

and for dessert a large slab off an enormous fruit cake prepared for us by Claire Brigden. We even had loaves of sweet and sour rye bread which we had wrapped in vinegar-soaked clothes and stored in large plastic peanut butter pails. About mid point of the trip our menu became much more restricted. The fishing fell off as the river became murky with sediment washed in from the heavily eroded banks. The fresh food ran out and we were reduced to freeze dried food. The freeze dried food was quite good when carefully prepared. Our only complaint was that the beef stew, Italian spaghetti with meat sauce and chow mein all tasted the same. We found an eight-man dinner dinner did just nicely for the four of us.

We had been warned before leaving Toronto that we would need parkas, mitts and long underwear. The day we left Toronto was one of the hottest of the summer and it took an effort of will to pack these bulky items into our already overloaded packs. We were glad we did. The weather in the Hudson Bay lowlands is one of extremes - too hot and too cold. On a hot day back on the muskeg we would curse the flies that prevented us from stripping down to our shorts. Then the north wind would rise and we would wish we had worn our long underwear.

One storm was so severe that all we could do was stay in our sleeping bags and wait it out. We were breaking camp on June 25th when the sky blackened, the wind increased to gale force the temperature dropped drastically and a lashing rain started. Fortunately our tents were still up. We could not have raised them in those conditions. We quickly threw our gear back into the tents, took a supply of gorp and crawled in to wait out the storm. We stayed in the tents for fifteen hours until the wind dropped enough to start out again. I was impressed at the ability of my old-fashioned wall tent to withstand the high wind. This episode confirmed our belief that one of the most important items of equipment on a long canoe trip is a good book.



The black flies and mosquitoes were worse than any of us had experienced before. The black flies were especially bad on the muskeg and the mosquitoes on the river banks. As we expected the black flies were worse during the day and the mosquitoes in the evening. The mosquitoes were often bunched so close on our backs, that they were crawling over each other. Mike and Jim wore head nets which they found bothersome because they interfered with their vision. Earl and I used the new bug jackets. The jackets are like parkas made of mosquito netting and treated with insect repellent. I found they were marvelous as long as the repellent lasted (about ten days). After that despite my attempts to reimpregnate the material with Muskol, I found it ineffective. In addition the netting caught on every branch I passed. (Earl does not agree with me. He was pleased with his jacket.)

What we did not anticipate was the number of horse flies we would find. They were there in swarms, and, unlike the mosquitoes and black flies would follow us out on the river. They were worse than the other insects because they ignored the fly dope and their bites were more painful.

The combination of sun and fly dope gave us a lot of discomfort. Very soon our noses and the backs of our hands were peeled and raw and our lips were cracked. This lasted throughout the trip. Aside from these complaints and a few cuts and bruises we survived very well. We ended the trip a little tougher and a little thinner.

Our mammal list was not impressive. We saw moose (two), otter, red fox, muskrat, beaver, groundhog and a red squirrel, but very few of each. We were disappointed to miss the caribou which had moved farther north a short while before our arrival. Two geologists we met in Fort Severn had seen a herd of about one thousand on the shore of Hudson Bay. Our most exciting mammal observations were the timber wolves. We saw the wolves three times and heard them several more. They were noisy and rather tame. Despite our enlightened views about wolves we could not help feeling a little nervous when we were walking our compass lines and they were howling close by.

Our survey of the breeding birds can be termed a success. Since very little previous work had been done on the breeding birds of the north-west corner of Ontario almost every observation represented new information. Of special significance was our evidence of breeding of many species whose known ranges were previously thought to end far to the south.

On July 4th a canoe with two Indians passed us heading up the Severn. These were the first humans we had seen for 17 days. We had not even seen an aircraft other than odd high flying jet.

We arrived at Fort Severn, an Indian village of some 240 people, on July 6th. We had the use of a small Ministry of Natural Resources building complete with the luxury of electric lights and a propane stove (but no running water). We had four days to wait for our flight out and these we spent looking for bird nests and other breeding evidence in the local area. We found a good patch of open tundra with typical tundra species of birds on Partridge Island at the mouth of the Severn River. We also walked out to the Hudson Bay coast. The Bay was still ice covered but with a stretch of open water between the ice and the shore line. We were disappointed in our hope of seeing whales or seals. The slope to the water's edge is so gradual and the inter-tidal zone so long that we could not distinguish anything on the water. At least we could say that we had visited Hudson Bay.

Here are a few "non-bird" things we learned about long wilderness trips:

- You may be spending some long stretches of time in your tent so make sure that you have one that is tall enough to sit up comfortably in with lots of head room
- If (like me) you snore and are up in the night with insomnia, tent alone and a good distance from your fellow travellers.
- When you want to start a wood fire in the rain use your small gas stove to light the kindling.
- Cheap rain suits melt when close to the fire.
- Give the fly dope bottle an extra twist before returning it to your pocket. Those tops have a way of unwinding themselves and dumping the contents down your leg.



I think we can claim that our trip on the Fawn and Severn Rivers was a success and not only as far as the bird survey was concerned. For four strangers to be thrown together under isolated and sometimes uncomfortable conditions and still get along as well as we did is a mark of success.