

KAWARTHA HIGHLANDS BOTTLE CREEK - SUCKER LAKE LOOP Canoe Trip

Sep 23, 2011 By: Ross Rutley

On September-23rd to 25th we had a very nice little trip into the heart of the Kawartha Highlands Provincial Nature Reserve park north of Peterborough Ontario. The route chosen is called the Sucker Lake route and it can be accessed from three possible put ins depending on how much paddling you wish to do.

This canoe area was designated as a non operating Provincial Park in the late 1980's and is a user maintained area. Set amid the beautiful Kawartha Highlands, the route takes you across a least three scenic lakes, through beautiful stands of mixed forest, and along the interesting Bottle Creek .The total distance for this easy route is about 20km and can be completed in 2 days. There are two short portages to access Bottle Creek from Catchacoma and then from Bottle Lake to Sucker Lake .

There were six of us on the trip; Ross Rutley(Trip Leader), Elke Lange, Kent Taylor ,Barb Kuchar, Susan Nagy and Chana Steinbok. Kent and Barb got delayed at the last moment so we arranged for them to come in by a shorter route the next day. Four of us in two canoes put in at Cavendish Bay on Beaver lake and this reduced the time spent on Catchacoma which in the summer can be fairly busy

with boat traffic.



AT THE CAVENDISH BAY PUT IN

In September however it's not hard to find solitude in this semi wilderness area, and the paddle in from Cavendish Lake is very scenic with the park along one side and only a few cottages on the other side along the way.

We had lunch shortly after entering Beaver Lake at a little protected bay which the cottage owner said had been a stopping place for Champlain when he was exploring the area hundreds of years ago.

From there it is a short paddle through a narrow channel out into Lake Catchacoma ,around a point and back into Bottle Creek .At bottle creek you portage past the dam and then you have a nice long paddle up the creek for about 3km with a mature Hemlock forest along both sides of the route.



ALONG BOTTLE CREEK

As you reach the end there are a couple of campsites along the left side just before the creek opens up into Bottle Lake.

There is an island just past the campsites and to try out a short cut we paddled through the reed bed along the north side and were rewarded by a close encounter with a big Blue Herron.

Just past the island is an interesting row of rocks stretching almost all the way across the lake; the remains of an old logging road I think. Bottle lake is interesting if you like sandy beaches because there seem to be a lot of them around all sides of the lake .The one beach you can see as you come in is probably about 300m long and there are three campsites along that shore.

If you paddle as far as the beach however it means you have gone past the portage, so it's best to follow the right hand shore line to avoid missing it.

Watch for some nice rock ledges when you go around a point and approach the second portage up

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to Sucker lake.



APPROCHING THE PORTAGE

The portage up to Sucker lake is short but the last 10m has a lot of rocks in it and is fairly steep, but with care it is an easy crossing.

Paddling out onto Sucker lake is a treat because as you come around the first point you see two beautiful islands with very interesting trees reminiscent of something out of a Group of Seven oil painting.



A TOM THOMPSON MOMENT

It was now later in the afternoon and the weather was showing

signs of rain so we paddled straight to our campsite on the point beyond the islands. As we landed it started to rain so we had to hustle to get a tarp set up over the picnic table and then get the tents up before it got too wet.

As it turned out we just made it so at least we had a nice dry table to sit at for supper even though cooking was a bit of a damp affair. That night we tucked in early and the rain came down pretty hard and at one point we had to add an extra tarp over Susan and Chana's tent to keep the spray from blowing in.

Kent and Barb called in by cell phone around six pm to say that they would be paddling in next morning, so we made plans to meet them at the portage and were just hoping the rain would quit by then. As it turned out it pretty much did although we had a grey overcast morning when we went out to meet them.



GUESS WHO'S COMING TO BREAKFAST

Soon we were all back at camp and the sun started to show up

and a relaxing warm day was enjoyed by all.



COFFE TIME



CHAT TIME

It's interesting around camp sometimes



SOME PEOPLE COLLECTED BUGS

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Elke and I did some exploring around the end of the lake to check out some of the other campsites.



CHECKING OUT A CAMP



THE VIEW BACK TOWARDS OUR CAMP

Later in the afternoon it got nice and warm so the summer activities began.



SWIMMING ?



JUST RELAXING

All together a very nice day and a gentle sunset.



SILENCE

Next day we had a relaxing morning and broke camp around eleven –thirty, to head back out. On the way out we retraced our route so that Barb and Kent could enjoy the paddle down Bottle Creek.

It was a longer route out but the weather was great so we took a relaxed pace and made the most of the fine autumn weather.

At the take out we did a short car shuttle to pick up Kent's vehicle and then we were on our way home again.

All in all , even with the rainy weather I think we had a great little trip. I know I enjoyed the company of my companions and I am sure they did likewise.

We had some fun and got to enjoy one of the last trips of the season.

Thanks to you ; ‘paddle partners’ hope to see you back next year.

Ross Rutley
Trip Leader
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