CANOEING IN THE MIDWEST

JULY 1973

MINNESOTA CANOE ASSOCIATION

HUT!





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on

Kayak Racing and Cruising

with

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- Explanation of various craft
- Where to Kayak
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HUT! Magazine is published every other month starting in January by the Minnesota Canoe Association, Inc. a nonprofit organization, and is distributed to more than 1800 members, and numerous friends of the MCA across the nation. Our purpose is to distribute information about canoe sports and canoe camping, to preserve and promote wild rivers, to effect conservation of canoeable waterways, and to encourage canoeing as family recreation.

Pictures (glossies), cartoons, art work, announcements, letters, and articles of all kinds which serve to promote the purposes of the MCA are cordially invited. Contributions should be typewritten, preferably double-spaced, and should be in the hands of the editor by the 5TH DAY OF THE PREVIOUS MONTH, AD COPY BY THE 17TH. We regret that only token compensation can be paid for photographs, and that no compensation can be paid for literary copy, however, byline credit will be extended to all contributions. Contributions cannot be acknowledged and will be returned — usually within eight weeks — ONLY when requested and accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Please DO NOT send documents. Address: HUT! 5804 Tracy Avenue, Minneapolis, Minn. 55436.

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Likewise, we cannot guarantee or endorse any product offered through our advertising. We invite constructive criticism and welcome any report of inferior merchandise obtained through our advertising, so that corrective measures can be taken.

A tip of the paddling helmet to MCA members AL BUTTON JOE CONRAD ANGUS MORRISON DOUG PETERSON for being selected to the U.S. Whitewater Team which competed in the World Championships in Switzerland on June 20-24.

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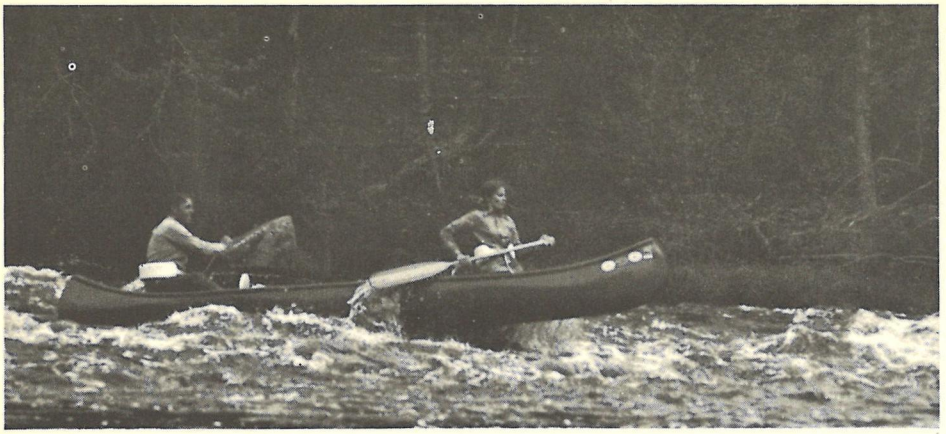
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The Flamboyant Flambeau (South Fork)

by Larry Johns

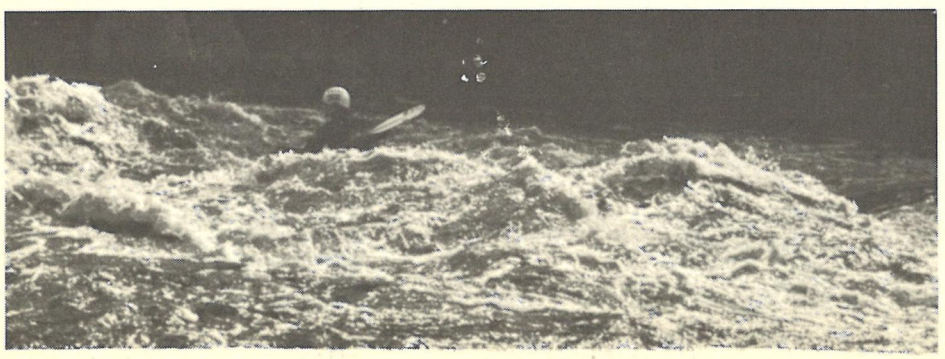
From its origin on the south slope of the Lake Superior Watershed in north-central Wisconsin to its junction with the Chippewa River near Ladysmith, the Flambeau River presents a variety of canoeing conditions that should please all paddlers.

My favorite part of the Flambeau is ten miles of the South Fork from County Road W west of Phillips to the Skinner Creek landing. This trip contains the best whitewater on the Flambeau and includes some rapids that will almost surely swamp an open canoe when the water is high. Water levels on the South Fork fluctuate greatly, and it is best to check before planning a trip.

Let's start the trip at the public landing just below the bridge at County Road W. From here, you have your choice of two takeouts or even three if you'd like to take two days and take out at Flambeau Lodge on the main Flambeau. This would give you the opportunity to run Cedar Island Rapids and Beaver Dam, but it would also involve the Impossible Shuttle – "You can't get there from here".

The first takeout is County Road M, eight miles downstream. Steady paddling will get you there in two hours or less, but three hours will enable you to enjoy the scenery and a lunch along the way. There are some good rapids that require some experience and skill, but are not too much for open canoes. All are quite easy to read from the water, but, by all means, pull to shore and look them over if you are in doubt. Carpenter Rapids (Class I) is 1½ miles from the put in. Cornsheller Rapids (Class II) is another two miles. You'll have to do some maneuvering to miss rocks here, and you'll probably take in some water in the standing waves. Another mile brings you to Price Creek Rapids (Class I) which extend for one-fourth mile but present no special problem. Little Bull Rapids (Class II) is one mile further. There is good turbulence here and a possibility of swamping if the water is high. Bull Rapids is just a short distance – take the chute on the right side and ride the standing waves around the corner to Prison Camp Rapids (Class I). This rapid is just upstream from the bridge at Highway M which should be your takeout if you're paddling an open canoe and the water is high. There is a landing and parking lot just above the bridge on the left side.

Slough Gundy, the Flambeau's most challenging water, begins one-half mile below the bridge. I would rate this section Class III at high water, Class II at normal levels and too scratchy when the water is low. The four pitches of Slough Gundy are on the right channel around a very scenic, pine-covered island. You should angle to the right of center as you go through the first pitch – the second pitch is a fast sweep around a sharp turn (a rocky shelf occasionally reaches out and trips up the unwary). If you get in trouble here, you've got 50 feet to get to shore before you drop into the third pitch – a very constricted, abrupt, fast drop with large haystacks, side curling rollers and a jumble of boulders to avoid at the bottom of the drop. The fourth pitch is a rock garden, the river having broadened and slowed. These four pitches can be easily scouted from the island – by all means, do so.



Little Falls is one-fourth mile downstream. This is a wicked little drop, divided by a rocky island, and should be portaged. The North Central Canoe Trails book suggests you land on the island and portage across it. I suggest you don't. You'd have to beach your boat perilously close to the left drop which is very abrupt, twisting, aerated and rock-studded – bad news. There is a good portage trail on the left shore. Use it, it is only 50 yards long.

Scratch Rapids is one-eighth mile below the falls. Scratch is a very respectable rapids with an interesting hole, large standing waves and requires a sharp right turn while still in the rapids. Otter Slide Rapids, a quick drop over a small ledge is another 1½ miles. The landing is around the corner from Otter Slide just beyond Skinner Creek which empties into the Flambeau on the left side. If the roads to the Skinner Creek landing are badly rutted by the spring thaw or if you are in a hurry, you can take out at Little Falls and carry your boat one-eighth mile to the parking lot on Highway M.

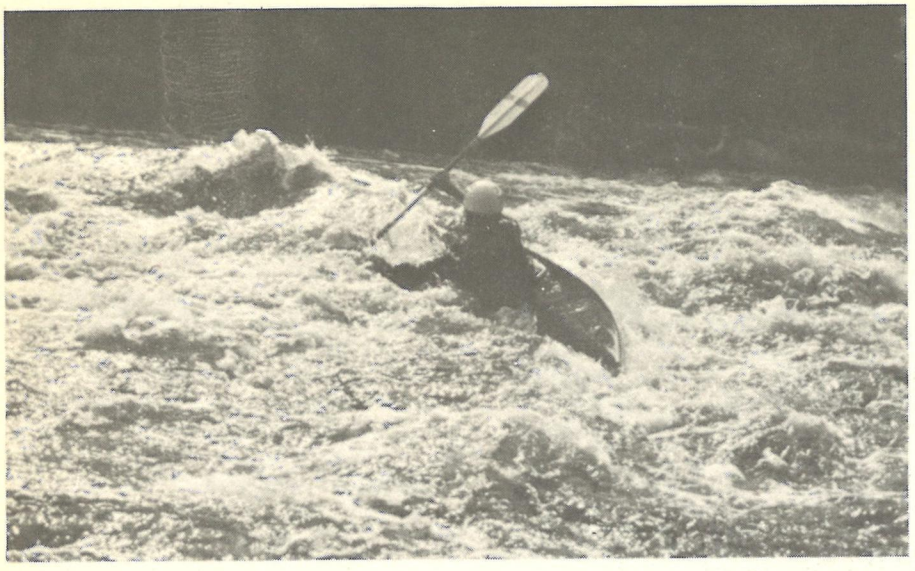
I have run this section about ten times at different water levels. It is quite routine at normal level, but Slough Gundy's gradient and constriction brings its rating up to Class III when the water is high – don't take it lightly. I've seen several open canoes badly smashed after swamping in the third pitch.

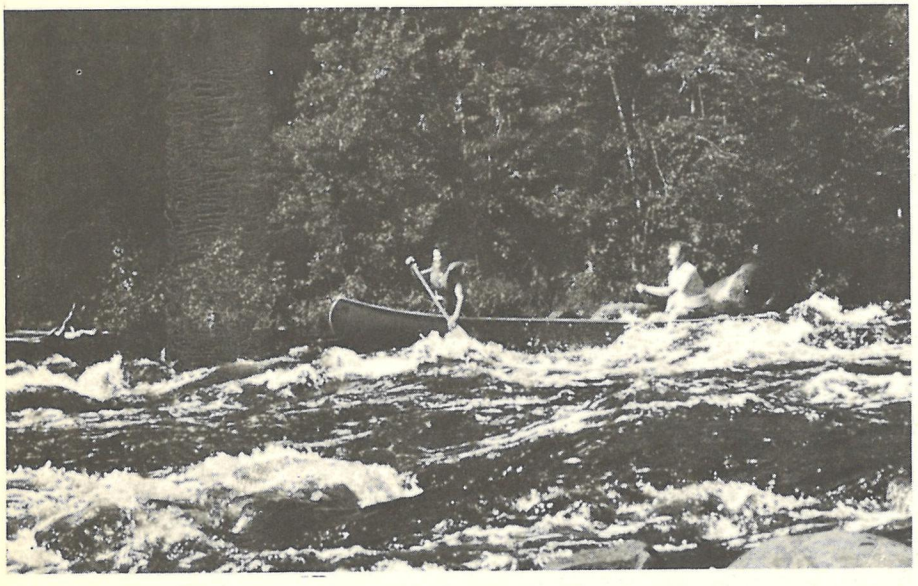
The Flambeau, known for its primitive beauty, is at its best here – Slough Gundy is especially impressive – in many places, the banks are sheer rock and there are many tall pine trees that were missed when this part of Wisconsin was shorn of its crown of pine.

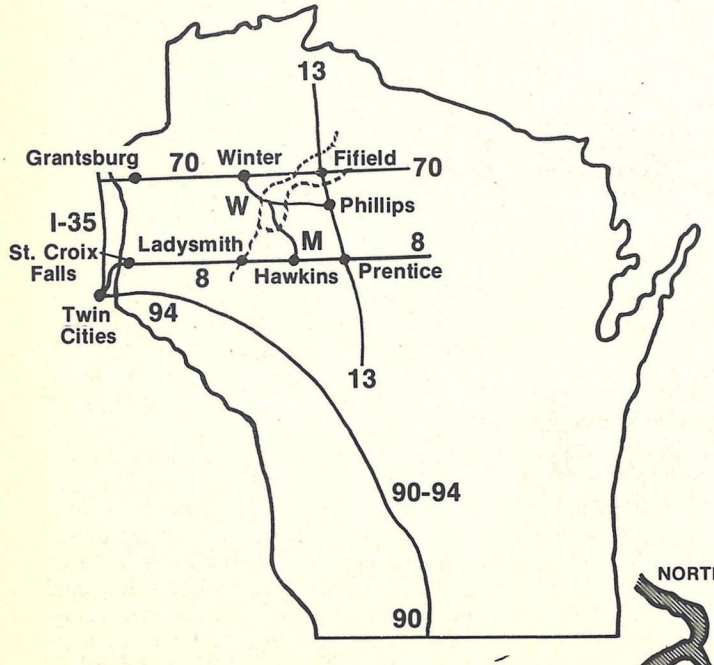
This area is about 165 miles from Minneapolis-St. Paul. Take Highway 8 to Hawkins and turn north on County Road M. Slough Gundy is ten miles from Hawkins. Another route is Highway 70 to Winter and County Road W south and east from there.

Other canoeable streams in the area include other parts of the Flambeau, the Elk, Jump, and Chippewa Rivers.

Water levels are usually good through Memorial Day – after that, it depends on the rainfall. The state maintain gauge at Highway W and I have arranged for a personal reporting service which furnishes a one-day old report each Thursday throughout the paddling season.







SOUTH FORK FLAMBEAU

ELK RIVER

To PHILLIPS (12 m)

W

Landing

To WINTER
(25 m)

W

Little Carpenter Rapids

Big Carpenter Rapids

Cornsheller Rapids

Price Creek Rapids

Little Bull Rapids

M

Bull Rapids

Prison Camp Rapids

Landing

Parking Lot

Slough Gundy

To HAWKINS
(10 m)

Little Falls

M

Scratch Rapids

NORTH FORK FLAMBEAU

Otter Slide Rapids

Skinner Creek Rd.

FLAMBEAU RIVER

SOUTH FORK FLAMBEAU

Skinner Creek Landing

SKINNER CREEK



Quetico Remembered

It's easy to pick up from his article that Will Fisher has been carrying on a love affair with the Quetico for some time. Will teaches English at Blake School and a course on rivers at Northrop School. (See Molly Morin's story in this issue of HUT!)

by Will Fisher

There are nights when one says, "The Quetico does not exist, it is like any dream of what once was. Occasional fantasies maintain our equilibrium." There are those, however, who still must travel these waters to confirm what they suspect. For them it will be the reality of the first time, a love affair between that physical being in all of us and the supernatural forces of the wilderness. It proves our inadequacy, and we take comfort in the discovery. We acknowledge our weakness even as we exalt in the grandeur of the primeval.

Those who paddle, those who move through any wilderness, know the uniqueness of the experience, the total immersion in the world of the senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. In the canoe we cleave smooth surfaces, chop through swells, hold steady in swirling currents. A lone white pine or the far hill gives direction. Distances are measured, reached – and one continues.

I am not sure what the Quetico is now, what lovers she has or how they use her. The motor traffic seems on the increase. Something to do with economics, I would guess. In the winter there are snowmobiles, and perhaps more so than paddlers or portagers, these adventurers do not always remove what they bring into the Quetico, so that there remain the small imperfections, no longer the perfect scheme.

The surface of the wilderness canoe country changes – creek into beaver pond, moose trail into portage, swamp into dry bed – and with these concurrent changes in plant and animal life. This writer is neither historian nor geologist, zoologist, botanist; what remains to be said is not the beautiful harmony of Sigurd Olson's *The Singing Wilderness* nor the journalistic reminiscence of Arnold Bolz's *Portage Into The Past*, both of which touch on the southern border of the Quetico. Instead, I can recall a few of many companions, for the friendship of the canoe trail is a major part of the unique experience. I can share moments close to the heart of the country, similar to what many others must have seen or felt or done in their journeys there. And I can contribute some small pieces of information which those who will travel the area may at some time find helpful.

Because of the daily close contact in the wilderness, we may discover our companion to be a model for our actions in certain situations. We may also reach a more complete self-awareness, for learned psychiatrists state that we know ourselves only by reflection, by the actions and words of others toward us. And from each with whom we share a wilderness experience, we take some small new knowledge, some simple trick or observation which for all our woodlore we had not discovered.

There seem to be contradictory forces at work in this situation. While our friends may seem magnified in their response to the power and the wisdom of the physical being that is the Quetico, we may ourselves feel correspondingly smaller. Admiration is directed outward, humility inward in the same moment.

At the top of my list of companions is my father. In sharper focus than ever before is his patience as he responded to situations that I tended to face with petty frustration. The long paddle to the far reaches of the lake when the noon sun seemed to come early and stay until nearly sunset. The unloading of the canoe, packs up and carried and swung down, loaded once more, repeated a half dozen times across a string of potholes, in a cold rain, until a lake with a suitable campground could be reached. Then the careful gathering of fuel, splitting and splintering and guarding the drier pieces until the fire blazed and the tea boiled. Heat

and cold, not vicious extremes in a Quetico summer, serve to place in clear perspective this trait of my father long taken for granted.

Steve Bowen, with a guitar carefully wrapped in light leather cover, plastic over that, the instrument stuck upright behind his stern seat cruising down Cirrus and Quetico and then stuffed beneath the bow seat for the long Jesse portage. Steve stretched among the Norway pines on layover days, around the campfire in the evenings, or in the tent at night – lonesome chords or a rollicking beat of whatever tune we called out, played by ear. In those moments, one senses why early man found the means to make musical instruments, to set songs to the rhythm of daily existence in a far better manner than the transistor radios which some must take into the woods.

Boot Gordon, pilot, architect, artist, ski instructor, educator, trail developer – so many suggestions by Boot for exploring our environment, for developing skills and discovering how to live together. "Say," Boot said looking at my evening cookfire over which lake trout from Joyce Lake were frying, "let me rearrange that a little." I had placed rocks sheltering the blaze from the breeze off the lake. Boot turned it all around so the wind swept right in and up the back, like a chimney – hotter, quicker, more efficient in every respect. Why hadn't I made that discovery for myself?

Don Mezzenga, well, sure, a hungry wrestler-football coach can spice up trail life. Three pounds of spaghetti for dinner for nine hungry trippers and a neophyte cook/packer who had allowed only two small packages of sauce. Don ate it with no complaints, no word of how mother used to make it (catch the last name again). But at the end of the trip, the little suggestion: "Bill, next time maybe you could bring a couple more packages of sauce for the spaghetti meal." (Sidenote: in spite of the booming business in trail pack meals, snacks, and desserts, one can still pack satisfying meals by visiting the neighborhood grocery and selecting from the dried foods and spices. Soups and stews can be assembled economically to suit individual taste.)

Jay Kremen, who knew the value of good coffee, whatever the temperature of the day. No instant brands for him, but instead the small black pot (*not* soaped for every use) set squarely on two pieces of wood on the edge of the fire. When water boils, in goes one teaspoon of coffee for two cups of water, plus a mite of coffee for the pot – it boils up and immediately the pot is removed, sits for two or three minutes, and then a fresh strong drink (touch of brandy if one chooses). The pot steams quietly over side coals. Not too difficult to convert a tea drinker with the coffee prepared in this way.

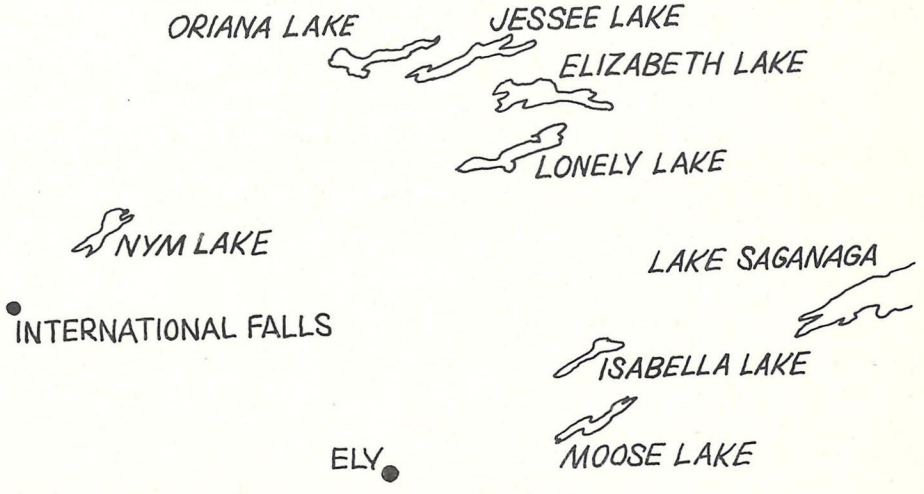
Uncle Dick Fisher, mail carrier from Springfield, Missouri, traveling north to Quetico and lakes beyond for many summers now. Each time he tries new homemade gear – canoe, tent, pack, sleeping bag. One year he brought a neat little collapsible minnow trap – 3 pieces of screen wire rolled in a newspaper for convenient carrying, then assembled into the old funnel trap. "No live bait brought into the Quetico" has been the rule. The intention was to prevent the spread of suckers, but this has not been too successful. In Pickerel Narrows, for one place, large schools of suckers swim beneath the canoe in the shallow passage. Uncle Dick's trap utilizes the bait fish which are already there, and the small perch in some lakes, but not the young gamefish.

His friend Gist (southern style, men known by their last names) proved the value of stumpwood for cooking, a lasting fire that needs little tending once it is set. Gist drives his axe into any of the old stumps around the camp, pries off chunks of wood, a plentiful supply in short order. One must take care with a light-handled axe or the stump may get the better of the prying with the handle splitting first.

Friendships and loyalties developed by sharing the simple life of the wilderness are not soon lost. Perhaps in older age it is the evening reunited with such a friend that provides meaning to the life one looks back on. One remembers the physical test of self perhaps first realized on the long portage, the questions silently asked of oneself while lying in the comfort of the tent as the night gathers. As one recalls such personal discoveries he may hope that others will also have the opportunity for growth in a natural setting.

Philsophy put aside. A word now about bears – doesn't one always hear questions and tales of the wild beasts of the woods? Quetico black bears are curious, sometimes hungry creatures who protect their young. They may wander into camp for a look around and discover ways of obtaining their food supply from what you have available. I believe they're acting in relation to some principle about adaptability and the survival of the fittest (smartest). So, in a well-traveled area of the park where these tamer bears might roam, camp on an island. On mainland camps look for signs of a high-pole rig which indicates that others have raised their packs at night to prevent theft. Put a stack of pots on the food pack and alert people to come out shouting and waving flashlights if the alarm clatters at night.

What to do if confronted on the portage or in camp by a bear who wants a handout and seems to be stubborn about it? Two young men who were packing out fish one year claimed that they had discouraged a bear who was dragging off their catch by running up to him and swatting him on the nose with a stick. The classic showdown, eyeball to eyeball – the daring young men won that one. Others tell of spraying repellents or bug bombs into the face of the marauder, another bold response to the situation. As one works out a new portage or explores a woodland near a layover camp,



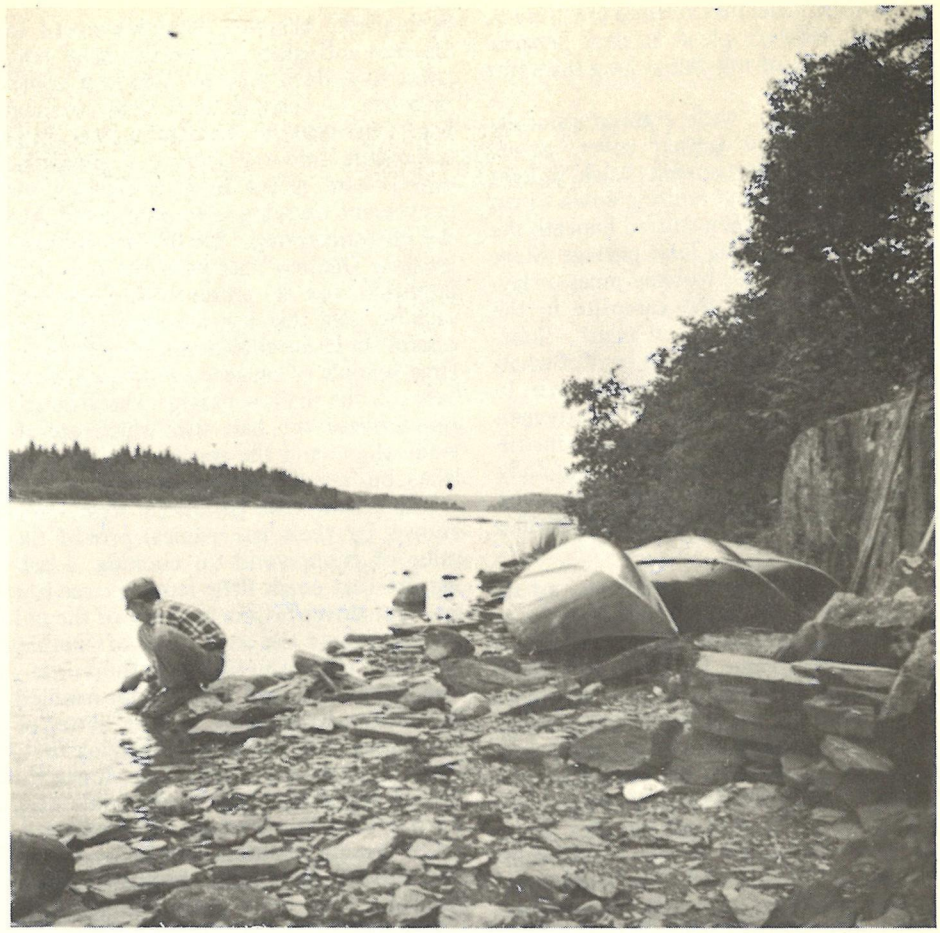
it is well to announce his presence by shouting, "Ho, Bear," or whatever may seem appropriate so as not to surprise a mother with cubs.

My first experience with one of these camp robbers was on Isabella Lake in the southern part of the Quetico. Tired from a long day's move, I set the cook kit alarm at dusk and crawled into my tent only 20 feet from the rigged foodpack. Nothing disturbed my sleep, but in the morning the 8 loaves of bread were gone, box ripped and wrappers strewn about – and also there was a slash in the foodpack and the chocolate bars and prunes were missing. The cook kit was sitting neatly by the side of the pack. I can only assume someone in the party removed it for some need after I retired and the bear had no difficulty in his burglary. We ate diet lunches of Rye-Krisp for 10 days and boiled a thinner fruit soup for breakfast.

Camped one night on Batchewaung after a week in the woods with only a small food supply left to tempt a beast, I had a short friendly encounter. As we sat with our pipes in the evening breeze on the point, one of the others exclaimed, "Look at that dog," and pointed to where the fuzzy black animal nosed among our packs. Of course it was a young bear. I reached over and thumped on a beached aluminum canoe with my fist, and the visitor shuffled off. That night I took the food into my tent and was not disturbed. That campsite was in reach of day-fishing parties who had established a garbage dump a short distance back, and the bear was probably an habitual prowler.

There is a lovely open rock ledge on the north shore near the western end of Cirrus. Normally I take a layover day there. On one occasion we followed a ridge back into the woods to identify birds. We noticed stumps overturned, anthills dug into. Shortly we heard movement on a lower, parallel ridge. We paused and waited. The movement ceased and was replaced by a loud sniffing. Finally, uncertain as to our exact presence or our intentions, a large black bear walked quickly through an open area and deeper into the woods, pausing twice to scent carefully in our direction. This campsite was clean, and the animal was not dependent on any form of human food supply. We were other creatures in his domain, but he did not confront us further.

Perhaps as helpful as anything for the novice traveler is a suggestion about portages and where one might enter the Quetico Park. There are minor inaccuracies on the detailed canoe route maps available, so the adventurer should not be too concerned if he is unable to locate a particular portage. Since lakes and trails twist so much, compasses are only partially helpful in locating or following a portage. Approaching the vicinity of a portage shown on his map, the paddler looks at the tree line for a cut in the land,



indicating a possible easy trail. Mouths of creeks seen from a distance tend to be darker than the surrounding area because of the growth of black spruce. Knowledge of both of these signs can enable one to arrive almost directly where he wishes rather than circling the shoreline.

Portages are frequently along creeks, even if it is not so indicated on the map; or the creek itself may be open due to beaver activity or high water. For example, the Fisher (no relation) Superior-Quetico waterproof maps, which most modern voyageurs use, show the portage from Lonely to Walter (map no. 104) across a neck of land, but it is actually two short portages along a creek and through a small pothole to the southwest. The large Quetico Provincial Park map by the Department of Lands and Forests (56a) does not indicate any portage at all between those two lakes. Nor does this latter map indicate a portage from the far northeast bay of Sturgeon into Halliday, a little lake off the beaten track. The Fisher map shows the portage but locates it to the north of where it actually is by several hundred yards. This is a rugged route which enables one to make a short circle south of Pickerel, on through Elizabeth, Jesse, and Maria. Neither of the two maps show portages into Hamburg, which can be reached from the east by three short portages or from the west by going up the creek and then a longer portage. This makes possible another circle route through Oriana and back through Jesse for those who like to see different lakes coming in and going out. The creeks which seem to connect most of the lakes may or may not be navigable, and here is where the outfitter can supply information as well as up-to-date details of the portages. Good aerial photo maps of much of the Quetico Park can be obtained at a reasonable cost from the Air Photographic Unit, Department of Energy, Mines, and Resources, Ottawa, Canada.

From the south, one enters the park by first driving to Moose, Saganaga, or Crane Lake and then paddling through the customs check points. I prefer to drive farther north, crossing the border at International Falls and traveling east to Nym Lake, entering the park there after picking up permits or securing a car shuttle from someone back to Lerome Lake on the highway. Many others enter at Dawson Trail Campground at French Lake on the northeast corner of the park. The Information Office at that campground (Quetico Provincial Park, Atikokan, Ontario) distributes two small booklets at no cost: "Canoe Routes" and "Quetico Provincial Park." The best book for the traveler may still be in print: *Canoe Trails Through the Quetico Park*, by Keith Denis, published by the University of Toronto Press and available at one time from The Quetico Foundation, 224½ Simcoe St., Toronto, Canada.

Our Own Canoe Trip

by Molly Morin



Our class of 12 juniors (11 gals, 1 guy) at Northrop School learned about the canoe trips of many explorers such as Alexander Mackenzie and David Thompson. We read *Canoeing With The Cree* and *The Lonely Land*, both of which I recommend whether you've been on a canoe trip or not. We also learned of the recent problems plaguing many of the rivers.

The class was fun, but it lacked one important thing, a canoe trip of our own. So we planned a weekend trip down the St. Croix where there is some of the most beautiful canoeing.

We began preparations by finding out who had the necessary equipment like canoes, paddles, tents, cars, and car carriers, and then we planned our food. At 7:00 Saturday morning fourteen of us – Will Fisher, Steve Pratt, Charlie Kronick, Michelle Bevis, Sally Noll, Nan Nolan, Kate Bryant, Bridget Bean, Lee Witcher, Patty Tumulty, Heidi Blackburn, Anne Clark, Joce Fansler, and myself – met at Will's house. There wasn't all that much to do, but everyone seemed to find it hard to move very fast. Finally, after about an hour, we were ready to go.

After a two hour drive we reached our starting point at the Yellow Banks in St. Croix State Park east of Hinckley, Minnesota. We quickly unloaded the cars, set the canoes in the water and jig-saw puzzled the packs into the canoes. Then Will and Sally set out to drop a car downriver and pick up some refreshments. This was to take only an hour. Well, after three hours of lunch, cards, sleeping and talent shows, Will finally returned. It seems that though the river was only 22 miles to our end point, the road twisted a bit making it closer to 50 miles by car. And on top of that, the drop point at Mile 81, Rock Creek Access on *The Minnesota Voyageur Trails* map, was well off the main road and no one there seemed to know of its existence.

After hearing their story and deciding who should carry the wine, we at last began our trip on the St. Croix. Many years before, French explorers and fur traders paddled this same area. Well, we all seemed to be paddling with those who paddled the same rhythm as us, and everyone was instantly in a good mood. We weaved in and out of islands, watching for wildlife, noticing the peacefulness surrounding us and learning the call of the bluejay. Mixed with the sounds of the birds were human songs that seemed to fit the occasion, often they were ones that had been sung on an earlier canoe trip one of us had been on. Besides the songs, there was the sound of the paddle, gurgling and creating little whirlpools that quickly spun themselves to non-existence, and the occasional "Hut, Changez" heard from the back of the canoe.

Then we came to our first rapids which held little whitewater except for one 5-foot drop. Everyone was a bit nervous. It was the closest any of us had come to rapids. The first three canoes got through fine but the canoe in front of Will's and mine was grabbed by a rock as it passed. The paddlers fought bravely but eventually capsized, sending Kate, Bridget and Nan into the water – cold! Kate grabbed the pack and waded to shore, and Bridget jumped onto the nearest rock, leaving Nan holding the canoe. After a good soaking and much effort, they emptied their canoe and continued on.

Meanwhile Will and I had been busy collecting anything that kept afloat, a paddle, a bag of potato chips, a ham and cheese sandwich, and a 10 gallon water jug (ooph). We stopped on shore after the rapids, found that everyone was all right and pushed on. There were some more eddies and a few rocks along the way but nothing very serious. At one point, quite a bit down river from where the canoe tipped, we were surprised to find a package of Girl Scout cookies that had stayed afloat.

We found a nice campsite on the point of an island and finally settled down after one last episode of the day – catching a run-a-way canoe (Will's red one) and Joce taking an unplanned swim. Bridget, Nan, Kate, and Joce changed to dry clothes, everyone set up tents and began to prepare dinner. We enjoyed hamburgers with or without cheese and wine. After dinner Michelle led a story by the campfire which always seems appropriate. The sky was clear and stars could be seen. It was *really* beautiful. We slowly crawled into our sleeping bags for the night. The day had not been a very warm one and the night wasn't either, especially for some who had to share their bag since some bags got wet when the canoe tipped.

The next morning we woke early to the songs of birds, the chill of fresh air, and the mist rising from the river. We ate oatmeal with raisins and sticky buns, then lay around for a while enjoying the sun. We had only 12 miles to go so no one was in any great hurry to leave. Finally we packed up, checked the campsite, took some final pictures and pushed off.

It was a strange day, for there was a storm in front of us and one behind us, but our luck held and it only sprinkled on us for a few minutes. As we paddled, we saw ducks and turtles and clouds that looked like a rider on a snowmobile or an old man with a big nose. We stopped for lunch on a hill that became known as "Warrior Hill." Everyone shared the bag lunches, and we continued our voyage.

Then our end came in sight, we landed our canoes, unloaded and the drivers Nan, Sally, Will and myself set out to pick up the cars left at the beginning point. After about three hours we were loaded and set to go. This was to be the end of our weekend, but for ten of us it was not. From here we went to a houseboat on the lower St. Croix. This was a whole different experience which I think everyone enjoyed. We planned to just stop quickly, fix supper, then hurry home. It all went as planned except for going home. At 9:30 we decided it would be nice to spend the night on the boat so everyone called to make sure it was all right. Will explained to my parents especially, since it was their boat, that it would be a good experience as a contrast to camping on the island. After the calls were made we went to the store and bought orangejuice, milk, bacon, eggs, and dark bread for breakfast the next morning.

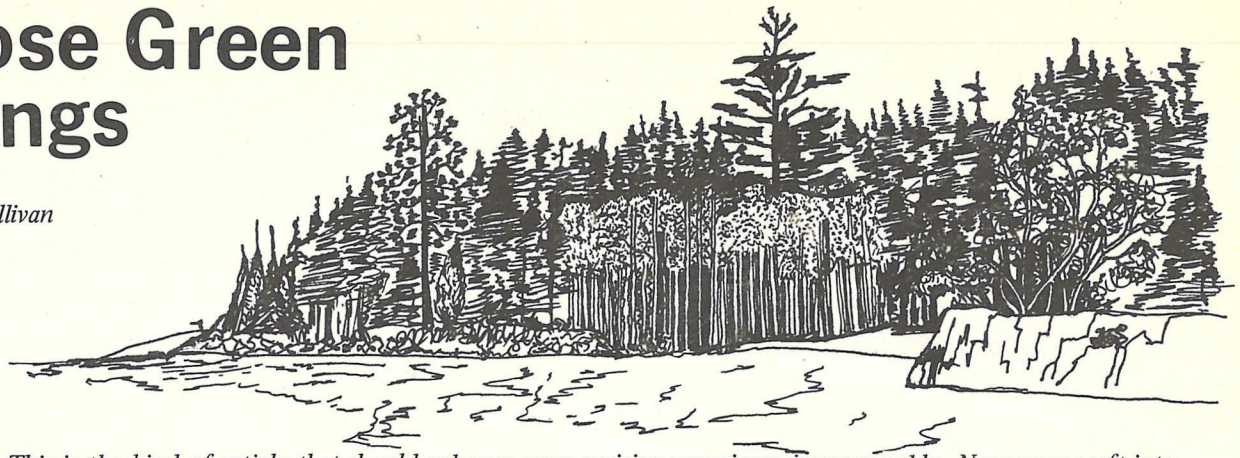
I hadn't slept so well in a long time. Morning came quickly. Breakfast and then slowly we left to drive directly to school.

Will's comment:

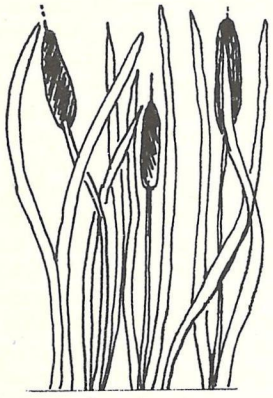
Now the reason the red canoe slipped away lonesome down the river and had to be rounded up by Nan and crew was that siren songs and sticky buns tend to honeynumb one's senses. . .but if you've been delaying an overnight canoe trip on the St. Croix, upper Mississippi, Crow Wing, Rum, Cannon, Root, or other rivers with the school, church, club, neighborhood gang of young people, take heed now of the revolutionary slogan – DO IT! (You'll be more than glad you did.)

Those Green Things

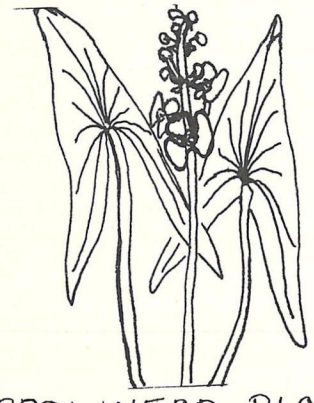
by Bill Sullivan



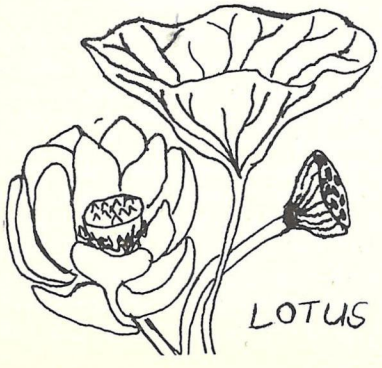
This is the kind of article that should enhance your cruising experience immeasurably. Nose your craft into shore occasionally and get on a first name basis with some of Minnesota's greenery.



CATTAIL



ARROWHEAD PLANT



LOTUS

What are the plants of Minnesota's lakes and rivers to you? Are they a backdrop for the stage where you pit your skills against the forces of nature? Or maybe the leafy walls of a natural cathedral where you can recharge your spirit? They are different things to different people. To many, they are a tangle of green in spring and summer and a riot of color in the fall. And yet there is a method to this green madness - a pattern of distribution that you can begin to see when you can recognize some of the members of the plant community.

Minnesota is unique. It is the meeting place of three major biomes – prairie, deciduous forest and coniferous forest. Each is the result of interrelated physical factors– soil, water, climate, etc. There are no sharp boundaries as are found at the tree line on high mountains, but rather, they meet in broad transition zones. The deciduous forest runs in a diagonal from the southeast towards the northwest, grading into oak parks and prairie to the southwest and a balsam fir-spruce forest to the northeast. Within these great regions, rivers and lakes create conditions that favor plants adapted to wet soil or shallow water.

Cattails growing in dense stands from quickly spreading underground stems are familiar to nearly everyone. They have long green leaves and cylindrical spikes of dark brown female flowers. The cattails have an aggressive nature. As the old vegetation builds the bottom, the stems advance through the ancestral ooze in an ever tightening circle. Aging a lake into a pond, filling a pond into a pothole, until finally there is nothing left but a wet spot in a meadow.

The Arrowhead plant is named for the shape of its leaves. It is found growing in shallow water from an underground stem with tubers, hence a second name, Duck Potato. As with other plants with subterranean storage systems, the arrowhead stores food through the summer, dies back to an underground stem in the winter, and uses its food stores to get an early start on the annuals which have a comparatively smaller food reserve. The tubers of the arrowhead can be eaten either for survival or a wild foods experience, but boiling is suggested. In July and early August the plant puts out a flower stalk that has three flowers to a whorl and three white petals to a flower. (Tell me there isn't order to the universe!)

Growing in open water are three varieties of water lily. All have large round leaves floating on or held just above the water. One variety has white or pink flowers and is called the white water lily. The other two varieties are yellow. The spatter dock, or yellow pond lily, has 5 to 6 petals and looks somewhat like a tulip. The other yellow flowered water lily, the American lotus, has a more open flower with many petals. The lotus is on the state protected list and should not be picked.

The small green plant scattered like confetti on quiet waters is duckweed. This smallest of all flowering plants is about 1/8 inch across so don't expect to see any blooms. As its name implies, it is a favored food for surface feeding ducks.

In shallow water or rich wet mud, the ancient order of horsetails stand as they have stood for millions of year. The straight hollow stem is jointed at the nodes where the whorls of leaves point outward. It is known as scouring rush by many forgetful campers because the gritty, tough stem makes a good substitute for the forgotten scouring pad.

Clean water and rich mud in a shady spot, often found around springs and small creeks, is a good place to look for water cress. Eaten raw, water cress is one of the tastiest of wild foods. The spicy flavor of its round, fleshy leaves hints at its place in the mustard family. Water cress is incredibly hard. During mild winters, like the one just past, it can be found thriving in the cold running waters surrounded by snow. In spring and summer it offers a more luxurient growth.

Pushing through the cool mud of early spring, just after the frost leaves the ground,

the skunk cabbage pushes out its dark purple or brown shell-like spathe. Inside the protective spathe, sits the knob shaped spadix or spike bearing small yellow flowers. At this stage, the leaves are tightly rolled lika a cigar but by the time the canoes are out in force, the leaves have opened into large cabbage-like affairs and the flowers are gone. Not familiar with cabbage leaves? Then you'll know it by the rank odor its damaged leaves give off when stepped on.

Another early arrival is the marsh marigold, sometimes called cowslip. It is unmistakable with golden yellow blooms set in lush green foliage of kidney shaped leaves and thick hollow stems. The lush green foliage is a rich source of vitamins (especially A and C) and minerals. It has been used medicinally for treating everything from fits to warts. Euell Gibbons, star of Grape Nuts commercials and author of several excellent books on wild foods and herbal medicines, recommends preparing the marsh marigolds as follows: cut select leaves from the plant (as opposed to uprooting it), wash and cover with boiling water. Bring the water back to a boil and immediately drain. Add more boiling water and repeat the process. After 2 or 3 of these treatments, cook the leaves in very little water until tender. Chop the leaves and season with butter, salt and a little cider vinegar. Other tasty recipes for this and other plants can be found in *Stalking the Healthful Herbs.*

There are several varieties of orchids to be found along streams and in wet places, including the Showy Lady Slipper, Minnesota's state flower. These native orchids are also on the protected list.

Dozens of varieties of native ferns populate the moist forests of Minnesota. The general fern leaf shape is well known but the differences between the individual species can be as minute as the shape of the sorus, the covering of the spore cases on the undersides of the leaf. Some of the more common ones include the bracken, maidenhair and cinnamon ferns. The bracken, which first appears as a highly edible fiddlehead but matures into a tough, almost woody plant, grows to be 2½ to 3 feet tall. The delicate maidenhair is an unlikely looking fern with a thin black stalk supporting small fan-shaped leaves. The cinnamon fern, which sends up several vegetative fronds for the production of food, also produces a separate brown-colored stalk covered with spores for reproduction.

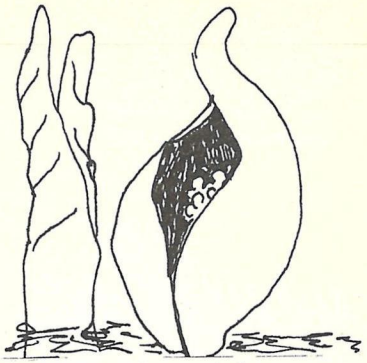
Flowing water is bordered by vegetation that is different from that found on quiet backwaters and lakes. The plants must resist the annual barrage of debris during the floods and the constant washing away of soil from their roots. The willows and alders are well suited to this environment. Usually shrubby, the thin, flexible branches survive the onslaught of the spring floods and the thickly branching roots hold the soil against the river's constant washing thus retarding its aging. Dense clumps of willows with straight stems rarely branching and thin, shapely pointed leaves, are a common sight throughout the state. There are several varieties in Minnesota, Bebbs, peachleaf, sandbar, pussy and black. The black willow is particularly handsome. The new branches have bright yellow bark. The leaves are slender with fine teeth. If you look closely, you will see two small, crescent-shaped leaves circling the stem at the base of each main leaf. Although shrubby in adverse conditions, the black willow can reach tree size along quiet waters. A tea made from the bitter tasting bark was used by the Indians for the treatment of diarrhea. The willows have an interesting way of increasing their numbers that makes use of the flood waters. A stem or branch, torn off by the rushing waters can replant itself in any wet soil in which it lands.

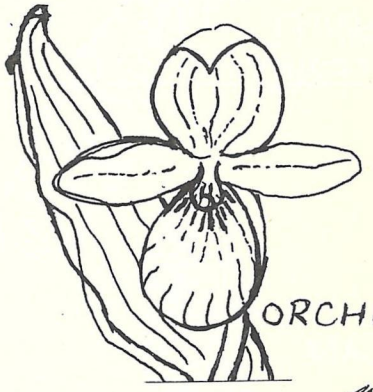
You may come across a broadleaf shrub with a "pine cone" on its branches. This is not a pine cone at all but rather the female flower of the alder. The alder, like its relatives the birches, has separate male and female flowers on the same tree. The male flower is a pendulous catkin and is shed after the pollen is gone. The woody female, on the other hand, hangs on into winter.

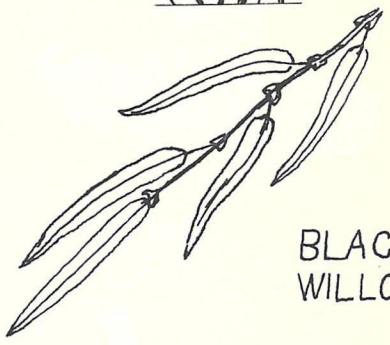
The coniferous forest covers much of Northeastern Minnesota including the midwest's remaining claim to wilderness, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

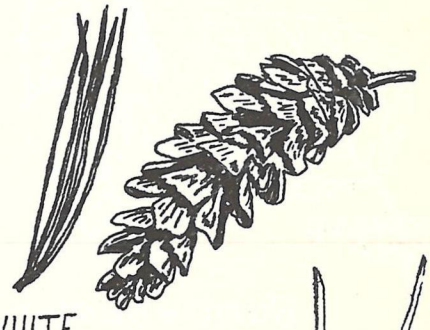
The white pine standing alone, towering above the lesser spires of spruce and fir seems a sentinel of the wilderness. In fact it is a remnant of a once vast forest of white and red pines that were logged over at the turn of the century. This stately giant has strongly horizontal branches underlining the great upswept tufts of needles making it easy to identify at a distance. Some have described the tree as looking scared, throwing its arms up in panic. Though its general shape is pyrimidal, it is often irregular due to lightning, insects or disease.

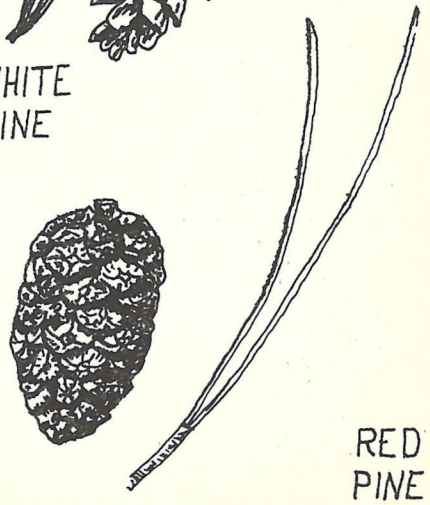
Another tree that shares the space above the pointed horizon is the red or Norway pine, the state tree of Minnesota. It too is easy to identify at a distance. The red pine has a rounded crown and the needles appear as clumps scattered along the branches. Up close other differences between these pines are readily seen. The reddish tint of the bark is the source for one of the names of the red pine, while the bark of the white pine is a deeply furrowed grayish brown. In addition, the 4 to 5-inch needles of the red pine come in bundles of two while the 3 to 5-inch needles of the white pine come five to a bundle. Lone red pines can be found scattered throughout the north but pure stands are becoming more common as the seedlings are planted for reforestation. For this purpose red pine is favored over white

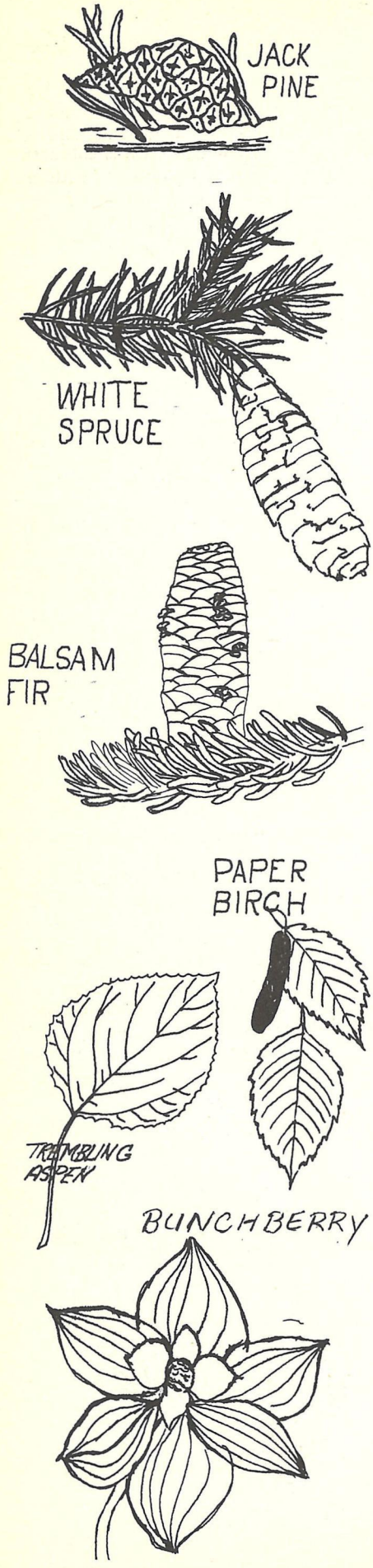

SKUNK CABBAGE


ORCHID


BLACK WILLOW


WHITE PINE


RED PINE



pine because it is more resistant to disease.

Another Minnesota pine grows in pure stands not due to man's reforestation efforts but from nature's. The Jack pine, a small to medium sized tree with spreading branches and scant open foliage consisting of short, 1-inch, twisted needles in paired bundles. Jack pines lack the stately beauty of other pines. The small dead branches that hang on for years give it a somewhat scraggily look. The key to its success is in the strongly curved little cones lying close to the branch. Unlike other cones that open at maturity to release their seeds, the Jack pine cone remains tightly closed, and clings to the branches until fire sweeps the area. Those cones not destroyed by the flames are stimulated by the heat to open and scatter their seeds over the burn. In this way, the young seedling is assured of a place in the sun. As these trees grow, they form a uniform stand. The stand provides a home for the ground nesting Kirtlands Warbler which only nests in large tracts of young Jack pine 6 to 18 feet tall. So dependent have the warblers become on the Jack pines and indirectly on the fires that produce the necessary conditions, that the tiny birds are dwindling in numbers. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources recognizes the role of fire in the natural environment and has a controlled burn from time to time to provide a habitat for those fire-dependent plants and animals.

While the pines have their beauties and intricacies, the spruces and firs are the dominant plants of the Northern forests which stretch from the Great Lakes to Hudson Bay. Spruces and firs, whose pointed spires fringe the horizon around many northern lakes and rivers, are very similar at a distance. On both trees the single needles crowd along the branchlets, but the difference can be told at a touch. The Balsam Fir has flat needles with rounded tips and is soft to the touch while the needles of the white spruce are stiff and sharp having four sides. This difference is carried over to the twigs, the needle of the fir leaves a round, smooth scar while spruce needles are borne on short woody pegs that persist and give the twig a feeling of roughness. The fir displays its cones in an upright fashion like candles on the ends of the branches. In the spruces the cones hang down. In contrast to the scaly gray back of the spruces, the Balsam Fir has smooth gray bark marked by blisters containing a resin. This is the resin, Canada balsam, used for mounting microscope slides.

The Balsam Fir is found almost exclusively in the northern forests, prefering cool, damp or shaded places. The range of the white spruce is wider, extending southward to the St. Croix River valley. It is found on dry slopes with pines, in swamps with Tamaracks and in mixed hardwood forests.

Another conifer found in the northern forest is the White Cedar. It is more commonly known as Arbor Vitae, widely used as an ornamental by men and a communications post by dogs. The Arbor Vitae, instead of needles, has yellow green scale-like leaves that form flat sprays. The cones are small, about ½-inch and the bark is in long vertical strips. The tree has a compact pyrimidal shape with the trunk often deformed. In low moist places it can form dense pure stands that are nearly impenetrable, but in more rocky soil, it is found growing singly or in small clumps.

The northern forest belongs to the conifers, but two broadleaf trees are important – the paper birch and the aspen. The paper birch is a picture book tree with its characteristic snow white bark. The thin bark is easily removed revealing a dark inner bark an unfortunate practice that not only permanently disfigures the tree but leaves it open to disease and insect attack. Oils in the bark make it good fire starter when all else is wet. The oils are also a preservative against decay so the bark lasts for years and can be picked from fallen logs if it becomes necessary. Because of its flexible toughness and resistance to decay, birch bark was used by the Indians to cover canoes and houses.

The paper birch is found along most of the state's canoe routes but Minnesota is the southern extent of its natural range. The foliage turns golden-yellow in the fall.

Another common tree of the north (and elsewhere throughout the state) is the aspen or poplar. Actually there are two similar species – the trembling aspen and the big toothed aspen. The main difference is in the leaves the trembling is smaller, about the size of a quarter, and has finer teeth than the big tooth aspen. Both trees have laterally flattened leaf stems, so with the slightest breeze the leaves shake furiously. These trees are straight, narrow crowned with smooth gray-green bark. They are fast growing trees that spread quickly (from underground runners). The aspens are a major source of pulpwood for paper mills.

Both the birch and the aspen can quickly cover an area left open by fire or logging operations. Their roots hold the soil and their fallen leaves help build the humus. Their leafy branches provide a protective canopy for the young firs and spruces that will succeed these short-lived guardians.

In the dim light under the close canopy of spruce and fir boughs only the most shade tolerant plants can grow. Often the ground is covered with a soft cushion of green mosses and curly gray reindeer leichen. Growing in this gray-green carpet is the Canada mayflower, a small plant that sets out white flowers in May or June that become pale red berries in the late summer or fall. Also growing close to the ground is the bunchberry or dwarf dogwood. A plant with tough, parallel veined leaves that produces what looks like a single white flower. Actually these are white leaves surrounding the many true flowers in the center.

In more open areas around shorelines or old burns, is a northland delicacy – the blueberry. It is a member of the heath family and as such puts out little white bell-shaped flowers in the spring. By late July or early August, bears and humans are competing for the juicy sweet berries. Another, closely related plant gets fruit a little later. It is called bearberry by the common folk (guess who wins most of these encounters) *Arctostaphyllos uva ursi* by the botanists and Kinnikinnick by the Indians.

The lowly lichen deserves a word at this point. It is in fact a wonderous thing. It is the result of a mutualistic relationship between a fungus and algae. The fungus partner provides a home, moisture and minerals for the algae which in turn produces enough food for both through photosynthesis. Lichens are found world wide in a variety of habitats. They often fill the niche of pioneer plant, clinging precariously to sheer rock faces building soil so other plants may, if possible, follow. They are a variety of shapes and often appear as blotches of color – oranges, red, light green, gray brown or black. Because they depend on the air rather than the soil for their growth requirements, they are a relative indicator of air quality. Their numbers decrease rapidly when pollutants contaminate the air.

While the Northern forest seems hauntingly wild, the mixed hardwoods seem more open and familiar. The greater diversity in the plants of the deciduous forest is readily seen in the many warm colors of the autumn landscape. Because of crowding in the canopy, the crowns don't develop in their characteristic form and are more difficult to identify at a distance. The best way to identify them is to look at the leaves. Leaves come in a variety of patterns: simple and compound, smooth margins or toothed, lobed or entire, with hairs and without; the combinations are immense. Fortunately for the novice tree watcher, the trees are consistent, setting out leaves that are characteristic of the species. In addition auxilliary clues like flowers, seeds and bark are helpful in some cases.

Gauzy red in the spring flower and a blaze of red in the fall, the red maple comes and goes in glory. This maple has the widest range along canoe routes, but its range is overlapped by the sugar maple and the silver maple in the south and east. All maples have seeds with two wings and descend from the branches like helicopters. Most people know the familiar five point pattern of the maple leaf but sometimes have trouble telling one kind from another. Briefly, the angle between the lobes of a red (or swamp) maple is sharp while the angle between the lobes of a sugar maple is a rounded U-shape; also the smoother leaf margin is parallel on the lower half of the middle lobe. While all maple leaves are a lighter green on the undersides, the silver maple takes its name from the whitish undersides of its leaves which flash in the sun. In shape, the leaves have longer thinner lobes and the points are more acute than the other maples.

Another member of the maple family is the box elder. It has the double winged seed but instead of the standard maple leaf design has compound leaves, each having three to five leaflets. Its range is the midwest, and its sap can be tapped like the sugar mapel to make syrup.

The wood of the white ash is tough and elastic making it useful for such things as baseball bats and canoe paddles. The ashes have compound leaves of 7 to 11 leaflets. The leaflets, about the same size and general oval shape as birch leaves, appear to be regular leaves rather than units of a larger leaf. Ashes also have winged seeds but only one wing to a seed, giving them the appearance of tiny canoe paddles. There are three native ashes in Minnesota – red, green and black. The differences between them are small and require close observation of the leaves. The red ash has red brown hairs on the buds, twigs and the undersides of stalked leaves. The green ash has no hairs and the stalked leaves are green on their undersides. The black ash is also hairless with leaves green on the underside but the leaves are set right on the central leaf axis rather than on stalks of their own.

Probably the most common of all trees in the midwest is the American elm. Familiarity has made us less sensitive to the fountain shaped beauty of this tree. Planted along streets throughout the state, the interlocking branches form row up row of arches. These elms have blue-green leaves that are asymetrical at the base and rough on the upper surface. This asymmetry is carried over into the buds as a result the twigs zig-zag from side to side.

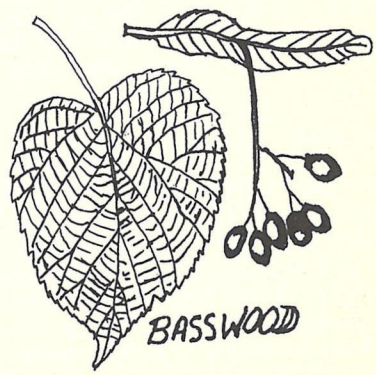
Another smaller tree, the slippery elm, lacks the stateliness of the American elm but has medicinal properties. The leaf is similar to the American elm but is rough on both sides. In the spring the bark moves when touched because of the slippery inner bark. Pioneer boys would chew the inner bark in the spring when it was soft and their mothers would lay in a supply for treating a host of maladies throughout the year. Euell Gibbons gives several ways of preparing it as either a medicine or as a food in *Stalking the Wild Herbs.*

In early summer, you might *listen* for the basswood. Long after the other trees have flowered, the basswood sets out bunches of starshaped yellow flowers that scent the air and drive the bees into a buzzing frenzy of nectar gathering. From the nectar the bees make honey that is said by experts to be the best. The flowers themselves, fresh or dried, can be brewed to make an excellent tea. The flowers, after pollination, develop into pea sized nuts five or six to a bunch. The bunches are attached to a special leaf that acts like a sail in the wind to disperse the mature seeds. The foliage is made up of distinctive, 4 to 6-inch heart-shaped leaves that are also off base like the elms.

Along river bottoms of more arid regions, the cottonwoods become common. It is a relative of the fast growing aspens. The leaves are triangular with small teeth set at right angles like steps. As with all members of the poplar family (willows and poplars) the sexes are separate. The female trees release vast quantities of cottony seed that in dense stands whitens the ground.

More light filters through the canopy of a hardwood forest than a coniferous forest, and as a result, there is a greater abundance and diversity of plants on the forest floor. Blood root, wood anemone, trilliums, violets, liver leaf are among the wild flowers that brighten the woods in the spring. These are followed by new plants coming into bloom nearly every week there after until the autumn frosts. To explore these plants, an excellent book is *Minnesota Wild Flowers of Forest, Field and Wetland* by Juanita Mariotta. It contains good, simple line drawings for easy identification and was the basis for the drawings of herbs in this article. There is a good range of books on trees, identification and lore, available at the local bookstores. One of the best is *Trees of Minnesota* by the Minnesota Department of Conservation. It also has clear line drawings and was used as a guide in this article.

By identifying plants, noticing how they are adapted to their environment and their pattern of distribution, they can add greatly to the enjoyment of your outings. Plants can be the key to understanding the ecosystem where you live or travel. Knowledge of their medicinal and culinary properties can be the basis of a fascinating hobby or possibly save your life in an emergency. And finally, appreciating the beauty of plants as individuals will increase the beauty of plants as scenery.





Thoughts

A lead-in about the author is hardly needed – Jeff tells enough about himself in his article. We'll just say that he's a past president of the MCA and if you take another look at the cover – that's him in the bow.

by Jeff Howe

Why am I writing this down? It is a beautiful day and I'd like to be outside. Do I have anything to say that would be worth your spending time to read? I guess neither of us will know the answer to these questions until later. In the past, I have written articles explaining some of the techniques used by racers and cruisers alike. I have also organized and helped to teach clinics designed to make "duffers" into efficient canoeists. I don't mean to disparage the "duffer", the somewhat inept modern day voyageur. Or do I? I realized that many of these people were physically unable to do what was asked of them. I have been an instructor in a health club, I have led exercises in school and the army and all of my experiences have led me to have a poor opinion of the general fitness of the American people. I look around me, and I see people who are falling into ruin before my eyes. Physical wrecks by the age of twenty-five. God help us when this generation struggles along to the age of myocardial infarction.

Many people look at me as some sort of freak. They see me perhaps as a kind of overgrown kid who never developed a proper sense of responsibility. At nearly thirty-three years of age, I am still playing games and have taken on very few of society's values as regards maturity.

I value development of my total self. I work at keeping my brain from rusting out. I try to develop my senses and to be in touch with myself. I am an animal and I don't want to rise above that state. Indeed, I don't believe that one can rise above it.

I have been utilized by some people as physical fitness consultant. "What can I do to get rid of a few inches off my waist? Should I lift weights to tone up my muscles like they used to be?" What they have really been asking for is to regain their lost youth. It slipped away without their noticing it. I am willing to show the way to regain that youth, but the price is high and I've only found a few who were willing to do what was necessary.

I think the problem is basically misplaced values. Today most of us seek the things that make us acceptable to others. A good education, respectable job, nice family, home and all the rest. I think we have to return to values that make us ac-

ceptable to ourselves. We have to live with our animalness. We have to achieve less and experience more. We have to sensitize ourselves to life going on around us. We need to enjoy the simple things: bare feet in the wet grass, smells and sounds too subtle for the pace of everyday life – watching the sunrise and wondering what lies between here and the next sunset – living without being a slave to schedules and deadlines. We need to learn to be the best we can be. Competition is a fact of life. We can choose not to compete but nature goes on selecting the best to survive. The rest are relegated to museums. Survival of the fittest is as much a reality today as ever.

I am encouraged to see so many people jogging, biking, canoeing, and generally pursuing fitness. I just don't think that most of us take these things seriously enough. Out to have a good time, we don't want to get carried away with these things. Very few people are sufficiently motivated to push themselves when it hurts. Beyond that pain barrier lies a sense of well being and a self confidence that can't be arrived at any other way. We are all born bundles of potential and most of us never push to develop it. We take what comes. School teaches us what we'll need to know so we never have to learn to think for ourselves. The church gives us our religion, TV gives us our entertainment, varsity sports in school and later on the spectator sports give us super bowls instead of personal physical fitness.

Once as a kid, I was at the beach doing gymnastics with some friends when a jolly fat man came over and said that he used to be able to do that. I could see even then that in his fantasy world he still could do it. He got up and tried to do something and failed. It hurt him when all of a sudden reality jarred him with the truth that he couldn't. He was standing at the door of his lost youth. I wonder if he took up the challenge or if he even realized that he was at a cross roads. I made a promise to myself then to never let that happen to me. I refuse to age. Aging is quitting, copping-out giving in to boredom and desperation.

I can run and paddle longer and faster now than I could ten years ago. When I can't go as fast as I used to, I can still go as fast as I can. That is the secret. Not to win necessarily but to do the best you can do. One of the things that attracted me to canoe racing in the first place, was the fact that old timers are not looking forward to retirement, but rather to beating the next batch of young whippersnappers.

* * *

As I listened to my car radio while driving down East River Road one night something came gently but emphatically to my mind. I had been trying for some time to tie several things together in my value system. I hadn't actually been consciously trying to sort these things out so the answer when it came to me was not intellectual but came more like a sigh of relief. There was a common theme threading its way through my liking for certain music, art, activities, and even people. The common denominator was the elemental nature of these people and things. And that is that they were true to their natural origins, uncontrived – their beauty springing from a harmony which is peace.



"Beyond that pain barrier lies a sense of well being and a self confidence that can't be arrived at any other way."

The discord which I see as I look around me in the world, I believe, comes out of the loss of freedom which in turn comes from putting faith in man's mis-contrived realities. Plastic is not a surface condition. It is one of basic compromise. I will give you my freedom for a little security. Unless you are among the very fortunate your job does not totally satisfy your needs for self expression. No matter how lofty the niche you have carved for yourself, you have but 24 hours in your day. Assuming you work at least 8 hours a day, sleep an average of eight hours, spend a couple of hours eating, commuting, bathing, reading the newspaper, a couple of hours watching television – that leaves about 4 hours of your life plus weekends from which you have to find time to mow the lawn, fix up around the house, etc., and to satisfy your needs for self expression. What have you done lately? I came to this point and asked myself how much I valued those hours. For what price was I willing to sell my life merely to subsist. To live is to grow, not to grow is to vegetate.

Now I understand why canoeing is what it is to me. It is the symbol of my freedom sold for a few pieces of silver. Canoe racing is a natural sport, person against the environment, person against person, and even person against himself. It is no spectator sport to draw thousands of admiring fans. It is a participation oriented sport. The thrills are subtle, not hurled at you by some 300 horse power engines. No fences, no arenas, no parking lots, no big money. The field is Nature's own, or what little mankind has left for her.

So don't buy a program, a cushion, and a beer. The ticket is simply to accept the challenge. The thrill is real. It is in its essence – freedom.

Let's Go Canoe Camping



In addition to being a teacher of biology, Bob O'Hara conducts adult courses in backpacking, canoeing, and camping, and is the Outdoor Activities Consultant to Hoigaards, Inc. Bob is currently preparing for his fifth expedition to the Arctic – along with Jan Berae, Bill George, and John Jambeck. Their journey will take them from Great Slave Lake via the Back River to Chantrey Inlet.

by Bob O'Hara, Jr.

With new materials on the market, along with increasing regulations at many areas around the country, it is time to take another look at Canoe Camping and equipment necessary for a successfull trip.

To begin with, let's talk about the big three: your canoe, paddle and life vest. In canoes, we find three major categories: wood canvas or wood strip, fiberglass-plastic, and aluminum. The manufactured wood canoes are so expensive they should be considered impractical. The do-it-yourself MCA woodstrip Cruiser is an excellent canoe, very light and very inexpensive. A few hints when building your own would be: use a cruising mold not a racing mold; build or buy a good portage yoke; use mesh or cane seats for coolness; allow some kind of ring or clasp attachment at bow and stern for mooring lines. If desired, you can put a dye into your resin and color your canoe. Most people prefer the natural wood design.

Of the fiberglass-plastic variety, use some caution in buying. Many glass canoes came from molds of wooden canoes. Since glass does not have the flotation of wood, many glass canoes are capable of taking in water over the gunwales in rapids or big waves. Be sure that the canoe you select has ample freeboard and rather high sides. One advantage to glass is that its bright colors are nice for photos, and they are pretty much maintenance free. Of the plastic variety, I know many people who have had problems with seams pulling apart or ribs cracking. One person, after obtaining a second canoe from the manufacturer, returned it and bought another product, a non-plastic.

Aluminum is one of the traditional all purpose canoes. They are not the fastest paddling, but I feel that they are rugged and take a minimum of care. The aluminum canoe is what we use on our Arctic Expeditions. I feel that there are two superior models on the market, the Aluma Craft Quetico Wilderness and the Standard Grumman. Both of these are well made canoes. Aluma Craft has a very nice built-in yoke. Grumman is made from marine aircraft aluminum. I find my legs a bit cramped in the Aluma Craft, but I must admit to being a Grumman owner for over a decade and use Grumman for my trips in the far North.

Regarding length and weight of a canoe, too much emphasis is placed on weight. A short canoe weighs less, but paddles like a bathtub. Your canoe should be between 16-18 feet with 17 feet the standard length for many models. Weight will run from the 50 pound range to the 90 pound range. A normal glass-aluminum canoe will be around 70 pounds, which I do not consider heavy. Beware of lightweight aluminum models. The lightness comes from a thinner skin which means they will puncture more easily; all other parts of the canoe will be the same weight and gauge as the standard variety.

Your paddle is a very important tool. Contrary to everything you may have learned, square tipped, laminated paddles of eight inches or more are really great! Also of considerable value is the T-grip handle. I buy my paddles a bit on the short side, but not as short as the MCA racers. None of this to the chin, eyes, or forehead bit. The most important item to consider is the ability to maneuver your paddle and apply a direct and straight force with your upper hand. If the paddle has to be at an angle across your body it is too long. Your arm should come across your body and apply a direct and powerful force on the paddle putting it straight down into the water. I am six feet and use paddles 57-61 inches in length.

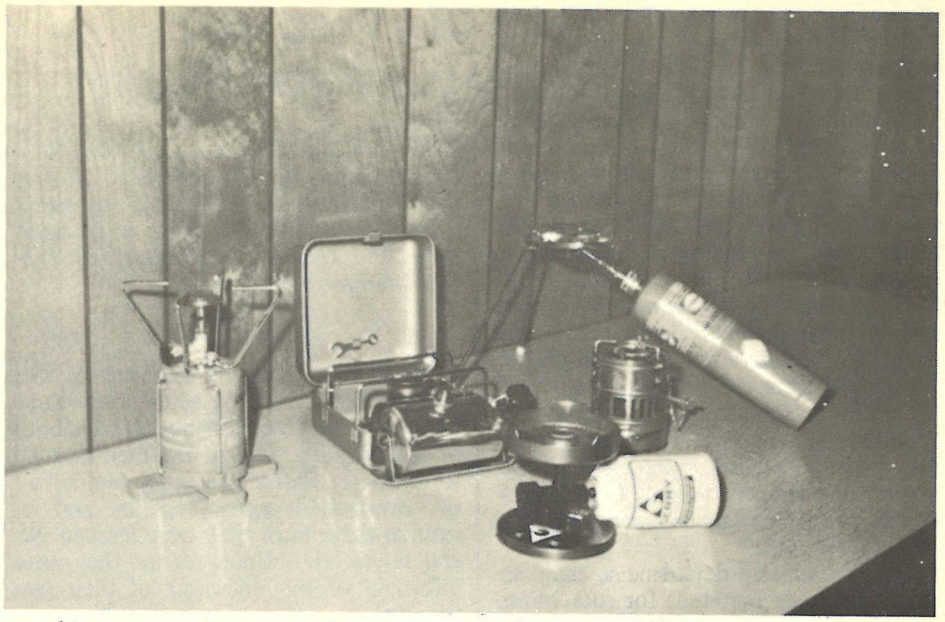
Painting your paddle a bright color or design adds a bit of flavor to any trip and sparkle to your photos. Remember a long paddle is not efficient and will result in tired arms and fewer miles.

Beware of your paddling techniques. I feel the J-stroke is highly over rated. In fact, I think the J-stroke should be declared DEAD! Its main function is to guide a canoe paddled by a *single* occupant. This was especially true in the early days of the canoe in Canada with fur trappers. I feel it is the J-stroke that causes people to buy long paddles, especially the sternman who likes to lean way back and rudder all day while his bowman dies trying

to maintain some resemblance of forward movement. If you change your technique to shorter strokes, use wide paddles and switch sides or make minor adjustments in the stern, you will be more successful – winding up covering more miles and winding up less tired. Remember the key to good paddling is your choice of paddle.

To drown or not to drown? Your life vest is a key piece of equipment. Contrary to popular thought, the water ski belt or boat cushion is not adequate nor legal. The one time you will really need a life saving device, you will probably not have it on. Therefore you should give serious consideration to a device that you will wear, that is comfortable, that will work and that will allow you the necessary freedom whether paddling or in the water. I feel the solution is a foam life vest. It is very comfortable, easy to paddle in, acts as an insulator on cold days and is used as the bottom part of my foam pad for sleeping. The typical "Orange Horse Collar" is superior only in cost. You should give serious consideration to what price your life is worth. Most drownings occur in cold waters or in rapids. It you buy a good life vest, like your canoe and paddle it will last a lifetime. Don't cheat on yourself. Go prepared.

With the big three covered, let's move on to the items necessary for safe and comfortable camping. Your sleeping bag is very important. It must serve your needs well, or you will derive little pleasure from camping. Dacron and down are the two most popular materials in use. Dacron Fiberfill II is a new product and worthy of serious consideration. Fiberfill II is about half the cost of down, will stuff for storage like down and is useable even when wet, which down is not. Being new on the market, only a few major brands offer Fiberfill II, but in the near future, many more choices will be available. When you buy a sleeping bag, the quality or workmanship, construction and style are as important as the material it contains. Look for good strong stitching, heavy duty zippers, and seams that are not sewn through. If the seams are sewn through, the bag will not be as warm regardless of what's inside. Mummy or modified mummy are warmer than the boxy rectangular style. The greater the LOFT the WARMER the bag. Therefore don't just buy according to the weight of filling, but take all of the above into consideration. For our midwest Canoe Country a bag of either down or dacron from 2-3 pounds will be sufficient for spring, summer, or fall.

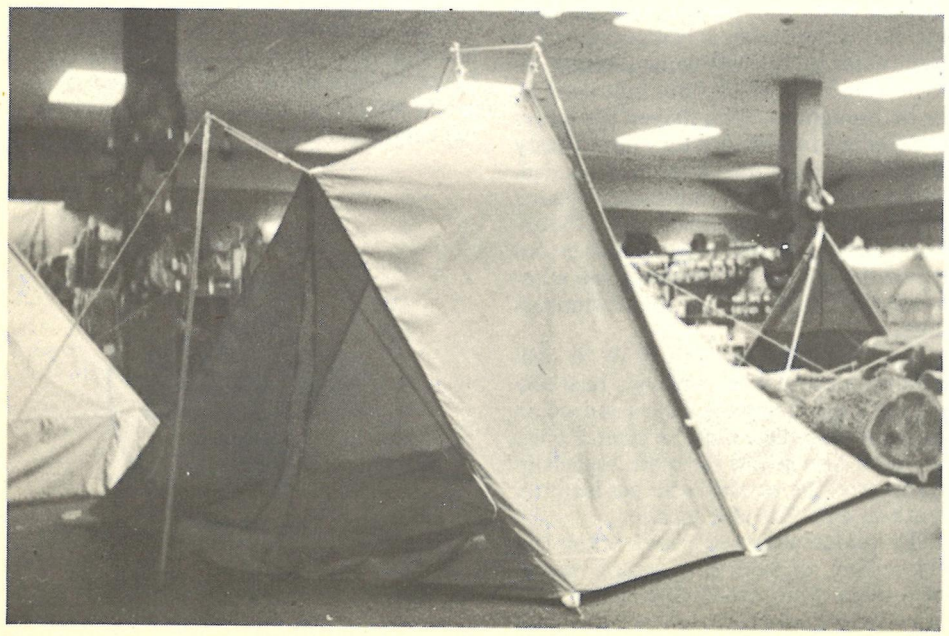


Bough beds have been obsolete for over a decade, yet we still read of them in various technique manuals. For ecological reasons and for fire safety, you MUST NOT use bough beds. An adequate replacement is the foam pad or air mattress. I prefer the foam pad because I hate to inflate, deflate and repair. There are three sizes of foam pads; the full length, the ¾ (down to your knees) and the shortie, only to your hips. If you use one of the last two, your foam life vest will fill in for the missing length. Foam is light but a bit on the bulky side. Two varieties of foam are on the market. One is open cell and allows moisture vapors to pass through. The other is closed cell permitting no passage of moisture. Closed cell is used primarily in the winter. It is useable for summer but does not have the loft or comfort of open cell. Either way, a foam pad is handy to use, safe, and a very necessary item to help preserve our American forests.

To chop or not to chop? Really, that is NO LONGER a question. Today the solution is simple. Saw first, split second, burn third. The woodsman's axe has gone the route of the J-stroke. It is dead. If you are permitted to use firewood (many places now prohibit this), your obligation is to use dead, down wood. The only tools you will need are a lightweight folding saw and possibly a half or three-quarter axe. The procedure is to gather the wood, saw into 12-16 inch lengths and split if necessary.

Your other choice is to bring your own fire. This is easily accomplished with the many models of lightweight backpacking mountain stoves on the market today. These are compact, burn very hot, have few mechanical parts, use small amounts of fuel and help preserve the overused campsite. We will see the day, I am afraid, that when it comes time to gather 'round the campfire, in its place will be a big Primus 111B! Seriously, the stove does have its place along with the campfire. For fast efficient cooking, use a stove and save the wood for later in the evening to meditate by.

Sleeping warm is one thing; sleeping dry and bug free is another. After having made a wise decision on your sleeping bag, you must exercise the same wisdom in your choice of a tent. I prefer to sleep out



when conditions permit. When I do sleep in, it is only to sleep. Therefore my tent needs are simple. A lightweight tent of nylon or poplin, sewn in floor, mosquito netting and aluminum poles or framework, are all the canoeist requires. A canoe tent should not be a three bedroom rambler. I don't consider it essential to stand up inside. Suit your own needs but keep it light and compact. Buy tents with bright colors, putting life in your photos. If you go nylon, remember there are two kinds: coated and non-coated. The coated are waterproof, but will have condensation inside. The uncoated are either water repellant or just nothing. The solution is simple. Buy an uncoated tent with a coated rainfly. You will solve both problems and live very comfortable. In weight, I consider 5 pounds per person to be maximum in a canoe tent.

In the First Aid department, carry an ample supply of materials for cuts, burns and other minor injuries. You don't need a portable hospital but only what the name implies, materials necessary for immediate and first aid. A manual is easier to consult than your memory. Bring one.

The BWCA doesn't allow cans or bottles. That really is no problem for the good canoe camper doesn't need them anyway. There are many reuseable plastic or nylon containers that will service your needs. Your menu selection can be as varied as your imagination, and the local grocery has most of what you need. Freeze dried food is great, can be prepared quickly and is the equivalent of fresh food.

For clothing, just a few hints. Spring and fall will require items of wool. Summer allows for more use of cotton. A good piece of raingear, more than a mere poncho, is as important as your sleeping bag. To be wet and cold is to be in trouble. Today the word is called hypothermia, but it still means death due to exposure. Keep warm, dry and well fed. Ahh, what contentment!



Photos courtesy of EMS - Lob Pine

Be Prepared for Water Safety

Scott Eckberg just graduated from Robbinsdale High School and plans to enter the University of Minnesota to study journalism in the spring. He is an Eagle Scout and Assistant Scout Master of Robbinsdale Troop No. 141.

by Scott Eckberg

Four men from the Minneapolis area recently were canoeing across Clear Lake when a strong gust suddenly capsized both of their canoes. Two of the men decided to swim for shore. The other two lashed the overturned canoes together and remained there until they were rescued several hours later. Upon rescue, they were informed of the drowning of their two friends.

The tragic ending of this incident could have been avoided had all the canoeists been equipped with a life preserver and had remained with their canoes until help arrived. This case is not unique; there will be many similar accidents this summer with the same unfortunate results.

The key to avoiding water accidents lies in prevention. No one should step into any watercraft without a Coast Guard approved life vest; much less without knowing how to swim. Just imagine how the casualty rate for water accidents would plummet if all water recreationists could swim.

Aside from knowing how to swim, the canoeist should know what to do in the event of a drowning. The only requirement for this, in most cases, is a quick mind and plain common sense. REACH, THROW, ROW, and GO is the sequence to follow in rescuing a swimmer in distress. If the victim is not far from shore, dock, or boat, one can REACH him with a fishing pole, arm, paddle, or what have you. But if the victim is further away, it's often better to THROW some floating object to him that will sustain him until he can be brought in. Ring-shaped life buoys are excellent for this, but they have a nasty habit of disappearing whenever needed. In that case one must improvise. Inflated beach toys, boat oars, sealed gallon thermos and Hilex jugs will support full grown men in the water. An inflated spare automobile tire can keep four tired swimmers afloat.

The third solution is to ROW or paddle to the victim. When rowing a boat row with the stern facing the victim and watch him constantly. One must be careful when the victim climbs into the craft, especially a canoe, lest the would-be heroes lean too far in one direction and capsize.

The fourth alternative, GO, is the last ditch effort to save a drowning victim when there is no other alternative. This rescue should not be attempted by anyone but a trained lifeguard. In this case the rescuer sheds all outer clothing and enters the water feet first. He then swims to the victim. At this point, the amateur "lifeguard" may find himself in trouble when the hysterical victim latches onto him, thereby pulling them both underwater. Authorities agree that it is better for one to drown rather than two.

But there may come a time when the drowning victim is you. Again, prevention is the key. If you can't swim, learn. If you can swim, practice. Use common sense while in a canoe or at the beach. Have an idea of what you would do if you find yourself in a potential drowning situation.

Drownproofing is the technique with which a tired swimmer can keep from panicking. If far from shore, the exhausted swimmer can perform a simple "jellyfish float" by taking a deep breath and grasping the ankles. By relaxing and snatching an occasional breath of fresh air one can remain almost indefinitely. And bobbing in the water like that he is sure to be seen.

Should you fall into deep water fully clothed, it is possible to inflate your clothing, which will then act as a life preserver. First, remove all outer clothing including shoes. Tie the legs of your pants together, leaving space to put your head through. Then do a scissors kick, so as to get as high out of the water as possible. At the same time, trap air in the trousers by grasping them at the waist and slapping them toward the water. Insert your head through the legs, lean back, and relax. Keep the air from escaping by holding the waist opening underwater. A button-down shirt also makes a good emergency life vest. While doing a jellyfish float unbutton one of the top shirt buttons and blow air into the opening. If the shirt is thoroughly drenched, the air will be trapped in the area of the shoulder blades between skin and shirt. It will keep you afloat if you remain still and you remembered to button your collar.

This information and more can be found at your nearest office of the Red Cross. Inquire and make use of their films and swimming courses. Have a fun summer but keep it safe.



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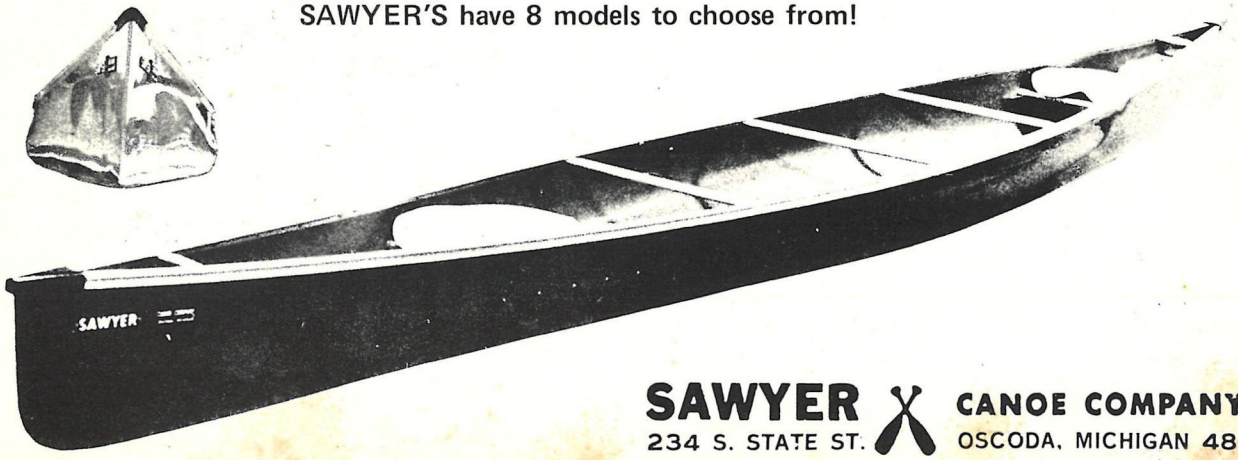
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