

McCrae Lake



April 9-12/04

Participants: Bill and Janice.

Sat. Apr. 10/04: *Janice:* It's 10:30 am on a beautiful crisp morning. We are camped on McCrae Lake on the first site on the right after the portage. We had quite an interesting time after arriving here on **Friday Apr. 9/04.** We drove to all of the viewing points and checked out the water to find it half open and half white with ice. We went back to the parking lot at McDonald Lake and decided to have lunch. We hiked the trail to the rapids and checked out McCrae Lake. It was open and we decided to go. We portaged the short trail to McDonald Lake and Bill smashed the thin ice along the shore as I paddled. There were places along the edge where there was no ice and a few places where it required a little muscle to break through. Anyway, we figured we could always portage if it was a problem. We noticed 2 guys half way down the opposite shore smashing their way through. They headed north and we went west to the 250 m. portage around the rapids. It's a nice easy portage up and over a hill. They have built quite a snowmobile bridge here. After a few pictures by the rapids we paddled on and around the bend to discover more ice lurking in the small bays. McCrae Lake is still frozen just as it widens before the small rock island. The wind is cold and strong off the lake. We explored the second site on the right and climbed the hill to look out into McCrae Lake. The ice is rotten with open paths throughout it. We paddled back to camp on the first site. After a good supper and a nice fire we hit the hay early. It was a really cold night. The prediction was -9 degrees C, but we were cozy in our little tent. We woke this morning to another great day, **Sat. Apr. 10/04.** We heard the owls talking last night and a beaver slapping the water with his tail. We awoke to the sound of songbirds. We've seen loons, bufflehead ducks, seagulls, crows, Canada geese, turkey vultures, ravens and we saw and heard a woodpecker. We plan to keep this site as a base camp and go out paddling this afternoon when the sun has had a chance to melt the night ice. The breeze is cold, but the sun is hot!

Bill: We had breakfast late and then it was time for lunch after a walk to explore the point down to the bay. We packed things away and went for a canoe. We checked out the site in the bay to the SE. We found an old chair which we took to throw into the dumpster when we leave. We canoed over what turned out to be a submerged powerboat. We left and portaged the rapids that we did on the way in and had a tea and gorp break. We canoed under the hwy. 400 to Crooked Lake portage and checked the dam. There are lots of dumpsites; er I mean campsites on this side of the highway. It looks like they car camp and party here. There is still ice on Crooked Bay. We went back and checked out the bay before the rapids and there were the 2 guys camped here and as we passed one of them picked up a whip and started whipping the trees. We kept going. There is a small canoe at the portage now and 3 people are setting up camp up on the hill. They still have a load of beer to take up. We did the portage and canoed back to our camp. There is no one in this neck of the woods. We had supper and cleaned up. Janice saw an owl flying away from us and a beaver has gone by several times. The owls are hooting in the

distance. It is a peaceful, cold calm night with lots of stars in the sky.

Sun. Apr. 11/04: *Janice:* It's another sunny day. The wind is still persistent and makes it cold. The long range forecast for today was 4 degrees C. It certainly feels like it when the wind blows. There was a mink running across the ice in the SE bay. It noticed me and tried to run back, changed it's mind, turned and ran off in the direction it was heading in the first place. Once again the birds are entertaining us. It is very pleasant. We've had a relaxing first part off the morning and we plan on picking up the large amount of garbage on this site and packing it out tomorrow. *Bill:* We gathered 2 garbage bags full of cans, bottles, and yucky things. Most of it was already bagged before and then left for the animals to scatter. We came across a garter snake sunny in the grass. We had lunch and since we couldn't go to the west because of the ice we decided to take the garbage out to the dumpster. On the way back we checked out the sites in the bay before the rapids. Everyone has gone home. Janice got a good picture of a pileated woodpecker. Before we went to our camp we went as far west as we could and checked out a couple more sites. It is much colder where the ice is on the lake. We took our shelter down at the camp to make it easier to go tomorrow. We had an early supper of soup and tea biscuits on the grill. It is getting cold and we are getting more and more dressed up. It sure was a beautiful day today.

Mon. Apr.12/04: *Janice:* We woke early to another sunny day. The beaver was busy again last night; he made several trips and gave us a fright when he slapped the water right behind us. We didn't know he was there. We finished the tea biscuits for breakie, packed up, and left the site like we would like to find it. The ice has receded quite a bit. The small bays should be ice-free by weekend, but the more open part of McCrae will require some warmer temperatures than what we have experienced. It is much warmer today, 8 degrees C, nice. The beaver lodge has some new wood on its roof. We stopped and had tea at the portage. A mink ran the length of the opposite shoreline. It is such a lovely day. We paddled back to McDonald Lake and found the ice shrinking. We did the short portage to the van and left. There are many sites that we hadn't noticed before. Some are large and spacious and some are rustic. The further you travel from the put-in the less abuse you find. The friends of McCrae have placed blue barrels at some of the sites. The site we used had one. It was a very relaxed trip and I think we can honestly say we are the first ones to canoe camp on McCrae Lake this year.