

could hear him breathe as well as snort and crash, but by the time I got out of my tent all I could see were the stars.

In the morning I discovered other company had been around. All that was left of the molasses loaf which I was looking forward to for breakfast was part of the plastic bags. Other food was missing, too. Everything had been wrapped the same as it had been the previous night. Did the same idea not work twice or were there different residents? Hopefully they were raccoons but there weren't any tracks or other evidence. I kept thinking of an article in the latest "Season's" magazine entitled "Bears live in the Park" by Patricia Weese.

It was a beautiful morning. The lake was like glass; it was so calm. The sunrise was spectacular. I stayed put to get caught up on some letter writing, read, rest and explore. There were dandelions in bloom even though it was fall. Two moose were arguing back and forth (or so it sounded), but too far away to go after with a camera.

At about noon the sky became overcast. I hoped it was temporary but passing canoeists informed me it was to last until noon the next day. It stopped raining long enough for me to cook supper.

The previous two nights had the advantage of a full moon. This night the moon was visible but not shedding much light through the overcast. I was more apprehensive than I'd been yet. At about mid-night, I was awakened by something just outside my tent. It sounded like smallish animals. When I poked my head out of the door, two pairs of eyes shone in the light from the flashlight. The animals were definitely smaller than a person.

It was quiet for a while but I couldn't go back to sleep and it was too early and too dark to go on. In the distance a cry and an answer. Wolves? No - loons. There was a loud splash very close to my tent. I could also hear a large animal in the bush - even closer than the splash. There was something right outside my tent. I could positively identify three raccoons by the campfire. What a relief. People say that black bears are harmless but I didn't particularly want to find out for myself right then. There was still no explanation for the loud splash or large animal in the bush, but I



stopped worrying and went back to sleep.

I awoke to the gentle splash of waves on the rock. What happened to the early morning calm? The mosquitoes and blackflies were out in the warm weather. I was packed and on the water almost before daylight. Rather waves than bugs.

The plan was to forget the map and try to remember the route in. As most of you know, everything looks different going the other way even if you have turned around to look back on the way in. Glancing around, a brown spot in the water near the opposite shore caught my eye. A moose. This one wasn't snorting and crashing like the others. Nor were there antlers. A lady moose. She saw me as soon as I turned the canoe around but only went onto the shore and stood there munching on branches watching me as I paddled up to her. Landing looked impossible due to the mud so I sat there telling her how beautiful she was. She didn't mind. Neither of us felt any fear of the other. It was one of those special moments which made the trip very much worth while and worth doing again.

More wind and waves. Occasionally something would look familiar indicating that possibly this was the right way; other times it was doubtful. There were waves in the channel. What would the lake be like? It turned out to be canoeable.

On the way into the next lake I was passed by a motorboat, then other canoes. The first people since yesterday. A bridge came into view and finally I knew exactly where I was and could even find it on the map.

The portage wasn't any easier than the first time. Tying the paddles in to carry the canoe helped some - until they slipped.

Canoe Lake. Just when the waves became impossible, (I was glad of my heavy load now) it would change and there'd be a downpour. At one point the rain was so heavy it seemed like hail.

The take out point came into view; it was a relief to get there but more of a sadness to be leaving. I determined to come back - even to face the bears. It's nice to have company but solo I experienced more wildlife than I ever had with someone else along.

