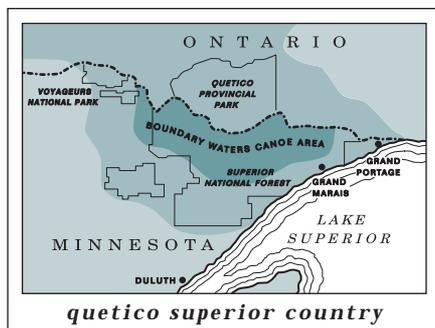


Wilderness News

FROM THE QUETICO SUPERIOR FOUNDATION FALL 2007



The Quetico Superior Foundation, established in 1946, encourages and supports the protection of the ecological, cultural and historical resources of the Quetico Superior region.

"The most beautiful light in the world is the light of the full moon on snow. Its glow seems to emanate not from the heavens but from within the earth and to radiate out into the darkness of space. The second most beautiful light in the world is the light of the midday sun on snow, light at its most transparent. The difference between winter sunlight and summer sunlight is like the difference between mountain stream water and prairie river water; a matter of clarity. Sunlight on snow sparkles; moonlight shimmers on it. Winter days are naked; winter nights are veiled in blue lace and sequins.

Paul Gruchow— *Boundary Waters; The Grace of the Wild*



Wilderness News

Published by the Quetico Superior Foundation

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An inscription on the back of this photo reads: "Picture taken on non-portage bushwack from McIntyre to Fish Lakes in Quetico, the day Barb, Larry & I took 29 portages from a base camp we had set up on Kett Lake. We were bushed!" Photo provided by the Rom family.

Bill Rom the "Canoe King of Ely"

By Alissa Johnson, Wilderness News Contributor

Ely, Minnesota boasts over twenty outfitters that send visitors into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Campers rent the latest gear, groan under the weight of a canoe without realizing it wasn't always this easy to carry, and rest assured that next year's trip will find canoe country as pristine as it is today. It's easy to forget – or never even realize – that these things weren't always a given. The individuals who worked to make it so, like Barb and Bill Rom, aren't widely known for their dedication to preserving the wilderness. Yet they should be. As the original proprietors of Canoe Country Outfitters, they started their business when only two other outfitters existed in Ely, and the Boundary Waters' future was uncertain. Their efforts helped ensure the future of what has become a Minnesota rite of passage: the annual canoe trip.

From Humble Beginnings to the "Canoe King of Ely"

At the height of their business, it was difficult not to know of the Roms. A 1960s article in *Argosy Magazine* dubbed Bill the "Canoe King of Ely," and for good reason. Canoe Country Outfitters was the largest canoe outfitter in the world and the largest Grumman canoe dealer in North America. The Roms' initial fleet of 10 wood canvas canoes had grown to over 400 canoes. An estimated eight out of

ten groups were repeat customers, and campers came from across the country and even the world.

It all started with a more humble dream. In 1946, Bill left the Navy after World War II. He moved his West Coast bride and their firstborn son to his hometown of Ely to start a boys' canoe camp. He wasted no time and took about ten boys into canoe country that first summer back. Yet the area was growing popular as a vacation destination. The demand was overwhelming the outfitters in town, and the Roms began receiving requests to rent out gear. They quickly learned that outfitting adults was far easier than homesick boys; Canoe Country Outfitters was born.

Purchasing a vacant lot from Bill's mother that was once the family garden, they built their outfit on Sheridan Street. What began in happenstance turned into nearly 30 years of prepping campers for the Boundary Waters experience. Their daughter, Becky, attributes their success to two factors: constant innovation in gear and unparalleled personal attention.

Whether forgoing bedrolls for army surplus sleeping bags or working with canoe manufacturers to develop a more comfortable portage yoke and a side-mount for motors, they were always the first to use the newest gear. And they ran their business with an

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Photos from left to right: Canoeing party on trail, paddler David Eaton in front of Canoe Country Outfitters, circa 1950s; Canoe Country Outfitters circa 1960s. Photos courtesy James Eaton and the Rom family.

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unprecedented emphasis on personal service. Bill answered every mail order reservation by hand the day it was received and the phone was always answered. Even in the middle of dinner.

To this day, Becky runs into former customers who still believe they are close personal friends of Bill's. Yet the Roms' influence is even greater, still. At the heart of it all was a passion for the land that led them to fight for its preservation in ways that can still be appreciated today.

A Lifelong Passion for the Land

Bill grew up across the alley from the vacant lot that would become Canoe Country Outfitters. His father passed away shortly after his birth, so his mother raised Bill and his eight siblings alone through the depression. To help support the family, Bill and his brothers hunted, fished and picked berries all over the region. Some days Bill walked as far as Farm Lake for a single fishing trip. He developed a knowledge and a love of the land that he truly learned to appreciate as a student of Sigurd Olson at Ely Junior College, where he was exposed to some of Sigurd's earliest writing.

Sigurd was the school's dean at the time and just beginning to delve into the writing and advocacy he would become known for. Bill had a job cleaning his office and laboratory, and he credits Sigurd with inspiring his passion for the preservation of the wilderness. It was under his guidance that Bill found summer employment with the Forest Service, and found the inspiration to study Wildlife Management at the University of Minnesota. Throughout his college years, he built the Kekekabic Trail, manned the fire tower on Kekekabic Lake while conducting a biological study for the U of M, and worked a portage and campsite maintenance crew. Living and working in the wilderness in this way deepened the connection to the land that he would carry with him throughout his years in the Navy.

Family Outfitter Turned Wilderness Advocate

When Bill returned to Ely after the war, the pristine wilderness had changed. The creation of the Superior Roadless Area during the 1920s had slowed development, but during Bill's absence the increasing affordability of airplanes had resulted in a boom in fly-in resorts. By the mid-1940s there were 16 resorts on Basswood Lake alone, and Ely had become North America's largest inland sea-plane base. Bill was an avid pilot himself, but he

saw this development as a threat to the wilderness. As he built his business, he took an active role in fighting for the boundary waters.

Others did as well, and an airspace reservation was proposed over the roadless area. Bill spoke out in favor of the air ban, and a fellow supporter, Bill Magie, formed Friends of the Wilderness to fight for it. Bill hosted meetings in his home, and in a town where many made their livelihood off these resorts, Bill's was not the popular opinion. During the height of the debate, an explosive was set off near the Roms' house as a scare tactic.

State and Federal air bans were enacted in 1949, but fly-ins continued for four years as the constitutionality of the air bans was challenged. It was the first of many development threats during Bill and Barb's tenure at Canoe Country Outfitters. Logging, the introduction of new roads, snowmobile access, and the motorized debate all rose to the forefront of public debate. And throughout it all, Bill steadfastly spoke against the encroachments and worked for the preservation of the wilderness.

He was one of the first to suggest that cans and bottles be prohibited in canoe country to prevent the garbage piling up at portages. He used his own plane to patrol for illegal activities, wrote letters, spoke out at Chamber of Commerce and outfitter meetings, and testified in Washington in 1974 against motorized access.

Bill's public support of regulation resulted in continued local tensions, and the explosion during the air ban debate was not the last time it culminated in harassment. During the snowmobile and motorized debates of the 1970s, it was not uncommon for snowmobiles to circle the Rom house at all hours of the night. In 1975, the enactment of a snowmobile ban resulted in major protests on Fishing Opener and Memorial Day weekends. Protestors barricaded Ely, letting drivers pass only if they signed a petition in favor of snowmobiles. They simultaneously barricaded and picketed Canoe Country Outfitters with signs that read "Run the bum Rom out of town."

End of an Era

To fight for the canoe country wilderness was never a question for Bill. It was more than his livelihood; it was his passion. Still, the tension took its toll, and a heart condition left him susceptible to stress. In 1975 the Roms sold their business to a long time employee.

Now ninety years old, Bill looks back pragmatically. He and Barb are both quick to point out that someone had to protect the wilderness, in spite of the tension it caused. It's clear their dedication was about more than standing up for their beliefs. It was about a passion for the land, and a dedication to doing the right thing.

While the Roms ran Canoe Country Outfitters, Bill stopped by the post office every single Saturday to pick up the mail. Mail was only delivered during the week in those days, and he had customers waiting for their reservations. He brought this same steady perseverance to the fight for the boundary waters, helping to lay the ground work for preservation that continues to serve those who make the annual pilgrimage north. It's the least we can do to remember his name when we sweat across a portage under the yoke of a canoe, a portage that Bill Rom just might have built. □

BWCAW Permit Fees to Increase

The cost of a Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness overnight trip will go up in 2008. The U.S. Forest Service recently announced that permit fees for the popular wilderness area will increase to \$16 per trip for adults and \$8 per trip for youths. Season-long permits are \$64 for adults, \$32 for youths.

The USFS noted that the increase is the first in the 10 years since fees were instituted in the BWCAW. Previously, adults were charged \$10 per trip and adult seasonal passes cost \$40.

Applications for the 2008 lottery for Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness permits have been accepted since December 1, 2007. Applications must be submitted by mail or fax no later than 5:00 p.m. on January 10. The online application deadline is 5:00 p.m., January 15. <http://www.bwca.org>

The BWCAW's sister-wilderness, Quetico Provincial Park, plans no fee changes for its backcountry users in 2008, according to officials there.

The Wilderness in Winter

By *Charlie Mahler*

Here's a Boundary Waters route I'll bet you haven't paddled: East out of Snowbank Lake to Disappointment Lake through Muzzle Lake to Thomas and Frazier Lakes. It's a smooth trip, manageable in a day, and you'll likely see some fellow hardy souls along the route.

Never paddled it? Neither have I ... but I snow-shoed and skied along the route a few winters back with my soccer coach buddy Larry and we had a fantastic trip. The beaten trail was pleasant to pull our sleds along; the crusty early-March snow floated us when we "bagged" the summit of Disappointment Mountain on a day-hike; and the relatively long days gave us ample illuminated time to enjoy the white splendor that is the BWCAW in winter.

Winter travel and recreation in the BWCAW, by all accounts, is only getting more popular. A few years back, thanks to a flexible schedule and some pals as keen on exploring the wilderness in winter as I was, I spent as many winter nights in the BWCAW as summer ones. From two-night weekend jaunts, to week-long circuits through the forest, from cold, dark, turn-of-the-year trips to that sun-dazzled March mission, we found, in our familiar summer haunts, a different face of the wilderness and a new and challenging way to enjoy it.

On various winter trips we've slogged through stretch-upon-slushy-stretch of big lake crossings and found December lakes blown ice-rink clear of snow, we've packed ice cream sandwiches in our food pack and revisited and re-occupied a quinzee hut from a previous trip, we've punched a leg crotch-deep into the Moose River and packed a network of snowshoe trails deep into the wilderness woods.

We even got stymied by stretches of open water and thick brush along an intended path. We've watched wolves reconnoiter our camps, observed otters sliding along the lake-tops, and pondered the tracks left by fellow human winter travelers.

Basically, we've had a wintry blast!



Bring Warm Clothes

If I had to name the biggest difference between "summer" and winter travel in the wilderness – and I could be a little glib about it – I'd say there's less opportunity for lying on the rocks with a book in winter than in summer.

That's not to say I haven't read a book while lying in the February sun. I have – it was a book about canoeing! But, in general, there's more to do on the trail in winter, less time to do it – in the light, anyway – and a greater need to keep yourself moving to stay warm. After a day of snowshoeing into the wilds, there's still firewood to gather – for warmth, not just atmosphere – a hole in the ice to chisel for water, meals to make, socks and boot-liners to dry, and thermoses to keep filled.

And a quinzee hut to build, if you're of that ilk. I've tent-camped in winter, bivy-sacked on the ice, and coveted those trapper-style wall tents with their woodstoves and warmth, but I enjoy the simple, caveman pleasures of the quinzee the best.



The author on the winter trail.

You crawl in on your belly, admire the twigs and pine-cones cemented into the packed snow that makes your domed home, hear the snow-insulated quiet of the interior, and feel the warmth – in the high 20s, at least, no matter the wintry wickedness outside.

Another tripping buddy of mine—we'll call him John, since that's his name – rightly deserves the builder's credit when I've "gone snow-cave." Together we piled the snow in an excavatable heap, but after the requisite wait for all those snow-crystals to become one – called sintering – he was the one, mountaineering shovel in hand, to hollow out our home. (I was, I hasten to add, the guy responsible for recycling the spoils onto the side of the hut and making sure the camp fire was ripping when he emerged, jacket soaking wet, from the job.)

Aside from the boots, snowshoes, sleds, ski-poles, ice-chisel, shovels, saws, and splitting axe, the bulk of our gear amounted to warm versions of the canoe tripper's outfit. Rather than the shorts and wind-pants of a paddle trip, we packed wind-pants, long-johns, and army-surplus wool pants. Tee-shirts were traded out for turtlenecks, windbreakers for anoraks . . . with a wool sweater and a down jacket thrown in for when the activity stopped.

Not that you'd forget, but we included lots of changes of socks, extra boot-liners and changes of mitts and gloves . . . You only really realize how much chilling perspiration your body can make when you're tripping in winter.



Endless Possibilities

BWCAW winter travel possibilities are practically endless. You can keep to the beaten paths if you're new to the game and enjoy meeting fellow hardy souls along the trail. Conversely, you can tromp down new trails that will, in all likelihood, only be tromped again that season by you yourself on the homebound leg.

Three of the more traveled-by trails in the frosty wilderness start out of Moose Lake and Snowbank, in the Ely area. Via Moose, trippers can follow the mushers' trails east toward Knife Lake or north to Basswood Lake. Both routes make winter variations to their summer counterparts.

The route to Knife sneaks through the wetlands north of Ensign Lake to avoid the up-and-down of the summer portages. The route to Basswood eschews the open water and the extra distance of the Prairie Portage route by sneaking through Found and Manomin Lakes to Rice Bay of Basswood Lake.

Like ice cream in the food pack, winter turns some of the basics of wilderness travel on their heads. Wetlands that would be nightmares to paddle or portage can be winter expressways. The packed dogsled trails can be especially helpful on the big lakes. They're easy to follow – often they're "staked out" with balsam boughs – and can keep you clear of the slush that seems to inevitably accompany freshly broken lake trails.

Where there are trails there are people. While on the Snowbank-to-Thomas route, Larry and I met a dogsledding outfitter's group and three women coming home from a wilderness weekend. We also saw the tracks of two other parties – including some fishermen who absolutely trashed their island camp on Thomas.

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On the trail between Moose and Basswood, John and I met a grouchy old fisherman, skunked for the day, muttering something about getting to Ely in time to catch his favorite TV program – NYPD Blue.

On trips we've made down lesser paths along the Echo Trail – sorry, that's all I'm willing to tell you – we saw nary a sign of fellow two-legs once we descended the wilderness side of the Echo Trail's ditch-banks. We found lots of deep snow to break trails through, though.



Winter Wonders to Behold

Wolves trotting along a frozen lake. ❄️ **The view from Eagle Mountain in winter.** ❄️ **An otter playfully sliding across the snow near the Thomas-Frazier passage.** ❄️ **The white expanse of mighty Basswood Lake from the top of the portage trail to Indiana Lake.** ❄️

It's not that there aren't wonders to behold in the BWCAW in the non-winter months. I've seen wolves and otters and stirring vistas and mighty lakes then too. But the winter experience colors the encounters differently and makes them seem more rare, more raw. If not for your presence, breath steaming from your parka, who would have been there to witness them? (In summer, I more often wonder what the bumbling group ahead of me just scared away!)

My English professor friend Don and I climbed Eagle Mountain two solstices ago and reveled in the view from Minnesota's pinnacle, glad for the Eagle's view in winter.

Wolves may reconnoiter campsites in summer from the stealth of the woods, but watching wolves surmise John's and my Quetico camps on Agnes and Shade Lakes made the winter wilderness that much more real and visceral.

Enjoying an otter as he slid around above the open water near the connecting passage between Thomas and Frazier Lakes made me think that having fun in the woods, in winter, wasn't just a human thing.

Winter in the wilderness has the effect, on me at least, of making the land seem bigger, more wild, more remote. Winter miles seems longer and all the more honestly earned than summer ones. The distance between far points on the shore seem more vast in crystalline cold.

But the winter environment has the effect, again, on me at least, of making the camp, the campfire, and your companions on the trail – the Larrys, the Johns, the Dons – all the more important and meaningful.

With the world beyond the glow of the fire and outside the circle of conversation that much more awesome in its harshness and beauty, the camp, the fire, the friendships – “home” – serves to comfort all the more.

Gathered around a fire, prepared to dwell for the night in your sheltering winter cave, listening to frigid winds sigh through the tree-tops, one can sense human's original civilizing elements – companionship, warmth, shelter, security – there around the campfire.

Hey friend, pass me another ice cream bar.



Drying footwear, enjoying life.

conservation issues update

Namakan River Hydro Projects Raising Concerns

Plans to build two dams on the Namakan River just outside of Quetico Provincial Park are drawing concerns from local residents and conservation groups as environmental study for the projects moves forward. The project would build two run-of-river hydroelectric generating facilities on the Namakan River at High Falls and Hay Rapids.

The Ojibway Power and Energy Group (OPEG), a partnership between the Lac la Croix First Nation and Chant Construction Limited of Aurora, Ontario, plans to complete environmental assessment field studies by July, 2008 with intentions of beginning construction on the project by the end of 2009.

Members of the Rainy Lake Conservancy, which is officially “neutral” to the project at this time, raised concerns about the project at a public meeting in August of the International Rainy River Water Pollution Board and the International Rainy Lake Board of Control. Concerns expressed at the meeting included the project's impact on fish migration and water quality and its development of the last remaining waterfalls in the region.

OPEG will host information sessions on the project this winter. The first is scheduled December 19 from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. at the school gym at Lac la Croix First Nation. Meetings will be held

in Atikokan and Fort Frances in February, 2008 on dates to be announced.

Proponents stress the project would create jobs and income for the Lac la Croix First Nation, produce renewable energy, and have little effect on the environment.

Mining Assessment Delayed

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposed Copper-Nickel mine near Babbit, Minnesota will not come before January 2008, officials have said.

The PolyMet Mining Corporation, whose project could be the first of a wave of new precious metal mines in Northeastern Minnesota, had initially expected the agencies to complete their evaluations of the proposed mine's plans by November of 2007. The new target date means an Environmental Impact Statement for the project won't come before the end of the first quarter of 2008.

PolyMet has amended its original plans for the mine, according to media reports, to include waste rock backfilling into the open pit, treatment and re-use of mine-site water to cause no surface water discharge and reducing the need to “make up” for

water used, and implementation of state-of-the-art air emission controls which would exceed statutory requirements.

Environmental Groups Appeal South Fowl Ruling

A coalition of environmental groups including Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, the Izaak Walton League, the Sierra Club Northstar Chapter, and Wilderness Watch will appeal a recent ruling that largely supported the U.S. Forest Service's proposal to build a new snowmobile trail near South Fowl Lake in the eastern BWCAW.

In October 2007, U.S. District Court Judge John Tunheim upheld most of the actions of USFS in a lawsuit brought by the environmental groups over the trail. The plaintiffs claimed the Forest Service had violated the Administrative Procedures Act, the Boundary Waters Wilderness Act, and the National Forest Management Act when it found that the proposed trail would have no significant impact on the wilderness.

While Tunheim rejected those arguments, he sided with the coalition on the need for the Forest Service to study the environmental impact of the noise created by the snowmobile trails on the edge of the wilderness area.



Chel Anderson

By Charlie Mahler, Wilderness News Contributor

Chel Anderson has spent more than 30 years studying the small plants of the Quetico-Superior forest. A Plant Ecologist/Botanist for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources by day and an advocate, on her own time, for preservation of the natural communities she studies, Anderson has witnessed changes to the eco-system from a unique perspective. Wilderness News contributor Charlie Mahler talked to Anderson about her work and her concerns.

WN: When people think of the Quetico-Superior region they probably think first about trees and, of course, the water, but your focus is on the smaller plants of the forest. What prompted your interest in them?

I think my interest is an extension of the innate interest every child has in every aspect of the world around it. I was very fortunate to spend my childhood in places that still had lots of natural qualities – oak woods, savanna, even a small patch of native prairie, as well as northern forests and lakes. I was given the freedom to play, explore and discover in these environments. My native curiosity, my wonder, was captivated by the plants and animals of all kinds that I experienced. The astonishing diversity of form and color in plants amazed me, and still does. Once I learned plants lived by ‘eating light’; could reveal some of the story of the earth beneath them and of plants and other life that preceded them; and that each species’ story (life history) involved marvelously elegant relationships, I was hooked. I couldn’t imagine limiting my interest to just the most obvious.

WN: What larger concepts can small plants tell us about the health and nature of a forest?

Each forest type is a specialized community of native plants (and animals) that reflect fundamental local conditions such as landforms, soil and water chemistry, hydrology, nutrients and their availability and natural disturbance regimes. The members of the community interact with each other in complex relationships and predictable cycles of change, which in a healthy forest are mutually sustaining over time – a predictable and gradual shift of species through different growth stages as conditions such as light and moisture conditions change. In northern Minnesota most native trees and shrubs will grow in a wide range of conditions, are part of many different forest communities and are wind pollinated. Many herbaceous (non-woody) plants are more particular about the conditions they will grow in, and so can

better define forest communities, and many are dependent on insect pollination. Changes in their distribution or range and/or patterns of occurrence or abundance in a forest community more closely follow change in local conditions. They can be the earliest indicators of a disruption of forest community relationships and cycles of natural change as a result of altered natural disturbance regimes, inappropriate forest management, fragmentation, introduction of exotic species, climate change or some combination of these.

For example, loss of some herbaceous plants in northern Minnesota’s forests is an early indicator of changes in the litter layer due to the introduction of exotic earthworms. Where trees and shrubs may suggest a healthy forest, the absence of some native herbaceous species, and presence or uncharacteristic dominance of others in a community can reveal a history of management that was a poor imitation of the forest’s natural disturbance regime, diminishing its native flora and severing relationships. These activities can range from timber harvest practices to fire suppression to intentional introduction of non-native plants to ‘cleaning-up the woods’ or ‘improving the view’ by removing snags, and woody debris or the shrubs and understory trees. The invasion and dominance of non-native species following a natural disturbance in the forest speaks volumes about their pervasive and expanding presence in the landscape and the threat they pose to our native flora – both common and rare species – and to the viability of forest and nonforest communities in the future.

WN: Based on your work, what is the condition of the Quetico-Superior forest?

In general, their condition has deteriorated since I began living and working here 33 years ago. To date, this is principally the result of forest and habitat fragmentation (the former primarily in the southwest, the latter throughout); forest management based on an industrial agriculture model instead of an ecological model that reflects an understanding of Northeastern Minnesota’s native species, native plant communities and their pattern of occurrence in the landscape mosaic; fire suppression and limited use of fire as a management tool; the proliferation of roads and the introduction and spread non-native invasive species.

Despite this reality, the greater Quetico-Superior area still has the luxury, at least in the short term, of opportunities that are gone in much of the rest of the state for conservation of native plants and plant communities. However, without significant changes in land management, including a high priority on the identification and conservation of the remaining areas where native biodiversity of plants and plant communities still flourish, those opportunities will slip away here too.

WN: Lee Frelich at the University of Minnesota has written extensively about the changes occurring in the ecology of the area. Do you see those same changes taking place?

Yes, many of the landscape and plant community-scale changes Lee has described resulting from forest management and other land uses, fire suppression, earthworms, non-native invasive plant

species, deer browsing etc are apparent in my work as well. Given the scale of the greater Quetico-Superior landscape and the state as a whole there is very little research focused on detecting or monitoring change at the species or plant community level in both terrestrial and aquatic systems. The focus of the County Biological Survey of the Minnesota DNR, which I work for, is as the name suggests, a survey to document and evaluate current species and community conditions. To the extent that we have the benefit of objective information of past abundance, distribution and condition of species or plant communities we can observe changes up to this point in time, but we do not monitor change into the future. Minnesota is the envy of most other states because we have a biological survey program (and have had one for nearly 20 years). The Natural Heritage Program of the DNR does monitor populations of a few plant species that enjoy both federal and state protection. However, the fact that identification of the state’s natural heritage is still incomplete, there is limited knowledge concerning the life history of most plants, and no comprehensive and coordinated monitoring speaks volumes about how comparatively little priority i.e. funding, this kind of work/knowledge has had in our society.

WN: Are the changes that are taking place preventable, and if so, how?

Many are, and require actions both individual and collective that acknowledge and reflect the intrinsic connection between our own well-being and that of the whole earth. As Gaylord Nelson put it, “The economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment.” Some actions that would contribute to preventing, slowing or reversing changes happening in this landscape and elsewhere are:

- 1) Recognize and reflect in personal choices the finite nature of the land and all it supports. Take personal responsibility to reduce and be conservative in your consumption, including forest products. Adjust your own consumer choices, land use and recreation to reflect the importance of sustainable forestry and development practices, and ensure that you do not contribute to the spread of exotic species. Advocate and support with your voice, vote and choices ecologically sound forest, wildlife, recreation and land development policies, practices and decisions on public and private land that put conserving our life support system ahead of our consumptive use of it, and on par with issues like education, and health care when it comes to investing our collective wealth.
- 2) Identify and conserve, using passive and active stewardship strategies appropriate to the native plant community, the remaining forests, lakes, rivers, and non-forested communities where native biodiversity still flourishes.
- 3) Protect or create where necessary corridors of undeveloped land linking these areas.
- 4) Apply ecologically based, adaptive forest management that seeks to sustain native plant communities and their natural pattern in the landscape on all public lands, and continue to offer incentives and assistance to private landowners to do the same. □

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book review

Daughter Father Canoe Coming of age in the sub-arctic and other stories of Snowdrift River and Nonacho Lake. by Rob Kesselring 2003, \$14.95

Review by Toby L. Berry

You don't have to have a daughter, be a father or paddle a canoe to enjoy this book.

Author Rob Kesselring, does such a superb writing job that I laughed out loud one moment, and wiped a tear of sorrow from my cheek the next, while reading his highly personal, true account of time spent in the Northwest Territories (NWT) of Canada.

Kesselring's daughter, Lara, is a typical 14-year-old in the affluent suburb of Eden Prairie, Minnesota. Her father worries about her self-esteem and the values that emerge from such an environment, and so decides to take her on a month long trip into the barren wilderness of the NWT to show her another side of life. Hungry for a reason to return to the NWT himself, Lara's coming of age is his multi-purpose excuse.

Most of the first half of the book describes Kesselring's early years in the NWT, including his relationships with the natives of the area, the Chipewyan Dene (people).

He writes about history, social anthropology, airplane mechanics and even firearms in surprisingly interesting detail by weaving this information relevantly into his experiences. For example, we learn a bit about small airplanes when Kesselring grippingly describes perilous flights he and others take in subzero degree weather.

The book covers issues like sustainability, the conflict between man and nature, and civilization's intrusion on tradition, without sermonizing.

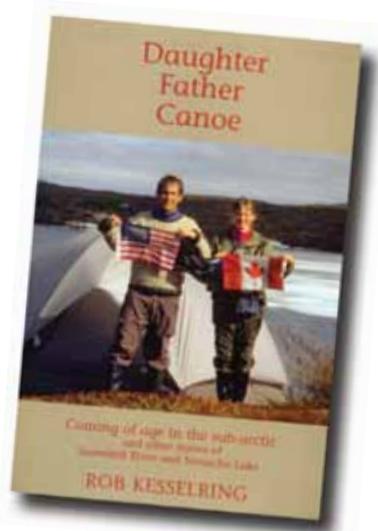
Best of all, Kesselring is a true storyteller. He had me laughing often, but my favorite story was when he described a group of Minnesota fishermen flown in to remote Nonacho Lake, where Kesselring and his then wife, Bonnie, had a cabin. "After two and a half hours of drinking beer and sitting in that vibrating aircraft, for those Minnesota fisherman, urination was the top priority. They lined up on a snow bank like blackbirds on a wire, zippers down when Bonnie came over the hill. A smiling blond was a least-expected vision. The six men caught midstream with their hands on their penises were dumbfounded. Bonnie was nonplussed. She was so thrilled to have visitors, she chatted nonstop."

In the second half of the book, Kesselring delves into his trip with Lara. One of the most poignant parts is when Lara is afraid to take her responsibility in the bow of the canoe in the rapids, directing her dad, who is steering in the stern. He describes how he told Lara a story. I don't know if he made it up or heard it from the Chipewyan, but it is about a frightened girl who goes to an old woman for advice. The old

woman said, "You have two dogs in your stomach, one dog is fear and the other dog is courage. The two dogs are having a fight." The girl asks in frustration, "Which dog will win?" To which the old woman replies, "The dog that you feed will win."

I am sure that Lara, even now, 10 years later, thinks about this story and feeds her courage-dog when necessary. The author, too, must have fed his courage-dog in order to write and publish such a candid and personal account.

The best way to get a copy of the book is to order online at: www.robkesselring.com



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