

Friends of Wabakimi Trip Report

June 3 – June 10, 2017, Week #2

Participants: John Holmes, Dan Walch, Andre Witwer Leader: Bill Pyle

Day 1, Sat., June 3:

Nice day, temperature 45 F, but a little windy from the south. J.H. prepares equipment for exchange, calls Mattice Lk. Outfitters and learns that the float plane will depart at 11:00 AM. Plane arrives at 11:30 and Dave McTeague leaves and Dan Walch arrives. Debbie Sargent was in the co-pilot's seat as she rode along to photograph Vale Creek. We paddle back to camp with new supplies, take inventory, get Dan situated, eat lunch and have safety meeting. The wind becomes strong, 20-30 mph from south, during afternoon so we just stay in camp. Eat a large dinner of corn on the cob and other fresh fruit which Debbie has sent in. Thunderstorms roll through the area as we all go to the tents about 10:00 PM.



Day 2, Sun., June 4:

Mild during the night and rain stopped; only to start again at 6:00 AM. Cook brats for breakfast with wraps. Temperature about 45 F. at mid-morning, so sit around under the tarp. Eat lunch and rain ends at 2:00 PM. We depart south out of Rushbay into the large bay where the Collins River comes in from the northwest. We find the portage from Collins Lake at a grassy area on river left. We mark the spot on the GPS and walk the portage about 200 m. to a point where it crosses the river. We don't ford the river to explore further upstream. We observe a marshy area in the distance and the portage is now river right. We think that this portage might be used as a snowmobile trail in the winter, as there are



lots of cut logs and blazes. We fish at the river's exit into the bay and only catch two small Northerns, Dan keeps one for dinner. We observe fish breaking the surface about 40 m. into the bay in 4-5 feet of water, decide that they are suckers or whitefish. Return to camp at 5:00, eat, clean-up and have campfire as temp. now 62 F. with light NE breeze. Have seen Eagle, Mergansers and Hummingbird today!

Day 3, Mon., June 5:

Up at 6:00 AM, temp. 45 F., clear, calm, and fog and mist on the lake NE and S. Rays of sunshine coming through the trees on the ridge line east across the lake make a nice picture. We strike camp and depart at 9:00 AM to begin our paddle SE on the Collins Riv. We are through the 241 m. portage, which we had cleared last week, by 11:00 AM. Paddle to next portage on river right and portage all packs, then have lunch. J.H. and A.W. portage canoes while B.P. finishes chainsawing. Portage measures 222 m. It is now 2:00 and we are looking for a campsite as we move down river. Paddle through a lake which we have named Weasel, because of its shape on the map, find nothing. Paddle through a narrows with no current into the next lake which has a small swift at the west end, no portage needed. Come to the next portage river left and carry it without clearing, will return to finish and measure in the future after finding a campsite. This portage goes by some large rapids! J.H. finds a large rock outcropping 70 m. across a bay from the end of the portage on river right. It is a spectacular site at the west end of this lake that has 100 foot vertical granite walls on both sides. The campsite looks east down the lake, has two tiers where the top area is slightly sloping with a small fire ring. We get camp set up and J.H. and A.W. try to catch some fish before dinner-no luck.



Day 4, Tue., June 6:

Nice night of sleep, up at 6:00 AM and prepare for breakfast. Temp. 50 F., clear and calm. Depart at 8:30 AM to return to previous portage for final clearing and to measure, 78 m. river left. Paddle down this spectacular lake to find the next four portages. The first portage is river right and has two steep sections, but only 51 m long. The next portage is river right and measures 128 m., it also has some steep sections, but not a lot to clear. We paddle further SE to the start of the next portage. This has a nice landing with a flat area which has been used as a campsite. It only has one good tent site at the fire ring area, but one could put a second tent about 20 m. down the portage and to the left; so, we marked it on the GPS as one needs to be able to camp near this bad portage! We eat lunch and clear this 136 m. portage on river right. The portage has two very steep sections and the last 50-60 m. crosses



an area of large boulders and rubble from the steep canyon walls. This is the worst footing and most treacherous portage I've seen in ten years, don't try this portage in wet weather! J.H. and A.W. managed to single carry the canoes! We paddled to the last portage in this group and found it river left. It is very open and well used, measures 49 m. This has a nice campsite area and we will return on Wed. to use it. We begin the return trip up river through the three bad portages to our campsite on Flue Lake. We have named this scenic lake Flue (Flu-a), Swiss for cliff! Dan and I find a nice

pictograph on granite face on the S. side, mid lake, of a Moose/Caribou and calf. This was a warm day with temp. of nearly 80 F. and clear skies with little wind.

Day 5, Wed., June 7:

Clear, calm and temp. of 60 F. at 7:30 AM. Strike camp and depart SE down Flue at 8:30 AM. Paddle past pictograph site to show J.H. and A.W. We work our way through the three hard portages by 11:00 AM, thanks to the heroic efforts of J.H. and A.W.! We reach the campsite that we found the previous day by noon. We put up the tarp and tents and have lunch. We rest and cleanup after all the sweat and work done in the AM. About 2:30 we depart SE down the Collins to explore the bridge and the final portage into Bukemiga Lk. We find a swift under the bridge which is paddle-able up and down stream, so no portage needed. We paddle approx. 2.5 km to final portage on Collins Riv. into Bukemiga Lk., river left measured at 160 m. We did some light trimming and returned to canoes.

We paddle upstream to the bridge and investigate the possible link from Collins Riv. to Vale Creek. Find nothing as the terrain is steep and the road would have obliterated any trail, if it existed. We walk the road north from the bridge to the "Y" intersection. From there we walk west/northwest over a small bridge that crosses the creek which flows south out of a small pond. We walk further up the road to a point where we can look east to open water of this small pond. We mark these points on the GPS and return to the canoes. We paddle back toward camp and fish below the rapids near our campsite with no luck. We all jump into the lake off of the rock to cool down and cleanup before dinner. I call Phil at 7:30 PM to inform him of our progress. He gives me the location of a camping spot on the west end of the portage between Wigwasan and Bukemiga Lks., in case we find no other one.



Day 6, Thur., June 8:

Temp. 60 F., calm and lots of mosquitoes at 7:00 AM. We decide to break camp and get off of this poor fishing river and move to Bukemiga Lk. Arrive at last portage into Bukemiga, carry and finish clearing by 11:00. Fish at the mouth of the Collins for a while, J.H. lands one Pickerel. We paddle SW toward the Kopka Riv. rapids and the campsite that Phil told me about. We find no lunch spot or campsite on the paddle along the lake shore toward the rapids. Arrive at rapids at 1:00 PM. Unload at the grassy area, which isn't a good place to camp overnight and begin to have lunch. J.H. hikes to the west side of portage and reports back that there are many good places to camp at the top of the rapids on the east shore of Wigwasan Lk. Rain showers develop to the west, so we hurry to get the packs across and to set up the tarp. Rain ends by 2:00 and we finish setting up tents and camp.

As we unloaded our gear at the east end of the portage, we noticed two fishing boats tied to the shore with current WI registrations. We assumed that these were trout fishermen who were along the rapids, but we saw no one. J.H. and A.W. went fishing below the rapids and D.W. and I stayed in camp. About mid-afternoon two fishing boats arrived at the shoreline of Wigwasan and four guys got out and were surprised to see us. There are many cached boats, probably about eight, at this area; so we didn't know who would appear from the boats that just landed. It turns out that these men owned the two boats tied on the east end. They were returning to cook their limit of Pickerel for lunch. We

conversed with these men from WI off and on during the afternoon. One man had been coming to this location for over thirty years. He said that the campsite used to be used a lot, but not anymore. He told us that he had been cleaning it up over the past years, but there is still lots of garbage off in the trees. They gave us some cooked fish and we asked them if they needed anything? One said, "Coffee, I forgot ours!" We said that we could spare some, and gave them some instant crystals in a plastic bag. They asked if we would like some fish brought back at the end of their evening fishing outing? Shrewd Dan said "Yes, three Pickerel!" Deal done, three nice fish kept on a stringer overnight for tomorrow's lunch arrived about 9:20 PM! Meanwhile, our two fishermen came back to camp with two Northern and two Pickerel for tonight's dinner.



Day 7, Fri., June 9:

High thin clouds at 7:00 AM, calm and temp. 65 F. A nice day to paddle across the lake, so we strike camp and portage the gear across the portage. We measure it at 343 m., which is almost exactly what the park map shows. We begin to paddle east at 9:45 AM toward a campsite that the men from WI told us about near the landing on the east shore. Arrive at site about 11:00 AM. We put up tarp while D.W. cleans the fish. Start lunch at 11:30, three fillets each! We finish setting up the tents after cleaning up the dishes. We depart to the NE arm of Bukemiga to see if there is any evidence of a portage north to Pillar Lk. We search at the ends of two different bays for any evidence. We find one blaze on a tree at the NE bay, but no other evidence. We follow a game trail which ends at a beaver pond. The other bay to the NW of a peninsula, which actually goes to the north further than the first search area is explored. One blaze is found back about 30 m., but no other evidence. We return to camp and fish on the way, no luck. I call Phil at 4:50 PM to learn of the pick up time and place, 10:00 at the landing about 1 km. south of our camp.



Day 8, Sat., June 10:

Up at 6:00 AM., cloudy and warm, 60 F. Eat breakfast and strike camp. We depart earlier than I had planned because of the threat of rain, about 8:30 AM. Paddle against a strong south wind to the landing on the east shore of Bukemiga. Unload, strip canoes and cover our gear with a tarp just as rain starts approx. 9:00 AM. We find cover in a nice large framed shelter covered with plastic and a tarp. It is near some trailers owned by First Nations People. We talk to a nice young man, named Mark for about an hour until Duane arrives with a pickup to take us to Mattice Lk. The packs get wet traveling to Mattice Lk., but we dry them in T. Bay. The gear is transferred to B.P.'s truck, but the canoes, chainsaw and gas and oil are left at Mattice Lake Outfitters. We depart for T. Bay about 11:45 and arrive at Phil's around 2:30 PM. See two young Moose on the way south. We unload and spread things out in the sun to dry as we relax, converse and debrief. Have T-bone steaks and trimmings for dinner followed by a birthday cake and ice cream for Andre's birthday! Mission complete.

