

A Hardy Group Survives Heavy Storm at Annual MVFN Canoe Camp in Algonquin Park

By Cliff Bennett

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Coming through a drenching rain and high winds, which emptied most of Achray campsite in Eastern Algonquin Park, forty-one members of the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists (MVFN) actually enjoyed the challenges at their fifth annual Canoe Camp, September 7th to 10th. By pooling all picnic tables and camp stoves under a huge tarpaulin, members were able to continue cooking comfortably and taking part in activities in relative dryness. A few personal tents didn't stand up to the continuous overnight downpour and six members packed up and went home to get dried out.

At the Friday evening opening activities, Camp Leader Cliff Bennett welcomed all and introduced the camp committee members and explained their roles. Health and Safety leader Graham Hunt talked about regulations and practices the participants would be following to keep everyone as safe as possible during the next three day's paddling. Doug Younger-Lewis and Joyce Clinton revealed the activities and program items to choose from during the camp and the sign-up process to be used.

On Saturday, after the rain eased, the members divided into three activity groups. While one group chose to do the hike to High Falls and area, the other two decided to paddle in the rain; one travelling up Grand Lake and the other exploring around the local bays and wetlands. The Grand Lake group just got off the water in the afternoon when a real tempest stirred up the water's surface.

Sunday saw the paddlers join into three explorations. One group paddled across Grand Lake and up to the Carcajou Bay Falls, another cruised down the east side of Stratton Lake to explore the top of High Falls while the third group took the west side of Stratton, through a series of portages and small lakes to explore the bottom of High Falls.

'Seeing Nature from the Water' was the theme of the camp and an impressive list of flora and fauna were seen. Thirty species of birds were listed including a barred owl, common merganser, ring-necked duck and green-winged teal, brown creeper, red-tailed hawk and great crested flycatcher. One black bear was spotted in the distance, a wolf and its juvenile appeared right behind one of the tents during the night and a painted turtle and a beaver were filmed during a canoe trip.

Dining was a great feature of the camp and members served each other a pot-luck dinner on both Saturday and Sunday evenings. A formal campfire program was conducted on Sunday evening with many skits, songs and stories creating good laughter and camaraderie.

After breaking camp on Monday, members had many choices including canoeing the famous Barron Canyon, exploring McGrath Lake or doing the hiking trail to the top of Barron Canyon. All returned home, happy and tired, without even a single scratch or upset canoe. Arne Snyder chaired the camp organizing committee, which started meeting in April to prepare all of the details, site reservations, site lay-outs and registration of participants.

The location for next year, MVFN's 6th Annual Canoe Camp, has not yet been settled but the dates will be September 6th to 9th 2013. The MVFN canoeing program is a part of the Program Committee, chaired by Cathy Keddy. A new season of MVFN's natural history lecture series has now begun at the Almonte United Church at 106 Elgin St. in Almonte. The next lecture will be held Thursday October 18; the presentation *Beetles on the Ground* will be given by well-known scientist Dr. Henri Goulet, Research Scientist Emeritus with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Ottawa. For further information please visit mvfn.ca or contact Cathy Keddy at 613-257-3089.



Photo 1: A hardy group survived a heavy storm to take this final photo at MVFN's 3-day canoe camp at Achray campsite in Algonquin Park (*photo by Cliff Bennett*)



Photo 2: Gorgeous skies and scenery surround MVFN canoes and kayaks during an outing on MVFN Algonquin canoe camp. In the foreground are canoeists Arne and Janet Snyder. *(photo by Simon Lunn)*



Photo 3: By pooling all picnic tables and camp stoves under a huge tarpaulin, members were able to continue cooking comfortably and taking part in activities in relative dryness during the heavy storm *(photo by Cliff Bennett)*



Photo 4: Some breaks in the weather allowed MVFN canoeists, kayakers and hikers to get out into nature during MVFN’s three-day canoe camp at Achray campsite in Algonquin Park (*photo by Simon Lunn*)



Photo 5: Canoes and kayaks are beached as the group waited out the heavy storm during MVFN’s Algonquin Park trip (*photo by Simon Lunn*)



Photo 6: Colours and texture of nature enjoyed in the fresh air of Algonquin Park (*photo by Simon Lunn*)



Photo 7: ‘Seeing Nature from the Water’ on MVFN’s canoe camp: A merganser family seen during the Algonquin Park trip (*photo by Simon Lunn*)