

## **Algonquin Provincial Park; Canoe Lake, Oxtongue River to Oxtongue Lake**



**Participants:** Janice and Bill

**Total Distance:** 40 km, with 1730m in 5 portages.

**Sat May 19/07:** *Janice:* 13 km, 480m in 2 portages. We left Bayfield at 3:15am. The traffic was good. We took turns driving and snoozing and we arrived in Huntsville around 7am. We ate and went to Algonquin Outfitters in Dwight to get our shuttle at 8:30. We had a nice visit with our driver along the way. We saw 4 moose on the highway; 2 cows, 1 young bull calf and one dead one. The shuttle cost us \$50 to move us and our gear to Canoe Lake. Our car can stay at their parking lot for no cost. We signed in at Canoe Lake and finally left the shore at 10am. Bill commented on how all the canoes set off from shore at once. He called them a herd of turtles. *Bill:* We rounded the two bays on the south end of Canoe Lake and paddled into and across Bonita Lake to Tea Lake. There are a few dead heads in the water. We had a snack at 11:30 at the Tea Lake Dam; nice spot with picnic tables along the river. It wasn't long and we were at Whiskey Rapids. It was fun to run this rapid. We had stopped in an eddy upstream and decided to run it. The Oxtongue River has some flow to it as it takes us effortlessly down stream. With each bend you have a chance to see an animal or bird that did not realize we were coming. We saw ducks and Canada geese and birds and a muskrat. This part of the river had a few swifts in it and it was zig zaggy too. We stopped at the Western Uplands Backpacking Trail. There is a walking bridge over the river. We thought that we were further than we were. We were at Upper Twin Falls at 2:30 and had a gorp break. We picked the second campsite because it would not be as loud. We looked to see if we could run the Upper Falls, but there was the chance of wrecking the canoe. There was a group of 12 people who are doing this trip also and they took the first campsite by the falls. They were looking for Lower Rapids. They were supposed to split their group in two. We set up camp and had split pea soup for supper. We were in bed by 9 o'clock after a very long day.

**Sun. May 20/07:** 20 km, 600m in 2 portages. *Janice:* We slept in after a much needed sleep. The group on the site by the first set of rapids started their truck across the 240m portage around 10am. We watched as they carried everything across and departed. We left a bit later. What a nice day! It's cool and overcast, but no rain! The bugs are much better. It was much more pleasant doing the regular chores without all those black flies

and mosquitoes. We hadn't paddled too long before we got to the 100m portage around Split Rock Rapids. We saw the other group portaging and after a nice big break and surveying the river we finally decided to portage. We wanted to run it and probably would have except for one nasty wave that pushed everything into a large rock at the bottom of the 1<sup>st</sup> set. The second set had a good line on river right. Oh well, the portages are easy and not very long. We wound our way down the river and spied a huge beaver that tried to hide on the bank. It is quite a twisty paddle and the wind is very swirly. It seems it's in our face more than not. The river slows for a while and we push our canoe on. We met a group that were out for a day paddle at the only cabin there was and it was on river left. We were pleased when the river picked up again and we ran two or three swifts and bypassed the 2 portages. There was a campsite on river right in between these swifts. We paddled a little further and found some more fast water and first thought "hey you could run that", but knowing better we stopped at the portage on river right and walked up to see the awesome Gravel Falls. You'll not be paddling that! We portaged the canoe to just before the bottom campsite and decided to stay at the top site by the falls. The sites are really nice and it's been a pleasant afternoon.

**Mon. May 21/07:** 7 km, 650m in 1 portage. It was a cold night. We both woke up at different times to put the liner into our sleeping bags. We slept in again and enjoyed the morning. The falls are lovely and it was hard to pry Bill away. We portaged our gear and put on the water at 11:30. We did the bottom ½ of Gravel Rapids (cutting about 500m off the 1km portage) and then carried on down to Ragged Falls. There is a 650m portage here. Ragged Falls starts out as a few rapids with rock ledges and then drops about 3 or 4 different levels to the base. It is an impressive falls with lots of people around enjoying it. The portage is hilly and there are lots of roots due to the usage it gets. We paddled the flat water back to Oxtongue Lake and Algonquin Outfitters where our car awaited us. The lake was smooth and we had to apply bug spray as there was no breeze and the black flies were hungry. This part of the river and lake were busy. We arrived at the dock around 1:30. It was a nice trip with good scenery and most of it was not busy.