; William Lake is off the northwest corner of Brent). A dark water, relatively fertile Canadian Shield lake, it is narrow and pretty easy to hunt down the action. Coming on as a very good smallmouth lake—more proof that

the two species can coexist just fine. (3+)

CONMEE What more can I say about the Quetico lake where my partners and I have caught more top-end trophy walleyes than all other lakes combined! Dig into the mid- 20th century written record and you'll find that Conmee has always been a trophy walleye producer. It's 2 days coming and another 2 days to get out so fortunately, Conmee is beyond the range of the uncommitted masses. That said, I can only pray if you come here you'll vow to release all larger walleyes to be enjoyed by another angler someday. If you kill these fish, just remember: there are no walleyes in hell. (3+)

SUZANETTE A classic top 5 Grand Slam lake with enough big walleyes to make it worth a solid effort. Like most trout lakes, the quality of these walleyes is more impressive than the quantity. Remember that windblown, eastern shore pattern. (3)

BURT The fishery here is similar to Suzanette except Burt is just one big open basin without the sprawling bays. The walleyes are in here, in both good numbers and trophy caliber. (3)

DELAHEY This is my kind of wilderness fishing lake—hard to reach and excellent smallmouth. We have caught only a handful of incidental walleyes, but friends assure me that I need to do some serious trolling here next trip. They have big walleye tales from Delahey. (3)

VERON I have paddled through here twice without wetting a line but my intel has convinced me that this lake should be a top priority for trophy walleye hunters who are willing to pay the portage toll. (3)

TED Only been in here once. We caught some decent walleyes, but I can't really give a meaningful description of the walleye prospects here. It does not strike me as very fertile and upon reading all the Olive Jar notes from other anglers, Ted does not easily give up its walleyes. (1)

MARJ Marj and Joyce are in that land in-between where most anglers overlook its fine fishing. I have caught nice 24" walleyes in here and BWJ Contributor Tim Mead writes in his new book,

"Quetico Adventures" that he caught his 31-inch "walleye of a lifetime" in Marj. (2)

JOYCE You can pick up plenty of eater walleyes working around all the islands in Joyce. I would camp and focus my walleye fishing here and relegate Marj for a day trip, change of scenery. (3)

KEEFER Known more for its big trout, Keefer produces solid numbers of nice walleyes too. Work around the islands on the northern half. (2)

SARK 5-star campsites with Grand Slam fishing. Sark is one of those canoe country gems where you never know what is on the end of your line until it comes alongside the canoe. On many lakes, you can get a feel for whether a particular bay or shoreline is trout or walleye habitat. Not so with Sark. This lake keeps me guessing, but I love both its level of action and trophy size fish. (3)

CAIRN This remote island studded jewel ranks high with my walleye fraternity for 25"+ fish. I've only fished it once and didn't do much. Just looks like good walleye water. (3)

WILLIAMS We go in here for the smallmouth and often catch walleyes on topwater plugs and crankbaits! That is a good indicator that the walleyes are hungry, dumb, or both. Super clear water lake gets almost no pressure and the bass and trout will keep you happy until the walleyes start biting. (2)

WOODSIDE Just south of Williams and nearly identical super clear water. Not tons of action in here for me so far but as beautiful a spot as you will find in all of canoe country. Gin-clear water, like Argo Lake. (2)

REID Fond memories here as daughter Taryn caught her very first walleye here on her first Quetico trip. One awesome 5-Star campsite, if you get it this great fishing hole is all yours. Lots of smallmouth and pike action too. (3)

AGNES The "interstate highway" of the Quetico, I have had some good walleye fishing up on the north end where one can get out of the wind around the islands. For all the people that paddle and camp on Agnes, it has not earned much of a fishing

reputation. It has to harbor big fish but it is a tough lake to pin them down. (2)

MCEWEN Another Grand Slam lake where smallmouth get the top billing for me, but there are some walleyes around if you want to go after them. We have not seen any trophy walleyes in here yet, only smallmouth. (2)

FALLS CHAIN Below all the current areas all through this series of rapids between Saganagons and Kawnipi are a lock for eater walleyes. (2)

SAGANAGONS Classic walleye water here with zillions of islands and miles of productive shoreline to troll. Lots of great campsites and great walleye fishing. This is a great base camp destination for those who like the idea of just one portage. I have caught a lot of 24" walleyes in here per hour of trying. (3+)

IRON Most of the lake is on the BWCAW side but both sides of the border have tremendous structure and lots of eater size walleyes. Good numbers of sauger in here too, so watch for the difference. I like the north side pinch points along Four Island. (3)

CROOKED Another border lake with far more fishing pressure on the BWCAW side than the Canadian side. Home to lots of walleyes and lots of big walleyes. Fertile, dark water fishery that holds up well all summer. (3)

ROBINSON Not a lot of walleyes but some dandies if you can find them. Very clear trout water, difficult to find the walleyes. I have caught most of mine on the east side where Dart Lake dumps in. (1)

DEER A trout destination to me, others tell me there are some trophy walleyes in here. Small lake that is worth a try if in the neighborhood. (1)

MCENTYRE As you will read in an upcoming issue of *BWJ*, canoe country legend Don Beland rated McEntyre one of his favorite walleye lakes in his guiding days. I refer to McEntyre and Sarah as nice camping lakes, but the "dead seas" for fishing. If you can catch walleyes in here, you are a better angler than me. (1)

TUCK We picked up a few eaters here and there the only time I camped here, and worked



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it. I have passed through here on many trips and others report good walleye action. (2)

SARAH The Dead Sea. Period. (0)

YUM YUM A four species lake that is small enough to easily fish and cover in a couple night's stay. Worth a try when you're coming and going to points further north. (2)

SHADE The S-chain gets moderate pressure. All 4 have all 4 species. I have really only fished these first 3 for bass, but my guys have picked up a few walleyes here. (2)

SUMMER (2)

SULTRY (2)

SILENCE This is the best choice to cast your walleye efforts in the S-Chain. Legitimate trophy walleye odds, especially in June. Pull in here instead of backtracking up/down Agnes. Skip the Meadows portages, enjoy more solitude and maybe catch that trophy walleye. (3)

BASSWOOD North Bay, around White Island, off U.S. Point, and Big Merriam Bay are all proven prime walleye waters. Lots of folks

paddle across Basswood, but few camp and fish hard on the Canadian side. If they only knew the walleyes they were passing over on the way to "better fishing?" This is an ideal base camp walleye fishing destination for those who want little or no portaging. Lots of fish and consistent trophy producer. (3+)

CARP An overlooked honey hole for walleye numbers with good size. Don't let the name fool you; I know walleye fans who argue this is one of the best walleye lakes in all of canoe country. I wouldn't rate it that high but, it can be very good. Especially for an easy access trip. (3)

THAT MAN I have never fished for or caught a walleye in The Man Chain. I really like it for small trout action and big bass action. There are walleyes in here but, it is not known for that. (1)

THIS MAN (1)

OTHER MAN (1)

GLACIER A picturesque, tough to reach Grand Slam lake. I love fishing smallmouth here but you can count on it for a walleye meal if you're sick of freeze-dried. Dark

water narrow lake so it is easy to pin down the likely structure. (2)

BWCAW

LOON You will need to put up with some motorboat traffic passing through to Lac La Croix but this is a good walleye lake with nice campsites. I see a lot of the guys running the marine railroad portages here, and they get a lot of walleyes out of Loon. If your canoe route goes through here, give it a shot. (2)

POCKET Nice little walleye lake with two 5-Star campsites. Try around the mid-lake islands. (2)

GEBEONEQUET Lots of nice structure. Plenty of eater fish and a few two-footers. Nice camps and remote enough to be able to fish with minimal company. (2)

LAC LA CROIX Monster water. BWCAW side is all paddle only, so canoeists who camp here and wait out the winds can have some great fishing. I like walleye fishing amongst the smaller islands northwest of Coleman Island and then down into Lady Boot Bay. Most of the pass through traffic on La Croix is right along the bor-

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der, so get south of that for more solitude. If you want really good BWCAW walleye action with little or no portaging, La Croix is hard to beat. (3)

IRON Incredible structure in here, most of lake in BWCAW so can use live bait. A long first day if paddling in from Moose River/Echo Trail, but once here lots of walleyes with good chance for some bigger fish. Start your search around the islands above entrance to Peterson Bay and all around Three Island. Lots of flow in/out so always try these areas, especially early season. Many nice camps so in July and August, camp on Iron and fish those evening hours. (3)

LOWER PAUNESS I was doing some spring scouting for deer sign in here and the eagles were just pounding the 26-inch walleyes in the rapids below Upper Pauness. That opened my eyes to return, and we found good numbers of eater walleyes as well. Easy access and overlooked fishery. Great destination for shorter walleye trips. (3)

SHELL Very shallow lake with

pretty muddy bottom for Canadian Shield lakes but friends report a few good spots for eater walleyes. There is better walleye water all around Shell (1)

HERITAGE Sweet little walleye lake. Good numbers of 18–20" walleyes. Troll all along both shores from the first campsite all the way down to the north end. Lots of smallmouth and pike action. (3)

LYNX I like to camp on the 4- and 5-Star sites here and fish smallmouth during the days, and then work walleyes here and over in Heritage in the evenings. You can't go wrong with a bucket of leeches in here for eater walleyes and bass action. Nice kids trip base camp lake. (2)

NINA MOOSE Most folks fly through here without fishing, but the walleyes are OK with that. Early season fish concentrate on north end and even below current areas between Nina Moose and Agnes. (2)

AGNES Too much fishing pressure for my taste, but those who camp here and fish it hard can pick up a few walleyes. (1)

STUART Classic example of how a couple miles of portaging can do wonders for the walleye fishing. Lots of 18–20" fish, several great campsites and hard enough to reach so it is as good as ever. That said, go easy on the number you turn into fillets or Stuart will be no better than its overfished neighbor, Agnes Lake. With every single fish you lift into the canoe, *only you* have the power to decide its fate. As 21st century anglers fishing in America's one and only water-based designated wilderness, we can do better than reducing the fishing quality here to the same pitiful status of so many other places. This lake is my namesake, so I am taking this opportunity to remind *BWJ* readers that in presenting this series of articles, I have laid bare a lifetime of canoe country fishing knowledge. I am trusting each of you to fish with a very high conservation standard. Don't let me down. I have caught thousands of fish, and I have not regretted letting a single one go. (3)

SUNDAY This one is even harder to reach than Stuart, and offers walleye fishing at an even

higher level. Lots of fish and lots of bigger walleyes too. Sunday is in a PMA, so no designated campsites and the portages are no longer maintained. The portages along the Beartrap River are still fine, but I have not recently taken the portage coming in from Sunday Bay of Crooked. I hope the BWCAW will always have hidden little walleye jewels like Sunday Lake. (3)

BEARTRAP I loved taking the family here because when we got the one and only designated campsite on the lake, we had the whole place to ourselves for the duration of our stay. And the walleye fishing never disappoints us. We never catch oodles of fish in any one day, but 24" fish are common enough to keep it interesting. It doesn't get any better than spending 3–4 days camping and fishing on Beartrap. Big pike and smallmouth too. (3)

CROOKED When the 1978 BWCAW Law banned motors on Crooked Lake a whole group of devoted fishermen "lost" their favorite walleye lake. Crooked has a lot of flow through it, which makes for a watershed relatively rich in nutrients and oxygen. Crooked is almost 4 lakes in 1. Saturday Bay is 10–20' deep while Thursday Bay has incredible structure, much of it plunging to 100–140' deep. If you absolutely had to catch a 30-inch walleye in the BWCAW, Crooked would be in that top trio with Basswood and Saganaga. Accessed from Crane Lake, you can reach/fish Crooked walleyes with only a couple portages. (3)

GUN These next 4 lakes all have good walleye fishing and less people than Fourtown and Horse. Moderate numbers of fish, few over 22". (2)

MOOSE CAMP Shallow lake but good numbers of eater size walleyes. A good action lake away from the Fourtown crowd. (2)

FAIRY Nice little lake, easy to find the walleyes. Nothing big. (2)

BOOT Nondescript lake but home to some big walleyes. Try the northwest shoreline in mid-summer. If camped on Fourtown, definitely worth a day trip in here. (2)

FOURTOWN Amazing, consistent walleye producer—heavy pressure for the BWCAW. My

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brother-in-law can go in here in July and take some eye-popping walleye photos while others around the lake are complaining about "no fish." Bottom line: the fish are here but often not easy to catch. I have only fished it early and late when nobody is around, and I have done surprisingly well. Sixteen nice campsites to choose from while you tackle the walleye challenge. (2)

HORSE I fish all the points on down the west shore. The mid-lake basin is featureless, so if the fish are not along the shore it is a tough day. Moderate numbers and a 25-incher not impossible. (2)

TIN CAN MIKE Fish the cabbage weed beds in the northern half. Some nice 20-22" fish and plenty of eaters too. Good day trip if camped on Horse. (2)

RANGE Tiny lake but full of panfish with a few walleyes mixed in. Good BWCAW day trip fishing destination from Cloquet Line road. (2)

BASSWOOD Just flat-out a tremendous fish producer. The Native Americans had it figured

when they chose to camp on Basswood. I personally prefer the Canadian side, but if staying in the BWCAW I head straight for the paddle-only zone up around U.S. Point. We have caught lots of 26-28" walleyes all around the reefs up here. All the way down to the southwest towards the juncture with Jackfish Bay is a trophy walleye zone too. Even boat anglers consistently catch good walleyes year after year in the heavily-fished motor zones. This is proof that Basswood is an exceptional walleye fishery. It is a great lake for all species. (3)

BIRCH I used to take the tow boat up to the Carp Portage and catch lots of walleyes where Carp spills in. Now that boats are prohibited, most folks paddle right on by Birch Lake. You can enjoy good fishing here with zero portages. Good smallmouth too. (2)

ENSIGN Old timers like Bob Cary and Don Beland tell me they considered Ensign a great walleye lake way back in the 1960s when it was motorized. They lived on the lake and knew it well. I lived

on Moose a couple summers in the mid-70s, and it was still very good then. I have not fished it lately, but all the reports I get indicate it is still a walleye factory. Lots of campers here, but if that doesn't bother you there is good fishing to be had. (3)

BOOT (near Snowbank Lake) Nice bass lake with a few walleyes. Tough portage in from Ensign, but a feasible day trip for most people. Fish the eastern half along the main peninsula. (2)

VERA Decent numbers of smaller fish. Try the mid-lake narrows. (2)

KNIFE Big, deep, super clear trout water with a ton of structure. There are big walleyes in Knife, especially the South Arm, but they are difficult to find and catch. This is a good lake for the sophisticated, experienced walleye specialist. The top-end walleyes are in here for sure. With live bait you have a fighting chance. (2)

OTTERTRACK MN DNR Fisheries personnel have told me walleye test netting stories from Ottertrack that would make you

drool. BIG fish. If after BWCAW walleyes with minimal portaging, this would be a great place to try. (3)

AMOEBA Nice 4-species lake with average size walleyes. Good day trip if camped on Knife. (2)

CHERRY Solid walleye numbers for a little trout lake. Can catch them right off the mid-lake campsite. (2)

OGISHKEMUNCIE Very good walleye reputation. Not as scenic as before the 1999 blowdown, but the walleyes are still abundant with some nice size fish. (2)

DISAPPOINTMENT I have fished this one a lot and can attest that it has lots of 18–24" fish. A shallow, dark-water lake, fish around the islands in the center. Michele and her horse farm friends went in here last year, and even they caught fish. (2)

JORDAN Small lake with nice structure and very good walleye population. Very kid friendly walleye hole—lots of fish and protected from wind. Nice camps too. (2)

HATCHET A lot like Jordan Lake. Same good numbers of 18" walleyes on small body of water, so you can find them by fishing it all. (2)

ALWORTH Another 20–30' deep smaller lake that is easy to locate the walleyes on. Start around the 3 islands on north end. Light pressure. Good action. (2)

IMA Plenty of nice campsites here to stay for a while and work this deep, medium size lake. If you can't find the walleyes here, day trip into Jordan, Hatchet or Alworth. (2)

THOMAS This is my favorite lake in this neck of the BWCAW woods. We go for the trout, but this is a walleye sleeper too. Tremendous offshore structure throughout the entire lake so walleye bite is good all summer. Need to follow the contours on your McKenzie Map or depth finder, constantly changing bottom. Nice campsites, beaches, and very good fishing. This lake has it all...except smallmouth. (3)

FRASER Actually you can paddle directly into here from Thomas. Known for its "red" variety of lake trout, there are a few walleyes around too. Some of

them are big. (2)

SAGUS Almost a lock for 18–20" walleyes if you haul in leeches. Both times we fished it the little kids had a ball. Fish the far northeastern bay and the inlet from Roe Lake. Poor campsites—only good for 1 or 2 smaller tents. Lots of hungry fish. (3)

ADAMS Medium size, deep lake with sprawling bays in many directions. Moderate numbers of walleyes plus larger fish. Easy to see why there was fly-in resort cabins in here pre-BWCAW. Good camps and good walleye fishing. Even a few smallmouth. (3)

BEAVER Not much for campsites here so I have only day tripped over from Adams. Very good numbers of eater size walleyes. Have run smaller for me in here than Adams fish. Not many people fish here and it is a very reliable lake for solid action. (3)

PAN I first started going here when former *BWJ* writer Jeff Murray recommended it. Jeff has passed away, but I can't help saluting him every time I fish this very special little walleye hole. We have caught oodles of 26–28" walleyes in here, even into September which says a lot about how good it is. I have many, many great stories and memories of Pan Lake walleyes and I hope to make a few more. Hands down a (3+).

KIVANIVA I just shake my head at all the people who go into Malberg and complain of no fish when, by travelling just another couple hours, they could have great walleye fishing all to themselves. Lots of fish, some over two feet. At least go up and day fish it from Malberg. Problem is, the best time is sundown so if you don't "camp" on these fish it means portaging back in the dark. (3)

NORTH KAWISHIWI RIVER Worth fishing all the current areas where this flowage necks down from Kivaniva all the way down to Alice. Most of these pools will produce eater walleyes. (2)

MALBERG Nice campsites, too much pressure for me, plus surrounding lakes have far better walleye action. Can camp here and day trip for walleyes on Koma, Boze, North Kawishiwi River, Kivaniva, and Pan. This is

a great game plan. (1)

BOZE We moose scouted/hunted around here in mid-1990s and I discovered gear caches from the old days. Barrels packed with canvas tents, old cook kits, Coleman stoves/lanterns, etc. This is a proof positive sign that a lake is a walleye hotspot, as the old timers would snowmobile their gear in and leave it so they would not have to portage in as much when fishing the open water seasons. Lots of 20" golden walleyes in here and almost nobody ever wets a line. (3)

TRAIL We spent just one afternoon fishing this while moose scouting and caught eight 18" walleyes under bright sun/calm conditions. I have always imagined what it must be like at its best. Definitely worth a look for those who like to portage for their wilderness walleyes. (2)

KOMA Seems everyone wants to stop on either Polly or go on into Malberg. Koma has better walleye fishing than either of them. Plenty of eaters and we have caught good numbers of 24-inchers. (3)

POLLY My results have been consistently poor here, and I have had very few other reports to the contrary. I would paddle on through here to the fertile walleye waters to the north. (1)

KAWASASCHONG Shallow, weedy lake with a few eater walleyes around the islands. (1)

GABBRO A single, "easy" one-mile portage and you're into some very good walleye fishing here. Lots of good shoreline structure. Out on the main lake the bottom is a uniform, flat 20', so stick around the points and islands. Lots of eaters with occasional fish surviving the moderate pressure to go 22". This lake is 5 minutes from my house and I spend a lot of time paddling into backcountry fishing that has less people but not necessarily better walleye fishing. I get distracted by the smallmouth in here, but it is a solid walleye fishery. (3)

BALD EAGLE Not near the numbers of fish as Gabbro but a lot of nice campsites with beaches so it gets fished pretty hard. Short on structure, so hard to pin down what seems like a randomly nomadic walleye population. Gabbro and Gull are better, so don't give

up on your trip's walleye goals if Bald Eagle doesn't produce. It is a tough bite. (1)

GULL I always seem to do well in here for catching a meal of walleyes. Nice, off the beaten path lake that we usually have to ourselves. I fish the eastern third. (3)

HUDSON Has a lot of flow through it so we have found the walleyes in the current areas during early season trips into Insula. (2)

INSULA A very strong producer that makes for a good base camp walleye trip with easy portaging. Sadly the 2011 Pagami Lake Fire torched the lower half of Insula, but there is still very good walleye fishing here. Lots of offshore structure, so get out there and work those mid-lake reefs during the summer. Healthy walleye population with the occasional big fish possible. (3)

ALICE A lot less obvious structure to pinpoint your walleye trolling around, but the average size of these fish seems to outrank Insula. Superb sandy beach campsites for kids to swim/play between walleye excursions. Don't expect a boatload of walleyes, but there are some nice fish in here. (2)

ISABELLA Can drive the kids right up to this BWCAW walleye hole. Nice camps, but lake tends to be windy as it is one big open circle. Camp here, wait out the wind, and you can bring a walleye meal back to the campfire. (2)

PERENT Easy float on down Hog Creek to this lake full of BWCAW campsites and very good numbers of eater sized walleyes. Great base camp for families with little kids, as no portaging and they get the gist of BWCAW experience. (3)

So there you have it folks, my canoe country walleye wisdom boiled down into a single article. There are others with a better knack for fishing walleyes than I, but not many have spent more hours trying to paddle them down. Good luck out there on your own walleye quests and remember, eat the under 18 crowd, and let the rest go. The BWJ Grand Slam Series will continue with lake trout in the Winter 2013 issue and conclude with northern pike in the Spring 2014 issue. That should have all you diehard canoe country anglers covered. □

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□ by Earl Fleck

A Wood Canoe

She was a sweet find—a 1941, 17-foot, C.S. grade, Old Town wood/canvas canoe, model H.W. (heavy waves), built for big lakes. The man we bought her from told us she'd been sitting on sawhorses in the hayloft of a barn for forty years. Immediately, beneath the cracked and darkened varnish, I could see the sunlight captured in her wood—her white cedar ribs, planking, spruce gunnels, and ash decks. No dry rot. Even the canvas was good. All she needed was to be stripped, sanded, varnished, and painted.

We'd been looking for a wooden canoe to complement our 1935, 18-foot Old Town Guide Model and our 17-foot Seliga. By the time we found the H.W. I had gotten it in my head that I wanted one canoe for each of our three children, though it hadn't started out that way.

Ever since working as a trail guide at a wilderness camp on Burntside Lake, where I was assigned my first Seliga and where my wife had been the camp nurse, we had hoped to one day own a wood/canvas canoe. Perhaps, we thought, in owning a wood canoe we could preserve the magic of those summers camping in the Boundary Waters. Then one day in the spring of 1984 I saw a "Wood Canoe for Sale" card tacked on the bulletin board of a sporting goods store. I jumped at it, calling the seller that same day. It turned out he had come into possession of a 1935 AA grade 18-foot Old Town Guide Model, left behind in a lake cabin he had purchased.

I gave it close inspection to

be sure it was restorable. The varnish had turned nearly black. The paint was badly cracked. Light showed through a hole the size of my fist beneath the stern seat—two broken ribs. I offered \$400 cash, telling the seller he would get no more for a boat in that condition, even though I could see its potential. He turned me down. I figured I'd never see that canoe again.

So I went home, talked my wife into the idea of buying a new canoe, called Joe Seliga, and ordered a 17-footer with four extra inches of freeboard. Joe asked me to send him a \$100 deposit and told me he'd have a canoe ready for me in about a year. That was in March.

Six months later the guy with the Guide Model called me up and told me if I came right over with \$400 cash, I could have the canoe. I raced straight away and made the deal. Then, on that very same day, just as I pulled into the driveway with the Old Town on top of my car, the mail carrier was delivering the mail. And, no kidding, in the mail was a letter from Joe Seliga. Someone had cancelled their order. What color did I want him to paint our canoe? He could have it ready in two weeks. I phoned Joe. Red, I told him, paint it red.

Two weeks later I drove to Ely to pick up our brand new wood canoe. But when I arrived at the home and workshop of Joe and Nora Seliga, I realized this wasn't about purchasing a canoe; it was more

like an adoption. Joe and Nora sat me down at their kitchen table just to visit awhile, though I suspected they were evaluating my character. Did I possess the proper attitude, spirit, heart? Nora served coffee and cookies. They were in no hurry. We talked quietly a bit about canoes, but they seemed more interested in the details of our family.

So there it was; in a matter of two weeks we came to own two wood canoes. I restored the Guide Model the next summer. Then, in the spring of 1986, we found the H.W. for sale in the newspaper—a third canoe for a third child and a family legacy.

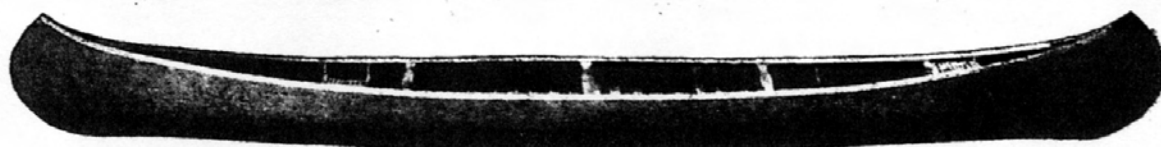
I took my time with the restoration of the H.W. Very carefully, I removed the outer gunnels, thin copper stem bands, and then the tapered keel. The seats and thwarts were fastened with those distinctive diamond-headed bolts, which I also removed. Meticulously, I cleaned and polished all the brass, screws, and bolts—sorted and set aside in jars. The seat caning needed no repair.

The original paint, dark green, clung stubbornly to the canvas. Patience. I took care not to sand too aggressively. Luckily, underneath the layers of paint and primer I found the canvas filler solid, no cracks or mildew. I sanded it smooth and wiped it clean as polished stone.

The old gummy varnish melted away easily, revealing the distinct characteristics of cedar, spruce, and ash. I scraped and sanded for hours

From left: Old Town 18' Guide Model, Grade AA finished in 1935. Middle—Old Town 17' H.W. (heavy wind) Model Grade C.S., finished in 1941. Right—17' Seliga with four extra inches of freeboard, finished in 1984.





Guide's Special Canoe (18 feet, Thirty Dollars): I. F. Model

THIS canoe is planned throughout for the use of professional guides and sportsmen. It is built from our improved I. F. Model, which has a generous width for large carrying capacity, and a flat floor to give the smallest possible draft. The combination makes a very fast canoe. By extending the flatness of the bottom farther into the ends, greater stability and more speed have been given this canoe than it had formerly.

It is strongly built of good lumber, the ribs and planking being of selected cedar, with spruce gunwales and finish rails, and ash, or oak decks, seats and thwarts. All fastenings are copper and brass, seats caned, and the hull after being oiled is covered with No. 6 canvas carefully filled with a special filler that dries hard and firm. The inside is filled, rubbed down, and varnished. The outside has a fairly bright surface but is not varnished. An honestly built canoe with no money put into ornamenting, guaranteed to wear and be satisfactory. Stock color, slate. The above is a description of our G. S. Canoe, carried in stock with and without keel. We can supply this model to order only in A. A. and C. S. grades.

Length	Width across Gunwales	Depth	Weight	Grade A. A.	Grade C. S.	Grade G. S.
18 ft.	35 1/2 in.	13 in.	83 lbs.	\$42.00	\$34.00	\$30.00

This is from a 1910 Old Town canoe catalog and is a description for the canoe shown on the left of the photo on page 43. My how things have changed.

on end, inspecting each section inch by inch. Not one crack did I find, and no soft spots in the wood. She was solid, tight, and light as a child.

Three coats of spar varnish highlighted even more so the warmth and light of her wood. Before applying the last coat, I glued an authentic Old Town decal to the bow deck plate. Four coats of slate-blue polyurethane paint gave her a hard, smooth shell. Then I reinstalled all the brass, the gunnels, seats, thwarts, and keel. Next I polished up those marvelous copper stem bands, bow and stern, and set the screws from deck to keel. Finally, to complete the transformation of the H.W. into a true Boundary Waters canoe, I fashioned for her a portaging yoke, replacing the center thwart.

But it wasn't until 2005 that

I finally got all three wood canoes on the trail at the same time. I recruited a group of friends willing to wet-boot camp with heavy canoes in the Quetico, just for the outrageous photo ops and the sheer fun of it. On a sunny autumn afternoon we christened the H.W. in the cool clear waters of Lac La Croix, setting her belly down in the bay just off Black Robe Portage, alongside the Seliga and the Guide Model. Then it was off and across McAree and Minn Lakes and halfway up the Darky River, all on that first afternoon.

On the second day out we moved on up the Darky River and across Darky Lake, pausing at the pictograph cliffs before taking the portage to Argo. I paddled stern in the old Guide Model—a real ship of a canoe, navel-looking in her inky-blue

skin next to all that mahogany trim and brass hardware, cedar wood the color of maple syrup. Two others paddled the Seliga, maple-leaf red, her wood almost birch white in contrast, a fine utilitarian boat. Up against them, the H.W. looked magnificent in the water, perfectly at home in the Quetico wilderness—for there's nothing quite like that classic wooden canoe profile (H.W., Otca styles) with its peaked ends and elegant lines. Three Duluth packs and two guys in red and black checkered shirts against a backdrop of ice blue sky, old growth pine and granite outcroppings, completed the archetypal image.

And there's nothing quite like the feel of it in the water, how she rides more in the waves than on top of the

waves. Stable. I've often stood up in the stern to scout a stretch of fast water, and never once swamped. Maneuverable. These are canoes with real lake keels, canoes I've paddled hard as hell into big winds. Then there's the evenness of temperature, no cold metal freezing your backside and hands. Finally, they're quiet. No clang of paddle shafts against the gunnels reverberating across the lake.

Ultimately, though, it's the aesthetics and the experience of the wood canoe, the look, the feel, the fit in nature that satisfies our desire to connect with something elemental—all the same reasons we camp in the Boundary Waters. This is the meaning of a wood canoe for me, not as a material possession, but as a set of values I hold, and hope I have imparted upon my children—strength, stability, quietude, beauty.

I'm not sure my three adult children have come to view the world of camping as symbolically as I do, but I know each has come to cherish his or her assigned canoe: for our older son, the Guide Model; for our daughter, the H.W.; for our younger son, the Seliga. Like Joe and Nora, they understand the significance of family—as the vessel that carries us in its hold, across smooth waters and rough, sometimes even needing to be carried by others.

With our three wood canoes launched, the fourth morning on the trail broke clear and sunny. We moved off of the Argo campsite, taking the Roland Lake passage to Crooked. We stopped at Curtain Falls, ate our trail lunch, posed for photos, and then casually made the portage to Iron Lake. At the lower landing, two or three of us waited with canoes floating in the water.

The slate-blue H.W. sat by herself, and in a moment of unexpected clarity, a moment I could not have anticipated, I could see her honey-colored wood literally glowing from within against the rock, water, trees, sky. This sweet canoe, merging with nature in the golden sunlight of a Boundary Waters afternoon. This was the gift of this trip, the memory held by this special canoe to carry back within her wood and canvas—something of this place, and perhaps something of my children's father in this place.

Returning home, I wash each boat inside and out, check for damage, and set them out in the backyard, bellies down, to dry in the sun. Three days later I hang the Guide Model, sling and pulley, belly up in the rafters of our garage. Just three feet below, I set the Seliga on a rack protruding from the wall. Lastly, I gently position the H.W. back on her sawhorses. Stepping away I survey my work, making sure each boat is secure in its place for the winter, and secure for the day when each child, in his or her time, comes to collect their wood canoe. □

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passing it on



The Early Days of BWCAW Scouting

□ by Dick Hall

Ninety years ago, in 1923, the first recorded Boundary Waters adventure sponsored and organized by the Boy Scouts of America—a crew of scouts and leaders from the Virginia, MN council—launched their journey from a dock in Winton on Fall Lake. In the early years, local councils sponsored trips setting out from several different launching places. By 1932 “provisional” crews were organized by, at that time, Region Ten operating in cooperation with outfitters mostly

on Moose Lake. The number of scouts on trips slowly increased under the leadership of Region Ten Chairman, Charles Sommers (who operated a wholesale general merchandising business in St. Paul). By 1940, he determined the Boy Scouts needed their own “High Adventure” base.

After an extensive search the decision was made in 1941 to lease 1.6 acres from the U.S. Forest Service. It was a mile from the end of the Fernberg Trail near what became North Country Lodge on Moose Lake.

The road, not much more than a two rut logging road, was extended to serve as a future public landing, the new scout base, and the edge of the BWCAW. At a Forest Service auction the scouts, winning bid of \$287, acquired 293 peeled pine logs from 36–60 feet long that had been harvested from an Echo Trail blow down.

Seven Finnish heritage log builders from Winton, using only hand tools, worked all winter building the Lodge and another smaller building, which were ready for dedica-



The St. Cloud/Brainerd, MN area scout troops before embarking on their 1946 BWCAW trip. Author Dick Hall is third to the left from the right end of the canoe (in front row, wearing hat).

tion May 17, 1942. The Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base became a reality as the scout's Region Ten Base and later the nation's first BSA High Adventure Base. It has since grown and has now served over 200,000 scouts. You can read the whole story in *A Diamond In The North: A History Of Scout Adventure In The North Country 1923–1998*. It is available for \$20 including postage from the BSA Northern Tier National High Adventure Base, Box 509, Ely, MN 55731 (or on NorthernTierTradingPost.org).

Fourteen trips were taken in 1942 with crews mostly made up of pairs of individuals from councils in Region Ten. After three years of "breaking in" from 1942–1944, most of the bugs were worked out, and the base was operating pretty smoothly. Councils were encouraged to organize groups and take trips.

In June 1945 a group from the Central Minnesota Council (mostly from the St. Cloud, MN area) left for a week long "ice breaker" trip. I was excited to be one of them. I had spent a week each of the previous three years at the CM council "Camp Clyde" near Merrifield learning camping skills and paddling techniques. I had become a Life Scout and was accepted. I was ready to go, one of 299 that year.

Upon arrival at the end of the road at Sommers Base on Moose Lake we were checked in, met a fellow named Parley Tuttle, also met our guide and swamper, were briefed, and oriented, including a review of maps showing our trip on the "Silence-Shade" route, mostly in Quetico Park. Today it is referred to as the "S-chain." After a hearty meal we retired to tents pitched on wood decks to prepare and pack our personal gear, trying to keep them

less than forty pounds. Some were paired into one #4 Duluth Pack and some in #3 single packs. We settled in, trying to get a good night's sleep.

The next morning was spent getting acquainted with the equipment: A-frame style tents were eight feet wide, ten feet long, and six feet tall with a hem at the ridge for a "ridge rope" support. They had a couple pullouts on each side and no floor. Around the outside there was about a foot-wide strip called a "sod cloth." Today's popular tents usually have a floor which must be swept before packing up. I often thought "no floor" tents were an advantage. Breaking camp for a move to the next site and taking down a tent with no floor automatically left all the dirt right there where it had been pitched. Each of the five occupants had their own individual "ground cloth" under their own sleeping bag. The end had full mosquito netting with a zipper closure and outside flaps with tie straps. With this style we did not need to carry poles—we tied the tent between two trees or cut a couple saplings for an A-front support if necessary. These tents fit two to a Duluth pack, together weighing about 80 pounds dry. They got a lot heavier when wet.

The cook kit was a lot like today's nesting patrol kits, except it had enough plates and cups for all ten or twelve of us, and usually included a reflector oven. The food pack contained many cloth bags with beans, rice, flour, sugar, etc. We carried plenty of bacon, shortening, cocoa, tomato sauce, peanut butter, jelly, and cheese, everything we needed to cook from scratch. There was one pack filled with loaves of bread. Everyone liked carrying the bread pack, as it was the lightest load of the outfit.

Some of us carried fishing tackle, and everyone had a life jacket and a "beaver-tail" style paddle made of a single piece of white spruce, with a large X for Region Ten burned onto it. The wood and canvas 17-foot Old Town canoes weighed 80 lbs, and all had an ash yoke with two shoulder pads. I do not think they had seats. While paddling, I often sat on the rear deck with my legs tucked behind the rear thwart rather than kneeling on the floor of the canoe. I don't recommend this approach. We knelt in windy weather, which gave us much better control of the canoe, more stability and a lower center of gravity. The common practice, which was drummed into us, was to "wet-foot" it on portages minimizing damage to the canoe.

The second morning we were all on the beach and waded in about hip-deep to learn the basic canoeing strokes and get a feel for paddling. A little later, we were off. The first night we camped on the American side before Prairie Portage. I do not remember any dam being there. In the morning we portaged around the falls and stopped at a kind of trading post, which could have been the predecessor to what became known as the "American House," and were told if we had some change it was the last chance to buy soda or a candy bar. We had to check into the "Quetico" at the ranger station over across Bayley Bay. The wind was down that day, but the portage into Burke was very wet. The creek at the north end of Burke had enough water for us to just paddle out into North Bay.

Paddling upstream out of the northeast corner of North Bay, we then portaged

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through a series of small lakes to West Lake and then into Shade Lake. Then we pushed on through Noon, Summer and Sultry Lakes before stopping at Silence Lake. The campsite on the point in the west arm of Silence remains one of my biggest highlights. I have no photos, but did an oil painting of it looking east that hung in my basement for many years.

The point was much less densely forested in 1945. About one hundred yards southwesterly from the point there is a large rock big enough for us to pull two of our canoes up on and fish, casting our lines from the rock to the shady side of a two-hundred-yard-long ridge just a foot under the water. One of the fellows had some mosquito netting with which we were able to catch some minnows. Another had a snuff can containing some corn kernels. We cut up a small fish for additional bait too. Using a couple rods and some drop lines, we landed over 30 5-pound walleyes in an hour. I cut a piece of red wool from the hem of my jacket and even caught a nice one on that. We kept enough to make a good meal and tossed the rest back. We wondered if we were catching the same one three times, as they were all the same size. I have since camped and fished here and never again matched that day.

The next day we headed out to big Agnes and camped the next night at the foot of Louisa Falls, one of my favorite places. We all spent plenty of time refreshing in the great “whirlpool” bath midway down the falls, which we always visit whenever in the vicinity. We also enjoyed swimming on the sandy beaches nearby. The following day we appreciated lighter loads in our packs while portaging from Agnes to Meadows and Meadows to Sunday Lake. We referred to these two portages as B-1 and B-2. I fell in love with “God’s country.”

Upon our return to the base and seeing all the decorated miniature paddles hung on the walls in the lodge, we learned about the “silver paddle” award. Noting the requirements, which included a minimum number of days and nights on the canoe trails, on the trip home I was determined to return the next year and accomplish this award. I was permanently hooked.

I saved enough from bonus money earned for “good management” on my St. Cloud Times newspaper route to pay for a late July 1946 ten-day trip. About half the guys were from the St. Cloud area, the rest from Brainerd. We loaded everything into the school bus and were underway (see photo, page 46). My cousin Tom, a year younger than I, was with us. The cost was \$25 per person for the whole trip.

After checking in we took advantage of the new sauna, steaming our bodies with cedar boughs then dashing down the hill into Moose Lake (because there were no showers). Two crews with the same itinerary camped the next night on Bayley Bay. Our guide, who was normally a swamper (an apprentice guide) was a college guy, football player type. Since I and one other scout had been on the trails before, I arranged for the swamper and I to be partners with me paddling stern. One of my crew dropped our menus and route directions into the campfire. A long debate resulted in the crews separating, ours heading counter-clockwise and the other clockwise, hoping to meet while crossing routes on Kawnipi Lake. The team reaching the Bayley to Burke portage first on the return loop would get to claim this 5-star campsite.

A drenching downpour ensued, causing us to stop, empty the canoes, and cut a small tree into two-foot pieces to place on the bottom of our canoes to keep the packs up out of the bilge water. Sunday/Meadows and Meadows/Agnes portages were like walking in creeks. We stayed an extra night at Louisa Falls and dried out. Clad in flannel pajamas while our clothes were draped on spruce trees to dry, a crew of Girl Scouts happened by. Naturally we helped them portage up the steep hill to Louisa Lake.

The next day I trolled a big red glass eye rig

up Louisa Lake hoping for a big lake trout. I had a couple hundred feet of braided copper line wound on a piece of hard-board and hooked what felt like a monster. All I got was a 150-foot tangle in the canoe before the lunger escaped.

Pausing briefly to appreciate the sandy beach on the end of Louisa, we portaged north over the "divide." A couple lakes later we portaged over a scary, narrow trail that one slip would send you falling 25 feet to the rocks below. After a few more small lakes, portages, and more rain, we reached an island campsite on McEwen Lake for another layover. Someone had lashed saplings into a platform on a slope as a tent site.

With more time to make up, armed again with more pre-made sandwiches, we paddled and portaged hard to spend the night in a primitive log cabin on Kawnipi's south shore, southwest of Kawa Bay. The cabin was sturdy and had a unique door latch in which an exterior bar slid up a wedge-shaped, thick rubber covered catch. When pulled shut with an inside handle, the bar got tighter the harder we pulled. During the night, one fellow feverishly tried to get out for an urgent bathroom call. The more he pulled, the tighter the door closed. About six guys, all at once, were up and pushed him outside.

Morning dawned bright and clear. We were behind schedule. A quick study of the map suggested the fastest and best way back to Agnes Lake was the middle of the three routes. We headed for the West Agnes River via Murdoch Lake. I was developing my own effortless paddling style, enabling me to paddle 8–10 hours day after day. Aided by a light tailwind, we flew down Agnes to the Silence portage. My partner and I raced each other across the

portages, alternately carrying the canoe and a guide pack or carrying two 80-pound Duluth Packs. Our plan was to stop on Shade Lake and then get an early start in the morning to win the race to Bayley Bay.

Waking to another glorious day, we packed and were on the water early. Everything went smoothly and we made good time. North Bay was calm. There was enough water in the creek to Burke, requiring only two short carries. Soon someone spotted a crew coming west from Singing Brook Portage. It turned out to be our other crew, and the race was on! We lost by about 200 feet. Now what to do? A difficult conversation led to the decision for a late moonlight paddle through Sucker, Newfoundland, and Moose Lakes for a nice spot on the large island directly in front of the Scout Base.

A couple hours of complaining later, we all moved to set up camp. The rules said "no crew can check in before noon." We had plenty of time to relax. Some picked a couple bowls of blueberries while the guide slipped into the base for extra supplies needed to bake a couple pies. We had time to clean everything before turning it in. It was a happy day.

One of the things I wanted to do before leaving was complete my application for the Silver Paddle Award. Unfortunately, they said it had been discontinued. But I did receive my second patch. I still treasure the two patches, the first ones ever given for making a wilderness canoe trip through the Scout Base. It is a little unusual because it is embroidered on a sky-blue felt background. With my friend and frequent paddling partner Paul, I retraced the original 1945 trip again in 1989. It was almost like I was there yesterday except the trees were 44

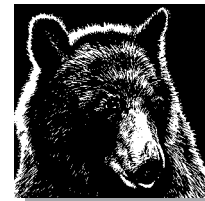
years older. In 1970, my wife sewed a red "patch jacket" for me that still holds my long scouting history of patches.

Over the years equipment has changed. Today, I still own three canoes—a 17-foot Alumacraft Quetico Lite, an 18 1/2-foot Bell Mystic, and a very special custom made 17-foot Seliga wood and canvas handcrafted by Joe and Nora in their Ely garage. Regretfully, I sold the very best wilderness touring canoe ever built, an 18 1/2-foot Bell Northwoods. For a paddle, I prefer the Bending Branches straight shaft in 60 inch length.

I still wear the same full brim bucket hat, neck scarf, long sleeve Pendleton wool shirt, jeans, leather gloves, and Neatsfoot oiled waterproof eight-inch high leather boots with aggressive sole and two pairs of wool socks for no blisters. I almost always carried a midsize "cruiser" axe, which I consider better than a smaller hatchet. In the 80s I added a cast aluminum griddle. In the 90s, for the first time, I added two Whisperlite white gas stoves. I have several nylon Eureka tents, a better, lighter sleeping bag, Thermarest sleeping pad, and an assortment of nylon canoe packs. I like to take fresh (frozen) pre-portioned food for the first two days, but depend on freeze dried (double the portions) for the remainder of the trip.

Sometime after 2000, my daughter Jane wrote in her Christmas letter that "Quetico is where Dad finds his peace." I have been extremely fortunate to have experienced nearly 1000 days of paddling. Today I am waiting, hoping, for some of my five grown grandsons to take me on one last easy trip. □

collective wisdom



Bear and Bug Phobias

□ by BWJ Field Editors

Editor's Note: *In mid-September of 1987, the very same year we started publishing BWJ, a single black bear injured two BWCAW campers in unprovoked, apparently predatory attacks. The wounds were serious, but both victims fully recovered except for some scars. Some 26 years later, that 150 lb. malnourished female remains the one and only black bear to initiate a full-fledged attack in the BWCAW/Quetico. This is proof positive that your chances of being attacked by a bear in canoe country are very close to zero, yet bear fears remain a top concern amongst canoe campers at large.*

For our Collective Wisdom column this issue, I've asked our twelve field editors to address the mysterious Boundary Waters "Bear and Bug" Phobia. While bear worries are usually more imaginary than real, insect pests are responsible for plenty of real world grief. Here then, is my own prescription for dealing with bears and bugs on wilderness canoe trips.

Stuart Osthoff

When picking up your BWCAW/Quetico permit, be sure to ask Forest Service or Park personnel if there have been any recent bear problems reported along your route. If so, steer clear of any

known hotspots.

My approach to safeguarding food packs in canoe country includes three basic strategies. First, whenever feasible, I hang food packs ten feet high and out away from the trunk and limbs. This will discourage all but the savviest camp bears. Hanging food packs is never going to be a guarantee, but it seems like a reasonable precaution to protect both your food supplies and the welfare of canoe country bruins. I'm always packing a week's worth of fresh/frozen food supplies on ice so I prefer to hang my food packs in the cool shade whenever I'm out fishing



Rule #1 in the BWCAW is to hang food packs when camp is left unattended. This is a reasonable effort to safeguard your food supplies and discourage camp bear behavior. (Lake 2)

and camp is left unattended.

After dinner, I carefully wash up all the dishes with hot water and soap in my rubber bucket sink, put everything away, burn all scraps and leftovers and finally lash all the food packs to trees 10–20 yards from my tent. I leave a 3-foot rope with brass snaps permanently affixed to each pack. This makes it quick and easy to lash any pack at any time to a canoe thwart or camp tree.

Why do I lash the food packs alongside a tree close to my tent for the overnight? Because canoe country camp bears will typically come in, scatter any campers, grab the food pack and haul it off into the security of the woods. I have found the remains of food packs over a half-mile from the nearest campsite. Tying the food packs to a nearby tree allows me to keep tabs on them and buys time to get out there and run the bear off. If yelling and bouncing a few rocks off his hide doesn't send him running, I go to my third strategy. Bear Spray.

The book *Mark of the Grizzly* by Scott McMillion, is the definitive work on bear attacks in the modern era in North America. It is cover-to-cover super-detailed first person accounts by those who lived to tell about being mauled by grizzly bears. No we don't have the more aggressive, powerful griz in canoe country but the takeaway from this book is still applicable to our camping scenario. For the average wilderness traveler, the single best bear defense is bear pepper spray.

I have now carried UDAP Pepper Power Bear Deterrent spray for the past six years on my BWCAW/Quetico and Sutton River trips. I have yet to fire it, but it gives me real peace of mind should I ever run into a problem bear. Be sure to purchase a product designed for deterring bears—not pepper spray or mace intended for personal protection. Pepper spray must be labeled for bear protection to be legally brought into Canada.

Carrying a firearm for bear protection is not a legal option in Quetico. On my brook trout trips through Polar Bear Provincial Park, I do get a special permit to carry a 12 gauge shotgun with slugs. We have seen a dozen polar

bears so far but they have all moved off upon spotting us. I am a lifelong, hardcore big game hunter so I like my chances of defending myself with a gun from any bear. But the last thing I want to do is shoot a bear in self-defense, so I carry the bear spray and would try to employ that first whenever possible. In the BWCAW, where it is legal to carry a firearm, I still opt for the bear spray over a gun during the spring/summer seasons. Shooting a camp bear dead in the summer heat will most likely waste the animal. A blast of pepper spray in the face makes a powerful impression, and there is a good chance he will cease hanging around people and campsites. At least bear spray gives him a chance to change his thieving ways. In the fall, when hunting BWCAW grouse or deer, we have guns or bows along anyway but bears are generally denning up by late October when the best hunting gets under way.

I've probably seen 50 something bears in 35 years of paddling, portaging and fishing in the BWCAW/Quetico. Only two have been in camp and we easily ran them off by yelling and throwing rocks their way. I have also spent considerable time bowhunting BWCAW black bears, observing them at close range from tree stand perches. Bears are fascinating animals to watch, especially a mother with cubs.

Plenty of up-close observation and interaction with black bears has made one thing crystal clear to me: bears are blessed with a phenomenal sense of smell. Yes, it is important to carefully clean up and store/hang food items, but if you think you can "hide" food packs back in the woods, you're only kidding yourself. First of all, BWCAW/Quetico camp bears already know where the campsites are located so if your camp is on his nightly rounds, it matters little what you cook for supper. If you think food odors are the last word in camp bear defense, think again. A bear can easily smell the sweat on any pack from a quarter mile away. Plus it is a simple matter for him to smell your tracks for many hours after the fact and back-track right to your "hidden, odorless" food stash. Attempting to hide

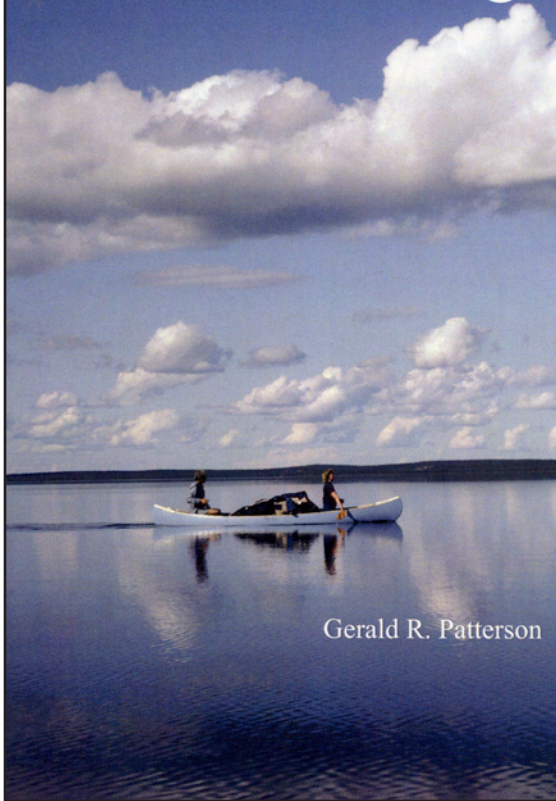
food packs is a mistake. I keep them in camp where I can manage their safekeeping. Hang or tie your packs up and always keep the bear spray handy.

Since I spend the entire bug season out in the woods, it's a given that I am going to see the worst of the worst. It all starts with the tick season before green up in May. The black flies will boom around Memorial Day, mosquito numbers peak in late June, the deer flies dig in on those hot muggy days in July, and the ankle biters take over your canoe in August. Pick your poison folks. And you wonder why October/November is my favorite season in the North Woods?

Die hard canoe country anglers tackle the peak bug season because, all in all, fishing is better in June than in July and August. If fishing is not a priority for you, by all means enjoy canoe country camping and swimming during the last half of the summer when the bugs are less ferocious. The truth be told, the last two summers have been so bone-dry we have gotten off easy on the bug front. Even my trips across the Hudson Bay lowlands, where head nets are usually standard apparel, have been a most pleasant surprise for the lack of biting vermin. But I am warning you all right now, as I write this up in late April, we are still locked in winter with a serious snowpack. I expect a very late ice-out and spring green up before the swamps swell to the brim and hatch a bumper bug crop. Not to mention we are poised for a Boundary Waters outbreak of the tent caterpillar (army worm) invasion this summer with its associated swarm of "friendly flies." That's always fun.

My personal approach to bug defense starts with the super-lightweight, cool, synthetic shirt fabrics available today. These polyester/spandex blend shirts allow me to wear long sleeves for 90% of the summer. I have Patagonia, Mountain Hardwear, Under Armour, and Columbia brands. These shirts are almost like wearing nothing at all except you get the bug and sun protection without the weight, bulk, and sweat of most other shirts. Since I never wear shorts and/or sandals, this reduces bug exposure to just my

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hands and head. An occasional blast of Deep Woods OFF (aerosol spray, 25% DEET) to the back of my hands, baseball cap, and neck and I am good to go...except for the black flies.

While a spritz of DEET will keep mosquitoes at bay for hours, black flies are a whole different animal. They will chomp right through multiple layers of DEET to leave you bleeding and cursing. If there was a chemical solution to the black fly plague, it would be a best seller for sure. But there is no magic black fly potion so when these little devils descend on canoe country for 2–3 weeks in late-May/early June, it's head net time. I like the Sea To Summit Insect Shield head net. It has a drawstring that hugs your neck, and my hat bill keeps the netting away from my face. It even comes with its own miniature stuff sack, which I keep zipped in the pocket of my PFD. Black flies are rarely a problem when out on the lake paddling or fishing. They are usually worst in the evening when the wind calms, the sun is low, and you're cooking dinner. This

is when I usually put on my head net, although they don't breathe really well so they can be hot to have on. Its sweat, swat, or bleed. I kind of rotate between all three.

Canoe flies, aka ankle biters, have a very simple solution. Put your pants on. Deer flies are actually my biggest concern in the entomological field. They love to bite my hands while portaging through the woods on hot, steamy days. I really react to deer fly bites. My hands swell up big time and will be sore for two days after a single bite. DEET does repel deer flies but easily washes off my hands while paddling and it's not practical to reapply before every portage. Inevitably I get nailed and just accept this as part of the way it is out in the woods. That said, the less hot, humid weather I see the better.

When people complain about the bugs in the BWCAW/Quetico I like to say, "You should go on a Far North canoe trip with me. The bugs down here will never seem bad to you again!" At the end of the day, all I know is that my canoe country indelible memories

score sheet reads: trophy fish photos—1001 and counting; trophy bug photos—zero. I can live with those numbers.

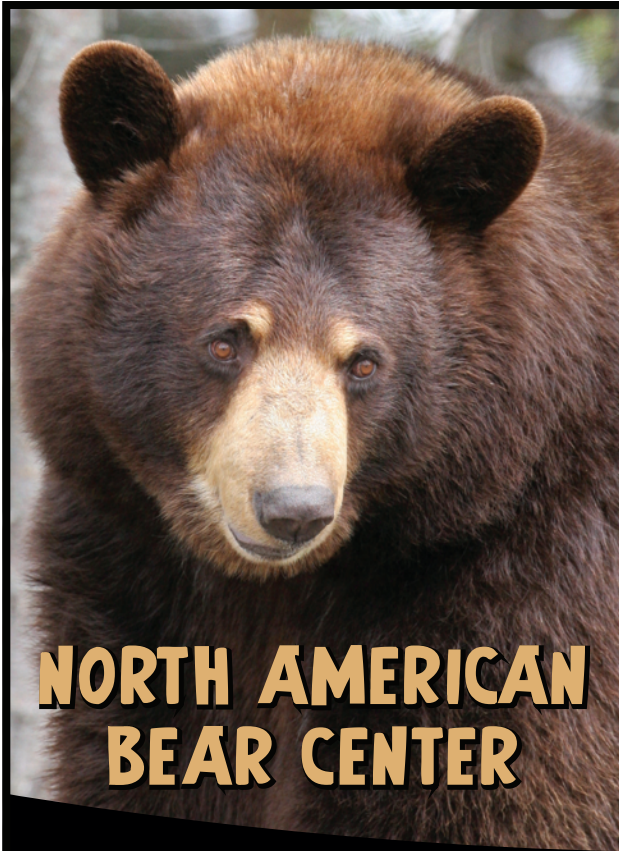
Heather Monthei

In the 20 years we have been canoe camping in the BWCAW, Marshall and I have yet to see a bear. Actually, that has been somewhat of a disappointment. To me, bears are iconic of the wilderness, a part of nature, and seeing one would be a treat. Oh, maybe not too terribly close-up or in our campsite, but close enough to capture in a photo...with a zoom lens!

Marshall and I always take precautions to avoid attracting bears to our campsite. It is important to co-exist with wildlife without inviting them to join us around the campfire. The U.S. Forest Service and Quetico officials recommend keeping a clean camp, avoiding strong-smelling foods, washing dishes immediately after the meal, and hanging the food bag or storing anything that has a scent in a bear barrel.

We hoist our food pack high in a tree or hide our Bear Vault barrel back in the woods. It is recommended that the pack be hung on a sturdy branch or strung on ropes between two trees away from the sleeping area. General guidelines state the pack should hang 10' above the ground and 6' away from the tree trunk. Unfortunately, the 1999 windstorm and several recent forest fires have left many campsites with poor choices for hanging the food pack so bear barrels are becoming more widely used. It is also important to remember to store any garbage out of reach of wildlife; *never* bury it or throw it in the latrine or lake! Some people go so far as to store toothpaste and scented lotions out of reach as well.

Marshall and I try to avoid camping on a lake that has a cluster of campsites in the same area. Campsites situated too close to one another on popular lakes offer an easy route for the bears. If a potential site has fish remains, apple cores, or onion peels, we either clean up the mess or move on. Bears have phenomenal memories, and they will return to a site that has been easy picking in the past. When they associate the campsite with a free meal, they become a nuisance and can panic a nov-



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ice camper. Remember also that islands are no safer than lakeshore sites; bears are good swimmers.

When we leave camp for a day trip, we hide our bear barrel back in the woods with its lid securely locked. I don't trust our food hanging technique enough to leave it for a day, so we take our food pack with us and include lunch and snacks to eat along the way.

We've also been fortunate to avoid bear encounters on portages. If a camper double-portages, the food pack will be left unattended at one end or the other. On long portages, we shuttle our gear part way down the trail to cut down the time we are apart from the food (Marshall thinks this is so he can stop for a snack midway in the carry).

The U.S. Forest Service and Quetico officials track occasional bear problems through logs from rangers or reports from campers and outfitters. They assure visitors that the bears are primarily looking for food and encourage campers to follow the hanging rules mentioned above or use bear barrels. Bear Vault, Garcia Bear

Barrel, and Counter Assault Bear Keg are endorsed as bear-proof; the commonly used blue barrels are not. Shouting, banging pans, waving arms, and throwing sticks or fist-sized rocks are all preferred ways to deal with an intrusive bear; shining a flashlight in his eyes works well to confuse him at night. Always remember to allow any animal an escape route; a bear can become more aggressive if he feels trapped. If you take your dog along, put him on a leash to keep him from antagonizing the bear. Some campers choose to pack a can of pepper spray in case the bear comes in close range. Just remember to spray downwind to avoid getting it in your own eyes! Canadian rules specify that the can must clearly state that it is to be used for "animals" not labeled for "personal protection." If the bear's aggression continues, it's time to look for another campsite.

Carl Skustad of the Kawishiwi District Forest Service reinforces the above tactics for dealing with bears, but he also emphasizes that campers should not be fearful, learning instead to be respect-

ful of wildlife. If campers avoid feeding bears, most will naturally move on. A "fed bear is a dead bear," Skustad reminds us. Habituated bears have become way too comfortable around humans, and when a bear is continually reported as cantankerous or aggressive, the only way to solve the problem is to destroy him. Skustad also recommends campers prepare themselves by practicing food hanging techniques ahead of time. "It's more than just throwing a rope over a branch. You have to pack plenty of rope, pulleys, and carabineers and know how to use them." He also recommends avoiding soaps and lotions with fragrances, as they are often attractive to bears (as well as mosquitoes). Tackle boxes and live bait also harbor strong smells.

The Forest Service coordinates their efforts with the state DNR when making decisions pertaining to problem bears. They consult one another if a situation becomes dangerous and if the animal needs to be eliminated. Outfitters, the local chamber of commerce, rural resorts, and campgrounds are all

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notified, and cautions are posted at trailheads and wilderness entries.

Lynn O'Kane of Voyageur North Outfitters in Ely highlights several popular lakes as seeing higher incidents of bear activity in recent years. An aggressive sow continued to cause trouble on Ensign Lake 3 years ago, and taught her cubs some bad habits as well. The mama bear eventually had to be destroyed, and it is thought that one of her cubs has continued to disturb campers on Bonnie Lake just off of Knife. Polly Lake has a reputation for persistent bears, and campers often come back with detailed stories.

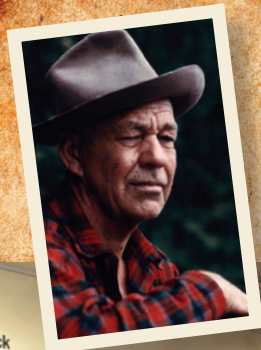
Several years ago the Mudro-Fourtown portage was patrolled by a bear with an eye out for food packs. Come fall, a hunter took care of that problem bear. An aggressive bear was also reported on the Canadian side of the Basswood River near Lower Basswood Falls; Quetico officials closed the campsites for about a month. The bear, paying no attention to international borders and having neither passport nor RABC permit, just

swam across the river to the US campsites. We are also reminded that although colorful bear stories are often remembered, they are few and far between. If we all remember to do our part in discouraging them from camp, there is less likelihood that they will pose much of a problem in later years.

The biggest problem Marshall and I have in the backcountry is the "mini-bears," those cute little chipmunks, mice, and voles. On one of our first trips, I left a bag of trail mix in the tent (I KNEW better than to leave food in the tent, but it was only for a few minutes, and I figured I would notice a big bear if it came along) while I gathered things for the day pack. When I returned to the tent, a little gray mouse sat in the corner munching on a peanut, his beady eyes giving me a defiant look. After a not-so-merry chase, he scampered out of the tent and into the woods. I thought my problems were over when I removed the food; but when we got back from our day trip, there were 5 holes eaten through the tent walls and screen windows!

Bugs, on the other hand, are a different story! I will take all sorts of precautions to avoid those tiny insects that can turn an enjoyable outing into a furious feeding frenzy. I can cope with the annoying mosquitoes, but those miniscule little gnat-like flies that get a thrill out of gnawing my ears and neck drive me crazy...and ticks give me the creeps! The added warnings of West Nile Virus and Lyme's Disease just add more reason to take extra precautions. I remind myself, however, that bugs are a part of nature, and if I want to experience the good, the bad, and the ugly in the wilderness, I have to learn to deal with them, too.

When choosing a campsite, there are a few things to consider during the height of bug season. Campsites found near marshes are wonderful for wildlife sightings, but unfortunately, they are also breeding grounds for mosquitoes. Islands and rocky points that are open to a breeze work well for keeping flying pests to a minimum. Grassy campsites are more likely to harbor ticks, but since ticks are hard to avoid anywhere



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in the wilderness, they are best avoided by wearing a hat and tucking pant cuffs into socks.

We take most of our trips in September, when there are very few insects, and while the decrease of bugs is not the major reason we choose that time, it sure is an added benefit. However, we also like to see canoe country in all its seasons, and bugs are part of that reality. I really don't care to use insect repellents any more than necessary, but my small container of Deep Woods OFF is reserved in the top of my pack for times when the bugs are intolerable. Deep Woods towelettes are particularly easy and more pleasant to use.

I just don't like to have chemicals on my hands where it might get on food or rub in my eyes. Marshall and I wear clothing that covers as much skin as possible, primarily nylon Supplex, which we spray with Permethrin (Repel or Sawyer are popular brands and come in pump spray or aerosol) just before the trip. One spraying lasts about 4-6 weeks and a half dozen washings, not only repelling but killing bugs on

contact. Clothing such as ExOfficio, BugsAway, and Columbia Insect Blocker are among several brands that come already treated with a repellent that claims to last through 70 washings. Some also contain UPF 30+ ratings. They are costly, however, and some websites have restrictions on shipping to Canada. Be sure to read the directions and precautions with regard to Permethrin use and always avoid direct contact with skin.

Marshall and I also wear special hats with head nets that roll out from the brim when the bugs get bad. Black netting is easier to see through than the lighter-colored nets. We've found that Buzz Off nets that fit over shirts and pants don't work well when carrying a backpack or camera case because the straps press the net against the skin, enabling the bugs to eat right through. While head nets work well on the trail or in camp, they don't work very well when eating. The Suzie Bug Net is a small packable net shelter which slips over both of us so we can eat in peace.

One last thing for those who take their canine friends along:

remember that dogs are just as attractive to wilderness insects. Be sure they are treated with Frontline, K9 Advantix, or some other vet recommended repellent before venturing out on that next canoe trip.

While bears and bugs may be bothersome in canoe country, they should not be cause for extreme concern or panic. Remember the forest is their permanent home, and we are the guests. Adapting to those conditions will help us appreciate the wilderness more fully. Hopefully some of these ideas will help improve the quality of your next trip.

Darrel Brauer

In more than 30 years of canoe camping, I have not been aware of any bear ever having been in my camp. Are bear problems in the parks overhyped? I don't think so, because when you have to deal with a problem bear it can be a serious situation. Imagine having to pack up and move your camp in the middle of the night because of a pesky bear. It's very important that all campers refrain from activities that habituate bears to

Pulling over beaver dams can be nasty, but the deeper water on the other side means easier paddling. Beaver bogs are bug city, but that muck is a far more serious threat. I try to stand on the sticks and grass, which minimizes exposure to fungal spores.





people. What you do to prevent a bear from associating campers and campsites with an easy meal is especially important for those who will follow.

There have been times when I've altered my plan or rejected a campsite because of a bear. One time, after watching a bear patrol the shoreline near our camp, we decided to do all of our cooking and eating at a nearby campsite in an effort to keep our "sleeping" site clean and odor free. When I've seen a bear near a portage, I have changed my routine to keep the food pack attended at all times. And then there have been rare instances when there were obvious signs of bear activity at a campsite. A camper using a site where a bear has left fresh sign is asking for trouble.

The number one deterrent to having a bear incident at your site is to keep a clean, odor free camp. Of course "clean" is a relative term, so everyone has a different idea of what that means. I would say that if you have any doubts, there is no need to worry about keeping your camp too clean. It's ok to obsess about keeping a clean camp. This means taking extreme care to avoid spilling oil or other liquids, and don't leave even tiny food scraps lying on the ground. Do not clean fish in camp. Rarely are there leftovers to be disposed of in my camp. If food is left after a meal it is often saved and eaten the next morning. If you choose to burn scraps or leftovers do so completely with a hot fire.

If you consider a bear in camp to be a problem, a bear in your tent is a very serious problem. No food products (including wrappers) of any kind are allowed in my tents and cooking or eating in the vestibules of the tents is not allowed. Anything scented is also forbidden from being in a tent, including toothpaste, deodorant, perfume, soap, gum and flavored lip balm etc.

I've put considerable research and effort into assembling a lightweight functional food pack hanging kit and have hung as much as 120 lb. loads with it. In the heavily-used BWCAW where there are more visitors and more bear/human contact, I will always use it. In Quetico, bear/human

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contact is rarer, but I will still usually hang my food at night and when not in camp. When I travel in Woodland Caribou Park I rarely use the hanging kit since most campsites are seldom used and the chance that a bear has become habituated to canoe campers and food is very slim, the exception being the resort fish camps, which I avoid. For anyone not familiar with effective techniques for properly hanging a food pack, let me just say that it is a challenging skill that can take considerable time and practice to master. The goal is to suspend a pack 8–10 feet above the ground and 7 feet from any tree trunk or branch. The time and effort involved can be substantial, and some have questioned whether it is really worth the effort. A discussion about that controversy could go on for pages. Beyond the arguable effectiveness of food hanging, one of the reasons I became a food pack hanger was that I enjoyed the engineering challenge. Diagrams showing how this is done and the equipment needed can be found using an internet search. Be mindful of your group's safety when attempting to rig lines and suspend heavy loads. This kind of activity is most likely well out of the normal routine for most people, so be careful and proceed cautiously.

When I travel solo I carry a small compact air horn and an ultra-bright tactical flashlight in case I need to dissuade a bear from entering or exploring my camp. I've never actually used these items to chase a bear away but I hope they would help if needed. When I'm with a group I rely on the collective noise and larger presence of the group to make a bear feel unwelcome enough to leave and hopefully not come back.

Tolerance for bugs varies greatly among people. I seem to have a rather high tolerance for most bugs so I may not be the best person to give advice for dealing with them. I consider dressing only in a tee shirt and short pants and not being bothered by bugs a very occasional luxury in canoe country that I don't think one should expect. If you can tolerate repeated applications of chemicals I suppose you will be able to dress down more often, but I prefer to stay covered whenever biting bugs are present.

I'm not a fan of chemical repellents of any kind. I carry a very small concentrated bottle of REI Jungle Juice or a tiny pump bottle of Muskol 95% DEET but rarely do I use either of them. In fact both bottles are more than 5 years old. If I do resort to using a chemical repellent it is usually just for the back of my hands and sometimes a little bit on the back of my neck. What I prefer to do is simply cover up exposed skin and move quickly when and where bugs are the worst. Covering up affords protection not just from bugs but from the sun as well. In the warmest weather I prefer to wear long sleeved nylon shirts and pants. Even though nylon is a thin and very lightweight material, the weave is tight enough to protect against most insects, including mosquitoes. Well-ventilated nylon shirts are reasonably comfortable even on hot days. Tall boots protect against stable flies (ankle biters) and a hat and head net take care of the rest. Inexpensive low-quality head nets work fine for very occasional use on portages or during creek paddling to protect against deer and horse flies, but if the possibility exists that I may need to wear a head net for long periods, perhaps on a lengthy bushwhack, better quality

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soft, fine, black weave netting is best. I always pack at least one spare. When ticks are present, tucking pant legs into boot tops is a good idea.

Most of my trips take place during June, July and August and the number and type of biting insects varies greatly from year to year, month to month and place to place. During any typical canoe trip the bug problem can be infinitely bad in some small areas. It may be that a hatch is occurring in a particular locale, possibly triggered by recent rains. In any case, if the bugs seem intolerable in one location the solution may simply be to move. Expect black flies to be present around moving water. Mosquitoes may flourish a couple days following a heavy rain and ankle biting stable flies seem worst when the barometer is falling.

On a couple of trips recently I have taken a screen house, and what a luxury that turned out to be. Of course, it meant an extra pack loaded, unloaded, and hauled across each portage, but once in camp and set up the screened shelter is a pleasant and complete sanctuary from bugs at any given time of the day or night. I did not bring any poles along and made do with what I could find to prop up the center and corners. To my surprise, the actual setup was not as difficult as I expected thanks to the abundance of trees in Quetico campsites and the forethought of bringing plenty of rope. With all of that said, the screen house will only rarely be along on my canoe trips.

Wasps, hornets, and bees can be a serious problem if there are any members of your party that are or may be allergic to their venom. I've recently been carrying an EpiPen, an epinephrine injection device designed to be used in the field when someone is experiencing anaphylactic shock following one or more venomous insect stings. EpiPens are available by prescription only and should include a prior consultation with a doctor. When it comes to bugs, the best plan is to prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

Daryl Blazino

I am always surprised when I hear someone say they don't go camping because they are worried about bears. I know it sounds like a cliché, but from a safety perspective I worry more about the drive to and from the park than the chance of being attacked by a bear.

Yes, bears exist in canoe country. Yes, everyone has heard a story or two about a bear stealing a food pack. And yes, if I did ever have a serious bear encounter my attitude would likely change, but until that day I will not lose a minute of sleep worrying about bears—even on the trips with my small children. Having said that, we always take basic precautions to minimize the risk of having a bear enter our campsite.

In thirteen years and about thirty-five trips I have only seen bears on two occasions, each time while traveling. The recommended approach to avoid bear encounters is to hang your food packs. Personally, I never do. Not because I am naïve, lazy, or reckless, but because I believe that our method is as effective if not superior.

Every evening after burning any food scraps and thoroughly washing our dishes and cutlery we pack all food items in sealed containers, place them inside the packs and cover everything with a ground tarp held down by rocks about ten to fifteen yards from the tents. On top of the tarp we place the pots and pans.

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Should any unwelcome visitor disturb the tarp the sound of the pots will alert us. In the inside pocket of the tent next to my pillow I keep an extremely loud marine air horn. If the falling pots and pans haven't sent the creature running then a quick blast from the horn will hopefully do the trick.

My rationale for covering versus hanging the food is simply that a bear will be attracted by smell and a pack hanging in the breeze will send food odors over a greater distance. We also try to have the tarp relatively close to the fire. While I have never seen any evidence or reference to campfires as a bear-repelling strategy, I am convinced that bears dislike the smell of a fire and that the residual embers, smoke, and soot from an evening campfire are a major contributing factor to our good fortune so far.

Being bear phobia free does not mean that bear avoidance strategies aren't regularly on my mind. For this reason, if I have a choice between an island and a mainland campsite, I will lean towards the

island. However, this consideration is usually well down my list when choosing a site. Bears are excellent swimmers, so I realize there is no guarantee an island site will not contain a bear, but if they aren't enticed they are unlikely to venture far from the forest.

Fortunately, for the majority of our trips mosquitoes and other biting flies have had little impact. Often I return from a ten-day excursion having only used repellent once or twice. In most cases, this would be because of mosquitoes either along a muddy portage trail or around the campsite at dusk.

Black flies have rarely been an issue for us in canoe country as opposed to the forests further north and east of Quetico. Those pesky ankle-biting bugs that look like small house flies have caused us considerable grief in the past. They seem to be resistant to DEET but are easily avoided by simply wearing long pants and socks that cover the ankles. Those who venture out for an evening of fishing with shorts and sandals can be endlessly tormented by these

quick, relentless pests.

Light, long-sleeved and full-length polyester pants and shirts seem to be the best defense against biting insects. This helps to greatly reduce the amount and frequency of DEET repellent used in our parties. Bug jackets with hoods go a step further towards limiting my children's DEET exposure, but these are a little harder to wear in the summer due to overheating.

Personally, I don't mind using a bit of repellent along the portages during the day but hate having it on my body at bedtime. During the day a little buzzing sound doesn't bother me much but it can be a major annoyance when I'm in evening relax mode. For this reason I almost always bring some type of mosquito netting so that I can enjoy sunset with a cup of tea if the bugs come out.

We have carried in three different types of mosquito tents over the last several years, the largest of which weighs in at thirteen pounds but is a comfortable 10'x10' and is over 6' high. It is great for playing cards and also acts as a bit of a rain tarp, but its weight and size are obviously a major factor when packing.

On the other end of the size and weight spectrum is our smaller mesh only mosquito net. You can stuff it anywhere in any pack, but it is only big enough for three people seated side-by-side on the ground. It takes a few minutes to set up but is so light and easy that there really is no reason *not* to take it. In fact, for bigger family trips I've even packed two.

For a couple of years we used a mosquito tent that was purchased through a Sears department store of all places. It is lightweight, free-standing, sets up very quickly, and was just large enough for four seated people. We called it the pizza pan because when packed it was circular and flat. It was too large to fit in a pack but was easily attached to the outside of a larger pack with a bungee cord. It was however, a bit cumbersome when unloading the canoe.

Obviously which of the three items we take is determined, as with all items, on a benefit vs. size and weight basis. Once our group of four adults went to five we were able to bring a whole extra pack of

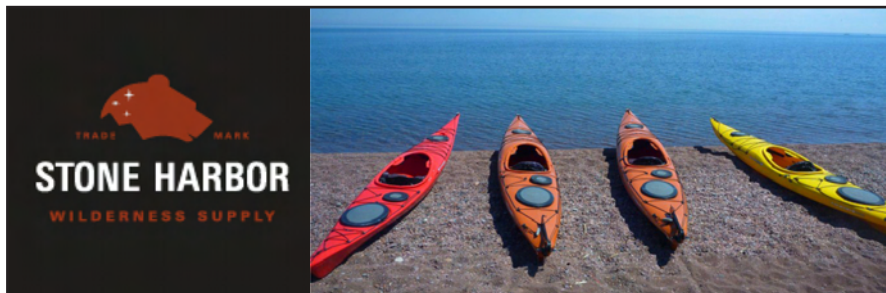
luxury items, and thus the largest bug tent seemed like a nice way to make the campsites even more enjoyable.

The only trip where mosquitoes really affected our trip in a negative manner was last July with my sons. After weeks of steady rains in May and June mosquito populations reached unimaginable levels by early July. I've never been so happy to have wind on a canoe trip before. If it was calm we couldn't even pull over for a snack during the middle of the day without risk of being eaten alive. In thirteen years I have never seen anything like it and hope I won't ever again. While they did "suck" some of the pleasure out of our trip, we still had a fantastic time overall. Knowing we faced the mosquitoes at their all-time worst and still had a successful trip was something we were all proud.

Steve Volkening

In the spirit of full disclosure, I have to admit that I've never had a bear problem during any Canoe Country trips or even on any of the backpacking trips I do throughout the nation. In twenty trips to Quetico/BWCAW, I've actually only seen one bear, and that was while driving along the end of the Gunflint Trail on the way to the put in. In June 2012 I almost saw another. I spent a week in one of Seagull Outfitter's cabins, located along the Sag Corridor, just a few minutes paddle from the BWCAW with my wife, son, and daughter-in-law. Since my annual "real" canoe trip wasn't until Labor Day, I decided to sleep outdoors on the cabin's wooden deck to watch the stars and listen to the loons. About 2 AM, I was awakened by a noise just a few feet from my sleeping bag. I knew it was some sort of critter raiding the cabin's garbage can. I yelled to scare it away and quickly fell back asleep. The next morning, I found muddy bear prints on the can and on the ground next to it. I realized that I'm much more careful with garbage during wilderness trips than we'd been while staying in the cabin.

I've led several backpacking trips along a section of the Appalachian Trail in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Bears are quite common there and can



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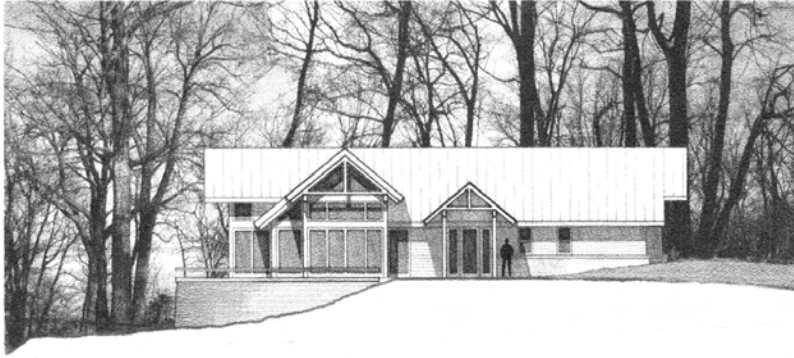
be a real nuisance. I've seen signs nailed to trees by the National Park Service at several designated backcountry campsites warning, "This campsite is *closed* because of the activity of aggressive bears in the area." The park service provides permanent food hanging equipment, which consists of a heavy metal cable, a pulley system, and brass swivel snaps to raise the food packs out of the reach of bears.

Black bears, or "Noka" as the Anishinaabeg called them, are definitely nothing to fool around with. According to Mark "Sparky" Stensaas' wonderful book, *Canoe Country Wildlife*, the typical Boundary Waters bear weighs 250 to 325 pounds (Minnesota's state record is 583 pounds). They can run 30 miles per hour. They aren't blood-thirsty man-eaters, and their normal diet is mostly nuts, berries, and an occasional dead animal, but they need to add one hundred pounds of fat before their late fall hibernation. They are opportunistic feeders and always search for an easy meal. Their sharp claws can easily tear through a food pack

if they are given the opportunity.

Thankfully, most visitors to Canoe Country today follow a more enlightened Leave No Trace philosophy than in the past. In the 1950s and 60s, a popular form of entertainment for guests at North Woods resorts was to drive over to the garbage dump and watch the bears feed. Today, first time BWCAW canoers are shown a video about proper wilderness etiquette, including ways to avoid bear problems.

Unfortunately, bears can be conditioned to associate campsites with an easy meal. Sloppy and/or inconsiderate campers sometimes aren't very careful with their food. Bacon grease spilled on the grate or scraps thrown in the fire pit may lure bears in for a snack. At the start of a canoe trip, I always ask the Quetico ranger and the outfitter if there have been any reports of bear activity along my proposed route. A few times, I've been told that bears have been repeatedly spotted in a specific campsite, so we avoid camping there. Before spending a night at any campsite, I also



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quickly inspect it to make sure it is relatively clean. The only other consideration I make in choosing a campsite specifically related to avoiding bears is to make certain that there's a tree suitable for hanging the food at night. That's rarely a problem.

My canoe-tripping style usually emphasizes traveling each day and single portaging as much as possible. The food I bring is mostly dehydrated or freeze-dried. Breakfasts are usually oatmeal or granola bars rather than bacon and eggs. Dinners are often ramen noodles or rice and beans instead of fried fish, steaks or pork chops. As a result, there are very few food odors while cooking. There's no cooking oil, grease, bones, or fat to dispose of. There are no leftovers. Portion size is easy to manage, and any extra food goes into my "belly sump." I eat it. I never need to dig a sump hole away from camp to bury food waste. There are no bloody meat wrappers to attract animals. I strain the dish water with a small piece of nylon

window screen to collect any food particles. These go into the garbage bag, which is hung with the food at night.

This culinary approach is not for everyone. I know that many prefer "real food." But, this method works for me. When planning the menu for a canoe trip, I deliberately select food that is lightweight, quick and easy to prepare, and doesn't produce a lot of waste or cooking odors. Before the trip, nearly everything is taken out of the original container, labeled, and placed inside Ziploc bags.

Although this type of food probably will not create a problem if left on the ground overnight, I still hang it properly. This is mainly so that curious mice and chipmunks don't chew holes in the pack looking for peanuts, rather than to protect it from marauding bruins. I bring a bear rope, small pulley and several carabiners on every trip. I'm careful to hoist the pack 15–20 feet off of the ground and pull it at least 10–15 feet away from the tree trunk.

I try to single portage whenever possible. Therefore, the food is rarely left on the ground unattended to attract animals while I double portage. Because of the type of food I bring and how it's packaged, I've never had any animals bother it while occasionally double portaging. I also prefer trips which involve traveling each day. Only once have I done a trip where we've base camped for several days. With the food either on my back while portaging or in the canoe as we travel, I normally don't have to leave food behind in camp while out on a day trip. On the one time I did spend multiple days in the same campsite, we hung the food pack and carefully cleaned up the kitchen area before heading out to explore the neighboring lakes for the day.

Bugs are another story. They are nearly impossible to avoid. While you can either eliminate or sharply reduce the chances of a bear encounter, insects are everywhere in the North Woods. I've visited canoe country every month from May through October. There are always some bugs. Early and late in the season has relatively fewer insects, but they're still present. During the peak of the summer season in June, July, and August they can sometimes be quite a bother. Since it's virtually impossible to avoid them, the best strategy is to find ways to minimize the misery they produce.

When people ask, "How were the bugs?", they are probably really inquiring about the mosquitoes. There are fifty species of mosquitoes just in Minnesota. As with many biting insects, it's only the females that bite us. It's also the females which make that annoying, high-pitched whining noise in your ear. This is made by vibrating bristles on their thorax as a mating signal. Females need a meal of blood in order to produce their eggs.

Mosquitoes are attracted to us by the carbon dioxide we exhale, by our warmth, and the lactic acid we produce during exercise. As they bite, they inject both an anesthetic and anti-coagulate under our skin. Our bodies react to the bite by releasing histamines. This produces a flood of red blood cells to the site which causes the swelling, red

bump, and itch that drives some of us crazy. Those who react badly to 'skeeter bites can find temporary relief from an oral anti-histamine, such as Benadryl.


The New England Journal of Medicine reports that insect repellents that contain at least 25% DEET can keep mosquitoes away for up to five hours, but be careful. DEET can damage synthetic material such as an expensive Gore-Tex jacket. Repellents containing eucalyptus oil work for about two hours. Citronella-based lotions last for only about one hour. The early French fur-traders reportedly used a combination of bear grease and skunk oil.

I don't like using harsh chemicals, so I first tried plant-based "natural" repellents. They frankly aren't very effective. When the 'skeeters are especially nasty, I rely on Sawyer's Jungle Juice, which is 91% DEET. I use it sparingly, but it really works quite well.

Besides repellents, clothing can also provide a barrier against bug bites. I have a cap and shirt that contain "Insect Shield." The makers claim it will repel mosquitoes, flies, ticks, and chiggers with the active ingredient Permethrin. This is a man-made version of a natural insect repellent found in certain chrysanthemum plants. The advantage is that it's bonded to the fabric. Since you wear it, you don't have to re-apply it throughout the day. Wearing light weight, breathable layers to protect bare skin from biting bugs is also helpful. I always wear long sleeve shirts and long pants for both bug and sun protection no matter how warm it is. Tucking your pants into your socks can prevent ankle bites. Wearing full-sized camp shoes rather than sandals can spare you from being bitten on your feet. Last year, I found a combination bug jacket/head net that I'm anxious to try out.


Mosquitoes are attracted to colognes and scented deodorant, so these are best not used in the backcountry. Mosquitoes can also really home in on hot and sweaty bodies. After a long day of paddling and portaging, rinsing off your smelly clothes and your body in the lake is not only relaxing, it can help somewhat avoid mosqui-

You guys grab the packs, I've got the canoes! - Zoe



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toes later that night. Most people know that 'skeeters become more active at dusk, so it's best to set up the tents before dark. If worst comes to worst, you can beat a hasty retreat inside. It's no fun reaching camp after sunset and battling mosquitoes as you struggle to put up the tent in the dark.

Campsite selection can sometimes help reduce mosquito problems. You don't want to camp where they live. It's best to avoid swampy or marshy areas. If possible, it's best not to select campsites with heavy tree and brush cover. An open campsite where the breeze can blow the bugs away is better.

Some believe that diet can even play a role. It's said that people who eat a lot of garlic and lemons naturally repel mosquitoes. Vitamin B1 (thiamine), rice, and legumes are also believed to help.

In May and June, black flies can become very irritating. Although small, these little flies have a vicious bite. They are especially common around running water. The females lay their eggs near riffles and the base of waterfalls.

In some prime locations, there are as many one million larvae per square yard waiting to hatch. Black flies seem to be attracted to the color blue. That's a good color to avoid in early summer when they are likely to be about.

Mosquitoes and black flies can be annoying; to people with allergies, bee and wasp stings can be potentially deadly. Every year, more than one hundred people die from allergic reactions to bee and wasp stings. Death can come in minutes from anaphylactic shock. Those severely allergic to bee and wasp venom quickly develop hives, shortness of breath, and a drop in blood pressure, which causes dizziness. Swelling of the throat can make breathing and swallowing impossible. An immediate injection of epinephrine with an EpiPen is critical. Mild cases can be treated with oral anti-histamines. It's important that group leaders are aware of those in the group with such allergies. It's also vital that the allergic person brings several EpiPens, knows how to use them, and knows where in their pack they



are located for quick access in an emergency.

Bees, wasps, and hornets are fairly common in Canoe Country. Most of them pose no problem if left undisturbed. Yellow jackets can at times be a problem because they tend to build their nest on the ground. Often, they are nearly impossible to see. I once saw a large nest in the middle of the trail along Quetico's Monument portage. I warned the others in my group to be careful not to step on it. Near the end of the portage, we met another group going in the opposite direction. I also gave them the location of where it was so that they would not accidentally trample over it. Wasp venom is nearly ten times stronger than bee venom. It takes only one or two wasp stings for an allergic person to quickly face a life-threatening problem.

Bears and bugs are part of the natural ecosystem, just as rain and wind. Everything has its place. While we may curse the female black flies biting us, the males are the major pollinator of wild blueberries. I don't enjoy being bitten by mosquitoes or flies, but bugs are part of the North Woods experience. With proper clothing and a few dabs of DEET, they've never been more than a minor irritant. I certainly would never pass up a

chance to paddle my favorite lakes out of concern for either bugs or bears.

Jim Carrier

Bugs and bears? After thirty trips, I hardly give them a thought anymore. Early on, however, that wasn't the case. My wife, Nancy, and I got off to a rough start decades ago on her very first trip. To this day, she prefers paddling in September when water is warm and pests are few and far between.

Nancy's "rough start" occurred one summer afternoon en route to Atikokan on Highway 11, just above Quetico. We were to enter the park the next day. So it happened that, across the road, we spotted a rather scraggly-looking bruin sitting straight up, looking around while lazily shooing away hundreds of biting insects. Excited by this unexpected prospect of pre-park wildlife photography, Nancy exhorted me to spin the car around and bring it to a halt near the bear. Meanwhile she rolled down her window to snap pictures. This turned out to be an unfortunate decision. Almost immediately, hundreds of said biting insects swarmed the inside of our vehicle. This "close encounter of the bear and bug kind" gave rise to all sorts of grim, dark fears. Could this be a precursor of things to come? What might we expect, to-

morrow, when we actually entered the park, ground-zero for the worst of bugs and bears?!

We sped off to Atikokan and didn't stop until we saw Walt's Dry Goods. There, we scooped up bug bombs, burning coils, mosquito repellent lotions and sprays, head and foot nets, as well as duct tape to wrap around her jeans and socks. Furthermore, I reassured her that I had, indeed, packed the *BWJ* bear pack system.

Today, nearly twenty-one years later, much of that anti-bug and bear paraphernalia rots away in my garage. We seldom needed it or used it on that trip—or any other, as it turned out.

Let me deal with bears first. In thirty trips to Quetico, only once have I spotted a bear that was actually IN the park. He was happily trotting along a sandy beach on the southern shoreline of Quetico Lake and paid us no attention whatsoever. On the other hand, I've seen several bears at edges of the park while en route to my entry point, much closer to human habitations. So while a healthy population of bears exists in Quetico Park, I just don't seem to run into them. Why?

When selecting a Quetico campsite, I adhere to time-honored real estate wisdom: "Location, location, location!" The fact is, I don't want to run into bears. I really don't want to run into people either, so my parties select sites in remote, isolated locations. Being creatures of habit, bears are most likely to return to places where they have found food before. These locations tend to be those used by people with food. A bear-ravaged food pack early in a canoe trip can ruin a trip a year in the making. In addition to my penchant for camping in more isolated areas, I do two things: a) I check the "Trip Reports Forum" on QuietJourney.com for any reports of bear activity in areas I intend to paddle, and b) I call the park office in Atikokan to hear what they know about active bears. With that information it is easy to avoid areas of known bear activity. If I'm pushed to use a problem campsite, I will take some precautions like hoisting the food pack with the *BWJ* bear pack system.

Generally, I'm not in known

problem areas, so I simply stow my Blue Barrel and Ostrom food pack harness system in a random, shady spot in the woods. At night I'll rig all sorts of pots and pans to the barrel as a kind of "alarm system." So far that alarm has never sounded.

There are other common sense precautions I take. For my trips with the guys, I've become pretty much a Clark Jungle Hammock devotee and camper, so my camps don't have to be made at any established site. All I really need are two suitable trees. If "random location" is protection from bears, it can hardly get more random than this! What I *do* avoid, however, is eating food in my hammock or storing it in one of those big underside pockets. The last thing I want is a rude awakening as the filling in a bear burrito!

Bugs can be another matter, however most bugs can be controlled. I refer you back to that campsite wisdom I cited earlier: "Location, location, location!"

When selecting a campsite, pick an elevated spot that allows breezes to pass through. This can dramatically reduce mosquito problems when the bewitching hour arrives. Just remember that campsites with this exposure can pose other problems when storms roll in. It seems like there is always a wilderness equation of some sort hanging in the balance but these challenges are what make wilderness camping so much fun!

In the spring you would do well NOT to set up camp near moving water, a primetime habitat for black flies. Also, unless you're an entomologist I'd avoid camping in low-lying and swampy areas. On the other hand, if you've done your homework and know it hasn't rained much in the past three or four weeks, you might get away with camping even in spots like these.

No-see-ums

There are several precautions you can take with your camping gear, as well. First of all, make sure the screen mesh on your shelter is fine enough to ward off "no-see-ums." I haven't encountered those little beggars often but, when I do, they can be a real nuisance. I've never found a repellent that works very effectively on



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them. They nearly drove me nuts at a camp on the west end of Camel Lake once. No-see-um netting works on these little devils but it also substantially reduces air flow and tents with fine mesh are slow to cool down in the evening.

Ticks

If I'm paddling before July, I'm probably sporting a buzz cut, because I'm not fond of searching for ticks and plucking them from my noggin. Ticks can be a real problem in the early paddling season. Permethrin-soaked clothing seems to help. One June afternoon I pulled seventeen ticks off of my clothing after crossing the long portage between Yeh and Lonely lakes! That experience taught me to thoroughly check everything during spring trips.

Mosquitoes

Unlike my first experience with Nancy, I now carry only a small container of bug repellent when I travel into canoe country. The specific brand doesn't much matter to me, so long as it contains a 95% or better concentration of DEET. Now, DEET can be pretty nasty stuff; I left a leaky container of it in a hard plastic tackle box one winter and when spring arrived the liquid had eaten a hole right through the box! That's why I apply this repellent as sparingly as possible, mainly to the brim of my Tilley hat and clothing. My under-

standing is the effects of DEET can be especially damaging to the nervous system of youngsters, so be careful using it with them. Lower dose solutions are recommended with kids. When I'm negotiating a mosquito-infested portage with a pack on my back and canoe over my head, my hands are unavailable for swatting skeeters. You can bet I take either of these two precautions: a) DEET is laced into my clothing near vulnerable areas or, more likely, b) I'm wearing my Original Bug Shirt (see BugShirt.com).

The fact is, over the years I do less and less with repellents and such. I much prefer to use the Bug Shirt or a head net and not mess with chemicals. During many recent trips, I have not used any repellent at all. I pick a good campsite with decent air flow and I remain vigilant regarding "the bewitching hour" for mosquitoes during summer evenings. I retire to my shelter just before the swarms arrive. More often than not, they arrive in camp with uncanny precision at almost exactly the same minute every night.

Canoe Flies

By far, my most-feared nemesis in canoe country is the dreaded canoe fly. Some folks know these critters as "ankle-biters." Ankle-biters tenaciously cling to the dead air space in your canoe on



STUART OSTHOFF

On my Sutton River trips, the bug factor rises to a whole new level. Our Cabela's screen house is central command for dining and reliving the day's fishing thrills. There are lightweight screen houses that are feasible for portaging in the BWCAW.

hot summer days, lurking around, and waiting for the precise moment they can catch you with your guard down. They persist in their bloodthirsty quest even during a healthy afternoon breeze. Their preference for munching on “wet” feet doesn't bode well for canoe country paddlers, either. They will even drift into camp on occasion. You see them only during daylight hours. For all intents and purposes, ankle-biters are indistinguishable from the common ordinary innocent-looking houseflies in size, shape, and physical appearance. Where they differ and where they most confound modern-day science is in their concealment of six-inch teeth! These evil flies attack ankles with unnerving persistence and gusto. Strangely enough, only rarely do they ever bite above that tender spot. In fact, I've long wondered what this nasty life form does for nourishment when human ankle meat is unavailable?

No repellent known effectively deters ankle-biters. Occasionally I have heard that something works

but I give these claims no credit whatsoever. These things are zombie-like and only die if you crush their heads. I find few satisfactions in life greater than that of swatting these aberrations before they can leave a big bloody welt on my ankle. In my experience, the only viable defense against ankle-biters is to establish some sort of physical barrier between your ankles and their cruel jaws. Ankle nets work, but are dependable only if they are fitted over socks (they'll bite right through nets, alone, but a substantial sock underneath slows them down). Heavy socks fitted over the top of your pant legs can be effective, too, but securing the whole arrangement with duct tape is best. Wearing this stuff is not much fun on hot summer days when I prefer going barefoot and splashing around.

Kim Young

We can't live without them; we can't seem to live with them. Bears and bugs are part of our world. I decided a long time ago that I just couldn't let bears or bugs

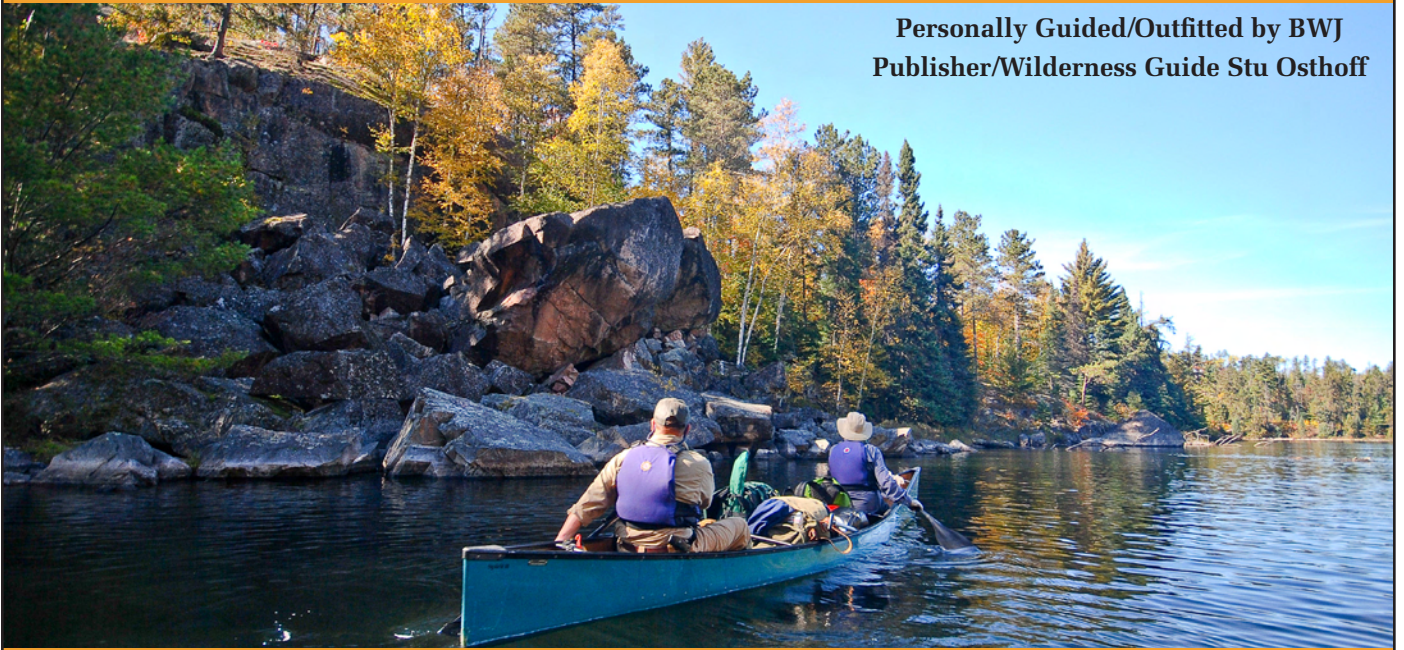
cause fear or anxiety for me any longer. Notice I said any longer. That doesn't mean bears and bugs haven't interrupted, discouraged, or kept me awake on past trips. I make my canoe camping plans because of other influential factors such as the weather, fishing, water temps suitable for swimming and whether it is berry picking time.

I've been canoe camping in the BWCAW and Quetico since 1977. I did not have a bear in camp until the mid 90s. I haven't had any since then, and I've been on 75+ canoe trips. I was on Olifaunt Lake with a group of women, and we had stopped for lunch at the rapids lift-over before the 1-mile portage into Fern. As we shoved off the rocky point, another group was coming up on the site. They later told us a bear was lurking in the woods watching us as we took off. Oh well, that wasn't so bad.

Later that day we secured a beautiful site between Bud and Beg lakes. The next morning our bear drama began in earnest. Deb and I had caught four nice

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bass below the falls and had started cooking fish and blueberry pancakes for everyone on our one-burner gas stoves (we had cleaned the fish and properly disposed of the fish guts away from camp). Merely minutes later, Carmen came skedaddling out of the woods and pronounced there was a bear near the “bathroom.” It was only a few feet away from her when she noticed it. Some of the women took pots and pans and tried to scare the bear away. One woman yelled, “Go home!” He persisted, and while he didn’t charge us, he wasn’t leaving anytime soon. We had originally planned on a departure time around noon to locate a campsite on Pickerel Lake. Consequently, a few women kept an eye on the bear while the rest of us packed up our gear as fast as we could. It took six of us about twenty minutes to arrange everything. We reluctantly put the food away (only because we were really hungry and the stoves were hot), but thought we could resume the cooking process at the next

portage. After a fifteen-minute paddle to the portage between Beg and Bisk lakes, we dragged our canoes and gear off to the side and began to cook right next to the picturesque falls. A few more of us had eaten our gourmet breakfast when a family of four and a golden lab puppy appeared on the portage from the Bisk side. The mom stayed with their packs as the rest of the family went back for their canoe. She lay restfully against a pack as I sauntered down by the water.

All of a sudden, a bear popped out of the woods, grabbed a small orange rubber pack and turned around. I yelled at the mom and she turned in time to see the animal scampering back into the woods. We intercepted her husband and he dropped his canoe and grabbed my wooden paddle. He ran off in pursuit of the bear. In due course (which seemed like forever) he came across the bear and used my paddle to whack it on the nose and strike the pack several times (the pack held dry dog food). The bear eventually

dropped the pack, the man came back to camp, returned my paddle, and they hightailed it out of there. We packed up the food and once again proceeded to paddle to the next portage, which would bring us to Pickerel. On our way there, we discussed our luck or lack of it. Seriously, I said we should bring all eight packs over the portage on the first trip instead of a mixture of canoes and packs. Three of us could stay at the Pickerel Lake landing with the gear and five of us would go back for the four canoes with one person watching for bears. My friend Lenore calmly said, “Don’t you think that’s overkill?” I replied, “No.” I’ve never seen bears so persistent. We followed my plan, and it seemed to be going well as the four of us were following Carmen for a second time on the trail. At that moment, Jan literally ran to tell us there were three bears at the Pickerel landing. We picked up our pace and as we did, passed by a steaming pile of fresh bear scat in the middle of the trail. When we reached the landing the

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four of us walked straight into the water, flipped the canoes and all of us loaded them as quickly as we could. It was apparent these bears we'd encountered were used to seeing people, stealing packs, and generally not afraid. They had put two and two together. People and packs equal food. My stomach was in knots as we finally launched and were away from the maddening crowd and the B-Chain of lakes!

What did we learn from this experience? Well, along well-used routes during certain years, bears will be persistent and present. That year there were not many berries. The bears were hungry. Don't leave food packs unattended on portages. Don't leave food packs open in camp. Don't leave food unattended, even if you are just going down by the water. Make sure others can watch the food while you are gone. Don't leave food scraps throughout camp, as bears will smell it. Avoid cooking strong-smelling foods like bacon. Anything that makes you drool bakes a bear drool too! Their noses can smell the minutest amount of food. Leftovers that will be eaten the next day should be properly stored and anything you don't eat, burn. Dump and bury the wash water (and food scraps) in a hole in the ground as far back as you can away from camp. Remember, we are visiting their home. Don't take food like gum into your tent, and check kids' pockets and backpacks prior to getting in the tent. Don't bring your toilet kit into the tent, as products like lotion and toothpaste may have odors. Don't eat or cook in your tent. Properly store your food at night, either hung in a tree or out of camp. That's a whole other discussion I won't go into.

If you encounter a bear in camp or on a portage, stand your ground, talk, yell at them, and make lots of noise. Hit your pots and pans together. Throw rocks at them. Wave your arms to make yourself look larger. This might not make them go away completely but will give you time to pack up and leave if you have to. I used to lay awake at night in my tent and lose sleep listening for bears. Sometimes I'd have rocks nearby

the tent. I finally quit worrying and just went to sleep. That's what I'm going to continue to do—although my friends seem to think I need to be the one to pop my head out of the tent whenever we hear something in camp. Imagine this, something slow and steady is making its way into camp. We've been asleep for an hour and my contacts are in a Ziploc (a different tale). I finally get the contacts in my eyes so I can see and take a look outside the door of the tent with a flashlight. I don't see anything. I go back to sleep. In the morning it is apparent it was a beaver dragging a large branch... my point is a sound in the dark outside your tent is usually a small animal not the least bit interested in you.

Bugs are persistent little buggers too. I've never met a bug (piercing and sucking-mouth kind) I liked. Mosquitoes, biting flies, friendly flies, deer flies, ticks, bees, and ants are among the pests I can think of in canoe country. But am I really going to let them determine when I go on a canoe trip? No way. Growing up and living in Minnesota all my life, I've learned to reside with insects. One thing positive about other insects: if you are lucky enough to be outside when the dragonflies are around they are beautiful to watch hovering about while eating mosquitoes!

Like a lot of canoeists, I wear long sleeve shirts and pants, then apply insect spray before a portage. Light colors are best. Sometimes I keep my hat in my hand as I carry the canoe to swat mosquitoes! If possible, we choose a site on a point or terrain where there is potential for a breeze. When there is no breeze and the bugs come out at night, we just go to bed and read. You can go back outside later on after the worst is over, or dress in long sleeved shirts, long pants, and socks, then put some insect spray on. Stand or sit close to the fire. Although fires don't always keep dive-bombing skeets away! I carry a head net, but I have yet to put it on. One year, on McAlpine Creek, many of us would have paid Cathy \$100 for her REI baseball combination head net hat. She was a happy camper!

I've accidentally plopped my tent on a few anthills. We move

it or strategically place the tent so the door isn't near the anthill openings. Biting flies tend to like sand beaches on hot days. I'm apt not to stay at beach campsites because of this in the heat of the summer although one exception is when we have kids with us (kids of a certain age). Lately, deer flies have been battled for us with a Deerfly Patch. It is a sticky patch not unlike duck tape that is worn on the back of a cap or hat; the special adhesive traps the deer flies. A special note, they are not recommended for use with long, blowing hair. I know firsthand; I helped a friend tear her hair off of a patch she had unknowingly put on the front of her visor!

I've used a lot of insect repellents. I grew up using Cutters, Deep Woods OFF, and Avon Skin So Soft. At Girl Scout camp we drenched ourselves with any spray brand we could. I went "natural" a long time ago and still try to use those kinds of products. Repel Lemon Eucalyptus, Burt's Bees Herbal Insect Repellent, Camouflage Outdoor Balm, and Cactus Juice are in my arsenal as of today. As I've read, each and every one of us needs to apply these products more often. Cactus Juice works great for "friendly flies." I've also tried Gear Smart, a Repel product with 15% Picaridin, and it seems to block mosquitoes from sensing their prey. I'm not afraid to use DEET but there are concerns about how it affects the nervous system, especially in children. I have a spray can of Backwoods Cutters, and I will use it occasionally. As stated by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), if you are in an area where mosquitoes carry disease such as West Nile Virus, DEET may be a good idea (the CDC also recommends Picaridin and Lemon Eucalyptus for the same reason).

I also use Repel Permanone, which repels and kills ticks and mosquitoes. It is applied to clothing and gear, not skin. Other ways I prevent ticks from getting on me include creating a barrier by tucking long pants into socks or boots, and tucking long sleeved shirt into pants. Wearing light-colored clothing helps the ticks be more visible. Try to walk in the center of the trail and avoid tall grass and



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brush. Pets need to be checked just like humans on a daily basis, especially if they are sharing your tent.

Bears and bugs are part of the environment and are here to stay. If you learn to diminish the risks of bear encounters and circumvent the insects, you will have a great canoe trip. And don't worry, be happy.

Rob Kesselring

Bear encounters in the Boundary waters are unusual and almost always benign. You are more likely to drown or be struck by lightning than be mauled by a bear. However, it is prudent to be cautious. Bears are unpredictable, intelligent, and powerful. They are also usually timid and yellow-livered. I have never lost a morsel of food to a bear in the Boundary Waters—something I cannot say for mice, chipmunks and Whiskey Jacks. I keep a clean camp, never fillet fish in camp, and I store my food in air-tight barrels. My life has been touched in a profound and tragic way by bears. Five years ago in the Arctic, and through no

fault of his own, my best friend was killed and eaten by a black bear. For the next couple years, I carried a handgun in the BW-CAW. I did this not because I was scared, but because I was dead set on vengeance. I was looking for an excuse to avenge the death of my dear friend. Thankfully, my healing has progressed and my desire to kill an innocent bear has passed. Now, when a bear wanders into my camp, I employ the Chippewa method of dealing with these potential trouble makers. I talk to them, and insist they leave my camp. If they show fear, I will jump at that emotion and chase them off. If someday I encounter a bear that is persistent and aggressive, returning again and again, I will move camp. In black bear country, I do not carry pepper spray or defensive firearms. I believe, just as I can sense fear in a bear, a bear can sense fear in me.

There is a lot of bogus advice out there about bears. A female bear with cubs is not particularly dangerous. Her mission in life is to care for her cubs, and she does

not want to take any physical risks that might diminish her ability to provide for them. She may huff and even bluff a charge, but it is unlikely she will risk her hide tangling with an animal as big as you. Young male bears, however, sometimes have a chip on their shoulder, and you should be wary of them. Imagine you are taking a stroll in a crime-ridden city. Should you fear the single-mother with two toddlers in tow or the swaggering teenager with nothing to lose and something to prove?

Everywhere I travel I hear scary hype about bears, sharks, cougars, rattlesnakes, scorpions, venomous spiders, crocodiles, barracudas, wolves, cobras, coyotes, and wolverines. The truth is you'll be lucky to see these critters, and if you do it will be their butt end hightailing it for a hiding place. These creatures have all learned long ago that the most dangerous animal on Earth walks on two legs and smells weird.

It flabbergasts me when people remark that they could never visit the Boundary Waters because of

all the bugs. My kneejerk reaction when someone starts up about bugs is, "What bugs?" I have made sixty trips in the BWCAW during all seasons, and I have usually worn shorts, never donned a head net, and never applied bug repellent for mosquitoes or black flies. There have been a few moments on portages or when sleeping without a tent that mosquitoes were mildly annoying, but having been bit so many times in the Arctic, mosquito bites no longer leave a welt or even a red mark. Mosquito attacks in the BWCAW are too understaffed and puny to worry about. I will temper that admonition by saying that I do camp in a bug-proof tent during mosquito season. The violin concerto of even a few mosquitoes can make sleep elusive. Black flies, in numbers which can blot out the sun in the Arctic, have never been an issue for me in the BWCAW. I keep hearing stories, but either I have been lucky for 25 years or the stories just exaggerate the acrimony of the supposed hordes of these little devils.

Once on Stuart Lake when I stopped at an island for a picnic lunch, a steady stream of wood ticks cut my repast short and drove me back to the canoe. But wood ticks are like snakes; it does not take too many to give me the heebie jeebies. That was just a bad year for wood ticks. I have known entire seasons in the BWCAW without feeling the grip of a single tick.

Horseflies, deer flies and bulldog flies are big and slow enough to provide good sport. I enjoy swatting them, catching them in my wet scalp after a swim, or best of all squishing them inside one of my ears. So I put those bugs on the positive side of BWCAW adventuring.

There is one bug in the Boundary Waters that bugs me—those little ankle biter flies or sometimes called Lac La Croix flies or sometimes called a variety of nasty names. They are out flying around in the middle of lakes on the most delightful of days. Once they zero in on my canoe, even a sweaty, sprinting hut stroke won't shake them. Unlike their bigger cousins, ankle-biters have an uncanny ability to avoid a focused, kung fu slap. They bite like a tack hammer and persist in their aggression until the sun sets. You cannot shake them. You cannot kill them. You just endure them. Wearing sandals and kneeling, I am especially vulnerable. I have tried slathering on Vaseline, rubbing my feet with Vanilla extract, and even dabbing on smelly DEET, which, in desperation, I had borrowed from my bow paddler. None of these defenses is worth recommending, so I hope another *BWJ* writer will teach me how to fight off the one Boundary Water bug that has my number.

Bugs and bears make good campfire stories, as do tales of boogie men and UFOs, but confusing hype with reality to the point where adventures are curtailed by fear, totally out of proportion with fact, is silly.

Dave Foley

I thought about bears all the time during my first few visits to Quetico in the early 1980s. Lying in the tent at night I would strain my ears for the sounds of breaking brush or padding of feet. But they never came. I still haven't seen a bear.

I am not looking for bears. When we pick up our permit, we ask the ranger about bear sightings. They

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usually have none to report. If they do, we avoid those campsites, and if the lakes are small skip that water altogether.

When selecting a campsite—before we take anything out of the canoe—we walk through looking for bear scat. A fire pit that has been knocked apart or litter that has been scattered about also are indicators one may have been foraging there. Since I do campsite evaluations for *BWJ* visit at least a couple dozen sites every trip, and I rarely ever see bear sign in Quetico.

Starting with packing, we make every effort not to tempt a bear. Our food has layers of plastic and nylon between it and the open air. Food will typically be in its store bought wrapping, which in turn is sealed in a Ziploc bag, tucked with other foods in a nylon stuff sack, then put in the food pack. We don't lay food out on top of the pack, nor do we eat or store it in the tent. No food is ever taken into the tent.

We carry bear ropes and a pulley system, but have rarely used it in recent years. When we did, the result was the bag suspended off a tree limb about ten feet off the ground and hopefully ten feet away from the tree trunk. After hearing that bears that raided campsites and knew how to dismantle a bear hang, we stopped hanging our food. If you hang food, using two ropes and two trees to suspend the bag in the center is more effective, but it's hard to find two trees near a campsite that will accommodate that arrangement.

Our storage system now splits the food between two waterproof heavy-duty Seal Line bags. At night or when we are away from camp, we drag the bags to opposite ends of the campsite, the idea being that if a bear came, it would only find one bag. In the evening, we place metal pans on the top of the bag as an alarm system.

To discourage bears from visiting, we make sure to remove all traces of food from the camp area. Edible scraps, whether from food preparation, left in cooking pans, or on dinner plates, are packed out in a sealed plastic bag or burned to ash in the fire pit. We never clean fish at the campsite but instead do it on another shore or island. Entrails and skeletons are left for gulls that always seem to be present, even on the most remote lakes.

If you want to visit Ontario's parks without having to deal with biting bugs, go before mid-May or after Labor Day. Unless it's a very early spring or the tail end of a long hot summer, those will be bug-free times. Campsites with open areas that let the winds blow through are less buggy. Knowing that breezes in the summer are from the west and south may be helpful when selecting a site. Avoid making camp near swamps and standing water, as those places are breeding spots for mosquitoes.

For mosquitoes I use Ben's in the 1 1/4 ounce size; that small bottle lasts me about five years. Just because a place looks "mosquitoey" shouldn't cause us to reflexively apply bug dope. Wait until the insects actually start biting. Most days we just bat away the occasional one and leave the repellent in the bottle. With a concentration of 98.1% DEET, we only apply it when there is a real bug problem. Rather than put it on my palms I spray it on the backs of my hands and then apply it to other areas from there. That way I won't end up eating the chemical. Another trick is to

put repellent on the bill of a baseball cap. That may be enough to keep mosquitoes away from your head.

While mosquitoes love to swarm at the edges of the day (dawn, dusk, and into the night), black flies work the day shift. During their high season, from the middle of May on into June, they can dominate a wilderness experience. Even though I have been in the Quetico for the week following the May walleye opener the last three years, I have had very few problems with black flies. They were present but never in great numbers. Head nets offer excellent protection, but I find them annoying and have only worn one once for about an hour. My only real experience with black flies occurred in early June on my first fishing trip to Canada in 1967. Following recommendations gleaned from *Outdoor Life* magazine, I wore white clothing with my shirt tucked in and rubber bands around my ankles and wrists. While mosquitoes bite where they land, black flies will walk over clothing to find bare skin. Securing cuffs and cinching my belt minimized biting under my clothing. Wearing white or bright clothing on a sunny day will reduce your popularity with insects, as apparently the bright surface reflects light, making those areas less appealing.

Deer flies haven't bothered me much in the Quetico, but they terrorize me on my trail runs in Michigan. Wearing bright clothing helps somewhat, but these flies will bite through cloth and have an uncanny ability to attack the center of our back, which is almost impossible to reach. I have a friend who wears a sheet of Bounce Fabric Softener tucked under his baseball cap and swears it repels deer flies.

Ticks have only occasionally been a problem. We may go years without seeing any, but when we find one, we can be assured there will be others around. They seem to favor meadows and grassy areas. When you are in tick country go with the dork look; pull your socks up over your pant legs, and belt your pants tightly around your waist. This may help keep them from reaching exposed skin.

Sand flies, often known as "ankle biters," are the only insects that have me cowed. When masses of them arrive, I just want to zip myself inside my tent or jump into the lake. Even when I paddle out away from shore, some ride with me in the canoe or fly out to join us. Their favorite target is the lower leg, and they seem to like it even better if they can bite through a layer of cloth to reach your skin, especially around your ankles. Heavier fabric does work, so when they are really active I have been known to don rain gear. Sand flies love open water and shorelines, which unfortunately is where we camp. They aren't as adept at hitting moving targets so walking around and portaging keeps the flies away. Luckily they come in cycles, so a few days of being terrorized by flies will often be followed by a period of time without them.

Insect pests are a part of every visit to the wilderness during the warm season. Knowing that deters many folks from coming. I've often remarked, "If there were no bugs or bears, wilderness areas like the Quetico would be overrun by people." Being proactive in taking precautions and having a positive attitude are the best ways to deal with bears and bugs. If you don't obsess about them and just enjoy your time

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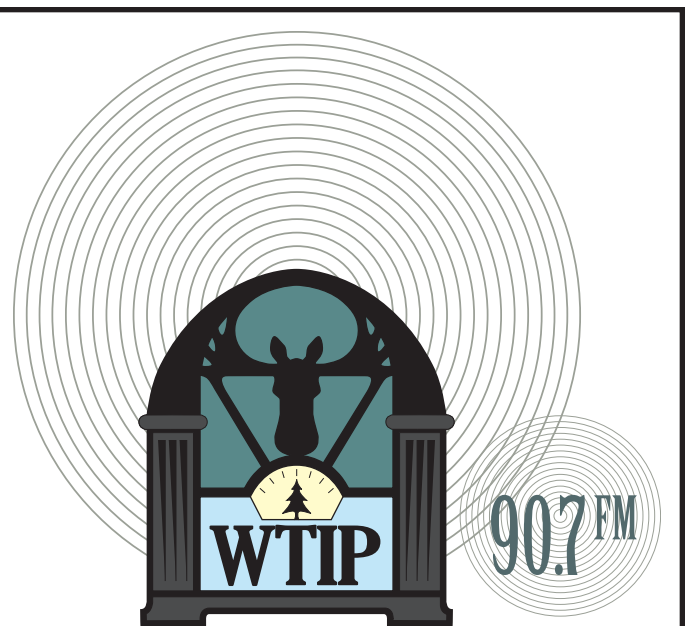
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in the back country, you'll hardly know they are there.

Tim Maas

I estimate that I have camped in bear country about one year of my life. To my knowledge, I have never had a bear in camp, and I don't have any exciting bear stories to share. I would like to keep it that way. We have seen plenty of bears on our trips, and once we saw a small bear near another group's camp. Have we just been lucky? No, keeping bears out of camp begins at home for us. All of our meals are sealed in Ziploc bags, placed in waterproof stuff sacks, and then placed in a plastic liner that can be rolled shut.

The habits we develop and the choices we make as campers in bear country are important to avoiding bears. We choose not to take bacon, eggs, or fresh meat, and we keep a clean camp. Our kids frequently are reminded to keep food out of the tent. We try our best to properly hang the food pack, or we take the food with us in the canoe when fishing or day tripping. Avoid cleaning fish in camp, and for the safety of every camper do not leave fish remains near camps. There have been a few occasions, mostly in the BWCAW, when we've arrived at a camp and been greeted by filleted fish strewn around camp and in the water. When we portage, our kids are instructed to stay with their parents for many reasons, including bears. Most experts recommend that if a bear enters your camp you make yourself look big and imposing by staying in a group. You can't outrun a bear, and don't get between a sow and her cubs. You can bang pots, blow whistles, and make loud noises to make unwanted bears go away. If that does not work, your canoe will be the safest retreat.

I have been canoeing the BWCAW since 1988 and have rarely concerned myself with bears or bugs. I grew up in rural Wisconsin, and being in the woods around bears and bugs was just part of daily life. For many folks contemplating their first wilderness canoe trip, bears and hordes of biting insects are too often a deal breaker. That is a shame because there are strategies to minimize the impacts of bears and bugs.

I have to admit children changed when we canoe and how we prepare for the bugs we will encounter. Infants, toddlers and young children do not understand self-defense against biting insects. It is your responsibility as a parent to protect them. We have paddled hundreds of miles with kids in diapers, and my best advice is this: go canoeing in August when most of the bugs are gone. It will make life in the Boundary Waters much easier and more enjoyable for all. That said, there have been August canoe trips with really bad bug problems.

My defense against all biting insects begins with my clothing. I normally wear long sleeve shirts, un-insulated hunting boots, nylon pants, and a wide-brimmed hat. Only during the very hottest days will I put on shorts, a t-shirt, and sandals. If those ankle-biting flies are present during the dog days of summer, forget the sandals and shorts.

Our second line of defense is head nets and bug spray. Twenty years ago, when most of our trips were in June, I thought people who used head nets were wimps. Then I used a friend's extra head net during a terribly buggy evening as we sat around the campfire. I learned that people who wear head nets are simply

smart campers. Everyone in our group gets a head net to keep in the pocket of their lifejacket to be used as necessary. I don't like using chemical repellents, and I avoid applying it to my skin. I certainly avoid dousing my young kids with DEET. I will spray my hat and my pants if needed with repellents that indicate 25% to 40% DEET. I have tried "natural" repellents, but they don't seem to work very well. I look for spray mechanisms on the can that won't fail and that have a locking off position. I own the Bug Jacket and have used it on a far north trout fishing trip where it was worth its weight in gold to protect against black flies. I don't believe a Bug Jacket is necessary in the BWCAW or Quetico. I have never believed in building smoky fires to deter mosquitoes; we head for the tent rather than face the onslaught.

Another factor is the camp you choose. A nice camp next to a swamp during a late June trip might not be a pleasant experience. Instead, choose a camp on a point with a breeze coming off the lake. Also, island camps seem to have fewer bugs. As you read this in late June I will be in Quetico facing the worst of the bug season. My kids will be twelve and eight years old this summer; they have done over twenty-five canoe trips. I am confident they will be able to defend themselves against a few bugs—even in June. I am more worried about the ten-hour car ride.

Good luck out there, and don't worry too much about bears and bugs. I always sleep well in canoe country, and I hope you do too.

Tim Mead

Bears and bugs. Among the questions I get from folks who learn of my travels in the wilderness, the threat of bears and the menace of bugs are among the most common reasons I hear, "I'd never do that." So, how do I deal with bears and bugs?

Black bears inhabit Quetico Park and the BWCAW. Not brown or grizzly bears. That's a key distinction. When fishing in Alaska and trekking through the woods along the streams, my companions and I talk loudly, periodically whistle, and say, "Hey bear. Here I come." In Quetico or BWCAW, however, I don't worry so much about the bears becoming aggressive.

In a little over a quarter of a century, I've seen two bears in Quetico Park. One peeked over a log as Jeff Barden and I left the portage into Montgomery Lake. The other scooted off into the woods, and all we got was a glimpse. I've seen more bears crossing US Hwy 2 in northern Wisconsin.

That's not to say I take no precautions. As I stop at the Ranger Station, I ask, "On the route we've outlined, have there been any incidents with bears?" A couple of times the Ranger has indicated a trouble spot, and we avoided them. No need to invite trouble.

My in-camp precautions have been impacted by the practice of fellow campers. Rather than hang the food packs we stashed them under an overturned canoe. On top of the canoe, we arranged pots and pans in a configuration that would make a terrible racket if disturbed. The theory was the racket would both frighten any bear and alert us so we could chase the critter off.

While in camp, we make every effort to avoid inviting bears or other critters. Black bears, we are told, have a very sharp sense of smell. The American Bear Association website asserts the sense of smell among

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bears is seven times more acute than bloodhounds. Can a bear smell bacon cooking? No doubt. While I never take bacon, my crews often grill fish. Bears, I'm sure, can smell our camp. Leftover food is burned or carried offsite; buried leftovers are an invitation for animals to dig them up and associate the campsite with food. Several years ago we cleaned wall-eye on a rock down by Joyce Lake. Doug Markham suggested leaving the remains near our island campsite in hopes we would see what happened. Reluctantly and with my insistence, Doug paddled to the mainland and left the carcasses on a big rock. When we broke camp in the morning, Doug and I paddled to the rock. Doug was flabbergasted to find no sign anything had been there.

Further, to minimize odors that might attract interest, all food stuffs are stored in plastic bags. I buy the best and most secure plastic bags I can. When I dry my own food, it is packed in a Food Saver sealed bag.

Bears in Quetico have never been a problem on my trips. Because they are not a threat? Or because I take steps to avoid encounters? I don't know. While respectful, I have not compromised my travel because I am afraid of bears.

Bugs. My family has had a cabin in Michigan's Upper Peninsula for more than half a century. As a result, I've been dealing with outdoor bugs for a long time. Once when I came off a stream with sufficient mosquito bites to lift my glasses off my cheeks, Mom said, "I don't understand how you can do that." I just lifted the lid on my creel and showed her my trout.

Over the years, I have visited Quetico Park in every month from May to early September, and there have been bugs. Without war stories, how do I deal with bugs?

For flying insects like mosquitoes, black flies, deer flies and the like, I like to find campsites exposed to the wind, on a point or an open bluff away from the water. I dress to minimize insect attack. I wear long sleeve shirts and pants with full legs, even on warm days. A few years ago I treated one shirt and one pair of pants with Sawyer Permethrin. Did it make a difference? Hard to tell, but I plan to

do it again. There are tradeoffs, of course; I've heard overexposure to the treatment has been associated with various skin irritations. That's why it is a treatment for clothes, not skin.

Spray insect repellent is also a good thing to have along. I use a pump spray rather than an aerosol can to minimize releasing greenhouse gases used as propellants. (Does my effort count? Think globally. Act locally.) DEET is the standard ingredient in most of the spray insect repellents, and almost all the common brands use it as the repellent ingredient.

One of my travel companions used his entire supply of repellent in a few days, frustrated because it did not make the insects go away. It kept them from landing on him, but he wanted them gone. On another trip Wayne Harrison and I were driven into the tent by combination of wind, rain and insects. Wayne really disliked the hum of mosquitoes on the mesh a few inches from our heads. Whatever your approach, you cannot make them go away. Live with it.

I carry a good quality head net. Cheap ones abound—not worth the money in my view. Get one large enough to extend over a hat with a wide brim to prevent the net from sinking against cheeks or neck, as biting critters will feed through the mesh.

When I first made trips into Quetico Park ticks were rare. In the last decade, however, they have become abundant. Ticks crawl up grass or shrubs and wait for warm-blooded critters, like humans, to pass. Sensing a combination of approaching heat and odor, ticks then launch themselves in hopes of landing on a host. Legs and ankles are likely landing spots—thus the need to spray repellent on pant legs. Ticks like warm, dark, moist places, and they climb on the host until they find a suitable place. For humans, groins and underarms are likely landing spots. A tick bite can result in Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever or Lyme Disease; a rash which develops a couple of weeks after a tick bite is a likely symptom. This is a serious business. Consult a doctor.

In the last few years I have tried to remind folks who travel with

me to do a self-examination for ticks every evening. Sometimes you can feel one crawling on your flesh, but often a careful inspection is the only way to find one.

Years ago Boy Scouts were taught to remove embedded ticks with hot matches, fingernail polish or some other exotic measure. Such methods are no longer the recommended way to remove a tick. The Center for Disease Control recommends: 1) Removal with tweezers, as close to the skin as possible (I carry such tweezers in my First Aid kit) 2) Steady upward pressure, without twisting which may snap off part of the tick in the wound, and 3) Clean the area with a disinfectant or soap and water.

Bottom line: neither bears nor bugs prevent me from treks in the wilderness. I try to take appropriate steps to minimize the risk. But I go and I'm looking forward to going again.

Editor's Note: This submission came in and I felt it was a good fit for our Collective Wisdom column this issue. If you really must worry about Boundary Waters bugs, worry about the one that is capable of serious damage to your body.

Frank Hazzard

"Lyme disease is the fastest growing disease in America. There are ten times more cases than AIDS, SARS, West Nile Virus, and Swine Flu combined. Hundreds of thousands of Americans become infected each year causing paralyzing fatigue, crippling arthritis, neurological problems and infecting every organ in the body. Lyme is fatal." (LymeAwareness.com)

August 2012 marked my ninth trip into Quetico with over 90 days spent in the park. In all those days, I can only recall seeing four or five ticks on myself or my camping partners. One afternoon while relaxing at our campsite, I noticed a dark speck in the hairline on Dawson's neck. I asked him to hold still so I could examine whether it was a tick, but he reached up and scratched the area, knocking the tick off. So I did not actually get to identify an attached tick. Within two weeks, a bulls-eye rash would appear on that very spot.

We arrived back in Texas on August 14. On August 28, Dawson

had his first appearance at his pediatrician's office after a week of low grade fever, abdominal pain, diarrhea and a spreading rash. The doctor's initial diagnosis was a viral infection. Two days later as Dawson's symptoms worsened they were back at the doctor's office. On this visit his mother asked if he could be tested for Lyme, was told it was not Lyme, and thus began the long portage through the medical system.

Over the next four months, Dawson would revisit his pediatrician multiple times. There would be four trips to emergency rooms because of intense abdominal pain and multiple visits to infectious disease doctors, cardiologists, rheumatologist and seven visits with a gastroenterologist. He would have to endure several sonograms and CT Scans. He would have to swallow a camera to run through his intestines. He would even go through hypnosis for pain management.

His possible diagnosis included Crohn's Disease, Hodgkins disease, and liver disease. The Rheumatologist would ask his mother if she was poisoning her son. He would ask Dawson if he was poisoning himself or taking illegal drugs. He would conclude the symptoms were all psychological and his conclusion would come after blood tests showed his body was producing antibodies fighting an infection.

After 5 weeks of doctor visits and only after threatening to take Dawson to Mexico for treatment, his mother convinced a doctor to prescribe an antibiotic. Dawson showed some improvement for a time but then regressed. In December she finally found a doctor who would test for Lyme. The test was positive.

Dawson was given an even stronger antibiotic. It would make him worse before it would make him better. His abdomen would swell because of an enlarged liver and spleen. Because of abnormal liver enzymes, doctors were discussing a liver transplant. Slowly his health has improved to near normal after seven months of severe illness. He still fights fatigue, but that is also improving. He is working on improving his immune system with healthy eat-

ing and vitamin supplements. His fight with the disease is ongoing.

This is a condensed version of all this young man has had to endure. His senior year in high school will be remembered for the hundreds of hours spent going to doctor's offices and feeling sick. His story possibly could have been different had a doctor been willing to acknowledge the disease, test for it and given an early round of antibiotics. Don't let this story happen to you.

Lessons Learned:

- While in canoe country, check each day for ticks. The less amount of time a tick is attached, the less likely any transmission will occur.

-If an attached tick is found, remove carefully and save it in a moist environment. Should you begin to show symptoms, the tick can be tested for the bacteria.

-If you begin to show symptoms (rash, diarrhea, flu-like symptoms, fever, abdominal pain) quick and early treatment can possibly save many months of suffering.

-Get into contact with a Lyme Literate Medical Doctor (LLMD) as soon as possible. Contact the Lyme Association in your state.

-Be demanding and persistent in being tested for Lyme. Most doctors lack knowledge of the disease and will test for everything but Lyme. You will probably meet with resistance.

-Antibiotics will be the most likely prescribed treatment but don't rule out vitamin supplements. Strengthen your immune system.

There is growing and compelling evidence that ticks are not the only carrier of Lyme. Research has shown mosquitoes, spiders, fleas and mites can also transmit the disease. Some expert doctors of the disease believe Lyme is underreported and there may be as many as 18 million people infected out there. The disease is sometimes called "The Great Imitator" because its symptoms are much like those of other diseases and thus patients are most often misdiagnosed. I strongly encourage all BWJ readers to remember to test for Lymes if they experience the associated symptoms and you have been exposed to ticks. □



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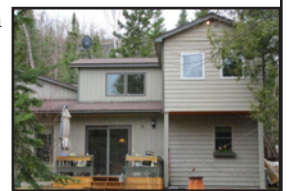
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Enjoy level access to Caribou Lake from



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canoe country mystique



□ by Gary Glonek

Stars of the Hegman Lake Pictographs

On a small granite cliff on the northwestern shore of North Hegman Lake in the BWCAW, an unknown artist, long ago, created an image on the rock. The meaning does not seem to have been passed down through history to succeeding generations, and it may contain a mystery to be solved. I have visited the site only once. I was on a solo canoe trip in a different part of the Boundary Waters, completed the trip a day earlier than planned, and was looking for a short day trip before returning home. The entire trip to and from the pictographs didn't take more than a couple of hours, but the memory of that short trip remains.

The internet opens up a source of information we never had in the past, and a quick Google search can result in finding interesting information. I quickly found reference to Carl Gawboy and his observation that the man figure was the mythical "Winter Maker" in native mythology, and is also the constellation that we refer to as Orion. I know the constellation Orion well. Any young person who has ever received a telescope for Christmas quickly runs outside with it to explore the night sky and immediately discovers Orion, the most prominent constellation in the winter sky. Orion totally dominates the southern sky at this time of year. Orion is winter, and winter is Orion; you cannot look at Orion and not feel the cold night air. When the hint is given, the answer jumps out and surprises you, it becomes obvious and indisputable: the figure in the image is Orion, the Winter Maker.

The realization that one figure in the image represents a constellation of stars now leads to connecting the other figures to the stars. The animal figure below Orion has a peculiar feature in the curve of the tail. This curve seems odd until you consider that it may be based on a prominent and well known group of stars found in our constellation Leo known as the "Sickle." The head of the animal is also well placed to represent the head of our constellation "Hydra." The animal can now be seen to have been drawn by combining parts of our constellations Leo and Hydra. This connection has also been made by others in the past, but the kind of animal that it represents is debated. The reason it doesn't look more like a wolf or another animal is simply because it is an accurate depiction of the stellar constellation of the animal as it is found in the night sky, not the animal itself as it is found on the earth. To me, the relation of the animal to the moose in the pictograph suggests that it is a wolf—a wolf drawn from some of the more conspicuous stars which found in the night sky in the springtime.

The excellent drawing of the moose found in the pictograph accurately depicts both its stellar constellation and the animal itself. It is easily found in the night sky once we begin to look for it here. Four stars known as the great square of Pegasus, which are found in our evening sky in the fall and

the stars around and above them fit remarkably well with the moose image on the rock. Once you make this connection, it is very difficult to look at this portion of the night sky and not see the moose as found in the pictographs.

We now have three of the figures, which can be seen to represent three constellations of stars quite well—actually, I would say precisely. These three constellations are also related to three of the seasons. If this interpretation is accurate we would now also expect to find a fourth constellation representing summer. The cross found at the top of the painting has been thought to represent the north star, but I see an actual cross which is found in the night sky. The Northern Cross is a bright group of stars we consider to be part of our constellation Cygnus, which is one of the most noticeable features of the summer sky. It is not imagined as an animal or other object, just as a cross as it appears in the sky. The proportions of the arms of the cross match quite well with the Northern Cross and the cross in the pictograph is angled almost exactly as the Northern Cross would appear in the northeastern sky shortly after it had risen above the horizon, which may also be significant.

We now have the four seasons and the constellations which mark them in the night sky, but we still need to explain their placement relative to each other, the canoes, and the

Northern
cross
(Cygnus)
(summer)



Canoes traveling toward direction of constellations
(east) and/or from summer to winter

units of time (months?)

Orion (winter maker)-
(winter)



Moose (Pegasus)
(fall)

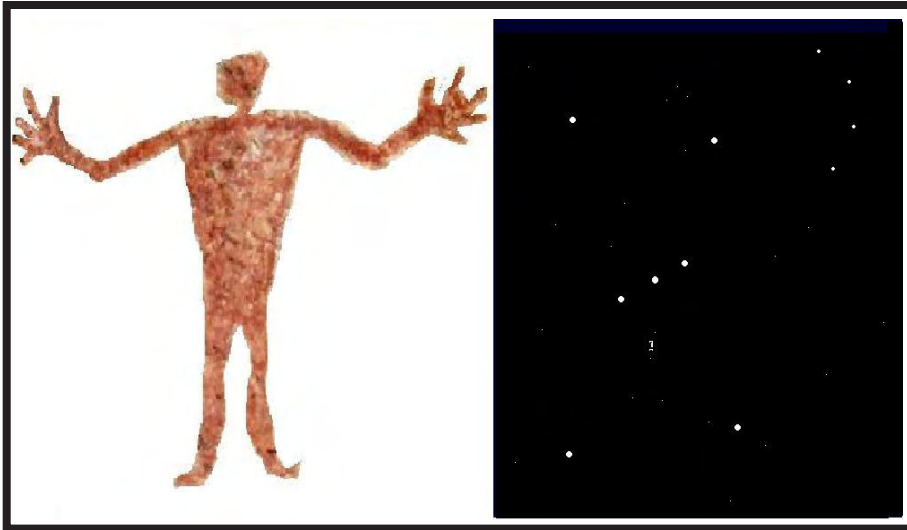


Leo-Hydra
(wolf?)
(spring)

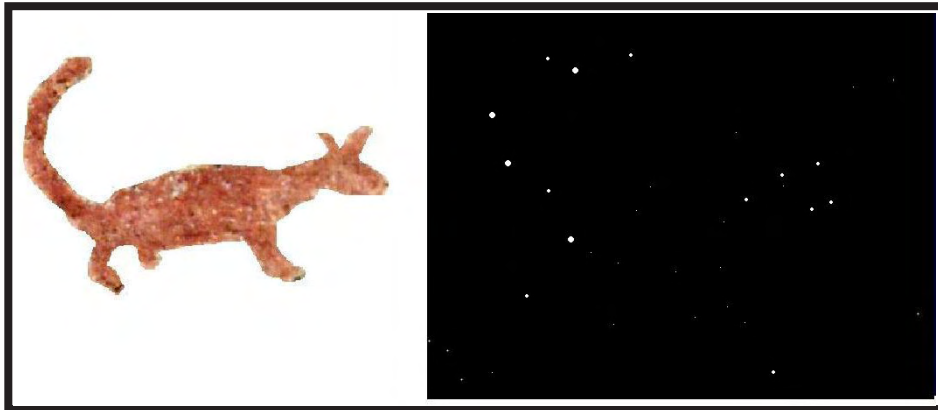


Ground line

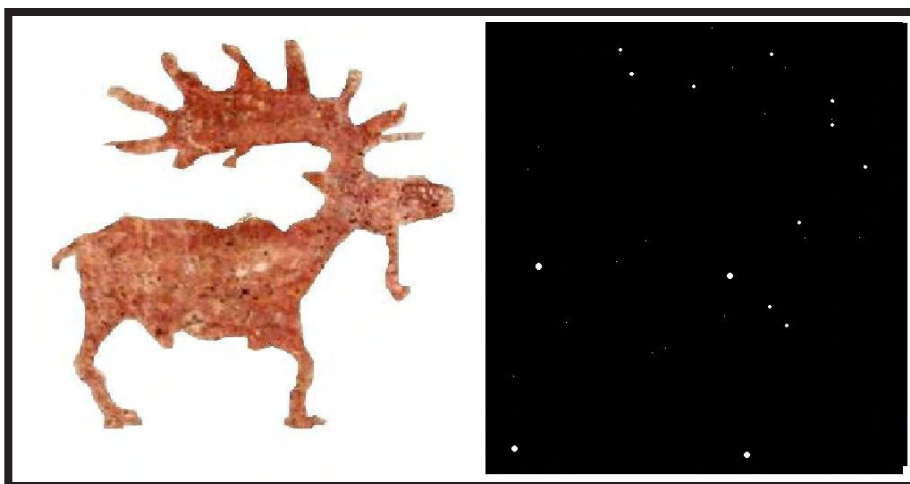
The North Hegman Lake Pictographs have been linked to corresponding constellations and the changing of the seasons.



The man figure in Hegman pictographs—corresponding stars in the Orion constellation—which are due south at midnight on the winter solstice.



Stars of the Sickle in Leo and the head of Hydra. These stars are in the south-southwest at midnight on the spring equinox.



Stars in the great square of Pegasus and parts of Lacerta and Andromeda. These stars are due south at midnight on the fall equinox.

horizontal lines. When we look at the stars as we face south during the course of a night, they travel from east to west. We can watch a star on the eastern horizon at sunset move to the south at midnight and then set in the west as the sun rises in the east. Stars which we see to the left of another star as we face south, follow that star throughout the procession of the evening and also of the seasons. Looking east at sunset foretells the upcoming features of the night sky and can also foretell the upcoming seasons. In the pictograph, the Northern Cross is to the right of the Moose, which is to the right of the Winter Maker, which is to the right of the Wolf. This is the same order which they appear in the sky and, of course, is also the order of the seasons.

The Northern Cross is separated from the Winter Maker with three canoes slanted downward, as if they are traveling in that direction, from summer to winter, or perhaps from the time that the Northern Cross appears in the evening sky to the time that the Winter Maker appears. Besides the four seasons, there is another season which a canoe culture people would consider critical to their lives: the season of open water. It is easy to imagine the anticipation that is felt toward the end of winter as they look forward to the open water and warmer weather of spring and summer. After sunset they could look eastward at the stars as they rise above the horizon until one day they see what they have been waiting for: the appearance of the Northern Cross, signaling the melting of the ice and the beginning of canoe travel. The angle of the cross in the pictograph conveniently matches the position of the Northern Cross as it appears when it first rises above the horizon. At the latitude of North Hegman Lake,



Your BWCW campsite is a great place to do some stargazing and ponder the mysteries of the universe. (Basswood Lake)

this would occur near the end of April and the beginning of May, the same time that the ice normally leaves the lakes. Similarly, in the fall as the open water season comes to an end, this is marked by the appearance of the Winter Maker in the evening sky near the first part of November.

I have no further explanation for the number of canoes or their occupants except to note the obvious; there are multiple canoes, and they are traveling. I may, however, have an explanation for the seven horizontal lines which appear above the Winter Maker's shoulder. These could be units of measurement, such as time. If the pictographs depict the seasons with special attention paid to the time of year that the water is not frozen and canoe travel is possible, it is quite possible that the lines represent seven months, or the

period of time which includes seven full moons. In a normal year, the ice-free period is very close to being seven months long and would normally include seven full moons.

The line at the bottom of the drawing has been interpreted by others to be a ground line and is positioned in relation to the wolf and moose so as to show that the wolf is following or chasing the moose over the ground. This would be a very common sight in the everyday world of those who made the drawing, and connecting the story in the stars to the real occurrences on the ground may be a way to help emphasize its credibility.

When I put this all together, my interpretation of the story written in the Pictograph, reading from right to left and up to down, goes something like this:

“When the Northern Cross

first appears in east the year begins, and we are able to travel with our canoes for a period of time which includes seven full moons, until the Winter Maker appears. Before the winter there is the fall, which is marked by the constellation of the Moose. The end of winter is marked by the constellation of the wolf, which in our real world chases after the moose on the ground as it does in the sky.”

Whatever the true story of the pictographs may be, I am fairly confident that it does include, as its main elements, the stars and the seasons. We can still share a common experience with ancient peoples and distant cultures by observing the night sky, which remains constant between and beyond generations. □

Voyageur Trading Post

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For those of us who truly cherish the wilderness canoe-tripping experience, preparing for each adventure is a year-round obsession—always staying in paddling and portaging shape, researching new routes, and fine-tuning equipment needs. At the Boundary Waters Journal, canoeing, camping, fishing and hunting in the BWCAW/Quetico is our life and livelihood. We take our outdoor passions very seriously. "Living on the Edge" means embracing all of the delights and dilemmas this magnificent canoe country offers. The gear we rely on, recommend, and sell here meets our demands for great performance trip after trip, year after year. We have a zero tolerance policy for equipment failure in the wilderness. Since 1987, Boundary Waters Journal has earned the trust of tens of thousands of readers and customers. Our goal remains helping you enjoy canoe country. It is our business and privilege to outfit you with the right gear, information, and inspiration to make that happen. The best in canoe camping gear is not expensive, it's PRICELESS because it delivers the times of our lives.

We sincerely appreciate your business. Michele and Stu Osthoff, publishers.

Complete Outfit for 2 People / 1 Week Canoe Trip

We recommend breaking down your canoe trip outfit into four parts: personal, equipment, food, and miscellaneous items needed on the trail. For two people on a one week Quetico trip, I load up as seen here. Clockwise, starting with top: ultimate extra-wide personal pack, insulated food pack, guide/day pack, and ultimate equipment pack. The guide pack is carried with the canoe, setting up a double-portaging approach (this means two trips per person, one pack each trip). Paddles, rod cases and other light items are carried loose.

Standard features on ALL BWJ packs:

- *1000 Denier, coated Cordura nylon. This fabric is resistant to grease, oil, and ultraviolet rays. It is light-weight and won't absorb water like canvas. It dries fast, is extremely puncture-resistant, and stands up to the endless abrasion of canoe country rocks. Simply the best material there is for canoe packs.

- *All packs except the guide pack have double-thick Cordura nylon bottoms.

- *Extremely comfortable 3 1/2" wide closed-cell foam padded shoulder straps with heavily reinforced stitching. Shoulder straps on all 6 models are articulated/curved for a non-binding ride and easy on/off. Steel hardware quickly adjusts for proper fit.

- *2 or 3 nylon front straps with side-release buckles for easy opening/closing. Low profile buckles won't hang up on canoe or other packs.

- *Nylon lifting loop stitched to shoulder strap yoke helps with loading and unloading at portage landings and serves as a solid hanging loop.

Both Ultimate Packs include all of these additional special features:

- *3/8" thick closed-cell foam padding covers the entire back for maximum comfort.

- *4" wide padded hip belt with large Fastex buckle distributes weight of heavy loads between your shoulders, back, and hips.

- *9" coated nylon extendible top with drawstring closure adds 30% more capacity to the pack. No chance of anything spilling out the top.

- *Attached to the articulated padded shoulder straps is a slide adjustable sternum strap with Fastex buckle—a great feature for transferring some weight to your chest so you are not being pulled backwards.

- *Double straps with Fastex buckles secure the gusset flaps over the extendible top and under the out flap, stabilizing the contents in the upper third of the pack.

- *Heavy-duty nylon lifting handles on each side let you grab the pack with both hands on awkward portage landings.

- *Stainless steel rings on each side for convenient hanging without the stress on the pack of a single hooking point.

- *4 nylon compression straps along each side of the pack create a far tighter, more compact load. Reduces contents shifting on portages and saves space in the canoe.

- *2 cinch straps with slide adjustable steel hardware top off the Ultimate Canoe Pack by pulling what's above your shoulders forward, toward your center of gravity.

- *Don't forget the Ultimate comes with contoured padded shoulder straps, a double Cordura bottom, and nylon lifting loop.

- *Includes a large mesh pocket across the front of the pack for loose or wet items.



BWJ ULTIMATE CANOE PACKS



Our most versatile packs!

The Regular Ultimate is our publisher's favorite

BWJ Regular Ultimate Canoe Pack:

Our most versatile all-around canoe pack. Works great for personal gear, equipment or food. (Best with BWJ Poly Food Box.) Specs: 17" w x 36" h (w/top extended) x 12" gusset; 7040 cu capacity Color: Green or Blue. **\$185**

BWJ Extra-Wide Ultimate Pack:

Personal gear for 2 people: Sleeping bags (in compression sacks), 2 full-length Thermarest pads, 2 camp pillows, 4 person tent, 2 people's clothing in dry bags including fleece jackets, camp shoes, towels, toiletries, first aid kit, books, fishing reels, tackle boxes, and room to spare. Specs: 27" w x 36" h (w/top extended) x 8" gusset; 8300 cu capacity. Color: Green or Blue. **\$195**



BWJ GUIDE PACK

GUIDE PACK



BWJ Guide Pack:

The perfect pack to organize all the gear needed regularly on the trail. No more digging into the full-size packs every time you need something. Large main compartment holds rain gear, cameras, headlamps, fleece jacket, first aid kit, lunch/snacks, rope, etc. Top has drawstring closure, 2 large side zipper pockets each hold two one-quart Nalgene water bottles. Front zipper pocket is perfect for bug dope, suntan lotion, knife, Kleenex packs, and emergency kit. You'll absolutely love the Guide Pack. Same quality and materials as our line of full-size packs. Padded articulated shoulder straps. Specs: 12" w x 18" h x 8" gusset; 1730 cu in capacity. Color: Green or Blue. **\$100**

BWJ STANDARD CANOE PACKS

THE ORIGINALS...
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BWJ Standard #3 Canoe Pack: The original workhorse envelope design. Versatile, performs well for personal gear, equipment or food, and fits BWJ Poly Food Box Specs: 29" w x 27" h - flat; 4500 cu capacity. Color: Green or Blue **\$100**

BWJ Standard #4 Canoe Pack: Personal gear for two people—sleeping bags, Thermarest pads, camp pillows, clothes in dry bags, towels, jackets, camp shoes. Specs: 29" w x 27" h x 7" gusset; 5550 cu capacity. Color: Green or Blue **\$110**



BWJ FOOD PACK SERIES

BWJ Double Insulated Food Pack System: Kevlar, Gor-tex, Lexan, and titanium have taken wilderness canoe camping into the 21st century. Amazingly, many folks still settle for processed, freeze dried food that is woefully short on portion size, calories, and taste. Yes, you can subsist on freeze dried in canoe country. But the wilderness experience is all about "really living." The BWJ Double Insulated Food Pack System lets you eat like a king in canoe country. Place two 1-gallon jugs of frozen water in the bottom of the poly box and enjoy fresh milk for breakfast cereal, deli meats, cheese, and fruits for lunch. Steaks, chicken, burgers, veggies, and salads for dinner. Managed carefully, you can expect 5+ days cooling at temps in the 70s. Early and late in the paddling season often yields 6 or 7 days cooling. Combining the **Poly Food Box**, optional **Food Box Insulating Liner**, and the **Insulated Food Pack** makes for the optimum way to keep fresh foods cold, dry, protected, and delicious.



BWJ Nylon Insulated Food Pack: A cooler pack for fresh foods. Most effective with an insulated Poly Food Box. Specs: Super comfortable, safely able to carry heavy loads. Full zippered top. 21" w x 24" h x 11 1/2" deep; 5800 cu in capacity. Color: Steel grey (helps reflect sunlight). **\$195** 🚚

BWJ Special Food Pack: Designed to perfectly carry a Poly Food Box. Specs: Box-shaped, with a fully padded back. Can still accommodate fresh foods using an insulated Poly Food Box, but will not stay cool as long as a Insulated Food Pack. Has stainless steel hanging rings. 17" w x 24" h x 12" gusset; 4900 cu in capacity. Color: blue or green. **\$110**

BWJ Poly Food Box: This super tough poly food box keeps food supplies clean, dry, uncrushed, and rodent proof. Poly box has an optional removable foam insert to insulate cold/fresh food items. Box can also be portaged without a pack, using the optional harness system. Box will fit properly into a standard #3, Regular Ultimate, Special Food Pack, or Insulated Food Pack. Specs: 15 1/2" w x 22" h x 10 1/2" deep; 3580 cu in capacity. **\$100** 🚚

Optional Insulating Foam Liner \$35
Optional Padded Harness System \$50



ALL THE RIGHT STUFF FOR CANOE CAMPING

BWJ Deluxe Bear Pack System:

Bear research experts and veteran paddlers consider hanging food packs a must, and this system is the best way to do it. Easily suspend up to 250 lbs of food packs, utilizing pulleys and handles for a 2:1 mechanical advantage. Lightweight and compact, this kit protects expensive equipment and food on your long-awaited vacation. High quality rope, pulleys, carabiner and wooden handles. **\$65**



BWJ Anchor Bag:

Very heavy duty mesh anchor bag. This material is really tough, and won't shred when your anchor rock hits lake bottom boulders. Two sturdy nylon loops secure your anchor rope and keep rocks from falling out. 16" x 16" **\$15**



BWJ UltraLight Dry Fly Shelter:

Spring and fall wilderness trippers just love our high performance dry fly. A unique pole-less rope suspension design sheds the worst rain, sleet, and snow canoe country can dish out. The roof angle and side panels hug the ground, reflecting campfire heat and keep you cozy. The back is 10' wide and the fly is 9' deep, with 4' panels tapering up. Made from UV coated waterproof ripstop. 2 3/4 lbs. **\$150**

BWJ Pack Hanger:

Quality poly rope with stainless steel ring and 2 heavy duty brass snaps. Designed to quickly hang from the side rings on your pack and simplify hanging. **\$12**



BWJ Canoe Pack Liner:

Designed to fit inside a #3 or #4 pack, our water resistant nylon pack liner keeps your clothes and gear dry from water seeping through pack seams. It closes with a drawstring and cordlock. I just haul my clothes into the tent at night inside the liner, leaving the pack outside. 28" x 37" flat. **\$30**



BWJ Deluxe Extra Large UltraLight Camp Tarp:

This 10' x 12' rip-stop nylon tarp features a special nylon webbing strip which acts as a ridgeline for multi-directional setups. Consider this a hybrid between a straight tarp and the dry fly above. Weighs 2 3/4 lbs. **\$85**



BWJ Lure Wrap:

Quickly cover your lures and hooks with these large lure wraps. All-around Velcro holds the wraps tight against your rods, keeping hooks away from brush and paddlers. Color: Green or Black. **\$6**



BWJ Compression Sacks:

Savvy wilderness campers wouldn't dream of packing for a trip without our space-saving compression sacks. The volume of synthetic fill sleeping bags and clothing are reduced by 40%. A unique hood system uses compression pull straps and Fastex ladder locks to squeeze out all the air. Pull them as tight as you can; these seams really hold. All sizes are waterproof coated Denier nylon. A real BWJ customer favorite.

Small: 8" x 18", 900 cu in, blue. For clothes or lightweight down bags. **\$25**

Medium: 9" x 19", 1200 cu in, red. Fits goose down or summer weight bags. **\$25**

Large: 10" x 21", 1850 cu in, green. Fits most 3-season synthetic bags. **\$25**

X-Large: 11" x 23", 2150 cu in, black. Fits winter down and synthetic bags. **\$25**

BWJ Tarp Bag: Waterproof nylon storage bag for either our Dry Fly or Extra Large Tarp (pictured above and to the right). Includes an internal flap and drawstring closure to keep other gear dry when you have to pack a wet tarp. **\$20**



CANOE ACCESSORIES

Yoke Pads:

Next to your canoe and paddle, a quality portage yoke is the most important piece of equipment on a wilderness canoe trip. Our yoke pads are made here in Ely by Bourquin Boats and are the most comfortable you can buy. Most canoes come with a poor excuse for a yoke. Replace yours with pads designed for the rough portages of the canoe country. One portage and you'll love them. These clamp-on pads hold 3" of closed-cell foam and will fit both curved and straight yokes. Pads are adjustable to shoulder width without drilling any holes. **\$65**



BWJ Canoe Seat Pad: This 1" thick closed cell foam pad really cushions. Nylon straps with Fastex buckles secure it in place to your canoe seat. Fits most seats on aluminum and Kevlar canoes, as well as some RoyaleX models. 10" x 14" **\$17**

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AROUND THE FIRE

Pro Series Turbo Cut Camp Saw:

This incredible 7" saw produces a cut so clean it looks as though it's been planed. The short, fast pull action requires far less effort than conventional saws. A unique, non-slip pistol-grip design eliminates frustrating assembly and lost parts. This saw is ready for serious firewood cutting the instant you pull it from its protective sheath. I strongly recommend you wear leather gloves; this is one wicked blade. Weighs 9 oz. and comes with a detachable belt loop. **\$55**



Gerber Lexan Sport Axe:

Splitting your firewood is the only feasible way to expose its dry heartwood. Even in warm weather, split wood builds better cooking fires. The Gerber Lexan Sport Axe is the best canoe tripping axe we've found, and it weighs in at a mere 1 1/2 lbs. It has a sturdy 12" handle, and a 2 3/4" x 4 3/4" precision steel blade. Comes with a quality nylon sheath. **\$55**



Cast Aluminum Fry Pan:

Our high-grade fry pan spreads campfire heat for unmatched uniform cooking and becomes better seasoned the more you use it. At 12" x 12" and 2" deep, you'll fry serious amounts of walleye and potatoes and never spill. Its sturdy handle can attach to all sides of the pan. At 3 lbs 12 oz, it's much lighter than cast iron but sacrifices no utility. **\$49**



BWJ Fry Pan Cover: Protect your packs and other gear from soot and puncture by putting the grate, griddle and fry pan all in this 13" x 20" 1000 Denier Cordura nylon cover. **\$22**

Utensil Roll:

You'll find our utensil roll a real time-saver around camp. Just tie it around a tree and everyone has easy access to clean silverware. Rolled up in your pack, the heavy Cordura nylon protects other gear from knives and forks. (Silverware not included) **\$20**



BWJ Cookware Cover:

Keep your dirty cook kit in our 400 Denier coated bag. At 12" across and 15" deep, it will hold up to a 6 person kit. The drawstring/cordlock closure cinches around small cook kits. **\$20**



Fry Pan Bread: Enjoy hot, delicious bread at your campsite with only 5 minutes of frying. With five different varieties, they can add terrific flavor to any meal. Basic breads come in: Onion, Garlic, Dill, Italian, or Plain. **\$5**

Specialty Dessert Fry Pan Bread: Delicious fry bread with an extra kick of flavor to satisfy your sweet tooth, making

for a great snack or dessert. Breads come in: Cinnamon or Caramel. **\$8**

Fry Pan Bread Blueberry Scones: With real dried blueberries, these make a great anytime treat. **\$8**

Fry Pan Biscuits and Gravy: Baking powder biscuits and homestyle gravy packed with sausage flavor bits make for a great, easy breakfast. **\$7**

Creamy Fish Chowder: With the increased emphasis on eating only smaller fish in canoe country, fish chowder is a delicious alternative to traditional fillet frying. With all the ingredients in one handy package, it's really easy to whip up a great meal in 15 minutes. **\$6**

Wild Rice Salad: With real wild rice, peas, carrots and celery in your choice of dressing, this simple and delicious side dish is light on space and weight but huge on flavor. (6.5 oz package serves 2) Flavors: **Ranch and Italian \$8**

CANOE PADDLES

Bending Branches Canoe Paddles: Shafts and blades are laminated with select basswood and maple for lightweight comfort plus cherry and butternut for rigidity and attractiveness. Both paddles we carry feature the Rockguard composite tip wrapped around the blade corners for additional protection.

Paddles will ship directly from manufacturer, so please allow a few weeks for delivery.

Fitting paddles is a personal affair. If you have an old paddle at the length you prefer, get the same length. To measure, sit on a chair with a paddle upside down between your legs. For straight paddles, the throat (where blade and shaft meet) should be at the top of your head. For bent shafts, the throat should be at the bridge of the nose. If you don't have a paddle, just measure the distance from the chair to the top of head or bridge of nose. This gives the length of the shaft. Add blade length to get overall length to order. How far apart you like your hands is really the key. Your lower hand should be within a couple inches of the blade, or it's too long.



Expedition Plus: This paddle has everything the serious wilderness tripper wants, including a 21-laminate hardwood shaft, wide hardwood blade to deliver efficient power strokes, and wrap-around Rockguard protection. The entire blade is protected by composite reinforced fiberglass cloth, making it the toughest wood paddle on the market. Its Ultimate T-Grip allows for total control and long-distance comfort. Blade 20" long, 8" wide. Weighs about 28 oz, depending on length. Sizes: 52, 54, 56, 58, 60. **\$139**

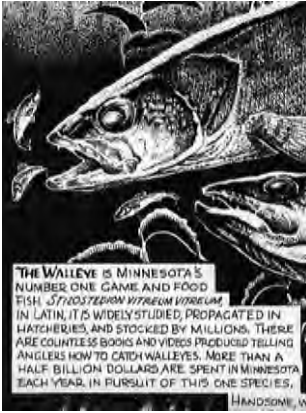


Cruiser Plus 14°: Features classic Ergo Grip and nine-laminate blade of light and dark hardwoods. Composite reinforced fiberglass cloth covers entire blade, and includes wrap-around Rockguard. If you're into high performance with the ultimate toughness and no maintenance, this is the bent shaft wood paddle for you. Blade 20" long, 8 1/2" wide. Bend 14°, weighs about 23 oz depending on length. Sizes: 48, 50, 52, 54. **\$109**

CANOE COUNTRY MAPS

Canoe Country Art- "Jackpine" Bob Cary Sketchbook Prints:

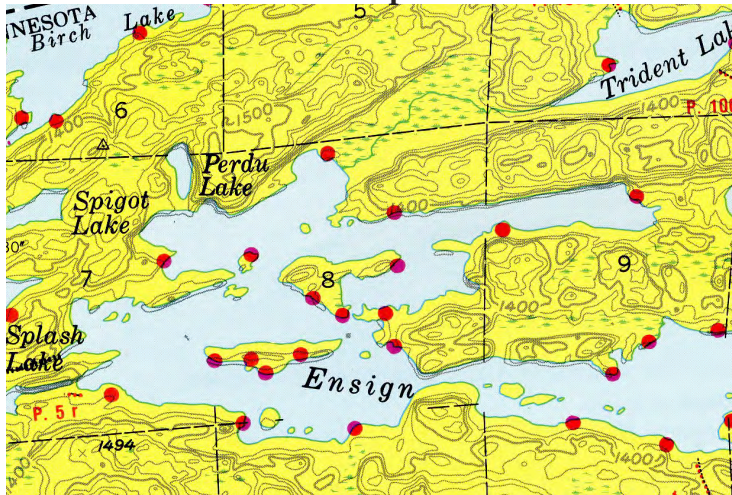
Created specifically for the Boundary Waters Journal by a canoe country legend, these prints are sure to add a bit of wilderness to your home, cabin or office. Prints are 11" x 17" and come on heavy semi-gloss paper suitable for framing. Please see our website for thumbnails of all prints. Print subjects include: black bear, lake trout, ruffed grouse, moose, pine marten, smallmouth, snowshoe hare, walleye, timber wolf, whitetail deer, beaver, wood duck, and mountain lion. **Single Print \$25, Four Prints \$85 (save \$15), Complete Set of 13 Prints \$275 (Save \$50)**



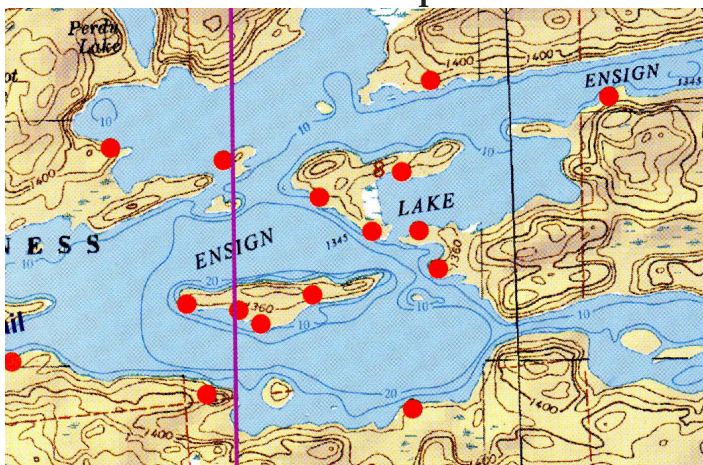
BJW Wrap Straps: These stretch utility straps are a wonder on the trail. Velcro closure lets you quickly bundle up paddles, rods, or just about anything for faster, easier portages. Never leave loose gear behind again. Pack of 8 includes two 12" and six 8" straps. **\$15**



Fisher Maps:



McKenzie Maps:



Both Fisher and McKenzie maps are produced from the most reliable information available. However, changes in water levels from weather and beavers can change portage locations and cover previously exposed reefs. This is a wilderness area; it will, hopefully, always produce some surprises for us all. Maps are folded to minimize shipping cost. If you prefer them rolled, there is an extra charge of \$2 for each mailing tube required.

McKenzie Maps: Easy to read, black text on tan land and blue water. 2" = 1 mile. 20' BWCAW contour lines. 50' Quetico contour lines. Some lake bottom contours given in BWCAW. 20" x 30" maps. On durable waterproof paper. Specify map number when ordering. McKenzie BWCAW-Quetico maps **\$6.95 each, 6 maps or more \$6.50 each.**

Index:

BWCAW

1. Pine, Greenwood, Mountain
2. East Bearskin, Clearwater, Alder
3. Ball Club, Winchell, Poplar
4. Gunflint, Loon, North
5. Magnetic, Gunflint, Northern Light
6. Saganaga, Sea Gull
7. Little Saganaga, Tuscarora, Sea Gull
8. Knife, Kekekabic, Thomas
9. Basswood, Snowbank, Sunday
10. Basswood, Crooked, Sarah
11. Jackfish, Beartrap, Thursday
12. Moose River, Stuart
13. Lac La Croix
14. Loon, Wilkins, Little Indian Sioux
15. Trout
16. Burntside, Cummings
17. Fall, Pipestone
18. Lake One, Bald Eagle
19. Isabella, Insula
20. Alton, Perent
21. Sawbill, Brule, Pipe

Quetico

22. Arrow, Sandstone
23. Iron Range, Canthook, Jinx
24. Northern Light
25. Saganagons, Mack
26. This Man, Cache
27. Agnes, Kahshapiwi
28. Brent, Poobah, Conmee
29. Argo, Minn, William
30. Red Pine, Badwater, Snow
31. Lac La Croix, Wolseley, Namakan R
32. Thompson, David, Namakan R
33. Beaverhouse, Whalen, Factor
34. Quetico, Cirrus, McCauley
35. Sturgeon, Burntside, Jean
36. Keefer, Williams, Camel
37. Kawnipi
38. Powell, Obadinaw R, Wawiaq R
39. Titmarsh, Plummens, Nelson
40. Burchell,
41. Tilly, Windigoostigwan
42. McKenzie, Cache, Buckingham
43. Russel, Olifaunt, Maligne R
44. Soho, Kasakokwog, Oriana
45. Pickerel, Batchewaung, Nym
46. Pickerel, Eva, Baptism
- 6A Saganaga, Saganagons

Fisher F-Series Maps: Easy to read, black text on yellow land and blue water. 1 1/2" = 1 mile. 20' BWCAW contour lines, none in Quetico. Some lake bottom contours given in BWCAW. 22 1/2 x 28 1/2" waterproof latex paper. Specify map number when ordering. Fisher F-Series maps **\$6.95 each, 6 or more \$6.50 each.**

Index:

BWCAW

- F-1 W Vermilion, Trout, Lost
- F-2 Bear Head, Eagle Nest, E Vermilion
- F-3 Birch, White Iron, Baggro
- F-4 One-Four, Bald Eagle, Insula
- F-5 Perent Kawishiwi, Sawbill
- F-6 Smoke, Flame, S Temperance, Brule
- F-7 S Gunflint Tr, 2 Island, Devil Track
- F-8 Vermilion, Vermilion R, Trout
- F-9 Cummings, Big Moose, Fourtown
- F-10 Basswood, Fall, Moose
- F-11 Snowbank, Knife, Kekekabic
- F-12 Little Sag, Tuscarora, Temperance
- F-13 Gunflint, Bearskin
- F-14 Clearwater, Greenwood, Fowl
- F-15 Crane, Echo, Loon
- F-16 Loon, Lac La Croix, Nina Moose

Quetico

- F-17 Crooked, Darby, Sarah
- F-18 Kahshapiwi, Agnes, Man Chain
- F-19 Saganaga, Seagull
- F-20 Northern Light, Canthook, Icarus
- F-21 Arrowhead, Sandstone, Whitefish
- F-22 Sandpoint, Namakan
- F-23 Lac La Croix N
- F-24 Sturgeon, Poobah, Maligne
- F-25 Kawnipi, Russell
- F-26 McKenzie, Powell
- F-27 Plummens, Titmarsh
- F-28 Beaverhouse, Cirrus, Quetico
- F-29 Jean, Batchewaung, W Pickerel
- F-30 E Pickerel, French, Cache

Large Area Maps (22 1/2" c 34 1/4")

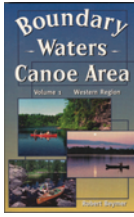
- F-31 Ely Lake Entry Point Map
 - F-32 Seagull & Surrounding Lakes
- Large Area Maps **\$8.95 each**



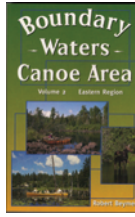
McKenzie A-2 Laminated Area Map: Large overview map in blue and brown McKenzie colors. Not for navigation, but good for planning or as a wall hanging. (shipped rolled in a tube) **\$24.95**

BJW Map Pouch: Our 12" x 15" coated-nylon case with heavy vinyl window keeps your map visible, dry, and in the canoe—not blowing down the lake. Fastex buckles fasten the pouch to a thwart or pack, so it's never left behind on a portage. Easily holds four McKenzie or Fisher maps. Keeps your route where you can see it while paddling. **\$24**

CANOE COUNTRY LIBRARY



The Boundary Waters Canoe Area - Volume 1 Western Region by Robert Beymer: Suggested route descriptions out of the 28 entry points between Crane Lake and Ely. A handy trip planning and field guide. (Softcover 200 pgs) **\$16.95**



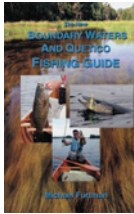
The Boundary Waters Canoe Area - Volume 2 Eastern Region by Robert Beymer: Suggested route descriptions out of the 25 entry points off the Gunflint, Sawbill and Arrowhead Trails. Includes portage, campsite, and visitor use information.) Softcover 200 pgs) **\$16.95**



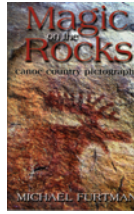
A Paddler's Guide to Quetico Provincial Park by Robert Beymer: A companion to the set on BWCAW routes, this book suggests circle routes from Quetico's access points. Descriptions of portages, natural & historical highlights, and campsites are helpful in planning trips. Includes a map locating some of the Quetico campsites. (Softcover 170 pgs) **\$15.95**



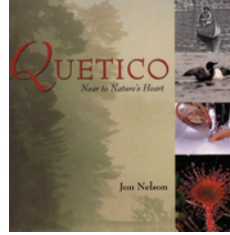
Boundary Waters Tips & Tricks DVD: Finally a professional DVD that actually shows how to camp, fish, and really enjoy the canoe country. Packed with information for paddlers of all levels of experience. (60 minutes) **\$19.95**



New Boundary Waters & Quetico Fishing Guide by Michael Furtman: The new edition of the canoe country fisherman's bible. Great "how to" info is organized by fish species. Includes complete index of what type of fish inhabit each lake in the BWCAW and Quetico (Softcover 203 pgs) **\$14.95**



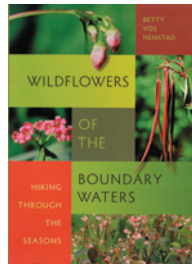
Magic on the Rocks by Michael Furtman: A comprehensive guide to the 49 pictograph sites in the BWCAW and Quetico. Detailed drawings and maps to guide your search. (Softcover 200 pgs) **\$14.95**



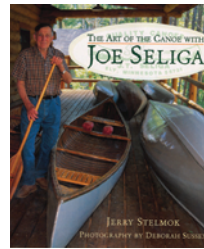
Quetico: Near to Nature's Heart by Jon Nelson: Jon worked as a park ranger in Quetico from 1976 to 1987. Here he combines his own extensive involvement in the park with thorough research to create an insightful look into Quetico's natural history. He examines the adaptations that have allowed moose, deer, wolves, and other mammals to survive. He also explores the designation of the park and the human history: the Ojibwa, trappers, loggers, miners, park rangers, and poachers. The result is a splendid tribute to a very unique place, enhanced throughout with exceptional photography. (Softcover 288 pgs) **\$35.00**



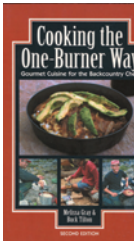
Bush Pilots - Legends of the Old & Bold by Bob Cary & Jack Hautala: Captures the remarkable spirit of those daring pilots. Bush Pilots has you riding along on fire fighting & rescue missions, laughing at pranks and marveling at crazy stunts. Includes a CD with more than a dozen talks told by the legends themselves, plus stories about the 1999 blowdown, told by current pilots. (Softcover 192 pgs) **\$15.95**



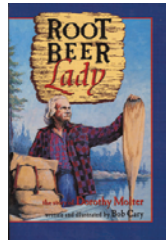
Wildflowers of the Boundary Waters - Hiking Through the Seasons by Betty Vos Hemstad: This beautiful wildflower guide is organized by season and then by color, offering views of 120 regional flowers shown throughout their life cycles, from bud to flower to seedpod, making it the perfect companion for a walk in the woods. Hikers, campers and anyone who loves the Boundary Waters will benefit from this useful guide. (Softcover 271 pgs) **\$22.95**



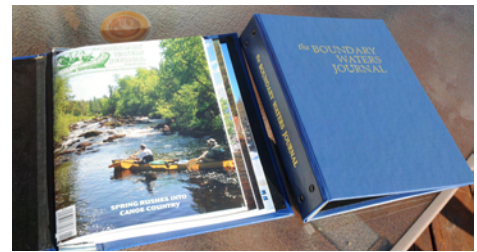
The Art of the Canoe with Joe Seliga by Jerry Stelmok: Details how Joe Seliga earned his reputation as the preeminent wood/canvas canoe builder in North America. Detailed color photos illustrate the step-by-step construction of the very finest canoes. Joe's passion for canoe country and craftsmanship is an inspiration to all who appreciate wilderness paddling and the pursuit of excellence. (Hardcover 170 pgs) **\$34.95**



Cooking the One-Burner Way by Melissa Gray & Buck Tilton: This ultimate cooking resource offers tips on stove selection, use & care. How to set up your canoe country kitchen & plan menus. More than 150 recipes take you from breakfast & snacks right through lunch, dinner and even dessert. (Softcover 146) **\$12.95**



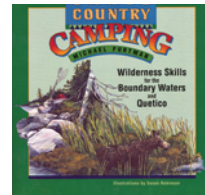
Root Beer Lady: "The Story of Dorothy Molter" by Bob Cary: From 1930-1986, Dorothy Molter lived a life in canoe country that the rest of us can only dream of. Bob Cary, Dorothy's long-time friend, captures the life of this northwoods legend. Dorothy's life is an amazing story, and nobody tells a story like Jackpine Bob. (Softcover 175 pgs) **\$14.95**



The Boundary Waters Journal Magazine Binders: These attractive blue binders are gold embossed with our name on the front and spine. BWJ articles retain their value as reference for future trips, so protect and organize yours by keeping each year in its own binder. Each binder holds four issues—a whole year of canoe country information and stories. **\$12.00 each, \$10.00 each if ordering four or more binders**



Back Country Kitchen - by Teresa Marrone: A great book that blows the backpacker menu mentality out of the water for wilderness canoe trips. Prepare and truly enjoy delicious, easy to cook high energy "real food" on your next BWCAW/Quetico adventure. (Softcover 208 pgs) **\$14.95**



Country Camping by Michael Furtman: This book will sharpen the camping skills of veteran canoe country travelers. It is essential that each and every one of us practice the minimum impact camping techniques Furtman preaches if we are to preserve the wilderness character of canoe country. (Softcover 216 pgs) **\$16.95**

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bwcaw campsite review



Ogishkemuncie Lake

□ by Paul Doubleday

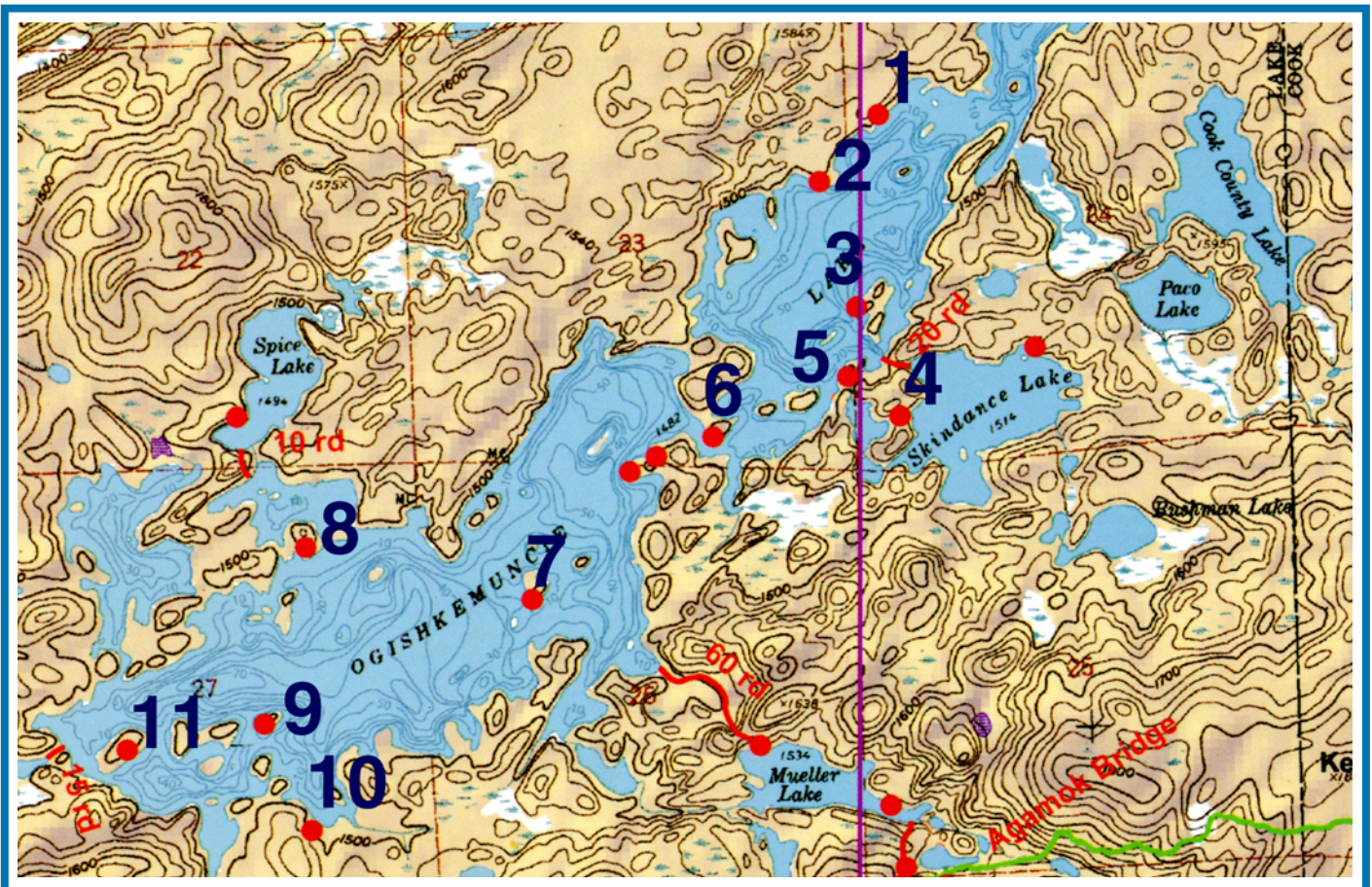
For our Ogishkemuncie Lake campsite evaluations, we used a 1–5 scale with 1 being poor and 5 being an excellent rating. Lake levels were extremely high (1–2 feet above normal) after the Memorial Day 2012 weekend storms that had dumped so much water in a short time on all of northern Minnesota. Landing ratings were based upon our experience at that time and the fact my brother is less nimble than he used to be. If Tom struggled to get to dry land, the landing

received a poor rating.

Site #1

This is the first site that you come to on the northeast end of the lake. Located on the northwest side of the lake this 4-star site is one of two sites that would be great for large groups. Both sites #1 and #2 were spared from the Cavity Lake fire and retained all of the trees that were not blown down in the 1999 storm. The southeast shore which was affected by the fire has made significant recovery over the

last few years, getting greener every year. This is a very nice site, and if you have a large group you will easily find enough space for your group. Landing (4) A nice area exists to pull right up next to the shore and step out of the canoe directly onto a granite landing. Plenty of space is available to store several canoes. Tent Sites (4.75) 2 Large and 2 Small tent pads are located on level pads and are nicely shaded. Removed slightly from the fire ring area this site is nicely set



Ogishkemuncie Lake offers very good walleye and smallmouth fishing and 11 campsites to choose from.

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up. Fire Ring (3) 3 logs face southeast with a decent view with a couple of islands in the foreground. The fire ring could use some work. It has many small rocks piled up as a wind break, but no one has taken the time to organize it in any way or provide those much appreciated rock shelves for a truly great cooking area. Open Space (4) Nice open, flat spaces with exposed granite. A large group would fit nicely into this space without feeling on top of each other. Not a lot of shade, but the site is open to breezes to keep the bugs away. Hanging a rain fly close to the fire ring area may be a challenge. You will find plenty of bear bagging tree options, which is not the case at some of the sites on this lake. There is also a great set of tress for hanging a hammock right by the lake. The site is raised nicely above the water, which greatly enhances the views of this beautiful area. Overall Score (4)

Site #2

Also located on the northwest side of the lake this site is a short distance down the lake from site #1. Sites #1 and #2 are not visible to each other and located far enough away from the main travel route through this area that you don't feel like canoe parties are passing right by your site. The landing for site #3 can just be made out in the distance. Like site #1, this site was spared from the fire and has the same great views to the southeast. Landing (2) Two equally difficult landing areas with room for 2 canoes. Tent Sites (3) Two large and two very small decent tent pads exist. Late afternoon shade is provided by the trees on this site. Fire Ring (2.5) The fire ring could be best described as messy. Three rotting logs face towards the

lake and the rock fire screen needed some serious work. Open Space (3.5) This site had really nice views of the lake in different directions. There is plenty of flat granite for laying out gear and cooking area options. A nice diving or jumping rock into deep water adds to the activity possibilities for this site. Rigging up a bear bag will be a little challenging as there were only mediocre trees close by. I would not recommend this site for large groups, but would do nicely for 2-4 people. Of the 5 sites located on this end of the lake, this would be my second choice. Overall Score (3)

Site #3

This site is on the western side of an island along the eastern shoreline. Its location on the lake is close to the main traveling corridor so you will have the opportunity to view any groups that pass by. An open granite slope leads uphill to the main area. This site is very open with little shade around the campfire area. I would choose this site last of any that are located on the eastern end of the lake. This site lacked the amenities you would want, if used as a base campsite. Landing (2.5) A granite slope dominates the only landing area. Parallel landing is the only safe way to load and unload a canoe without grinding the hull. There is plenty of room to land 2-4 canoes, although you will be hard-pressed to find tent space for a large group. Tent Space (2) One large and one small tent pad are located on grassy open areas. Both sites lack shade for the majority of the day. Fire Ring (2) The fire ring sits just up slope from the lake and I am sure that this site will have fantastic views of the sunset, however the

site lacks character. Two logs face towards the lake and provide just enough seating for a small party. Open Space (2) This site is mostly open and exposed to the lake. Excellent view exists to the west. There are no flat open granite areas as the site is mostly grassy. A few bear bagging tree options exist. Rigging a rain fly in the campfire area would be challenging. Overall Score (2)

Site #4

This site is tucked into a tiny back bay. A small sand and gravel landing leads up into this small site. I have stayed many nights on Ogish and this is the first time I have noticed this site as it is off the main travel route and is hidden in the back of a small bay. This site can be best described as small and shady. Large trees surround this site with the only opening facing a limited view of the lake. If you are looking for a well-hidden site with lots of shade to hide from the sun this will be perfect. Landing (3) A sand and gravel landing provide a nice area to step out into the water. Limited open space exists by the lake shore, 1-2 canoes will fit in this area. Tent Sites (2.5) One large and one small mediocre tent pads are tucked into the trees. Fire Ring (2.5) Two rotting logs face towards the lake with a limited view besides the trees that surround this site. Open Space (1.5) This site is very small and a large group just would not fit into the limited open space available. Plenty of trees would provide easy opportunities to hang a rain fly. I would suspect this site might be very buggy with all of the shade and shelter. Bear bag trees are easy to find and use. The one added bonus to this site is the sandy bottom landing area that would provide a nice area to wade and

swim. Overall Score (2.5)

Site #5

This site is located just above the lake level right in the middle of the narrow channel that separates the western and eastern ends of the lake. Before the 1999 storm this was a really nice

but busy site, with any canoe parties passing within 25 yards of your front door. The storm took out all of the tall trees in the area, leaving this site very sunny and exposed to the passing traffic. With its location in the narrowest part of the lake limited views

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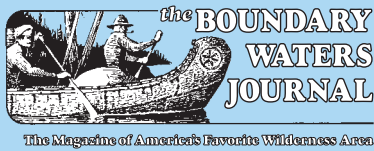
exists. Many deadfall trees are located close to camp and have provided me with some decent northern fishing action. Landing (2) Two different landings exist, which we found equally difficult to use. Space for 4 canoes easily exists. Tent Space (2.25) One large and two small spaces exist. All tent pads are in the open as all of the tall trees are gone. Fire Ring (1.5) The cooking area can be best summed up as "it's there." Only one log bench faces the fire ring which is located right next to the water. The fire ring lacks any of the aspects that you would desire. Open Space (2.5) This site has plenty of open space just no trees to provide any kind of shade or screening from any canoes that will easily pass within chatting distance. No trees exist for either bear bagging or

for rigging a rain fly. Overall Score (2)

Site #6

This point site sits high up on a hill looking southwest down the longest view of the western half of the lake. This is the biggest site on the lake and would easily handle a large group. A somewhat long climb exists to get to the main part of the camp, but you will enjoy the great views in many directions. Unlike the eastern end, the western end of the lake was untouched by the Cavity Lake fire, and all of the trees on the shorelines are tall and green. There are a couple of trails that lead a fair distance back into the woods. This provides an opportunity to wander around much more than the ordinary campsites that I have stayed at. Landing (2.5) Two angled granite slabs exist to land canoes. The

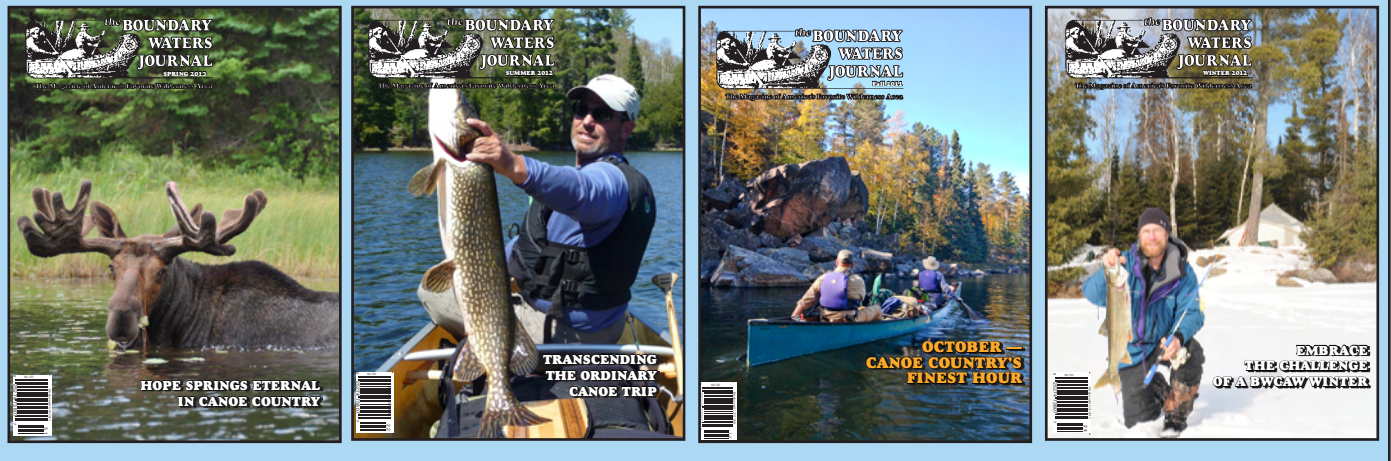
landing is the only thing that is a real drawback of this site. Room exists for 3 or 4 canoes. A long, loose stone climb takes you up to the main site. Tent Space (3.75) Two large—one of excellent quality—and two small tent pads exist. Plenty of room exists to spread the tents out in different areas. Fire Ring (4.5) Three large logs surround a nice fire ring. Situated on top of a hill, you will love the great views of the lake and the numerous islands that can be seen in the distance. Large groups will find enough room for the whole group to sit and enjoy the fire and dining area. The only drawback is the long walk to water. Open Space (3.5) Plenty of flat open space exists on top of the hill. Exposed flat areas of granite provide great areas for sorting through gear and keeping equipment out of the mud on



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rainy departure days. Several different bear bagging trees exist. Convenient trees exist for rigging the dinning fly and for hanging hammocks. Overall Score (3.75)

Site #7

Located on the southeast end of an island this site is located a half mile from the Mueller Lake portage. I have stayed at this site several times, and it is my favorite site to stay at. It is not really suited for large groups. Two to four people will find this to be a very nice site. Two different granite slopes exist for fantastic views to the southeast and northwest. The island is removed from the main travel corridors, so a feeling of isolation does exist. The waterfall that dumps into the lake is close enough to hear when it is quiet, especially at night. A sand and gravel landing area provides a

nice area for swimming and a granite ledge provides a spot for rock jumping directly into the lake from a six-foot drop. A short trail climbs up behind the site to provide you with a great view to the northwest to see the sunset. Landing (4.5) A spot exists too conveniently to step directly from the canoe to dry land. You will find enough room to store two, maybe three canoes. Fire Ring (4.5) A well maintained fire ring with large flat shelves on two sides provides a fantastic cooking area. Three large log benches have a great view of the nearby lake. Tent Space (4.5) Two large flat sites and one small tent pad are nicely spaced from each other. Trees provide shade for the afternoon to cool off tents before bed. Open Space (4.5) Plenty of open space with large trees makes this a great site. Open granite is available

for laying out gear. Several bear bagging trees are located close to the main camp. Trees can easily be used for rigging a rain fly and hammocks. Fantastic views exist in multiple directions. The moss covered granite slope that is part of the trail that leads to the latrine can be very slippery when wet (personal experience) so be careful. Overall Score (4.5)

Site #8

This site is located on a point on the north side of the lake close to the portage to Spice Lake. This sight has all of the aspects of a 5-star site, but lacks the tent pads to make it a truly great spot. Large areas of open granite are screened nicely from the lake. Views of the southern and western shores make this a great spot to spend some time in. A quiet bay sits just to the north. Protected from the



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west winds that blow during the summer, it is also close to some great smallmouth bass structure located just to the west of the site. Large groups will find it hard to find enough space to pitch more than two tents of any size although the site itself is large and roomy. Landing (3.5) Two areas can be used for landing canoes; both have room for a couple of canoes. The north side landing is a step out from deep water and the other is a long angled granite slope that could be slippery after lots a rain. Fire Ring (3) Located high up above the water, this fire ring is in the middle of a large area of open granite. Two log benches face towards the lake and offer a view of the southern part of the lake. Tent Space (2) One level medium sized site and two poor small tent pads are located at the back of the site. More space is available as long as your tent does not require tent pegs. Most of the level open space is totally granite or has about an inch of topsoil. Open Space (4) This site has a lot of character with several different levels to cook or hang out in. Several different areas can be used for those cooking with a stove. Fantastic views lay in several different directions. Trees are available for erecting a dinning fly and bear bagging trees are easy to find. Plenty of open granite is available for laying out gear or tossing a Frisbee around. On quiet nights you can hear the sound of the distant waterfall located on the south side of the lake. Overall Score (3.75)

Site #9

Located on the eastern end of an island this site was hit hard by the 1999 wind storm. Most of the tall trees were knocked down which has left the site feeling a bit open. Great views exist to the east,

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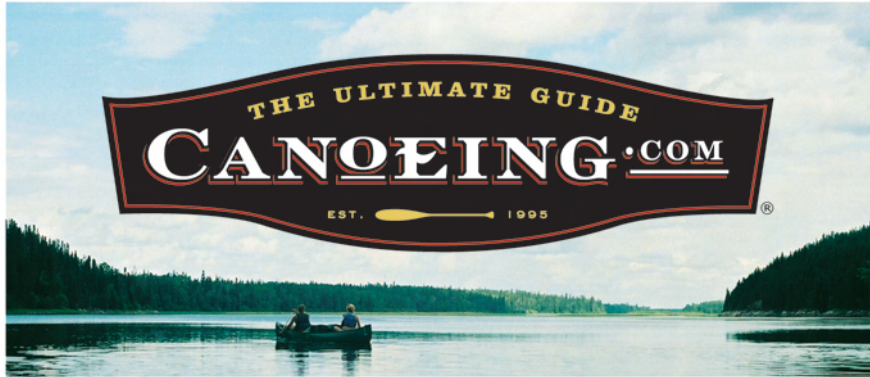


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north and south. Landing (3.5) A nice easy landing with space to land parallel to the shore and step out onto land. Room is available for three canoes. Fire Ring (3) One great bench and two smaller logs surround the fire ring. The site sits uphill from the water and offers good views of the lake. Tent Space (2) Two mediocre tent pads, one large and one small. Open Space (2.5) This site is very grassy, but not in the well-maintained lawn way. This site is very open and exposed to the lake. No trees exist for bear bagging or for rigging up a tarp. The openness of the site does offer really great views. Overall Score (2.75)

Site #10

Located in a back bay on the Southern shore this is probably the least desirable site on the lake. Tucked into pine and cedar trees this very small site offers limited views of the lake. Plenty of tall trees provide plenty of shade. Landing (3) An adequate landing offers space for storing 3 canoes. Fire Ring (3.5) The fire ring was well constructed and was probably the best aspect of the site with two good benches and a ring that is very close to the water. Limited view exists despite how close you are to the water. Tent Space (1) Two small, sloped, and rocky tent pads will make sleeping uncomfortable at best. Open Space (2) The site was very shaded and buggy during our visit. One semi-good bear bag tree could be found close to the living space. Overall Score (1.5)


Site #11

Located on the last island on the western end of the lake and a short paddle from the Annie Lake portage, this site was very nice. I have stayed at five of the sites on this lake and did not know that this

one was as good as it was. A nice island-studded view exists to the east and south. It is a short paddle to some great smallmouth bass structure located along the north shore. A nice rock jumping ledge into deep water adds a nice bonus to the swimming area. Landing (4) An easy step out landing onto dry land made this an easy site to land at. Room is available for 2-3 canoes. A short uphill walk takes you to the main living area. Fire Ring (3.5) Three decent log benches offer a great view of the lake. The fire ring is a little exposed if the wind is really blowing. Tent Space (3) One large and one small decent tent pad exist, with the possibility of one other adequate site. They are spread out in an open area with limited shade. Open Space (3.5) This site was well set up with plenty of open space. Plenty of flat open granite areas are available. This site had great views in a multiple of directions. Open and sunny, limited trees were available for bear bagging or tarp rigging. Overall Score (3.75)

Author's Notes:

Some older maps will show a campsite located between sites #5 and #6, just down the shore from #6. The forest service closed this site after the 1999 storm. One of the trails from #6 leads to this abandoned site. For those just traveling through Ogish you will find a great lunch spot on western end of the island that sits just across the water from site #6 close to the narrows. Some maps will show campsites located on Skindance Lake, which is a 20-rod goat path of a trail up a steep climb. This lake was totally burnt out by the Cavity Lake fire and if the campsites still exist they would be very unappealing to stay at. □



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