

Crotch L., Big Gull L., Mississippi R. Loop



Participants: Bill and Janice.

Total Distance: 66 Km., 4,320 m. in 12 portages

Sept. 12, 1998. Janice: Left the shop in Clinton at 1:40 pm. It rained this morning but it is sunny now. At 5:40 pm. we are at Hwy.#37 Belleville, heading toward Tweed, hopefully for supper and gas. Left Tweed at 6:50 pm. Set up camp at Sharbot Lake Prov. Park at 8:00 pm. This is a nice park but half of it is right on the Hwy. with lights and cars and trucks zipping past your back door. We camped deeper in the park up on a hill. It was very quiet there. We can still hear the highway.

Sept. 13, 1998. Up at 7:00 am. Nice shower. We are on the road at 10:30 am.

Bill: Drove up to Crotch Lake public boat launch. To our surprise it was dry and about 200 meters of muck to get to the water. The lake level was down by about 5 feet. We wondered if it was all like that, so we drove through Coxville and it was fine there, and up to Ardoch and it was fine. We also drove to the bridge on Mud Lake and it was fine along there also. It just seems that they lowered Crotch Lake. We drove back to the boat launch, had lunch, and got everything out of the van. Parked the van and at 1:00 pm. started our portage along the edge of the lake. We portaged for 450 m. before we found a place with rock to the water's edge, where we could put in. It looks strange with the water so low and you can see things that are normally under water. You don't have to be scared of the water because there is nothing down there but a few logs and rocks and lots of mud. We Put in at 1:30 pm. and started paddling north. We found the entrance to Gull Creek at Colonel Island. We did a 75 m. portage and then another one. We had to wind our way through the vegetation in this part of the creek. Then the 350 m. and the 45 m. portage to Coxville. We were confused because of the extra portage on Gull Creek, but we figured there is one extra 75 m. portage at the start because the water level was so low. We paddled west on Big Gull Lake and arrived at our campsite on an island just east of Long Island at 5:00 pm. Nice spot. Had to clean up from the last people who were here. It is cloudy and warm and the sun is peaking through every once in a while. There are lots of spots for tents here and we chose the one that would let in the sun shine in the morning. We had stuffed pepper goulash and butter pecan pudding for supper. It was good. It is 9:00 pm. and we are in bed and ready to sleep.

Sept. 14, 1998. Up at 6:45 am. There is a beautiful rainbow to the northwest and it is trying to rain. Had oatmeal for breakie and it did rain. We are on the water at 8:45 am. and heading west on Big Gull Lake. The water level is high. Had a gorp break at 10:00 am. on the point of land with the campsites before the narrows. There are a few people fishing in boats but not much traffic. Had to go to the left of the island by Watkin Bay. Went up the North Creek channel and had lunch at the start of the portage at 12:00. We went up a steep hill at the start of the 1250 m. portage and then the rest was nice to walk on. We were at Shoepack Lake at 1:00 pm. Did the 275 m. portage along the trail and the road to Kashwakamak Lake and put in at 1:30 pm. We looked at the campsites around Brown's Bay and came back to the first one on the point west of the island. Set up camp and made a turkey stew supper. It is 7:30 pm. and getting dark quickly. It might rain. It is nice here.

Sept. 15, 1998. Janice: We are up at 7:15 am. We woke a few times and fell asleep again. It has drizzled

the night away and we awoke to drizzle. A squirrel was dropping pine cones down on the tent and then he would come and snatch them away, run off and hide them. He then did the same thing over at our kitchen area. He was very entertaining. We left the camp at 10:00 am. We paddled to the east end of Kashwakamak Lake. It rained and drizzled the whole day. The 350 m. portage was well trodden and easy to follow. You might want to put in after the start, but don't, because it is a series of small rapids and shallow areas. It is a quick paddle to the 500 m. portage. The trail is good. I walked through many spider webs here. The end is a very steep descent to the water's edge. We loaded the canoe and had lunch at 12:30 pm. under the cedars. Into the canoe and off we paddled in the rain. We are camped on the site at the beginning of the 120 m. portage. It is a big site with a treasure chest. Nice site but I had to be convinced to stay here. There are very fresh cow patties all over the place and lots of cow hoof prints. The cows have left cow pies in the water, so we filtered our water on the other side of the portage. I hope that we do not wake to a herd of cows tromping around our tent. We are in bed early at 7:15 pm. It has just quit raining, but it is still very foggy. It is dark now. 7:45.

Sept. 16, 1998. We woke a few times in the night and Bill saw lights. He had to check it out, and several times the tent zipped open and closed. He finally figured out it was the headlights from the road behind us. Left camp at 8:00 am. We traveled down the Mississippi River to Mud Lake. It was a nice paddle and we took a picture of a heron just after the bridge. We followed the channel in Mud Lake until it split into two channels. Knowing the channel was on the right, we decided to go left and check things out. We saw a few beaver lodges and many duck blinds. Wild rice grows abundant here. (Both sides of the island.) We frightened duck and Red Wing Blackbird flocks. The lake was nice. We paddled back to the main right channel and carried on. It was pretty on the rest of the river. We portaged the 30 m., 110 m., and 50 m. portages. There are many sites here and some are very accessible by road. Crotch Lake is still low. We canoed south and checked out the sites along the way. I was very disappointed to see that many sites here have been littered with menagerie and junk. There was a lean-to on one covered with a rotting tarp, another had a broken umbrella left behind. Someone wrapped a log with a tarp or what not, stuck it with lots of duct tape and used it to sit by the fire. There are many chairs and tables left behind and of course, litter. It is too bad that people try so hard to make a condo out of the bush. We tried to go into Twin Island Lake, thinking we might avoid some people travel, but the water is too low (dried up). We decided to camp on the west side of the point of land beside Three Sisters Rock. We picked a rustic site (fire pit only). It is a nice site. Tomorrow we plan to fish and slowly make our way out. It is 7:40 pm. and I see my first star. There are too many mosquitoes here. I don't know where they came from. There is a beautiful yellow sky and lake to the west behind me. Good night to all!

Sept. 17, 1998. We stayed up late last night and did dishes by flashlight. We had tea by the fire. It was nice. We were awake at 6:00 am. but very lazy and we dozed and listened to the loons and small birds rustling and fluttering in the leaves by our tent. It is 7:00 and Bill is dressed, the sun is up and the first fishing boat has scooted by. Time to get going. We fished for about 1 1/4 hrs. No fish. A fisherman assured us that there is big walleye and northern pike and others. Bill had already caught a small mouth bass last night. The fisherman said that they have lowered the water level in Crotch Lake to do dam maintenance. We took a picture of our site from the water and Bill pointed out two bald eagles soaring above. Beautiful. We packed and left. We had lunch on a site near Stormy Point around 1:00 pm. We were finished our last portage at 2:15 pm. The river bed is beginning to dry out. We went grocery shopping and drove to Bon Echo Provincial Park to meet Tony and Ruth where we spent 3 nights. We explored the Upper and Lower Mazinaw Lake and paddled part of Bon Echo Creek. We took a day to go to Joe Perry Lake and we wound our way into Pearson Lake. It was all lovely and it was a nice end to a week of holidays.

Bill: It was a nice relaxed trip. It is nice to see the effort that the townships are making to provide a free boat launch with lots of parking at the south end of Crotch Lake. It was a delight to finally show Janice some bald eagles which she has been looking to see for a long time. You may have to be prepared

to share the site before Ardoch, because there is nothing for a while either side of it. Couldn't ask for nicer weather for September.

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