

## TEMAGAMI-STURGEON LOOP

Article: John Winters    Photos: Peter Haskett

Those who paddle with me know that I don't take notes, pictures, or maps. What you read will, therefore, be a mixture of true-to-the-fact reminiscences, inaccurate interpretations of events, and pure fabrication. As my father said, "Never let the facts interfere with a good story." For the most part, however, this might be a factual account of our trip.

None of us had ever paddled down the Temagami River. I don't know what that says about people who have lived more than twenty years in Southern Ontario but there it is. Hap Wilson won't even speak to me next time we meet. At least we were getting around to it before our citizenship was revoked. "We" were Peter and Bob Haskett and Dan Rusciollelli and me.

There are no trip leaders on our trips. None of us are easily led. Bob, however, had Hap's book *Temagami Canoe Routes* and was anointed naviguesser for the duration. Dan and I would follow.

The muffler fell off in North Bay and it looked like rain. I mention that to set the mood.

The Central Temagami access point is a bit of culture shock to serious woodsman like ourselves. Lots of power boats, delightfully attractive girls going somewhere we weren't, and a packed parking lot that would make any Torontonian feel at home. We didn't paddle far before lunch and mused whether one of the thunder bumpers all around would hit. Silly boys. We were wet the rest of the day.

Our first camp was nice enough. Bob prepared the traditional fresh veggy dinner for the first night and Dan didn't snore. Rain the first day doesn't necessarily mean it will rain the whole week, so we looked forward to a good morrow.

The Temagami River doesn't begin until Cross Lake Dam. Even though it was late summer, the river was at spring levels. I wonder why. With high water we ran stuff that normally couldn't be navigated late in the summer. At the first decent rapid Dan and I had a small communication problem. I back-paddled like we were at the precipice of a waterfall. Dan was a tad more

aggressive in the other direction. We got that sorted out and made it down without incident. Bob and Peter always make it down without incident. The BOOK says "spring only" so we felt good even though it was raining.

At one downright hairy looking thing, Dan and I carried around the first drop and watched the Hasketts. OK, I have seen this lots of times so it was no surprise to me but it was new to Dan. They poised at the top for what seemed like an eternity and then slowly dropped over the edge. Just when you thought they had been eaten by the river, they popped up and slowly eased through the standing waves, back-paddling steadily. They poised again, shifted across the river, and then dropped down the next ledge. They milked every drop of water and every wave out of the thing. At the bottom Bob scooped out a little water and calmly commented that he wasn't really sure they would pull it off.

We were impressed.

