



*Moving the canoe upstream around an island to Camp 5*

mountain are vast uplands carpeted in untouched forest. The only sound was the gentle gurgle of current sweeping past me toward the Bering Sea.

By 9:30 the next morning we were packed and ready to load the canoe. Suddenly, four peregrine falcons came at us from across the river. There was much squawking and carrying on as they reached the downstream point of our island. A family of herring gulls had spent the morning at that point, and after some observation with binoculars, we realized a falcon had stooped on an immature gull, and was sitting on the beach, tearing it apart for breakfast. The feeding raptor was probably just learning to hunt, as the rest of his gang flew around in a big circle calling out high-pitched congratulations. The gulls evidently decided flight was unadvisable under the circumstances. They remained huddled at the river's edge.

We had heard quite a few peregrines in the previous two days, and could well believe the Park Service statement that this preserve has the highest nesting density of these masterful flyers in North America.

One of our goals for the morning was to replenish our drinking water supply. We had checked a stream flowing off Mount Kathul the day before, but it was dry. Jeremy said that snow pack the previous winter had been low through much of the Yukon basin, and we were seeing the effects in dry stream beds and empty

channels bisecting many of the Yukon's islands.

The Kandik River looked a bit too gritty for our taste, so we pushed on to the Charley. Again Jeremy was out and pulling, to get us into position to fill our plastic cube. We were glad for the extra ballast, for no sooner were we back in the big river than a northwest wind began to blow with authority. In short order whitecaps were coming at us from upstream. We sheltered for lunch under a cut-bank near the entrance of Sam Creek

After lunch we pushed off into a current (rated at about eight kilometres per hour), that, from a canoeist's perspective, was completely neutralized by the wind. The centre section of the river was blowing hard, so we chose to hug the south shore and work through the side channels. Avoiding dead ends and finding enough depth for our paddles now became a real challenge. Shallow areas near shore that had shown a riffled effect caused by gravel, were now much deeper, but retained the same "bumpy" appearance caused by the push of the nor'wester. Usually we read the river correctly, but a couple of times we ran out of options and were stranded in the shallows. We had to abandon ship and guide the canoe to a deeper passage. My rubber-bottomed LL Bean boots proved extremely water-retentive when filled from the top. It took a Dawson City dance hall kick to empty each boot before settling back into the canoe.