



canoecopia 2026

the world's largest canoe, kayak, and outdoor expo.

march 13-15, 2026
alliant energy center
madison, wisconsin

We're Here For You, And We're Not Going Anywhere.

Dear friends,

Here's an update to the status of Rutabaga Paddlesports and Canoecopia. It's all good news, as far as I'm concerned. *Good for everyone.*

Back story: Last fall I announced, after much thought, that our family was to close Rutabaga Paddlesports.

Anyway, I *thought* I was going to. After a few hundred cards, letters, phone calls, emails, social media posts and private messages, I reversed course. Why?



There are two kinds of retailers: *transactional*, and *relational*...we want people who realize the importance of relationships, not transactions. That's the main criteria for any new ownership. People who want to spread the good news of paddling and being outside.

While I would have liked to move on to my next career as a hospice chaplain; you all had other ideas. The two phrases I heard the most were *What about our community?*, and *Where will I get my paddling gear now?*

The first sentiment was what I heard the loudest. Rutabaga spent half a century building a community of paddlers and I was there for 36 of them. A month after announcing the closure, I found a way to put Rutabaga up for sale (as of this writing, it still is), instead of dissolving the shop and the community attached to it.

Long story short, it's my intention that Rutabaga Paddlesports will live a long and prosperous life, long after I am gone. I will not pass over the shop to people who aren't passionate about getting people on the water.

There are two kinds of retailers: *transactional*, and *relational*. Transactions are easy: we give a shop or website money, and they give us stuff. It's simple, fast, and useful if you're buying a commodity.

We want owners who realize the importance of relationships, not transactions.

Canoecopia will also live a long and prosperous life as well. It is tied inextricably together with Rutabaga, one more event that bonds our community together.

So stay tuned. We're not going anywhere.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darra".

2026 Show Guide Contents

Welcome to Canoecopia 2026!

Welcome, dear friends and customers (frustomers?). We all have been working hard to make it the best one yet.

You may have noticed that we switched back to glossy magazine printing from newsprint. Even at a higher cost, it's well worth it to give you something you can hold on to. The newsprint copy from 2025 sitting next to my computer for reference is yellow and ugly.

I was approached by dozens of new speakers who have fascinating stories to tell and skills to share. We have outfitters from far away places who have never been to Canoecopia before and want to share their love of their home turf, from Temagami to the Northwest Territories.

There are plenty of returning boat and gear vendors, but plenty of new ones too. All of them have new boats and gear to show, and feature a good selection of the new stuff.

One favor; please, bring a friend to the show. We need more paddlers in our community, and the best way to find a new paddling partner is to make one.

We can't wait to see you at the show!



Canoecopia March 13-15 Alliant Energy Center

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Canoecopia has always been presented by



Getting the Most Out of Canoecopia

First, come all three days. If we had one recommendation, that's it. There is so much to see.

See at least one presentation.

Sitting down and hearing a presentation is informative (and restorative for your body). Plus, the speakers are top-notch. Our speaker schedule starts on page 20. Check the web for any last-minute changes.

Talk to everyone. The vendors, speakers, Baga staff, and exhibitors are glad to discuss any questions you have. We're all paddlers, which means the "Cool Factor" is absurdly high. Take advantage of that.

Sit in a lot of boats. Canoecopia offers an opportunity to sit in hundreds of models under one roof. Make sure to adjust the seat properly and take your time.

Special Orders are a way to get that special thing you wanted if it is not in stock and you can wait 6-10 weeks to get it.



Questions? Lost something?

Come up to the Customer Service booth. We're amazingly good at getting answers and reuniting people with their treasures.

Boats and Trailers

To purchase a boat or trailer, go to the large Boat Register area inside the main hall (booth 164). If we have your boat in stock, you can take it home that day. The friendly staff there will guide you through the next steps of picking your new boat up.

Special ordering a boat (or a boat not in stock)? A Rutabaga Staffer at a Boat Register will explain the timeline for your boat arriving at Rutabaga. Forms are at each vendor booth and need to be filled out before you check out. Boat special orders go to the Boat Registers, everything else to the Accessory Registers.



Need a roof rack or trailer? Racks can be installed at the show if you need to take a boat home that day. Start this process early. It can take a while. Pay for trailers at a Boat Register, roof racks at Accessory Registers. If you don't need the rack right away, take it home and we'll install it later at Rutabaga. There is a \$50 assembly and install charge for roof racks.

Layaways are an option if you want to pick up your boat a week or more after Canoeecopia. We ask for half of the purchase price. Deposits are fully refundable until June 5th.

Accessories (everything else)

Purchase accessories outside the hall. Accessory Register entrance is by the Customer Service booth.

If you don't need a rack to get your boat home from Canoeecopia, we're happy to install it later at Rutabaga.

We have shopping totes to carry your items. If you want to go see a speaker, leave your totes at one of the Tote Checks. Shopping totes are emptied each night. Buy your stuff before you leave that day.

Special Orders? Your special item isn't in stock? Staff in the vendor booths will fill out a form for you (make sure your contact information is complete). Bring the completed form with all of the rest of your accessory purchases to the Accessory Registers near the

Customer Service booth.

Check-out lines move fast. The line time peaks just a little during the speaker changes.

Returns need to be in "like-new, sellable condition," with its tags, packaging, and receipt. All returns must be made by May 2nd at Rutabaga.

Questions? Look for anyone wearing a staff shirt. They can give you an answer or direct you to the proper place to find it.

Where is Rutabaga? During Canoeecopia, we're at the Alliant Energy Center. Other than that, we're at 2620 Rimrock Road.



what's new

Ombraz Sunglasses

Ombraz replaces sidearms with a built-in cord, making them more comfortable, durable, secure and packable than traditional sunglasses. They're rock-steady on the water and sit perfectly still on your face through movement and chop. Ombraz uses world-class polarized Zeiss optics that cuts glare and boosts contrast where it matters on the water. Cords instead of bows fit great under hats and helmets



Esquif Echo 2.0

We love the Echo, one of a handful of T-Formex solo canoes, but it was a little shallow for bigger people or in “fluffier” water. The 2.0 is built on the sweet-paddling Echo, but with more depth and fullness for a dryer ride and a little more load capability. If you want a versatile tripping/moving water solo, this is a great choice. Esquif makes great whitewater boats, so the heritage comes through nicely in this more touring-friendly design.



Chill Angel Merino Hoodie

Chill Angel is new to Rutabaga and Canoecopia! A women-owned women-designed line of merino wool clothing, Chill Angel brings super soft merino to warm, cozy, soft, and all the other adjectives.

The Merino Hoodie is one of their best sellers, and a go-to piece for a nice layer in the winter or a stand-alone in the summer. It also keeps you warm even when wet, so it's great to throw on if you're still wearing your swim top. It has all the cool features many women love; thumb loops, a kangaroo pocket for toasty hands, and a giant scuba hood.



Northstar Black HD

If you want a super-durable can't-kill-it Northstar canoe, the IXP layup is fantastic. Darren has been beating on his IXP for 6 years and it has zero structural wear (just scratches, but that means they're being used). It's a little heavier than some would want to portage.

Charlie and Bear split the difference. BlackHD is a tougher version of BlackLite. BlackHD is for the paddler that wants more strength than BlackLite, but without the weight of IXP, bridging the gap between them. No foam core means a lamination capable of river running, though not built for "classed" whitewater. Paddling later in the season when the water's a little low, it's great.

For 2026 BlackHD is available on four solos: Northwind Solo, Trillium, Phoenix, and Firebird. Tandems will come later, we've been assured.

Swift Prospector Solo 15

The Prospector 14 is a great boat, but some trippers wanted a little more speed and capacity, so Swift got busy with it. They didn't just stretch the 14 footer, David Yost made refinements needed for a longer boat. Fifteen feet is a nice all-around length, and it is indeed a little faster than the Prospector 14. With two inches of rocker, it'll still handle moving water with ease, and give you the capacity you need for longer trips. Available in all the standard constructions and options, so you can go tough, go light, or anything in between depending on your need.



Helinox Chair One High Back

You spent your youth sitting on logs around the campfire, and that's awesome...when you're 16. Helinox allows you to take a lightweight chair with you, even into the most remote areas over the longest portages, but they're also good for soccer games and reading your favorite book on a sandbar. The Chair One High Back has been redesigned for more comfort and durability, and made stronger so it can support over 300 pounds. Helinox uses 300D recycled fabric and industry standard DAC aluminum poles. The Chair One High Back weighs under three pounds.



Swift Wabakimi 18

Want a fast tripper? The Wabakimi 18 is a rocket, made for covering distance quickly and efficiently. Although designed for paddlers with a little experience, it will reward that experience with performance. Stern paddlers will love the gunwales that tuck in a little, to make it easier for them to reach the water without having to reach out too far. A little V in the tail lets the paddler carve turns, and a little bow rocker makes draw strokes easier, so you can miss the sneaky rock you see at the last second.

It will be debuted for the first time at Canoecopia 5:00 pm Friday, so if you want a first peek, be there.



Jetboil TrailCook 1.2 Carbon

Constructed with high-strength, corrosion-resistant materials, the Jetboil TrailCook 1.2 Carbon features a lightweight, carbon-infused pot that offers exceptional durability without adding extra weight to your portage pack. An integrated heat exchanger maximizes boiling speed, making it ideal for quick meal prep, and its efficient design reduces fuel consumption. This compact system includes a reliable push-button igniter, and the 1.2-liter capacity provides ample space for cooking multiple servings or larger meals, making it versatile for solo adventures or small groups.



Mocean Scout Series

Mocean is a newer kayak company based in Washington, and we're pleased to welcome them to Canoeopia for the first time. All Mocean kayaks are made using thermo-

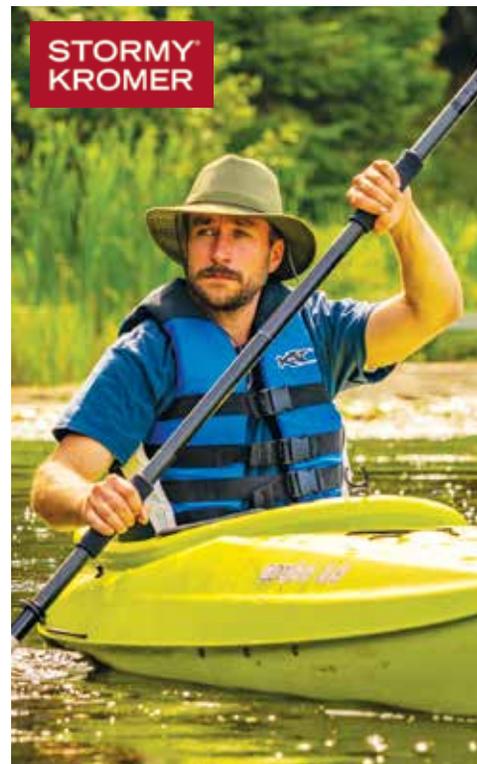
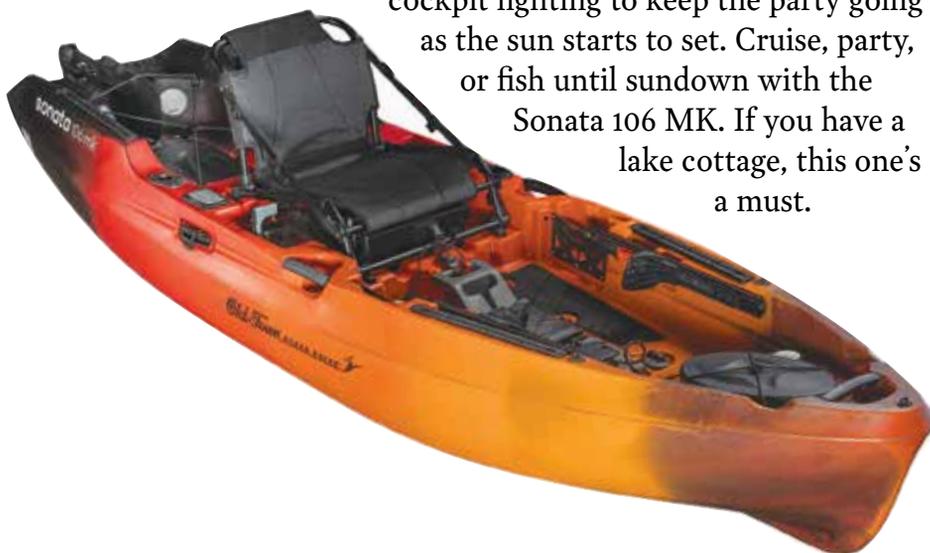


formed technology to create lightweight ABS kayaks. The flagship is the 12' Scout. It's somewhere between a sea kayak and a recreational kayak, with two huge hatches (12" and 18") and bulkheads with lots of storage, but with a larger cockpit and a little more width for stability. It features a comfy seat, and weighs in at 46 pounds, so still easy to lift and load. Even if the Scout is only 12 feet long, you can still do over-nighters and long weekend trips with its abundant storage.

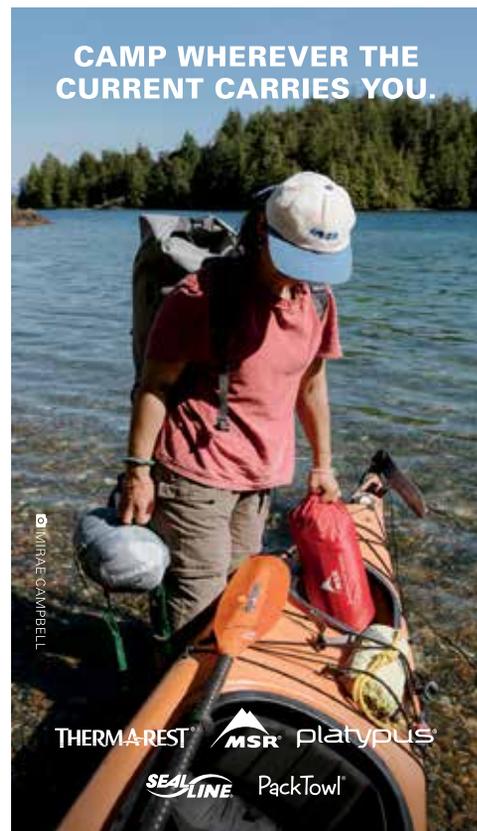
Old Town Sonata 106

If summer vibes were a kayak, the Sonata 106 MK would be it! The Sonata 106 MK is easy to maneuver like a kayak, but fully motorized. Featuring an integrated Minn Kota electric motor, you control your kayak with an intuitive forward-and-reverse throttle beside your seat, and you steer with your feet using the adjustable foot braces. It is configured to fit Hummingbird fish finders, and the Sonata has plenty of room for storage (even a dog). Turn on the LED

cockpit lighting to keep the party going as the sun starts to set. Cruise, party, or fish until sundown with the Sonata 106 MK. If you have a lake cottage, this one's a must.



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THERMAREST MSR platypus SEALINE PackTowl



Wenonah Canoe

Jensen 18 II

The Jensen 18 II is back! Gene Jensen designed the Jensen 18 II for the Wild Hog Race, a twisty bushwack of a race on Florida's Waccasassa River. That DNA created a performance canoe for big water situations or narrow rivers. If you want a fast canoe that can still handle curves, the Jensen 18 II is unique in its combination of speed and predictability in rough water, running dry in waves and turning on a dime.

Wenonah Canoe

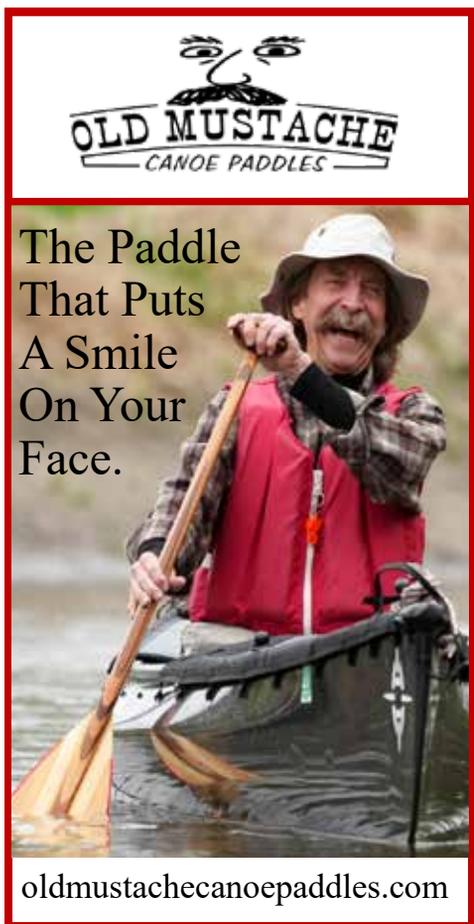
SuperLite

SuperLite is Wenonah's ultimate refinement of their well-proven Ultralight construction. SuperLite canoes are nearly 15% lighter than standard ultralight construction. Wenonah achieved weight savings through refinements in selective reinforcement, CAD-designed structural cores and standard carbon seats, all with no loss of strength and durability. SuperLite is offered in the Spirit II, Minnesota II, Escape, and the Prism.

Wenonah Canoe

InTek

InTek is Wenonah's new construction employing state of the art infusion. Advantages to this construction are amazing aesthetics, access to bespoke fabrics and the ideal ratio of fiber to resin. InTek canoe cores are all CAD-optimized and machine cut for perfect alignment. InTek is available in select models; talk to Wenonah at the show to get more info. Outer fabric choices are Red or Green polyester, or Carbon exterior, all with Innegra/Black Aramid interiors.



Astral Designs

Lonnie

The designers at Astral have updated their Lonnie with their ThinVent™ tech that is breathable and the low-profile fit accommodates a broad range of body types. Astral equipped their ergonomic design with easy access mesh pockets, a secure phone pocket, a knife park, and an integrated whistle. Hydration compatible and crafted with bluesign®-approved materials, the Lonnie™ delivers high-performance utility and storage in a streamlined silhouette.



Astral

V-Eight 4.0™

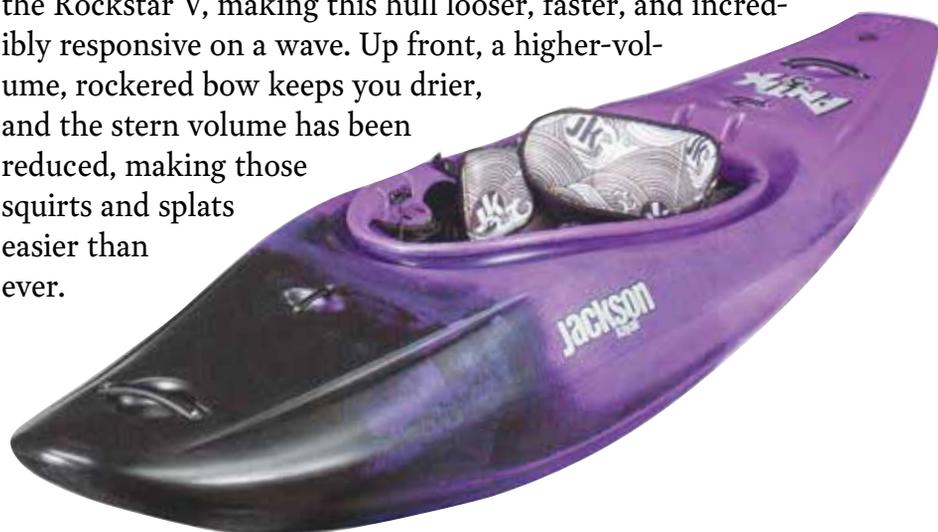
The venerable V-Eight just gets better and better. The V-Eight 4.0™ uses Astral's patented Air-escape technology to reduce the heat and sweat typically associated with wearing a life jacket. Super-soft and environmentally-friendly Gaia foam is sculpted for mobility and prevents ride-up. A high mesh back further increases ventilation and pairs perfectly with high-back kayak seats. Made with a bluesign® approved recycled shell, knife storage, and an integrated whistle, this is the life jacket for those hot, humid Midwest days when you want ventilation.



Jackson

Kayak Antix 3.0

The new Antix 3.0 takes the crown as the ultimate downriver play machine by blending the best features of its predecessors with modern freestyle DNA. Jackson integrated the double-rail system from the Rockstar V, making this hull looser, faster, and incredibly responsive on a wave. Up front, a higher-volume, rockered bow keeps you drier, and the stern volume has been reduced, making those squirts and splats easier than ever.





NRS CVest

You never have enough pockets on your PFD. We all told them, and NRS listened. The CVest still has the standard OrbitFit and graded sizing to give best in class fit that leaves you forgetting you are wearing a life vest (it happened to Darren – good story). Pockets upon pockets, additional attachment points and enhanced reflective accents will have you ready for any adventure.

NRS has also redesigned its HydroSkin .5mm Glove, adding an outstanding new grip for 2026. This will give you better traction holding your paddle or fishing rod. The 5mm thickness gives amazing dexterity, while the Titanium laminate reflects body heat for all day warmth, wet or dry.



Werner Paddles Pack-Tour M: Canyon

Winner of the 2026 Paddling Magazine Industry Award for Best Paddle, the Pack-Tour M: Canyon brings high-definition artistry to the backcountry. This paddle features Werner's stunning new "Canyon" graphic, capturing the perspective of floating through a deep river gorge. The Pack-Tour M features a 4-piece breakdown system for easy packing, and an adjustable shaft that toggles between two lengths to handle both tight streams and open water. Take your paddle on the plane with you!



Bonafide XTR 130

Is this a small bass boat or a large kayak? Doesn't matter, what the XTR 130 has is function. A whopping 750 pound capacity means you can bring everything to rig your boat like you want it; no limitations. You can even fish it as a tandem with an add-on seat! The XTE is pre-set for all your electronics: forward-facing sonar, dual screens, secure battery storage, all with tidy wiring.



Pyranha InaZone

Darren had an old InaZone 20 years ago, and he loved it before he gave it to a young paddler with no money and big ambitions. The updated InaZone took the same standard do-everything boat and added decades of experience into a redesign. A great beginner boat for sure, as it will handle flatwater with a stable base for honing skills, ferrying, edging, etc., but get it into Class II-III and it will show its speed and responsiveness. It's not a playboat for sure, and that's great; a lot of us just want to bomb down the river, surfing waves in a speedy little kayak.



Pyranha Wizard

This new kayak is like nothing else Pyranha makes; the Wizard is not a new Ozone, nor is it a full slice, and it is not to be confused with the new InaZone. It's an evolution of classics from the past to re-establish and re-define playboating. Launching, carving, flat spinning; the Wizard has the speed and looseness of hull to do all that good stuff and more, as well as a volume distribution which enables balanced end-to-end moves, but leaves enough 'pop' to boost you into an aerial move whenever the urge hits – it's magical. Wizards are magical.



ADVENTUROUS
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What's New

NRS Silkweight Hybrid Hoodie and Campfire Flannel (for men and women)

The Hybrid Hoodie mixes fabrics, with low-stretch fabric in the back, chest and shoulder areas for durability, but stretchy fabric in the arms and torso where you want freedom of movement. The Hoodie keeps the sun off you with a 50+ UPF, and wicking fabric keeps you comfortable. Massive chest pockets too!



The Campfire Flannel is made from a poly-cotton blend, so it won't shrink like some flannels do, and is also 50+ UPF. Articulated sleeves give freedom of movement, so paddle all day with it and you'll feel unrestricted. You could wear it for a week in the northwoods and walk into a grocery store and no one would notice. Totally wearable around town too.

CHILL ANGEL

active

sleep

Chill Angel Women's 100% Merino Wool sleepwear & activewear designed for better outdoor living, rest and recovery.

chillangel.com

Thule Force 3 Sport Cargo Box

As we move from the giant SUV era to the Compact SUV era, luggage boxes are more and more popular. The Force 3 holds 11 cubic feet of your



bulky stuff to keep the back of your vehicle free for heavier stuff. Thule is always improving the aerodynamics of their boxes to match that of today's vehicles. It helps reduce air resistance and noise, which may enhance fuel efficiency on the road. The durable AeroSkin material stands up to wear and tear, making it a solid and dependable addition to your car for years to come. It opens on both sides, so you don't have to worry about access.

Badger Paddle Maine-Style Grip

When Darren asked Mike if Badger Paddle had anything new, Mike said “Not really...” Darren said he had to have something. He said, “Well, we did redesign the grip on the Swifty...” That’s huge, as the top grip of a paddle is by far the most important thing on a traditional paddle. Darren often re-works the top grips of his traditional paddles. Not this one. It’s a traditional Maine Guide-style grip that is super comfy. It allows for a palm push type grip but is also comfortable to hold on the end like a standard grip.



Suspensz Tow and Go Bike Trailer

Towing your boat behind your bike makes so much sense. You can run your own shuttle, or bike down to your favorite pond or lake without burning a drop of fuel. The Tow and Go can carry anything from small whitewater boats to 19 foot canoes and kayaks. Wheels are placed toward the back so the load is stable, and three straps hold your boat securely in place. The Tow and Go features 18” removable wheels for a super sweet ride, and a flexible coupler and bike receiver make connecting and disconnecting from the bike a breeze.



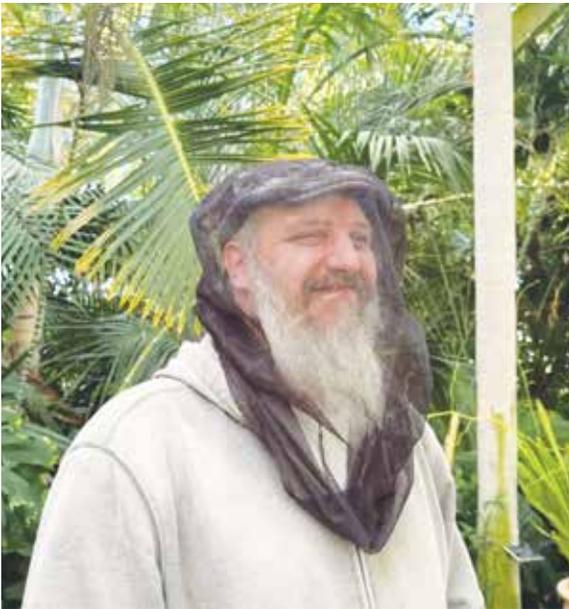
YOU CAN OWN LOTS OF PADDLES, BUT...

THERE'S ALWAYS **ONE** THAT
ENDS UP IN YOUR HANDS MORE.

BADGER
THE ONE YOU'LL REACH FOR MOST.

Cooke Custom Sewing Bear Head Net

This mosquito net goes over a cap to provide a fast, simple way to keep biting things out of your face. There is no draw cord, it just hangs down lower so you're not restricted. Comes with its own stuff sack and a carabiner to hang on your pack for easy access.



Recreational Barrel Works

Recreational Barrel Works has a bunch of new items to show at Canoecopia, so we thought we'd showcase a few. New High Viz Yellow Barrels in both 30 and 60 liter sizes are easily spotted if your canoe tips. They're also sewing up bags for paddles, grills, tent poles, etc., to keep your gear more organized and protected. We're excited for the new XL pack liner.



PRIJON

Paths, Peaks & Paddles and Prijon GmbH are thrilled to reunite and bring you an exclusive preview of the latest Prijon Touring and Whitewater kayaks.

Get ready for the US debut of The Drip at Canoecopia!

PATHS
PEAKS
PADDLES



Native Hammer

It's Hammer Time (sorry)! But imagine a kayak that allows you to paddle, pedal, or motor, and switch between those modes seamlessly. Pretty cool. Super adjustable so you can go as fast or as slow as you want to save battery. The X-Range Pedal Drive stows cleanly and flush, which opens up better space for landing fish or managing your gear. At almost 13 feet and 3 feet wide, the Hammer has a 650 pound capacity! The Rig How You Fish layout means it's yours to customize. You can easily run forward-facing sonar in an electronics-ready bow.



ePDL+ Drive

The award winning ePDL+ technology provides the flexibility to offer extra power and assistance when you want it with manual pedal, power-assisted pedal, or fully motorized cruise control. If you already have a pedal drive Old Town, the ePDL+ module is now available as a drop in on kayaks with pedal drives as a retrofit! The battery is built into the unit, so there are cables to add: just drop it in and go!





Cascade Designs Honcho Poncho

One of our favorite go-to pieces for so many reasons. Darren keeps one on top of his rescue bag in case someone takes a swim and gets cold. Ann wears one in her office when it's chilly. Stephanie wears it around the campfire.

The H.P. comes in adult or child sizes. Snaps down the side keeps things from flapping around if you want. A kangaroo pocket keeps hands warm and allows it to stuff itself for storage. This is a great piece to keep in the car. It's just a great piece. Try one on at the show!

MicroSport™ Overland Tent Trailer Package

A complete overland adventure package including the MALONE® MicroSport™ Overland off-road trailer, The Naturnest Polaris Plus clamshell style tent, two bike carriers and two kayak carriers.



The MicroSport™ Overland trailer has a 11-gauge steel frame featuring a unique textured black powder coating over pre-galvanized steel providing the best rust-preventative coatings possible. The light kit on all MicroSport™ trailers is a proprietary "Plug and Play" LED submersible lighting system designed for longevity and ease of installation.

The Overland Tent is also available separately and will mount on your roofrack.



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speaker presentations

Justin Adams and Todd Wilkinson

Padding Opportunities in Missouri State Parks

The MR340 – Advice and Anecdotes from 20 Years of Racing



Justin grew up canoeing and fishing on the rivers of southwest Missouri and continued that passion into adulthood, where he has built a career in the outdoors working for Missouri State Parks. Adams also participates in endurance events, including ultramarathon trail running and gravel cycling. At 54 years old, he decided to dip his paddle in the Missouri River and take on the greatest challenge he has faced yet: the Missouri River 340.

Todd Wilkinson is the assistant superintendent of Montauk State Park, one of Missouri's most popular state parks which is also the headwaters of the famed Current River. Wilkinson is an ACA certified kayak instructor and a proud member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Carla Anderson and Friends

Isle Royale's Historic Cultural Resources and the Community That Pre-Dates the Park



Most visitors to Isle Royale are unaware that the island is home to a rare surviving example of a historic recreational enclave in the North Woods of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan—one unlike anything else remaining in the United States. When Isle Royale became a national park, not only were its wilderness qualities protected, but change to these camps was effectively frozen in time. Elsewhere, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century recreational enclaves were modernized with conveniences such as plumbing and electricity. On Isle Royale, that transformation never occurred.

Instead, generations of the same families have cared for these camps, preserving their structures while passing down stories, traditions, and a deep sense of place. Stepping into one of these cabins today feels like stepping back in time.

Carla is President of the Board of Directors for the Isle Royale

Families and Friends Association (IRFFA). A fourth-generation Isle Royale resident, her great-grandfather homesteaded a small island on the north side of the archipelago in 1916. Her family commercially fished on Isle Royale from the late 1880s through the late 1950s. Today, like many IRFFA members, Carla returns each summer to her family's former fishery to preserve and maintain its historic cabins and to share their history with park visitors.

Tim Aurand and Beth Naughton

An Epic Journey to the 63 United States National Parks

Tim is a retired marketing professor from Northern Illinois University. He moved to Lake Mills, Wisconsin, four years ago and has fallen in love with the many outdoor activities the state has



to offer. Besides hiking and kayaking, Tim is an avid cyclist and, in 2025, biked across the United States on the Southern Tier.

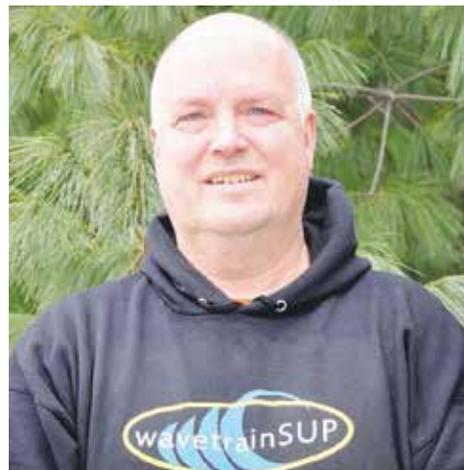
Beth Naughton retired from a successful career in industrial sales. She is happiest when outdoors and enjoys traveling both domestically and internationally. Beth stays busy hiking, cycling, kayaking, paddleboarding, reading, quilting, and volunteering.

Jeff Bach

Boards, Glue, Fiberglass – DIY Paddle, Here I Come!

Growing up as a country kid, Jeff always had access to wood scraps and tools. Years later, there are still wood pieces and tools.

Jeff built his first paddle as a young lad. His mom saved it, and he brought it to the show this year. Between that first 1970s-era paddle and today, he has picked up plenty of experience working with wood. There is also possible evidence of dabbling in artistry. Oh—and he has written a series of books on paddle building.

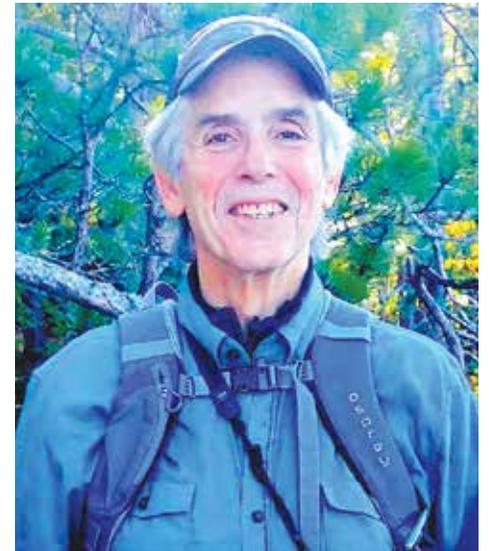


John Bates

Spring Paddling in the Northwoods:

A Cornucopia of Life

The Love Language of Rivers



John Bates is the author of eleven books and a contributor to eight others, all focused on the natural history of the Northwoods. He has worked as a naturalist in Wisconsin's Northwoods for 36 years, leading trips and giving talks designed to help people better understand the remarkable diversity and beauty of nature—and our place within it. He has served on numerous environmental group boards. John holds an MS in Environmental Sciences from UW–Green Bay. He and his wife, fiber artist Mary Burns, live on the Manitowish River in Iron County, Wisconsin.

Tim Bauer

What Is a Wild River?

The Pleasures and Perils of Cold-Weather Paddling



A native of New Jersey (Exit 159), Timothy grew up playing street hockey, skateboarding, and garage rock—clueless about camping or canoeing. But he found his muse.

Since 2010, Timothy has proudly been part of the voice and verve of the popular website MilesPaddled.com. In 2016, his first paddling guidebook was published, and he is currently finishing his next guidebook about the Driftless Area.

Bianca Boettcher

Oh, the Places I Went!



Born and raised in southeastern Wisconsin, Bianca had no experience with personal watercraft until she was 38 years old. At the urging of her partner, she joined him on a trip down the Root River in Racine and discovered a whole new point of view to photograph. That first trip involved an 8-foot plastic recreational kayak. Her current watercraft of choice is a Swift pack boat.

Bob Carlson

Brew Your Best Cup in the Woods



Bob Carlson has been canoeing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area off and on since he was three years old. Coffee drinking came a bit later—around age five—when he went to work at the family machine shop with his dad on Saturday mornings. His skills in canoeing and coffee have evolved over the years. His coffee roasting company, Loons Nest Coffee,



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has a shop on the Gunflint Trail on the edge of the BWCA, giving him the opportunity to spend more time in his favorite place.

Myles Carter

Outfitter-Assisted, Self-Guided Far North Canoe Tripping

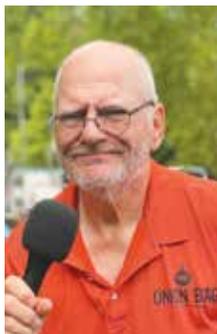


Myles Carter was born in the Northwest Territories of Canada in 1964 and has spent his entire life living on the edge of the last frontier. Every summer for 60 years, Myles has worked at a fishing lodge founded by his father, fabled bush pilot Merlyn Carter, on Nonacho Lake.

In 2005, when his father was killed in an unprovoked bear attack, Myles assumed ownership of the lodge. Four years ago, he began outfitting small groups of canoeists seeking a true wilderness adventure.

Curtis Casto

The Onion Bag Solution: Empowering Paddlers to Protect Our Waters



Curtis is a passionate paddler, environmental advocate, and the driving force behind the Onion

Bag Litter Prevention Project—a grassroots initiative aimed at reducing litter in waterways through simple, effective solutions. With years of experience exploring rivers and lakes across the Midwest, Curtis has seen firsthand the impact of trash on natural spaces and has made it his mission to empower paddlers to be part of the solution.

At Canoeecopia 2026, Curtis will share how small actions can lead to big change and how every paddler can help protect the waters they love.

Members of the Illinois Paddling Council

From Towering Skyscrapers to Cypress Swamps: Expanding Your Paddling Adventures Across the Prairie State of Illinois

When you think of Illinois, you probably think of Chicago, Abraham Lincoln, and sprawling corn and soybean fields. After this presentation, you'll also think of the wonderful paddling destinations the state has to offer. Bordered by



880 miles of rivers—including the Mississippi and Wabash—Illinois contains thousands of miles of paddleable waterways.

Members of the Illinois Paddling Council will highlight diverse paddling opportunities across the state, from Lake Michigan to the Cache River, one of the northernmost cypress swamps at the southern tip of Illinois. It will truly be a top-to-bottom experience.

John Chase

5 Things I Wish Someone Told Me When I Started Kayaking Sea Kayaking Michigan's



Grand Traverse Area

John combines his love for the outdoors with a dedication to helping others make the most of their time on the water. He is the host of the Paddling the Blue podcast, author of *Power to the Paddle: Exercises to Improve Your Canoe and Kayak Paddling*, an ACA Coastal Kayak/River Kayak/SUP Instructor and Instructor Trainer, and a NASM-certified personal trainer.

Abby Cichocky, Emma Brackett, and Helena Kalstrom

The Hudson Bay Girls – Lessons Learned from 80 Days on the Water



In the summer of 2025, Abby, Helena, and Emma paddled 1,381 miles over 80 days as part of the Hudson Bay Girls' journey from Lake Superior to the Arctic Ocean. They were the first all-female crew to publicly paddle the entire route, starting at Grand Portage and ending at York Factory.

Tamara Dean

River Bellwethers

Tamara Dean is an author whose latest book, *Shelter and Storm: At Home in the Driftless* (University of Minnesota Press, 2025), invites readers to consider how we tend the earth in times of uncertainty, what we owe our neighbors, and how we thrive in community. She has served on the



boards of the Valley Stewardship Network and the River Alliance of Wisconsin and lives in Madison.

Native freshwater mussels—each capable of filtering ten to forty gallons of water daily—are vital to keeping our rivers healthy. Their losses from overharvesting, damming, pollution, and warming waters are legendary. *River Bellwethers* is based on an essay from Dean's collection.

Bill Diedrich and Friends

North of the 60th When North of 65

What happens when six seasoned canoeists attempt a 500-mile tundra river trip descending the Clarke and Thelon Rivers of Canada's Northwest Territories and Nunavut? It proves to be far more difficult than it once was—but still deeply rewarding. Bill and fellow tripmates will share close-up photos of musk ox, caribou, and wolves, describe the route and obstacles, and review the planning, logistics, and equipment needed for a successful northern canoe adventure.

Emily Elkins

Bear Safety 101

Emily has been an outdoor educator for eight years, working for some of the top outdoor companies in the industry. Her work



has focused on inclusivity and challenging people to step outside their comfort zones. She is also an avid outdoorswoman and a member of Silver Paddles. This will be her third year speaking at Canoeopia.

Al Fairfield

The Transformative Experience of Joining a Paddling Community



Many people paddle to escape the hustle and bustle of daily life—but paddling is even better with old and new friends. If you've never taken a class, gone on an organized paddle, or attended a symposium or immersive workshop, you might be missing out. Al will share real-life experiences that demonstrate how paddling communities create fun, safe, and enriching environments where everyone benefits.

Blake Feree and Amos Kolodji

Canoeing Pukaskwa

Ontario's Pukaskwa National Park lies along the northeast corner of Lake Superior and features rolling hills, historic sites, white sandy beaches, and miles of stunning Superior shoreline. Modern visitors often experience the park on foot or by sea kayak, but Pukaskwa's long history as canoe country beckoned Blake, Amos, and their companions.

This past summer, Blake, Amos, and two others launched from Hattie Cove and traveled 100 miles of remote Lake Superior shoreline to Wawa. Along the way, they encountered all of Gitche Gumeé's moods and learned valuable lessons about paddling—both before the trip and in the demanding conditions of Superior itself.

Gillian Fitzgerald

How to Food Pack Like a Boss



There are a million ways to pack food for a canoe-based wilderness excursion, and everyone has systems and tricks to learn from one another. Originally from the East Coast, Gillian first arrived in the Boundary Waters as a youth expedition guide—and never turned back.

When she's in the wilderness, Gillian feels like the best version of herself, with nothing else mattering besides the trees and water surrounding her.

Peter Frank

4,853-Mile Eastern U.S. Circumnavigation by Canoe

Peter Frank is a journeyman adventurer who has completed a series of human-powered expeditions. After surviving being run over by a car at age 14, he went on to become the youngest person to



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solo circumnavigate the eastern United States in any vessel.

The journey covered more than 5,000 miles over 17 months in a 17-foot Sawyer Loon decked canoe, traveling clockwise and including over 2,000 miles against the current and 458 miles of portages.

Marco Norris Garcia

Kayaking from Spain to Maine

Marcos is an ACA Level 3 Sea Kayak Instructor, rolling instructor, and passionate guide. He currently serves as the ACA



State Director for Illinois, sharing all things paddling with anyone willing to learn—or listen.

Although he started kayaking relatively late in 2019, he has not stopped since, paddling extensively in both the United States and Europe. His current project involves building guided trips from Spain back to the U.S., crossing

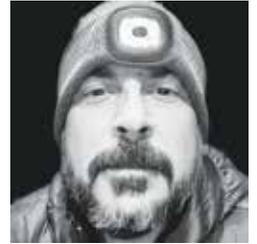
the Atlantic while skipping the longest open-ocean stretches.

Miguel Garcia-Gosalvez

Canoeing Solo: The Inner Journey

Miguel was born in south-eastern Spain, far from rivers or lakes, but always loved the outdoors. He worked at the University of Barcelona and now works at the University of Wisconsin.

Miguel discovered canoeing and

A man in a blue long-sleeved shirt, khaki shorts, and an orange cap is standing on a boat deck. He is holding a long pole and appears to be loading or securing a kayak on a black Yakima LowRider trailer. Another person is visible in the background, also on the boat. The scene is set on a body of water with mountains in the distance. The Yakima logo is prominently displayed in red at the top center of the image.

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the BWCA/Quetico region later in life, but in recent years he has completed three to four solo trips each season, along with additional trips with family and friends.

Mona Gauthier

**Food Dehydration:
The Basics and Beyond**

**Give Your Dreams
the Wings to Fly**

Known as “Woodswoman,” Mona led her first BWCA trip in August 1983 as a recent college graduate



with limited resources and improvised gear. Inspired by the peace, beauty, adventure, and challenge of the Boundary Waters, she vowed to return—and did.

In 2000, she founded MSB Wilderness Adventures, a small trip coordination business focused on helping adventurous souls experience the BWCA with a bit of extra guidance. In 2025, she completed a 200-mile solo canoe trip—her first—and led her 70th BWCA expedition.

Chris Gavin

**Foraging
from
Watercraft**

Chris Gavin is a modern hunter-gatherer based in the Madison, Wisconsin

area, with years of experience harvesting wild foods both from land and watercraft. Born and raised in Wisconsin, Chris has traveled widely in search of adventure—and his next meal.

His gathering grounds include southern and northern Wisconsin, the BWCA, Georgia’s Low Country, northern Florida, the Florida Keys, and beyond.

Tracy and Nick Georgiade

**Campfire to Canoe: Hands-On
Mastery of Gear, Systems, and
Skills for Traditional Canoe
Tripping**

Tracy and Nick Georgiade have paddled in the Canadian wilderness for decades and are dedicated



to passing on traditional bushcraft skills that remain relevant today—wood-canvas canoes, wannigans, tumplines, and more.

Their business, Camp Temagami, is located in the heart of northern Ontario’s Temagami wilderness. They are passionate about preserving the legacy of timeless tools that connect people to land, water, and one another.

Miles Gordon

**Veins Are Rivers Too: A
Journey Through Northern
Waters**

Miles Gordon is a Toronto-based filmmaker whose work documents the remote regions of the North. Childhood summers spent in a canoe inspired his pursuit of expedition filmmaking.

His award-winning films—Once Upon a Time in the North, The Shape of Cedar, and Veins Are Rivers Too—have been recognized across Canada for excellence in cinematography and storytelling.

Rudi Hargesheimer

**Superior Trails: A Photo Tour,
Including
Packrafting
Adventures**

Rudi is the author of Superior Trails: A Photo Tour of



Speaker Presentations

Lake Superior's Best Hiking Trails and The Superior Hiking Trail Story. His fifteen Lake Superior Circle Tours have included hiking, backpacking, and packraft backpacking.

He is a former volunteer board member and president of the Superior Hiking Trail Association and previously served as a manager at Midwest Mountaineering in Minneapolis.

David Inskeep Original Paddling Songs Performed Live!



Born with a love of nature, David enjoys paddling, hiking, backpacking, camping, and nature study throughout the U.S. He has been writing and sharing songs inspired by his outdoor experiences since childhood.

David's varied career has included farming, construction, lab work, field research, and teaching high school science. Today, he shares his music through live performances and recordings and considers Canoeopia the perfect venue for his songs and stories.

Kendra Kennedy Ghostbusters: The Wisconsin Historical Society's Search for Lake Michigan's Vanished Ghost Ports



Kendra has more than twenty years of experience as a maritime and terrestrial archaeologist across the Midwest, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, and Gulf South. She is a Maritime Archaeologist with the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Her work has included investigations of sixteenth-century Spanish shipwrecks, War of 1812-era vessels, and numerous nineteenth- and twentieth-century shipwrecks. She serves as archaeological advisor to the Underwater Archaeological Society of Chicago and sits on the Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology.

Terry Kent Better Paddling Technique Made Easy

Terry Kent is a three-time Olympian who has raced canoes and kayaks every year since age 12.

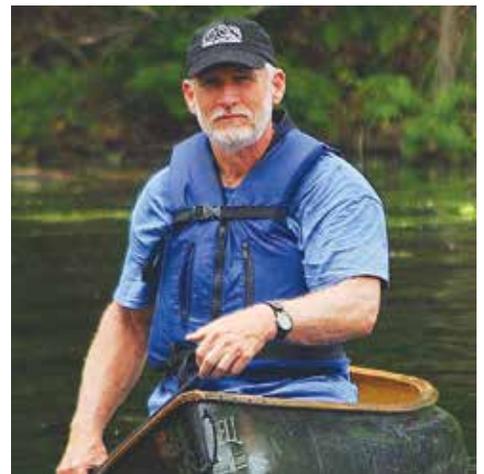


He still holds the top American Olympic finish in the K-2 500m event and sees common elements of good technique across all paddling disciplines.

Rob Kesselring Campfire River Stories from Anywhere and Everywhere Have Canoe, Have Van, Will Travel

The Thrill of a Self-Guided Far North Canoe Trip—You Can Do It!

Rob Kesselring is a veteran of 39 Arctic canoe expeditions, 112 BWCAW-Quetico trips, and more than 150 rivers paddled worldwide. A wilderness guide in

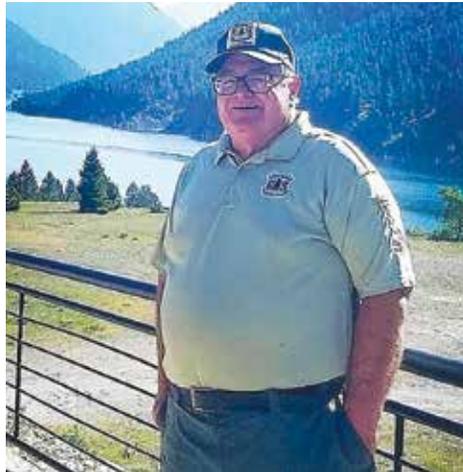


the Boundary Waters, Big Bend, and Gates of the Arctic National Parks, Rob is the author of three books: Merlyn Carter Bush Pilot, River Stories, and Daughter Father Canoe.

In 2025, he camped more than 250 nights across the United States, Costa Rica, Africa, and Canada's Northwest Territories, continuing a lifetime devoted to wilderness travel and storytelling.

Marty Koch
The Buffalo National River
Paddling the Yellowstone &
Grand Teton Area

Marty is a retired park ranger



with over 30 years of experience guiding thousands of people on a wide range of outdoor adventures. In retirement, he volunteers at National Parks and National Forests and continues to share his passion for the outdoors.

An accomplished nature photographer, Marty travels extensively capturing the beauty of wild places. This will be his 23rd year presenting at Canoecopia.

Doris Kolodji

Power to the Pipsqueaks: Anyone Can Pack, Paddle, & Portage



Doris's first BWCA canoe trip was in 1972, at a time when there were few girls in canoe country. Through the Northern Lakes Girl Scouts, she and hun-

dreds of others learned to paddle, portage, navigate, cook, and sing their way through the wilderness.

Doris guided canoe trips in the BWCA for 13 summers and helped establish a permanent base for Girl Scout canoe trips outside Ely, Minnesota. She continues her involvement as a private guide, trainer, and consultant, having trained hundreds of girls and women to be competent and confident wilderness travelers.

Ken Koscik

Quetico Provincial Park: Wisdom from 57 Years and Over 85 Trips

Ken Koscik is a retired civil engineer who loves building canoes, fishing, and canoe camping—especially in Quetico Provincial Park. Over 57 years, he has completed more than 85 trips, camping over 540 nights and paddling more than 3,000 miles in the park.

Ken also teaches canoe building at the North House Folk School in Grand Marais, Minnesota.

Pete Kuhn

The Perfect Fitting Kayak

Pete enjoys kayaking in all its forms—whether guiding groups in fully loaded boats or paddling a slender Greenland kayak while wearing a tuilik. When not on the water, he enjoys biking, blading, snowkiting, and Nordic sports.

Pete is an ACA Level 4 kayak



instructor, a Wilderness First Responder, and a PASA-certified snowkite instructor.

Gina LaLiberte

What's That Green Stuff? Identify Algae Blooms Where You Paddle



Gina leads response and communication efforts on cyanobacterial bloom issues as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Statewide Harmful Algal Bloom Coordinator. A lifelong resident of the Great Lakes region, she holds a BS in Biology and an MS in Resource Ecology Management from the University of Michigan.

Gina has studied algae for more than 30 years.

Mary Langlie

Fitness, Flexibility, and Fun

This participatory session invites attendees to take a break in their day and learn



ways to

prepare for paddling season. The focus is on building strength, flexibility, and mobility to stay healthy, avoid injuries, and enjoy more time on the water.

All ages are welcome, and accommodations will be made for those with limited range of motion or physical challenges. Mary is a teacher, coach, paddler, and athlete who loves sharing her passion for movement and the outdoors.

Vince and Stacie Sadowski

Hammock Camping 101: Hanging Out in the Woods

Vince and Stacie bring a combined three decades of experience



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in backcountry camping, backpacking, canoeing, and kayaking. Vince is a DIY gear enthusiast and seasoned navigator, while Stacie is an outdoor writer, naturalist, and Leave No Trace Certified Trainer.

They hammock camp on multiple extended trips each year and are co-creators of Two Weeks in a Hammock, an educational initiative designed to inspire people to spend more time outdoors.

Matt Magolan Kayaking the Fjords of Iceland

Matt has been paddling canoes and kayaks for more than 30 years. He owns Umingmaq Paddle Touring Center and has guided trips in



Quetico Provincial Park, the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, Lake Superior Provincial Park, Pukaskwa National Park, the Lofoten Islands of Arctic Norway, and beyond.

Since the birth of his twin daughters in 2014, Matt has focused on raising his family within a paddling lifestyle, culminating in a family expedition on the Mackenzie River in the summer of 2023.

Dave Mangin Paddling the Potawatomi Islands



Dave's long and winding relationship with boats began at age five during his first float in an aluminum canoe. While procrastinating during college, he built his first cedar-strip canoe in his brother's garage. Five years later, he lived on the floor of a boat shop in Ithaca, New York, while building a rowing wherry for a trip down the Mississippi River.

Dave later managed a boat shop and taught a variety of classes at a charter high school in central Milwaukee, where he and his students built and christened six boats, including plywood skiffs, a stitch-and-glue wherry, and cedar-strip canoes.

Dave Meier

Dave is the Digital Marketing and Communications Manager for Friends of the Boundary



Waters Wilderness and host of the popular BWCA podcast Big Red Canoe. He has traveled to the Boundary Waters for nearly 40 years and loves introducing new people to this special place—most recently his two elementary school-aged sons and their friends.

Paul Mellor Strokes of Kindness: The People of the River



During his 2,300-mile kayaking journey down the Mississippi River, Paul encountered logjams, 27 locks and dams, massive cargo ships, and alligators. He capsized three times—but his story is not about hardship. It is about peace, generosity, and the kindness of people who live along the river.

Strangers offered Paul meals, shelter, and help at exactly the moments he needed it most. His presentation celebrates the humanity found along the river's banks.

Paul is a national speaker on memory skills and motivation and the author of ten books. His adventures include running a marathon in all 50 states, cycling 4,600 miles across the U.S., and paddling the length of the Mississippi River. He lives in Richmond, Virginia.

Dave Miess and Friends

Capturing Your Outdoor Adventure

Dave's photography journey began in 1975 when he loaded a roll of film into his father's old Zeiss rangefinder. He has been behind a

viewfinder ever since. In 2001, he combined his love of photography and the outdoors into a business.

Dave owns Natural Spaces Photography Studio in Wisconsin's Northwoods. His work is regularly featured in Our Wisconsin Magazine and at art fairs throughout the Midwest.

Danny Mongno

Selecting the Perfect Kayak Paddle

Understanding the Forward Stroke: Let's Be Efficient

Understanding the Vast Options in Paddling Clothing

In 2026, Danny will celebrate his 22nd year—in Canoeconia years—with Impex Kayaks, Werner Paddles, and now NRS. Paddlesports has been the only career he's known since age 16, and Canoeconia remains his favorite weekend of the year.



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Danny proudly identifies as a paddler and coach and loves every aspect of paddling, regardless of craft or water type. When not on the water, you'll find him hiking, biking, snowboarding, or at the Nordic center.

Michael Neiger and Chris Ozminski

How to Assemble and Wear an In-Pocket Survival Kit for a Wilderness Adventure

How to Ensure Your Child Will Be a Survivor When Lost in the Wilderness

Since 1984, Michael has organized hundreds of backpacking, canoe-



ing, biking, snowshoeing, and caving expeditions between Lake Superior and the Arctic Ocean. He has paddled dozens of rivers—often solo—including an expedition from the Great Lakes to the Arctic Ocean.

A Michigan State Police Detective



Sergeant for 26 years, Michael serves as the lead investigator with Michigan Backcountry Search and Rescue's Long Range Special Operations Group. He has been featured in *Outside*, *Explore*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Michigan Out-of-Doors*, *Society (Paris)*, and *Recoil Offgrid*.

Ginny Nelson

Planning and Traveling the BWCA in Comfort and with Responsibility

Each season, Ginny outfits and sends countless groups, solo travelers, and families into the Boundary Waters. Her active lifestyle



includes managing an outfitting staff, selecting retail products, and raising two daughters.

Ginny enjoys fishing, camping, and hiking with her family and brings a fresh perspective to camping and canoeing gear, paired with deep route knowledge. She is the manager and co-owner of *Spirit of the Wilderness Outfitter and Outdoor Store* in Ely and has traveled the BWCA for more than 30 years.

Andy Nevitt and John Seal

421 Miles: Fast Paddling the Wisconsin River

Andy is an avid endurance paddler from Rib Mountain, Wisconsin. In addition to twice paddling the full length of the Wisconsin River, he has completed several long-distance paddle races, including the Mississippi River 150 and the Missouri River 340.

When not on the water, Andy enjoys spending time with his family, exploring local bike and ski trails, and volunteering in support of endurance races across the Upper Midwest.

John Seal is a freelance cinematographer based in Wausau, Wisconsin. John's forte is in cinematic



storytelling, specializing in drone photography to cover an array of outdoor activities and social events. John has filmed for numerous organizations and events in Wisconsin, including endurance races, music festivals, and a large variety of business stories.

Kyle Parker

What a Cross-Country Canoe Journey Taught Me

In this reflective presentation, long-distance paddler Parker paddles shares the deeper story behind his 5,000-mile canoe journey from Neah Bay, Washington, to Key Largo, Florida. Along the



way, he discovered lessons about resilience, fear, trust, time, and the quiet kindness of strangers.

Kyle is a long-distance canoeist and storyteller who explores both landscapes and inner journeys through writing, photography, and public speaking.

Bear Paulsen

Canoeing to the Arctic Prairies

Wilderness Babies

Bear is dedicated to introducing his young son, Dashwa, to the outdoors. By first grade, Dashwa had already traveled more than 4,000 miles and camped over 250 nights on canoe trips.



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His experiences include a month above the Arctic Circle, a journey to Hudson Bay, paddling Minnesota's entire North Shore of Lake Superior, more than 150 nights of winter camping in the BWCA, and a trek to Kala Patthar (18,500 feet) for views of Mount Everest. Bear and his wife, Claire, joke that if Dashwa someday moves to Manhattan, at least he'll know how to dress for winter.

Rolf Peterson

The Recovery of Wolves in Isle Royale National Park

The long-term study of wolves and moose in Isle Royale National Park seeks to understand the role of wolves in a protected and isolated ecosystem. After the native wolf population declined due to inbreeding and reduced ice bridges on Lake Superior, the National Park Service reintroduced wolves in 2018–2019.

Rolf is a Research Professor at Michigan Technological University and has led or co-led the Isle Royale wolf-moose study for more than 50 years. He is the author of two books and more than 100 scientific papers and is recognized as a world authority on wolf ecology.

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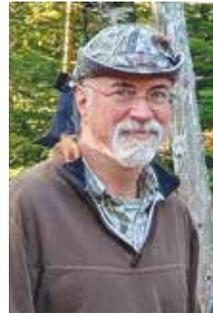
Don Richard and Chuck Rose

Northern Tier– Bissett: Tales from 50 Years of Scouting's Most Extreme High- Adventure Program

Don is an Eagle Scout from Moorhead, Minnesota. His first high-adventure canoe trip was to Atikokan, Ontario, in 1979. He worked for the Boy Scouts leading wilderness trips near Bissett, Manitoba, throughout the 1980s.

Don is now a civil and environmental engineering consultant and lives near Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota.

In 1972, Chuck Rose joined Boy Scout Troop 56 in Roseau, Minnesota on a Monday and went on his first canoe trip the following Saturday; they went to the Northwest Angle of Lake of the Woods. There, he heard stories from other boys who had been to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area the previous summer. During the 1980s, he led trips for the Boy Scouts out of Ely, Minnesota, Bissett, Manitoba,



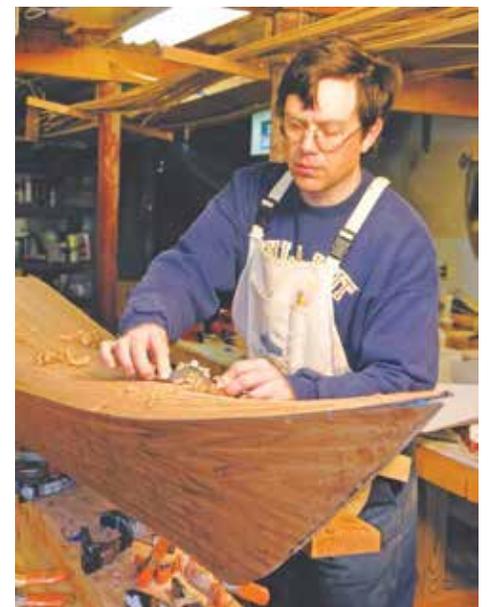
and Atikokan, Ontario. Canoe tripping inspired him to earn a PhD in Water Resources and teach Environmental Science at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. He volunteers teaching Wilderness First Aid and water quality. Recently retired, he lives in Sartell, Minnesota overlooking the Mississippi River.

Nick Schade

Schoodic Point and Beyond: Sea Kayaking Maine's Bold Coast

Nick's kayaking origin story began with exclusion—at age three, his older brother paddled a home-made kayak while Nick watched from shore. Fifty-seven years later, he still remembers.

Determined to paddle, Nick designed his own sea kayak after college. For more than 40 years, he has designed and built high-performance kayaks and small boats through his company,



Guillemot Kayaks. His designs are built worldwide, and one resides in the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Neal Schroeter, MD

Apostle Islands: One of the Best Places to Paddle in the World



Emergency Room Procedures in the Wilderness

Neal lives in Washburn, Wisconsin, and works as an emergency room physician in Ashland. He regularly leads trips in the Apostle Islands and has paddled to or around all 22 islands.

He is an ACA Level 5 Coastal Kayak Instructor, Level 4 Whitewater Instructor, and Instructor Trainer, as well as an Advanced Wilderness Life Support and Wilderness First Responder instructor. His business, Whitecap Kayak, mentors youth through guiding and instruction in the Apostle Islands.

Bill Schultz

Kayaking and Kayak Fishing Door County, Wisconsin

Bill lives in New Berlin and Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, and is one of the nation's top smallmouth bass anglers. Since 1994, he has



caught and released more than 35,000 bass—20,000 while kayaking or wading.

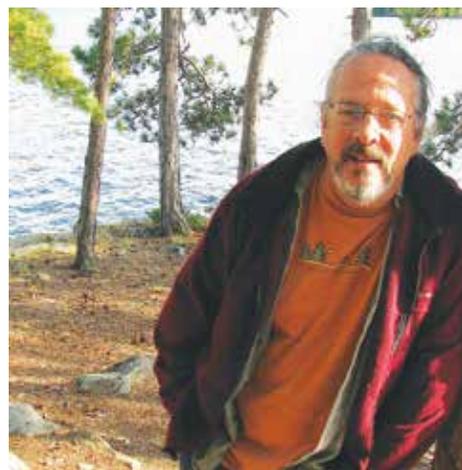
His talks and articles over the past 25 years have introduced thousands to river and lake fishing throughout Wisconsin. He serves on the pro staff for numerous fishing and paddling companies.

Dave Shapiro

Ask the Knot Guy

Backyard Maple Syrup

Dave is an outdoor educator from southeast Wisconsin and works at River Bend Nature Center in Racine, where he leads nature



programs and teaches canoeing, kayaking, and—occasionally—knots.

Kris Simonson

How to Go Solo at Any Age



Kris has spent her life pursuing paddle-sports, including wilderness canoeing,

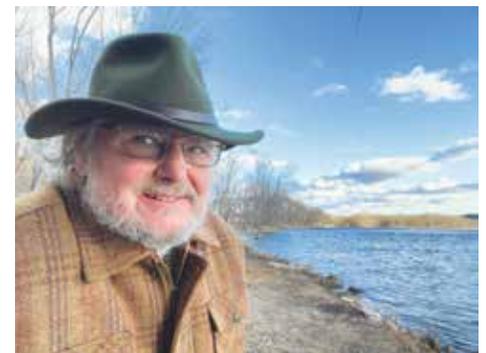
whitewater kayaking, slalom racing, kayak polo, and ultramarathon canoe racing. She competed on the U.S. Women's Kayak Polo Team at the 1998 World Championships.

At age 56, she began solo canoe tripping in the BWCA and has since embraced the joy of light, fast solo travel well into her 60s.

Stephen Simpson

Boreal Odyssey: A Northwoods Vision Quest

Steve grew up in the northwest suburbs of Chicago and began paddling Lake Michigan and Lake Superior in the mid-1970s.



CANOECOPIA SPEAKER SCHEDULE

		Superior (MAIN LEVEL)	Quetico (MAIN LEVEL)	BWCA (MAIN LEVEL)	Algonquin (MAIN LEVEL)	Sylvania (MAIN LEVEL)
FRIDAY	3:30	Kris Simonson - How to Go Solo at Any Age	Calem Watson - Alone Across the Northwest Territories	David Meier - 20 Items Experienced BWCA Campers Always Pack	Gillian Fitzgerald - How to Pack Food Like a Boss	Chris Gavin - Foraging from Watercraft
	4:30	Neal Schroeter, MD - Emergency Room Procedures in the Wilderness	Bear Paulsen - Canoeing to the Arctic Prairies	Jared Wold - A Beginner's Guide to Exploring Moving Water	Ginny Nelson - Planning & Traveling the BWCA in Comfort & Safety	Seth Taft - Friendship Matters: The Trail Ahead for Wisconsin State Parks
	5:30	John Bates - The Love Language of Rivers	Cichowski, Bracket, & Karlstrom - Hudson Bay Girls	John Chase - 5 Things I Wish Someone Told Me When I Started Kayaking	Andy Nevitt - 421 Miles: Fast Paddling the WI River	Craig Zarley - Catching Canoe Country Lake Trout the Simple Way
	6:30	Bear Paulsen - Wilderness Babies	Neal Schroeter, MD - Apostle Islands - One of the Best Places to Paddle in the World!	Karla with a K - Day Paddling Trips & Paddle-in Campsites in and Around WI State Parks	Jerry Vandiver - Songs about Paddling and All Things Outdoors	Al Fairfield - The Transformative Experience of Joining a Paddling Community
SATURDAY	9:30	John Chase - 5 Things I Wish Someone Told Me When I Started Kayaking	Marcos Garcia-Norris - Kayaking from Spain to Maine	Blake Ferree et al. - Canoeing Pukaskwa	Kris Simonson - How to Go Solo at Any Age	Kendra Kennedy - Ghostbusters: The Wisconsin Historical Society's Search for Lake Michigan's Lost Ghost Ports
	10:30	Michael Neiger - How to Assemble and Wear an In-pocket Survival Kit	Kyle Parker - What a Cross-Country Canoe Journey Taught Me	Bill Schultz - Kayaking and Fishing Door County	Marty Koch - Paddling the Yellowstone & Grand Teton Area	Bianca Boettcher - O The Places I Went
	11:30	Timothy Bauer - What Makes a River Wild?	Neal Schroeter - Apostle Islands - One of the Best Places to Paddle in the World!	Karla with a K - Day Paddling Trips & Paddle-in Campsites in and Around WI State Parks	Mona Gauthier - Food Dehydration the Basics and Beyond	Richard and Rose - Northern Tier-Bissett: Tales from 50 Years of Scouting's Most Extreme Adventure Program
	12:30	John Bates - The Love Language of Rivers	Rob Kesselring - Have Canoe, Have Van, Will Travel	Tracy and Nick Georgiade - Campfire to Canoe: Hands-On Mastery of Gear, Systems, and Skills for Traditional Canoe Tripping	John Chase - Sea Kayaking Michigan's Grand Traverse Area	Beverly Vaillancourt - The Story of the Baraboo River
	1:30	Marty Koch - Buffalo National River	John Bates - Spring Paddling in the Northwoods: A Cornucopia of Life	Dave Mangin - Paddling the Potawatomi Islands	Bill Diedrich et al. - North of the 60th When North of 65	Kendra Kennedy - Ghostbusters: The Wisconsin Historical Society's Search for Lake Michigan's Lost Ghost Ports
	2:30	Timothy Bauer - The Pleasures and Perils of Cold Weather Paddling	Michael Neiger - How to ensure your child will be a survivor when lost in the wilderness	Isis Timm - We Endeavor: Lessons Learned on the Border Route Challenge	Peter Frank - 4,853 mile Eastern US Circumnavigation by Canoe	David Meier - 20 Items Experienced BWCA Campers Always Pack
	3:30	Rob Kesselring - The Thrill of a Self-Guided Far North Trip	Neal Schroeter - Apostle Islands - One of the Best Places to Paddle in the World!	John Stofflet - Drive Less; Paddle More: How To Boost Your Time On The Water	Mona Gauthier - Give Your Dreams Wings to Fly	Justin Adams - The MR340 - Advice and Anecdotes from 20 years of racing on the Missouri River.
	4:30	Aluminum Chef	Kyle Parker - What A Cross Country Canoe Trip Taught Me	Miguel Garcias-Gonzales - Canoeing Solo Inner Journey	Jerry Vandiver - Songs about Paddling and All Things Outdoors	David Shapiro - Backyard Maple Syrup
SUNDAY	10:30	John Bates - Springtime Paddling in the Northwoods	Jared Wold - A Tour of Wisconsin's Wonderful Rivers	Kris Simonson - How to Go Solo at Any Age	John Stofflet - Drive Less; Paddle More: How To Boost Your Time On The Water	Craig Zarley - Catching Canoe Country Lake Trout
	11:30	Neal Schroeter, MD - Emergency Room Procedures in the Wilderness	Kyle Parker - What a Cross-Country Canoe Journey Taught Me	Marcos Garcia-Norris - Maine to Spain	Cichowski, Bracket, & Karlstrom - Hudson Bay Girls	Al Fairfield - The Transformative Experience of Joining a Paddling Community
	12:30	Miles Gordon - Veins Are Rivers Too: A Journey Through Northern Waters	Bear Paulsen - Canoeing to the Arctic Prairies	Gillian Fitzgerald - Pack Food Like a Boss	Blake Ferree et al. - Canoeing Pukaskwa	Bianca Boettcher - O the Places I Went
	1:30	Tracy and Nick Georgiade - Campfire to Canoe: Hands-On Mastery of Gear, Systems, and Skills for Traditional Canoe Tripping	Rob Kesselring - Campfire Stories	Calem Watson - Alone Across the Northwest Territories	Marty Koch - Paddling Yellowstone and Tetons	Aurand and Naughton - An Epic Journey to the 63 United States National Parks
	2:30	Timothy Bauer - What Makes a River Wild?	Nick Schade - Schoodic Point and Beyond: Sea Kayaking Maine's Bold Coast	Andy Nevitt - 421 Miles: Fast Paddling the WI River	Jerry Vandiver - Songs about Paddling and All Things Outdoors	Emily Elkins - Bear Safety 101

CANOECOPIA SPEAKER SCHEDULE

		Bear (UPPER LEVEL)	Caribou (UPPER LEVEL)	Atrium (UPPER LEVEL)	Killarney (HILTON)
FRIDAY	3:30	Peter Frank - 4,853 mile Eastern US Circumnavigation by Canoe	Ken Kosciak - Quetico: Wisdom from 57 Years and over 85 trips	Doris Kolodji - Power To The Pipsqueaks: Anyone can Pack, Paddle, & Portage	Evan Sirianni - Searching for Sculpins: Exploring the Kickapoo Valley Watershed
	4:30	Aurand and Naughton - An Epic Journey to the 63 United States National Parks	Illinois Paddling Council: From Towering Skyscrapers to Cypress Swamps	Terry Kent - Better Paddling Technique Made Easy	Marcy West - Water Lovers Role in Protecting Landscapes
	5:30	Riley Smith - The Ephemeral Joys of November Canoe Trips	Miles Gordon - Veins Are Rivers Too: A Journey Through Northern Waters	Pete Kuhn - The Perfect Fitting Kayak	Curtis Castro - Onion Bag Solution: Empowering Paddlers to Protect Our Waters
	6:30	Mona Gauthier - Food Dehydration; The Basics and Beyond	Beverly Vallaincourt - The Story of the Baraboo River	Danny Mongno - Selecting the Perfect Kayak Paddle	David Inskeep - Paddling Songs Performed Live
SATURDAY	9:30	Peter Frank - 4,853 mile Eastern US Circumnavigation by Canoe	Justin Adams - Paddling Opportunities in Missouri State Parks	Danny Mongno - Understanding The Forward Stroke. Let's be Efficient	Evan Sirianni - The Search for Sculpins: Exploring the Kickapoo Valley Watershed
	10:30	Danny Mongno - Understanding the Vast Options in Paddle Clothing	Ken Kosciak - Quetico: Wisdom from 57 Years and over 85 trips	Emily Elkins - Bear Safety 101	Jared Wold - Understanding USGS and NOAA Stream Flow Data
	11:30	Paul Mellor - Strokes of Kindness: The People of the River	Isis Timm - We Endeavor: Lessons Learned on the Border Route Challenge	NOLS Instructors - Wilderness Medicine and Paddlesports	Tamara Dean - River Bellweathers
	12:30	Bianca Boettcher - O The Places I Went	Stephen Simpson - Boreal Odyssey: A Northwoods Vision Quest	Bob Carlson - Camp Coffee: Brew your best cup in the woods	Marcy West - Water Lovers Role in Protecting Landscapes
	1:30	Illinois Paddling Council: From Towering Skyscrapers to Cypress Swamps	Carla Anderson - Isle Royale's Historic Cultural Resources	Dave Shapiro and Jeff Bach - Knots and Paddle Building Drop-in Session	Gina La Liberte - What's That Green Stuff? Identify Algae Blooms Where You Paddle
	2:30	Riley Smith - November Canoe Trips	Stacie Longwell-Sadowski - Hammock Camping 101	Dave Shapiro and Jeff Bach - Knots and Paddle Building Drop-in Session	Rudi Hargesheimer - Superior Trails: A Photo Tour Including Packrafting Adventures
	3:30	Chris Gavin - Foraging from Watercraft	Karla with a K - Hammock Camping 201	Dave Shapiro and Jeff Bach - Knots and Paddle Building Drop-in Session	Lenore Swobota - Overcoming Fear One Stroke at a Time
	4:30	Ginny Nelson - Planning & Traveling the BWCA in Comfort & Responsibility	Matt Magolan: Kayaking the Fjords of Iceland	Danny Mongno - Selecting the Perfect Kayak Paddle	
SUNDAY	10:30	Matt Magolan - Paddling the Fjords of Iceland	Paul Mellor - Strokes of Kindness: The People of the River	Bob Carlson - Camp Coffee: Brew your best cup in the woods	Curtis Casto - The Onion Bag Solution: Empowering Paddlers to Protect Our Waters
	11:30	Myles Carter - Outfitter Assisted Self-Guided Far North Canoe Tripping	Stephen Simpson - Boreal Odyssey: A Northwoods Vision Quest	Terry Kent - Better Paddling Technique Made Easy	David Inskeep - Paddling Songs Performed Live
	12:30	Tamara Thomsen - Navigating Wisconsin's Dugout Canoe Landscape	Dave Miess - Capturing Your Outdoor Adventure	Donna Smith - Fly Fishing 101	Tamara Dean - River Bellweathers
	1:30	Richard and Rose - Northern Tier-Bissett: Tales from 50 Years of Scouting's Most Extreme Adventure Program	Rolf Peterson - The Recovery of the Wolves of Isle Royale	Doris Kolodji: Power To The Pipsqueaks: Anyone can Pack, Paddle, & Portage	Jared Wold - Understanding USGS and NOAA Stream Flow Data
	2:30	Garcias - Gonzales - Canoeing Solo Inner Journey	Stacie Longwell-Sadowski - Hammock Camping 101	Mary Langlie - Fitness, Flexibility, and Fun	

Speaker Presentations

His travels include the Voyageurs Highway and a final expedition from Fort McMurray, Alberta, to the mouth of the Yukon River.

Inspired by wilderness travel, Steve pursued a career in education and taught at Highland Community College for more than 30 years. He retired in 2018 and now lives along the Wisconsin River.

Evan Sirianni

The Search for Sculpin: Exploring the Kickapoo River Watershed

Evan is a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse studying native, non-game

fish species in the Driftless Area. His research supports ecosystem-based fisheries management by identifying patterns among understudied species.

He earned his BS in Environmental Science at UW–River Falls and continues to explore connections between fish communities and river ecosystems.

Donna and PJ Smith

Fly Fishing 101: A Beginner's Guide

Donna has been fly fishing for 30 years. She transitioned from

a career as a horticulturist at the Morton Arboretum to becoming a fly-fishing professional with The Orvis Company, where she worked in customer service and retail management.

She is now co-owner and instructor at PJ's Guide Service. Donna's passion is introducing newcomers to fly fishing and helping them build confidence and skill.

Riley Smith

The Ephemeral Joys of November Canoe Trips in the BWCAW

Riley has worked in nearly every Boundary Waters-related field, including guiding, outfitting, gear making, and nonprofit work. He currently serves as Community Coordinator for Friends of the Boundary Waters.

He has completed more than 70 overnight trips in the BWCA and Quetico and is pursuing a personal goal of visiting every BWCA entry point and named lake.

Lenore Sobota

Overcoming Fear One Stroke at a Time

Wind, waves, wet exits—what fears keep you from fully enjoying the water? This presentation explores strategies for managing fear and helping others do the same.

Lenore is a retired journalist and former sea kayak symposium

Don't miss it...

Aluminum Chef

Saturday, 4:30, Quetico Room

Once again, our three Aluminum Chefs will test their camp culinary skills against each other in true outdoor style. Woodswoman Mona Gauthier and former park ranger Marty Koch go up against a Mystery Chef soon to be announced.

Using MSR stoves and cook kits and a pantry of simple ingredients you might have on your next camping trip, our chefs will compete for the best appetizer, entree, and dessert. Come join the fun! You could be one of the judges from the audience who will determine the winner of each course!



instructor. She famously describes herself as a paddler afraid of water and a climber afraid of heights—and has learned to work through both.

John Stofflet

**Drive Less, Paddle More:
Boosting Your Time on the
Water Locally**



A 26-time Emmy Award winner and Wisconsin Broadcast Legend, John spent decades as a news anchor before retiring to spend more time paddling. He logged 1,200 miles by kayak in 2024 and 1,500 miles in 2025.

Seth Taft

**Friendship Matters: The Trail
Ahead for Wisconsin State
Parks**

As Wisconsin State Parks face record visitation and chronic underfunding, Seth explores how



Friends groups play a critical role in stewardship and sustainability.

Seth is a professional archaeologist and Executive Director of Friends of Wisconsin State Parks, supporting more than 60 Friends organizations across the state.

Tamara Thomsen and Sissel Schroeder

**Navigating Wisconsin's
Dugout Canoe Landscapes**



Wisconsin is home to more than 120 known dugout canoes, ranging from 81 to over 5,200 years old. Many have been discovered in Lake Mendota, highlighting the region's deep Indigenous history.

Tamara is a Maritime Archaeologist with the Wisconsin Historical Society. Her work has placed more than 80 submerged sites on the National Register of Historic Places, and she was inducted into the Women Divers Hall of Fame in 2014.

Sissel Schroeder is a professor of archaeology in the Anthropology Department at UW-Madison, the Bradshaw Knight Professor of Environmental Humanities, and Director of the Center for Culture, History, and Environment in the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies. Her research focuses on cultural-environmental systems and the archaeology of climate change on ancient peoples of the southeastern United States and the Midwest.

Isis Timm

**We Endeavor: Lessons from
the Border Route Challenge**



Isis has visited the BWCA every summer since age three. Now a high school junior from Decorah, Iowa, she balances academics with tennis, chorus, speech, and outdoor pursuits.

Her presentation reflects on lessons learned from endurance paddling and wilderness challenges.

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Beverly Vaillancourt and Rick Eilertson

The Story of the Baraboo River

From Indigenous history to industrial use to modern restoration, the Baraboo River tells a story of resilience and renewal.

Beverly is a board member of Friends of the Baraboo River, a former town chair, and a lifelong educator. She is honored to represent the organization at Canoecopia.

Jerry Vandiver, Amanda Healan, and Caitlyn Evanson



Songs About Paddling and All Things Outdoors

Back for his 14th Canoecopia, award-winning songwriter Jerry

Vandiver brings new songs and old favorites inspired by paddling adventures. His music credits appear on over 15 million records, including two in the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Jerry will perform with The One Match Band, featuring Caitlin Evanson and Amanda Healan, for a fun and unique Canoecopia experience.

Marcy West

Water Lovers' Role in Protecting Landscapes

Using the story of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, Marcy illustrates why water lovers must care about

the landscapes that protect rivers.

Marcy is Landscape Initiatives Advisor for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin and spent 24 years as Executive Director of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

Karla With a K

Day Paddling Trips and Paddle-In Campsites Around Wisconsin State Parks

Hammock Camping 201

Karla began camping and paddling at age 40 and now camps exclusively in hammocks. She leads the Milwaukee Area Hiking,



Speaker Presentations

Biking, Paddling Plus Meetup group and has organized more than 35 non-commercial trips.

Her goal is to camp in every Wisconsin state park—and earn the patch to prove it.



Jared Wold

A Tour of Wisconsin's

Wonderful Rivers

Understanding USGS and NOAA Streamflow Data

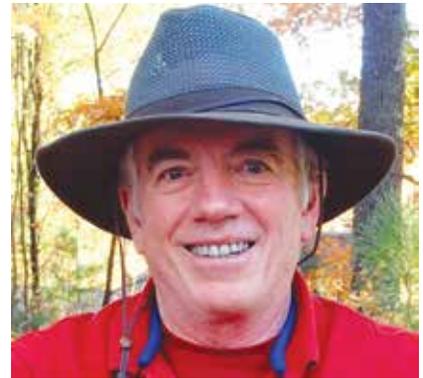
Jared organizes and leads moving-water trips throughout Wisconsin and helps paddlers learn how to plan safe and enjoyable outings.

He is the author and designer of the Wisconsin Rivers and Other Popular Waterways map and the Wisconsin Paddle Trail Map Series.

Craig Zarley

Catching Canoe Country Lake Trout the Simple Way

Craig is a longtime CanoeCopia



presenter and author of multiple fishing books for wilderness paddlers. He has fished and paddled the Boundary Waters and Quetico for more than 60 years.

Craig lives on a lake near Rhinelander, Wisconsin.

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Rutabaga Outdoor Adventures is here to help you take the next step in your paddling journey!

- Kayak Basics
- Kayak Rescues
- Solo Canoeing
- Tandem Canoeing
- Stand Up Paddleboarding
- And more...

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- Groups, Schools, Corporations, Family Events
- Wilderness First Aid Classes
- Olbrich Park Boat Rentals

Private Lessons

Sometimes you just want to learn at your own pace. Private lessons are sometimes even more economical, because you can focus on your needs without waiting for the rest of the class. Contact us to schedule a custom class for one, two, or many.

Youth Programs

Make the most of summer with fun-filled adventures on the water! This year, we're thrilled to present a variety of classes on Dane County's lakes.

Through paddling, children will build confidence, independence, and a lifelong love for nature. Guided by experienced, safety-first instructors, our classes focus on water safety, skill-building, conservation—and, most importantly, fun!



How Do I Sign Up?

Class registration will be open March 10th. You can register at learn.rutabaga.com, or use the handy QR code.



Classes in Western Dane County

We are partnering with Verona and Mount Horeb Recreational Departments to offer youth classes at their locations at Fireman's Park and Stewart Lake. More details will be available on the website.



Reflections on Paddling

Why the Stories?

Why use a third of the Canoecopia show guide on stories?

Because there are a few times when it's good to be the owner—and this is one of them. It's my magazine, and I can do what I want to.

Because stories matter. They help us share our human experiences.

When I share my stories, customers sometimes share theirs. Not just about paddling, but about their lives—often with surprising vulnerability. The night before Camp Rutabaga, I was sitting on a bench in front of a giant outdoor fireplace when a woman sat down next to me. She had lost her spouse to cancer the previous spring. I put my arm around her, and we just sat there in solidarity. Two strangers, but strangers no more. I now consider her a nonbiological sister.

Stories like that are scattered throughout our lives. At least, they should be. Stories make us human.

We asked our friends and customers to share their stories with us. They're not professional writers, but they write about what they love—and it shows. The range of experiences reflects the range of their lives: beginners and experts, newbies and veterans alike.

Their stories come straight from the heart. They love paddling, and they want to share that love.

Stories connect people. I hope one or two of the stories here resonate with you—that you'll learn something new about the writer, and likely something new about yourself. Stories preserve cultures and build new ones. They make people real. They teach us compassion, empathy, and insight. They inspire us.

On behalf of the writers, thank you for reading their heartfelt stories.

Gratefully,

Darren

Boundary Waters Baby

By Emily Dzierzak

Canoeing has always been a part of my life, and I didn't realize how much it meant to me until I started working in the Boundary Waters.

My first trip to the Boundary Waters was when I was four years old with my dad, grandpa, and two foreign exchange students. I have very few memories from that trip myself, besides my grandpa pouring the entire salt container into dinner and feeling like I was the coolest person ever when I found the biffy by myself.

However, I have been told countless stories from my dad and grandpa about paddling across Rose Lake and duffing the whole time, catching a fish while wearing princess pajamas, and swimming every night for as long as I could convince someone to stay in the water with me. That trip truly sparked my love for the outdoors. I remember seeing Rose Falls for the first time and being completely awed by it.

As I grew up, I spent more and more time paddling and being in the water. I went to camp in the Boundary Waters every summer, where I met some of my lifelong friends. We went on canoeing and backpacking trips together each year and stayed close throughout



the rest of the year. These trips quickly became the experiences we looked forward to most.

I haven't always identified solely as a canoeist. I would also consider myself a backpacker. However, when I started working as a trail guide in the Boundary Waters in the summer of 2024, my perspective on canoeing changed. I had always loved it, but it became even more meaningful when it

became a way to connect with others around me. I was able to work with my best friend, someone I had spent many summers exploring the Boundary Waters with. We spent countless hours on the water, and you know you truly love something when you spend all day working with kids on the lake and still choose to spend your free time paddling.

Many hours were spent canoe-

ing with close friends and people who became close through shared adventure. After my first summer, there was no way I wasn't going back, and I returned in the summer of 2025. I had the opportunity to lead a 21-day all-girls canoe trip in the Quetico, and if I didn't already love canoeing, I definitely fell in love with it during that trip. The experience held both challenge and joy, two things that I believe are often synonymous with canoeing. Some days included 12 or more portages, with constant in-and-out of the boat. Other days were spent paddling across massive lakes from one shoreline to another.

Canoeing is such an underrated mode of transportation. It allows you to notice details you might otherwise miss. One afternoon, about halfway through the trip, we were all exhausted, so we decided to stop and make a flotilla. We connected the boats with our legs, placed our paddles inside the canoes, and let the water carry us. These are the moments that let you slow down and take everything in. I vividly remember thinking about how much physical time I have spent in a canoe — all the conversations, hardships, laughter, joy, and everything in between. I felt completely overwhelmed with gratitude and appreciation for canoeing and everything it has brought into my life.

When I returned from that trip,



I shared stories from the experience with my best friend, and we decided to take a day trip to a nearby lake the next day. We woke up early, made breakfast, packed lunch, and prepared to get on the water. We completed what we call the DRD loop (Duncan, Rose, and Daniels). We took our time paddling through the morning fog and really allowed ourselves to be present in the landscape around us. We took turns portaging the Baby Grand and laughed harder than we had in a while. We made it to Rose Falls for lunch and talked about everything under the sun.

While we were cleaning up, my friend took a picture of me. I didn't think much of it at the time, but when I returned home, I sent the photo to my parents and discovered an older photo from my first trip. If you look closely enough, you can see the same

crack in the rock in both photos. I am sitting in the exact same spot 15 years later, with an even bigger smile, absolutely loving where I am.

The moral of the story is that I would not be where I am today without canoeing. Through it, I have met my best friends, strengthened my relationships with my family, learned valuable life lessons, deepened my love for the outdoors, and ultimately fallen in love with a canoe.

Emily Dzierzak is a junior studying Environmental Science and Spanish at **UW-Madison**, and has been camping since elementary school. She's guided backpacking trips at summer camp and volunteers with the University of Wisconsin's Hooper Outing Club. Her dad, Lou, edits *Silent Sports Magazine*, proving once again that the pine cone doesn't fall far from the tree.

The Unsolved Problem of Packing

By Jeremy Vore

There are two kinds of people in this world, and you can tell them apart by opening their portage packs.

The first kind rolls everything tight, nests every object inside another object, and arrives at the put-in with a hull that looks like the inside of a Swiss watch. The second kind stuffs things in until the pack won't close, then sits on it. I have been both of these people, sometimes on the same trip.

Packing a canoe or kayak is one of the oldest unsolved problems in the outdoor world. People have been doing it for thousands of years and nobody has gotten it right. This is not for lack of trying. There are books on the subject. There are diagrams. I once watched a man at the Sawbill Lake entry point spend forty-five minutes arranging dry bags with the focus and seriousness of a surgeon. His wife sat on the tailgate of their truck, reading a magazine. She had seen this before.



The trouble is that packing a boat is not really a spatial problem. It looks like one. You have a vessel of fixed volume and a collection of objects that must fit inside it. But the math is never straightforward because the objects are not neutral. Every item you put in a boat is a small declaration about what kind of trip you think you're going on, what kind of person you believe yourself to be, and how much suffering you are willing to accept in exchange for comfort.

Consider the camp chair. It weighs almost nothing and takes up almost no room and, after ten hours of paddling, offers a pleasure so acute it borders on the spiritual. But there is a certain kind of paddler who would sooner die on the riverbank than carry one. The chair, to this person, represents softness, a capitulation to the body, an admission that the ground is not enough. This person will sit on a log and be righteous about it. This person will tell you about the log.

Then there is the person who brings the chair, the table, the two-burner stove, the French press, and a small bottle of Scotch wrapped in a wool sock. This person has decided that the point of being out there is not to suffer but to live well in a beautiful place. Both people are packing a boat. They are packing different universes.

I know a woman who has paddled the Boundary Waters every summer for thirty years. She brings a cast iron skillet. Not a small one. A ten-inch Lodge that weighs five pounds and takes up room that could hold a rain jacket and a week's freeze-dried dinners. I asked her about it once, expecting some practical defense—heat distribution, the virtues of seasoned iron. She looked at me like I'd asked why she brought her hands. "It's my skillet," she said.

That's the thing. At a certain point, packing stops being logistics and becomes autobiography. Show me your portage pack contents and I will tell you



who you are.

The ultralight contingent, with their titanium sporks and their obsessive gram counts, are writing one story. The people who bring a cribbage board and a bag of fun-size Snickers are writing another. Neither is wrong. Both are a little funny, if you're honest about it.

I like to think of myself as an ultralight realist. In my 30s, I shaved the handle off my toothbrush. I cut the tags out of my clothes to save weight. I carried a bivy instead of a tent because a tent was an indulgence and a bivy was real. I was, during this period, a very unpleasant person to share a campsite with. I ate cold food and was proud of it. I lay in the rain listening to water pool three inches above my face and thought: this is authentic. I do not know what I thought it was authentic to. Misery, probably.

Now I bring a tent. I bring the chair. But I still carry a titanium spork and my tent is made from Dyneema and my chair is a Helinox Chair Zero. I have lightweight comfort and an empty wallet, which also weighs less than one filled with money.

What nobody tells you is that your packing list is going to change every year for the rest of your life, and that these changes will not represent progress. They will represent a long, slow argument you are

having with yourself about what matters. When you are young you pack for adventure. When you are older you pack for comfort. When you are older still you pack for simplicity, which looks like packing for adventure but is something else entirely. You are carrying less, but you know why.

The most experienced paddler I ever met was an old man on the French River in Ontario who had been making the same trip for fifty years. His pack was small and perfect. I asked how he decided what to bring. He said he brought everything he needed and nothing he didn't, and when I asked how he knew the difference, he said it had only taken him about forty years to figure it out.

That's the real answer. There is no system. There is no diagram. There is only time on the water and the slow education of hauling things you didn't need and not having things you did. Every portage is a referendum. Every rainy night is a pop quiz. You learn, and then you learn something that contradicts it, and you go home and start a new gear list for next year.

I think this is why paddlers talk about packing the way they do—with the energy and conviction other people reserve for politics or religion. Because it is politics and religion, in miniature. It is a question about how to live. How much is enough. What you can do without and still be happy. These are not small questions. They just happen to express themselves in dry bags and arguments about whether you really need a second pair of socks.

You do, by the way. You always need the second pair of socks. That's the one thing everyone agrees on. Everything else is negotiable.

Jeremy Vore is part commercial pilot, part canoe racer, and part materials scientist—working with the stuff that becomes outdoor gear at his company, Redleaf Designs. He lives in Scandia in Michigan's Upper Peninsula with his wife, Cassandra, and their two sons, Hale and Calder, who frequently help out in the workshop just 40 feet from the back door.

Shelter from the Storm

Kyle Parker

Somewhere in North Dakota, I received a notification: *Possible derecho incoming. Eighty-plus mile-per-hour straight-line winds expected. Secure your boat and seek shelter immediately. Tents will not hold. Good luck.*

I looked around and realized Bob and I were standing on the windward shore of a 230-mile-long

reservoir. The nearest road or building was six miles away and the only structure in sight was a concrete outhouse. We had to make a decision quickly.

At a glance, the idea of crossing the United States from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic, alone in a canoe sounds like something you would only read about in a glossy outdoor magazine. I called this expedition Tip 2 Tip. The idea was

to start at the northwestern tip of the continental United States in Neah Bay, Washington, and end at the southeastern tip in Key Largo, Florida. When friends and family asked why, I simply said, “Why not?”

The quest did not seem that difficult when I first dreamed it. I figured if I just went a little farther every day, eventually I would get there. This is the story of what





happens when the paddle meets the water and the act of moving forward becomes less about control and more about learning to listen to the land, to others, and to myself.

For five traveling days, I walked through the heart of Spokane Washington, past traffic, sidewalks, industrial zones, and neighborhoods that had no reason to expect a now skinny, bearded, and sunburned man hauling a fully loaded canoe would walk through their daily routine. When I was asked “Where you headin’?” I would reply “Florida!” with a grin on my face knowing

they don’t understand or even believe me. I could feel the bewildered expression watching me as I walked past. By the time I reached the Clark Fork River, the romance of portaging was gone.

The Clark Fork brought more upriver travel and to reach the Continental Divide, I had to paddle and pole against the current day after day. My daily mileage was cut in half. The longest portage, the Continental Divide, once felt like the symbolic heart of the expedition, it was the turning point. After this I would be headed almost all “downhill”. One hundred and fifty miles of walk-

ing and pulling. This was something I believed I needed to prove to myself and others. But standing there, almost two months into this journey but only 800 miles behind me, I was behind schedule, physically worn, and again unable to find a semi-safe walking route alongside the highway.

Three days before attempting the divide, I connected with someone through social media who had been following the trip. The decision to accept this ride felt like letting go of the expectations I spent the previous several months creating for myself. Shay picked me up directly off



the river and drove me over the Continental Divide. He offered more than just transportation, a place to stay, warm meals, and a much-needed morale boost. And somehow, it didn't feel like cheating.

By the time I put the canoe back in the water on the other side, I understood something no map could teach me. The route was never fixed. Learning to read it meant knowing when to let go and accept help. It was here this journey stopped being about proving something and became more about experiencing and seeing the country in a way few people do.

The day the storm arrived started like many others. We had been paddling together for three days when the wind picked up around two in the afternoon. Strong afternoon winds were common on Lake Oahe and often forced us off the water. We found a decent place to camp if conditions didn't improve, a routine decision guided by advice passed down from other Missouri River paddlers.

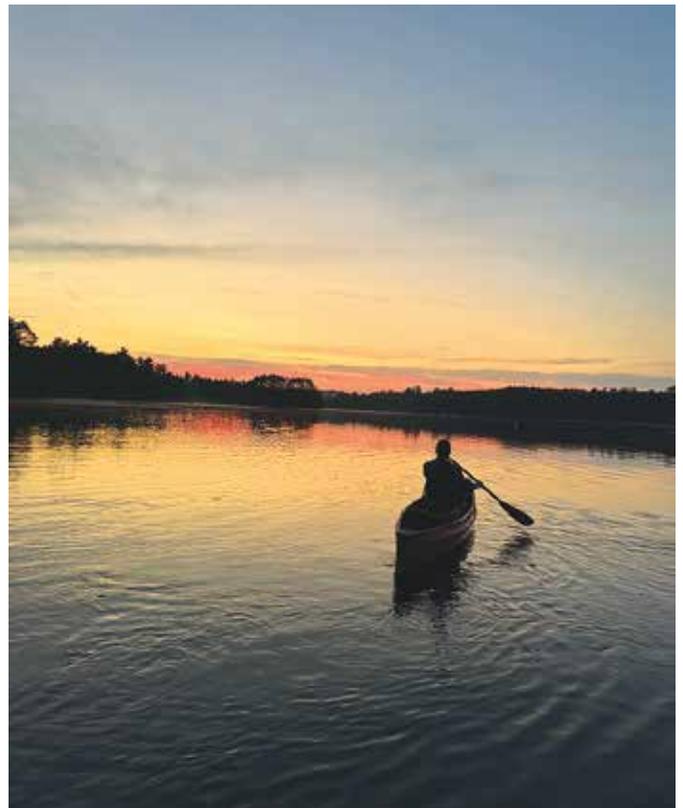
I ran the rocky shoreline with a 30-pound pack, uneven terrain tearing at my feet, tennis shoes without socks. Fear pushed me harder than exhaustion ever could. Just under an hour later, I reached a lonely boat launch as the last fishermen hauled their boat out and sped away, the sky growing darker behind them.



I took shelter in a concrete outhouse. Inside, I inflated my sleeping pad and peeled back my shoes to bandage blisters that stretched from toe to heel. As the wind rose and thunder boomed outside, I waited. The storm never truly hit us. It smelled exactly how you would expect, and I had never been happier to be inside it.

Somewhere along nearly 5,000 miles of paddling, walking, and trusting strangers, Tip 2 Tip stopped being about crossing a continent. The most important distance was never measured in miles, but in learning when to push forward and when to listen. That lesson, like the river, continues long after you step back onto shore.

Kyle Parker discovered his love for paddling while working for a canoe outfitter in the Boundary Waters. When he's not on the water or in the woods, he's glued to a computer screen or hovering over maps, plotting his next adventure. He works to live and lives to get outside.



From Solo Kayak to Tandem Canoe



By Eric Dahl

My wife, Debi, and I began paddling sea kayaks nearly fifteen years ago. We often paddled side by side, free to travel in different directions or paddle with other people on the water. Each of us always had complete control over how and where we paddled our own boat. That all changed last September at Camp Rutabaga.

Early in our kayak training, we were told that tandem boats are often called “divorce boats.” We proved that point the first time we climbed into a canoe together while camping at Mirror Lake State Park. We had no idea what we were doing, and it showed. A few unkind words may have been exchanged, and we didn’t really enjoy our two-hour rental. Despite that experience—and all the warnings about two people paddling one boat—we chose to rent a tandem canoe and enroll in tandem canoe classes at Camp Rutabaga in September 2025.

When we arrived at Camp Rutabaga, we saw many familiar faces. Kayak friends and instructors we’d paddled with for years were surprised to learn we were crossing over to the “dark side.” Not only were we dabbling in the world of canoes, but we were doing it in a tandem canoe. What were we thinking?

With proper instruction and coaching, we soon discovered that a married couple can, in fact, coexist in the same boat. The key for me was learning the responsibilities of the bow and stern paddlers. During that first rental experience, we didn’t know how to control a canoe, and the people on shore probably thought we’d had a little too much Baileys in our morning coffee. With guidance, however, we learned how to paddle in unison and glide across the water on a smooth, straight track. Of course, some compromise is required—both paddlers must agree on where they’re going, in the same boat, at the same time.

Moving from sea kayak to tandem canoe involved many of the same skills and paddle strokes we’ve used for years. We learned a few new strokes and

Reflections on Paddling

how to apply our kayaking knowledge to maneuver a canoe. Sweep strokes, draw strokes, braces, and sculling strokes are used in similar ways to control both canoes and kayaks. As solo kayakers, we've spent years helping partners with launching, landing, rescues, towing, and other on-water challenges. Now we're learning how to do many of those things together in one boat. It was fun applying our years of kayak training to a new craft.

It felt a little strange getting on the water without first pulling on a spray skirt or deciding what gear went in which hatch. Getting in and out of the canoe was easier than with a sea kayak, which was a definite benefit. One thing we quickly learned, though: don't forget sunscreen on your legs and feet. Without a cockpit or deck, the canoe offers no protection from the sun.

Paddling a canoe with a partner requires more—or perhaps better—communication to paddle safely and maintain harmony. Where are we going? Are there obstacles ahead? When do we switch sides? Do we slow down or pick up the pace? Good communication keeps both the boat and the relationship on a smooth course.

I spent most of our first weekend of tandem canoeing in the stern. In addition to good communication, tandem paddling requires more focus on the canoe, my partner, and the water ahead. I need to watch what Debi is doing in the bow and adjust accordingly. If she stops paddling, I adjust my stroke and steering. I'm reacting not only to the water and weather, but also to her paddling.

After that inaugural canoe experience, we ordered a Swift Combi canoe that can be paddled as a tandem or solo. We're still sea kayakers, but the canoe gives us more options. When we want to paddle quiet water and spend less time at the put-in, we can grab the canoe. One boat to load, launch, and clean up instead of two sea kayaks.



We're excited to get out on the water with our new boat, learn new skills, spend time together in one canoe, and continue strengthening our relationship as a couple. That's another advantage of paddling—it's good for your relationship. So get out on the water and paddle. It's good for you and for those around you. Whatever boat you choose, paddle safely, seek good instruction, and paddle with others. Keep an open mind—you just might discover another boat that's fun to paddle and makes you a better paddler, and maybe even a better person.

Eric Dahl is a longtime friend of Rutabaga who loves sea kayaking and is rapidly falling for canoeing, too. He's a Fire Inspector with the Madison Fire Department, and his wife, Debi, is a Paramedic there as well. If something goes wrong on your trip, these are absolutely the two people you want nearby.



AUGUST 28-30
CAMP MANITOWISH YMCA
BOULDER JUNCTION
WISCONSIN



Welcome to the 2nd Annual Camp Rutabaga!

What is Camp Rutabaga?

It's a place to learn about canoeing, kayaking, and the skills you need to enjoy paddling no matter what your discipline. It's the only gathering for all sorts of watercraft.

We don't care if you use one paddle blade or two. We just want you with us.



What will I learn?

We'll have dozens of classes, from solo canoe to sea kayak and everything in between, with class levels for beginners to experts.

Tours to a variety of rivers and lakes will happen again. Some old favorites, some new.

Talks and dry land presentations, music, and community building is a big part of our mission. Come ready to make friends and paddling partners.

Why Camp Rutabaga?

It's all about community. Paddling together can create life-long friendships.

That's what Rutabaga Paddlesports is all about.



Where is Camp Rutabaga?

Camp Manito-wish sits on a 300-acre campus, surrounded by the 225,000 acre Northern Highland American Legion Forest, within a half an hour of over 1,300 lakes.



Great! How do I sign up?

The registration price of Camp Rutabaga is \$490 for all three days. This includes dinners Friday and Saturday and Sunday lunch. You may purchase breakfast and lunch if you want to eat on site.

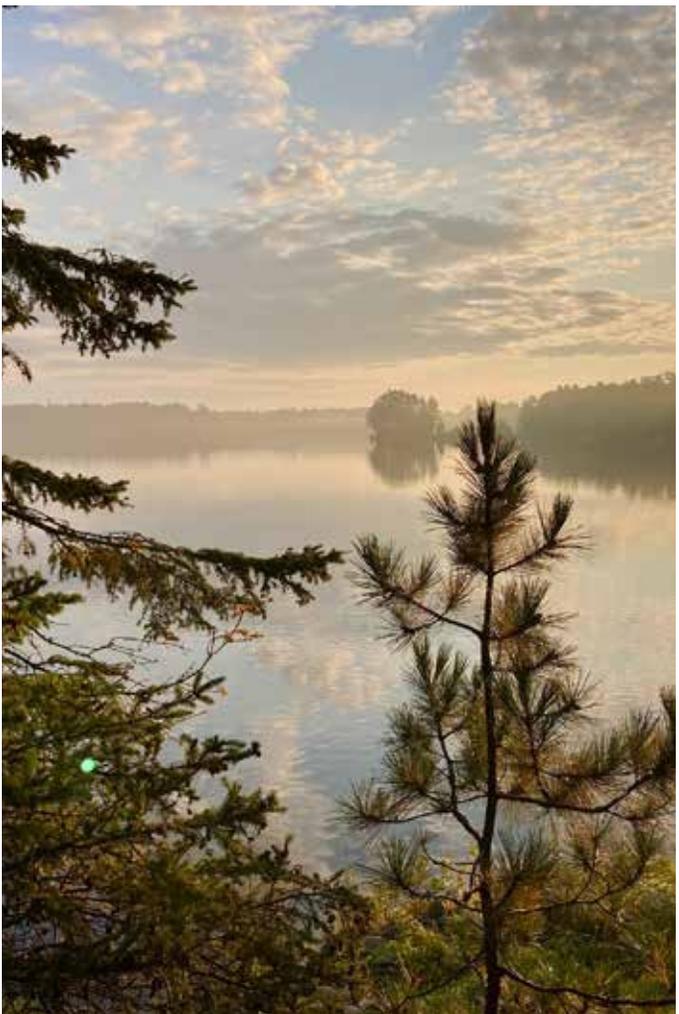
Canoe and kayak rentals are available for rental, or you can bring your boat or boats.

Sign up at www.everyonepaddles.com, or go to the Rutabaga home page and click on classes and trips.

What about housing?

Vilas County has plenty of housing, both hotels and private rentals. If camping is your style, there are a number of fantastic campgrounds within 10 minutes of Camp Manito-Wish.

There are gender-specific bunkhouses available on-site. If you're interested, click the interested in housing box and we'll get you more information as it becomes available.



You've heard of going from zero to 60 in two seconds? I went from zero to 1,500. It just took me 64 years.

By John Stofflet

Yes, I kayaked more than 1,500 miles this past year. That's like paddling from Madison to Miami, Florida. Not bad, considering I once lacked the confidence to paddle just one mile.

For much of my life, I didn't pursue my dream of owning a kayak. My doubting side told me I was too busy, not fit enough, not able to figure out how to safely transport a kayak on my roof, not "outdoorsy enough" to pull it all off.

During my years as a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I would watch the people in the UW Hoofers Club in their canoes and kayaks in front of the Memorial Union Terrace, wishing I was that *cool and confident* person who could figure out how to put a boat in the water and paddle off into the distance on Lake Mendota.

I had always loved the water. In fact, for two years in high school, I decided I'd join the U.S. Coast Guard. Guess what? The lack of confidence crept in once again. "I couldn't do that," I told myself.

For the majority of my life, my water activity was limited to going out on friends' boats every so often, even going out on U.S.



PHOTO CREDIT: CHRIS COLLINS.

Coast Guard rescue boats in the Pacific to do television stories for KING-TV and the Nat Geo Channel. Still, no paddling in my life.

About 12 years ago, during a life transition, that changed. I was dealing with the stress and sense of loss that comes with divorce, as well as the daily stress of work-

ing as a television news anchor at WMTV in Madison.

I decided it was time to do what I had always dreamed of—start exploring our beautiful area at the pace of the paddle. I bought an entry-level plastic kayak in 2013 and used DIY videos to teach myself how to transport the boat.

It wasn't long before I discovered that the calming pace of a paddle helped me prepare for and deal with the often frantic pace of the TV newsroom—that life sitting level with the water kept me level myself.

After a year or two, I upgraded to a better, but still heavy, kayak ... and then an Eddyline Sitka LT. I paddled that boat thousands of miles and many hours over the years. It was easy to lift, easy to paddle, and had a skeg that kept me from fishtailing.

This fall, I bought a lime green Delta 16. (Hey, that rhymes.) It's a beautiful boat that gives me an extra 1.5 feet, is smooth as can be in rough waters, and also has a skeg. The good folks at Rutabaga Paddlesports suggested it as a great next boat for me, and they were right.

With nicer, lighter boats like my Eddyline and Delta, it became even easier for me to spend more time on the water, and it became even more obvious that time spent in the seat of my kayak better prepared me to handle the seat at the news anchor desk through chaotic political campaign seasons, breaking news, protests, the pandemic, and more.

In July of 2021, as we were all starting to recover from the pandemic, the television station encouraged me to produce a series highlighting waterways we might drive over or by all the time that

were worth exploring at the *Pace of the Paddle*. The five-part *Pace of the Paddle* series featured five reports, including one on Rock County's Turtle Creek and its 5-Arch Tiffany Stone Bridge.

The paddling miles started adding up, as did my desire to be on the water. Using the free ASICS Runkeeper app, I kept track of my miles using GPS. I paddled 400 miles in 2020; 502 in 2021; 600 in 2022; 808 in 2023; and, in my first full year of retirement, 1,200 miles in 2024. I didn't think I'd go even farther this year, but I did, surpassing 1,500 miles on December 26.

December was challenging, to say the least! My paddling spot, the Yahara River, underwent an early freeze, plus I broke a dry suit zipper.

Thanks to Ethan at Rutabaga, who loaned me his own dry suit, and to the never-frozen waters of Lake Columbia—the power plant cooling lake—I was able to keep paddling. The Yahara even thawed just before Christmas.

Hitting 1,500 miles was a milestone I never thought I'd reach. The kid who used to watch those cool kayakers but was too chicken to try it himself now can't get enough of it.

The thing is, around the Madison area, we don't have to go far to get a paddle in the water. My roughly 300 paddles this year have been on Lake Monona, Lake Mendota,

the Yahara River, Starkweather Creek, Rock Lake (Lake Mills), Lake Waubesa, Upper Mud Lake, Cherokee Marsh, Devil's Lake, the Rock River, Booth Lake (East Troy), Lake Columbia (Portage), and just one out of state—Lake Bradford in Tallahassee, Florida.

My motto? *Drive less to paddle more.*

It's not so much about the 1,500 miles paddled in 2025 ... it's about the joy each one of those miles brought me.

Buying the boat is the first step. Making the time to get out is the crucial step ... and it's worth it. Do it today, not tomorrow. Okay, wait for the ice to melt, then do it.

It's been nice in my life to replace breaking news with breaking waves...and deadlines with shorelines. I'm forever grateful that I stopped doubting and started kayaking.

I'll take the pace of the paddle over zero to 60 any day.

John Stofflet has flown through hurricanes, survived an avalanche, stood inside a developing tornado, and jumped off the 72nd floor of a building in New Zealand—attached to a cable, thankfully. He's dived with sharks and killer whales, knelt beside a tranquilized polar bear, and reported from the middle of thousands of penguins in Antarctica for *National Geographic*. Basically, he's done all the things your mother warned you about.

The Peace of Wild Things

By Lisa Allred

August 2025: I looked over the packing list with nervous anticipation and excitement pooling in my gut. “What am I doing? I have no business doing something like this. I don’t know what I’m doing.” This constant refrain ran through my head after each planning session for our trip to the BWCA. The previous December, a friend called me and said, “Stephanie and I want to plan a ladies’ trip to the Boundary Waters next August, and we want you to come. We’ll help you. Find a way to make it happen—I promise it’ll be worth it.” I was, without doubt, the least experienced person in the group. Darren and Stephanie graciously lent me some gear, and I spent the days before the trip packing and repacking, wondering what I didn’t know and would find out the hard way.

Growing up in rural Idaho, outdoor recreation was as common as the potato fields lining the highways. But in my farming-focused extended family, camping was usually seen as more work than it was worth, especially if it meant leaving behind livestock and fields that needed daily tending. And yet, I’ve always been drawn to the wild. I memorized Wendell Berry’s “The Peace of Wild Things,” as a col-



lege freshman, and I managed to go paddling and camping with friend throughout my growing up years. But it was always reliant on others’ generosity. I felt I lacked the knowledge and experience to spend time in the wilderness myself.

I married a man from New York City, who’d only had terrible experiences on poorly-run Boy Scout camping trips. I wanted to make the outdoors more part of our family life, but I was scared—of the financial investment, of making dangerous rookie mistakes, of the learning curve. Before this, my longest paddle was about three hours. I’d never camped in a tent for longer than two nights, or in a campground

where we didn’t have a spigot for water.

The week before departure, several roadblocks arose. One group member learned that a chronically ill person close to them would likely pass away while we were gone. I had some difficult extended family situations arise, and some of the childcare we’d arranged for while I was gone fell through.

The night before leaving, I lay worried and sleepless: “How can I possibly leave now? What if I slow everyone down? What if I ruin it for others?” Then, the opening lines from “The Peace of Wild Things” floated through my mind: “When despair for the



world grows in me...I go and lie down where the wood drake / rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds." I knew it would take some doing to relax into that peace. I just had to get there.

After a seven-hour car ride, an overnight stay, and a final hot breakfast, we put in on Saginaw Lake on a Sunday morning. We began our journey on a protected inlet, where I sat in the bow and relearned how to paddle. Whitney, Darren and Stephanie's daughter, patiently taught me how to sweep, draw, and move my torso efficiently. I felt my rattled nerves settle as the rhythm of my body and my breathing aligned. As we exited the inlet, blinding sunlight broke through wispy clouds and the wind whoosed my breath out of my lungs at sight of the glittering

whitecaps before me. Okay. This was worth it.

It took a full day of disconnect from the modern world for me to fully settle into the stillness that only exists in the wild. One dusk,

we caught sight of a beaver swimming near our campsite, and we did the only reasonable thing: we shut up, crept over to the water, and watched beavers gnaw, chew, and swim for the next hour. After that primetime programming, we glimpsed otters, mergansers, mother and baby loons, and bald eagles. Coexisting with these creatures hushed the constant turmoil I didn't even know was inside me.

Over the next several days, I easily adapted to camp life. This was a group of six highly capable women, all of whom are mothers, teachers, or both, so when things needed doing, each was the type of person to notice and pitch in. Sometimes, one member of the group would be particularly exhausted, so they'd spend extra time resting while the rest of us



Reflections on Paddling

picked up the slack. One day, I'd neglected to drink enough water during a grueling paddle, and I found myself dizzy and headachy afterward. Another group member sat me down in a camp chair while she prepared some food and electrolyte water for me. But that's how it was: there was no keeping score, no comparing efforts. Everyone pulled together for the good of the group, while also trusting each other to give what we could and rest when needed.

As with any transformative experience, there are too many stories to tell here, some sublime, some awe-inspiring, some downright comical. But as we paddled out through the drizzly, misty morning light of our eighth and final day, I found myself unconsciously whispering Wendell Berry's words again:

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron
feeds.

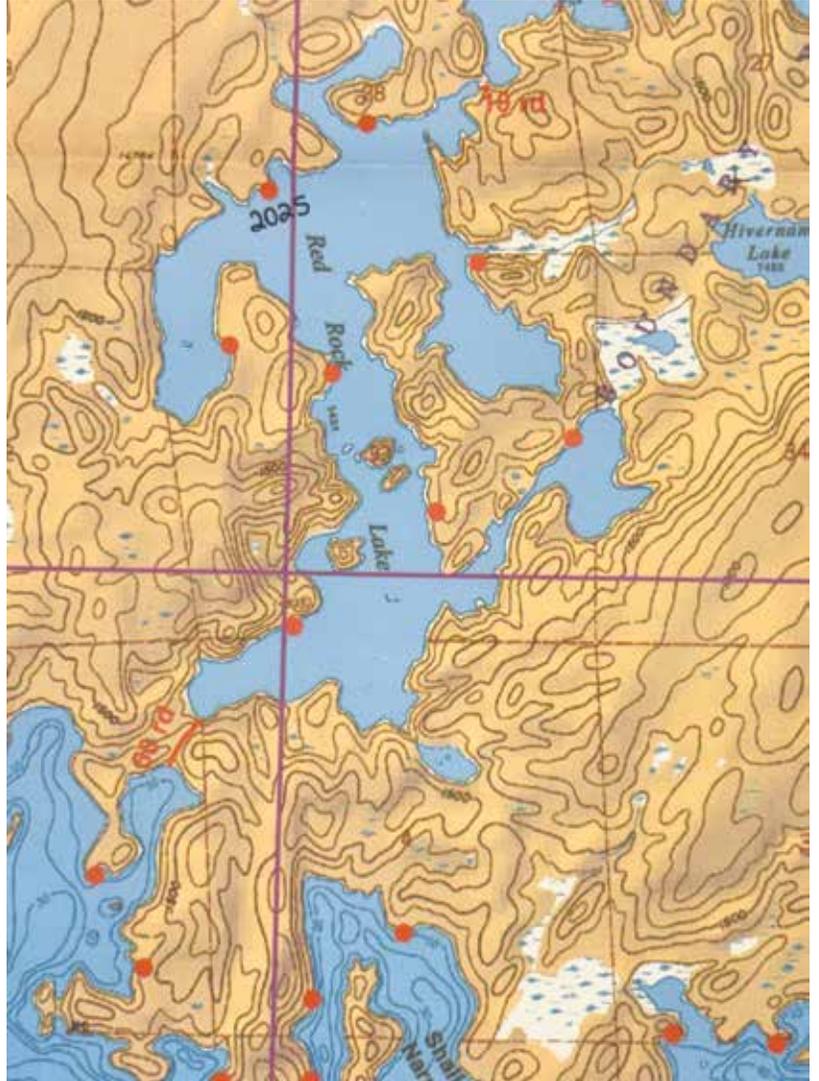
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.

And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time

I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

I didn't need to know everything. But thanks to the care and community of my fellow paddlers, and the care and communion of Mother Nature herself, I had, "for a time...rest[ed] in the grace of the world." I can't wait to go back.

Lisa Allred is a pianist, vocalist, and writer who teaches piano at her own studio and bakes legendary cheesecakes. Her nocturnes are so soothing they could lull a caffeinated squirrel to sleep. She lives in Fitchburg, Wisconsin, with her husband and their three children.



Finding Bryozoans

I followed the GPS on my phone. A mistake. I'm glad I made it.

By Darren Bush

The roads in Vilas County vary from paved four lanes to gravel paths barely wide enough for one vehicle.

In this case, I wanted to take the shortest route from Frank Lake to Allequash Lake. The GPS gave me directions. Halfway through the four mile gravel journey, I hit the ubiquitous yellow pipe gate blocking the road.

Turning around, I noticed that the wide spot in the road actually led to a path. A road, sort of, but it went somewhere. I decided to follow it.

It was barely wide enough for my Tacoma, and the branches scratched at the sides like a bad car wash. At the end of the road



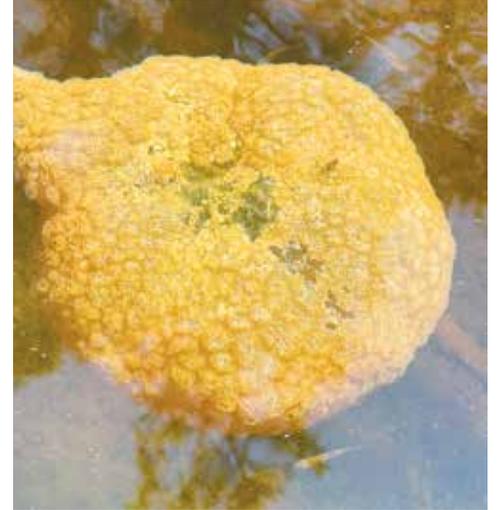
was a place for one vehicle to park. I was at Allequash Springs.

I had my drone so I scouted it before launching. It's quite shallow, but the water is incredibly clear. Maybe because of all the springs. It's shallow, but navigable.

Only 8 acres, Allequash Springs feeds a non-navigable Allequash Creek. Because it's so small, it doesn't attract a lot of attention except for trout fishermen, because the springs keep the water cold enough for trout. Some of them make their way to Allequash Lake.

There are many indicators of water quality. Presence of certain species of damselflies are a good indicator that the water is clean enough to support the larvae for the two years they live in their aquatic stage.

Another indicator of clean water is the presence of bryozoan colonies. If they look sort of like coral, it's because they're colonies, not a single organism. They're squishy. Picking one up feels like picking up really heavy Jell-O.



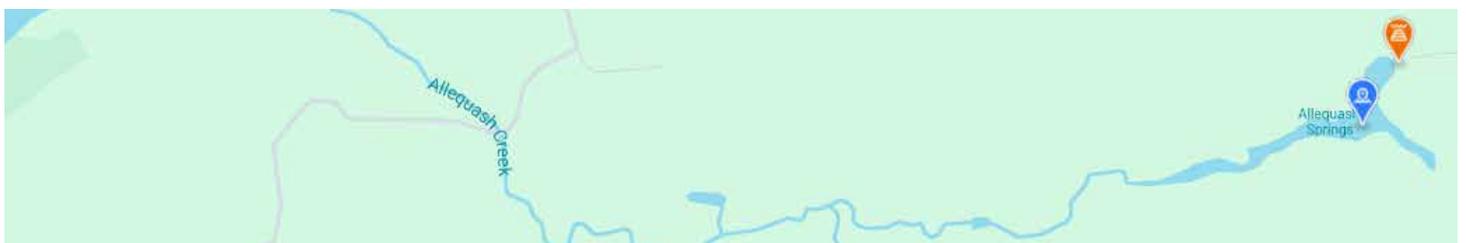
Honestly, I had never seen them before except in books. Bryozoans in three dimensions are much cooler than they are in an encyclopedia or guidebook.

You keep discovering things as you grow older. I find I discover more in a canoe due to its quiet propulsion and ability to paddle in a foot of water or less.

A powered craft has no chance in Allequash Springs.

I'm glad I followed my GPS. It led me to bryozoans.

Darren is the owner of Rutabaga Paddle-sports. More of his writing can be found at: <https://canoelover.substack.com>.



How Did I Get Here?

By Camper Christina

There I was, out in the middle of nowhere. Day 3 of 6 in the remote wilderness, all alone, and I was lost on a portage with no idea of which way to go. There was not a chance I was going back through the ridiculously challenging obstacles I had to overcome to get here. I needed to find a way forward.

My clothing, hands and face, were covered in soot. The forest fire had altered the trail considerably, and there were downed trees everywhere, making it impossible to find a way through. How did I get here? Who did I think I was, that I could go into these uninhabited places, alone, and think that I could find a way to get through to the other side?

I stood there, doubting myself, my confidence wavering, and just stopped. I took a deep breath, told myself to suck it up, and reminded myself that I needed to use my mind, my years of experience and training, and figure out how to get myself out of here, and where I needed to be.

I looked at the map again and saw a small waterway, just a tiny creek that ran right alongside the portage. If I could follow that waterway, I could find the next lake. I began making my way through, slowly, but surely, climbing over

burnt up trees, and bushwhacking through the forest. After what felt like forever, I finally saw what I'd been praying for.. water!

From a young age, I have always enjoyed being outside. I remember waking up and sneaking out of the house. I'd grab a few cookies and I would go sing and whistle to the birds in the backyard, or roller-skate around the neighborhood, or check out the creek behind my friend Patricia's house, and look for frogs. I almost always was alone on those mornings, before the world awoke. Being outside, at that time of day, I had everything I ever needed, and was completely content.

I wasn't raised to be an outdoors person. When I was young, our family spent some time at a cottage up north, near Algonquin Park. Later in life, I discovered those visits may have only totaled three weeks, over three years, but in my mind, they have a much more significant amount of time designated to them. Being "up north" as we call it where I'm from, was what I remembered to be the most monumental moments of my childhood. Even though I almost drowned while I was up there, and experienced my first bloodsucker attack, but those are stories for another time.

After 32 years of living, I redis-

covered my love for up north, and finally did something about it. I began researching at the library, reading books, watching videos, and learning everything I could about backcountry camping. I talked my boyfriend at the time, into going on a big canoe trip in Algonquin together for five days and it was truly magical. We returned for several trips over the next two years, until our relationship ended, and then I found myself waiting endlessly to find someone to come with me, on another backcountry trip.

After that first trip, in 2002, I went on many other backcountry adventures, but not nearly as many as I wanted to. I wanted to be in the forest and near the water, all the time. Currently, my trips were sporadic, and sometimes years in between would pass, before I could find someone to go with me. A contest in 2015 made me realize, I was tired of waiting and it was time for action.

I started small, doing things by myself, like going on day hikes and day paddles. In 2015, I embarked on my very first solo backcountry camping trip. I was so excited, but also terrified. I barely slept at all, but I survived the night without any issues occurring. I gained a tiny bit of confidence from that trip, which then allowed me to go on another solo

backcountry trip, and once again, I survived. It was getting easier, and the more trips I completed, the more confidence I gained, but it took time. I was, after all, afraid of the dark.

It wasn't until September 2017, at age 47, when I finally attempted and completed my very first big five-day solo canoe trip, completing 14 portages through Algonquin Park. It was a huge achievement for me, and something that would end up changing my life, forever. A massive door was opened for me that day, and it confirmed that I no longer had to wait to find someone who would canoe trip with me. It was time to do what my heart wanted, regardless of how, or with who. Waiting for 'who's' only suppressed my dreams and made me feel like something was missing in my life.

For me, there are many passions being fulfilled by going on these trips alone. A major one is successfully conquering and overcoming challenges and obstacles. The second one entails something I deeply love and truly enjoy, documenting my adventures by using words, pictures and videos to share with, and inspire others. Doing this connects me to people in more ways than I ever imagined it could. I may be going out on my actual trips alone, but

subsequently, I have thousands of people coming on these trips with me, through the publishing of my adventures through pictures, videos and stories, shared on social media, and in person.

The simple things in life are what make it so valuable. The trees whispering on a warm wind. The water glistening in the sun. The loons calling to each other. Enjoying nature in its truest form is something I love and dream of, and now it is something I am able to do whenever and wherever I

choose, all because I went on my first solo trip, and didn't wait for anyone to go with me. The only regret I have is why didn't I do it sooner?

Camper Christina has been an outdoors enthusiast since early childhood—backpacking, paddling, and poking around creeks in search of critters. She got her start camping in her own backyard and never stopped. You can find her adventures at <https://camperchristina.com>.

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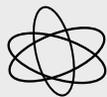
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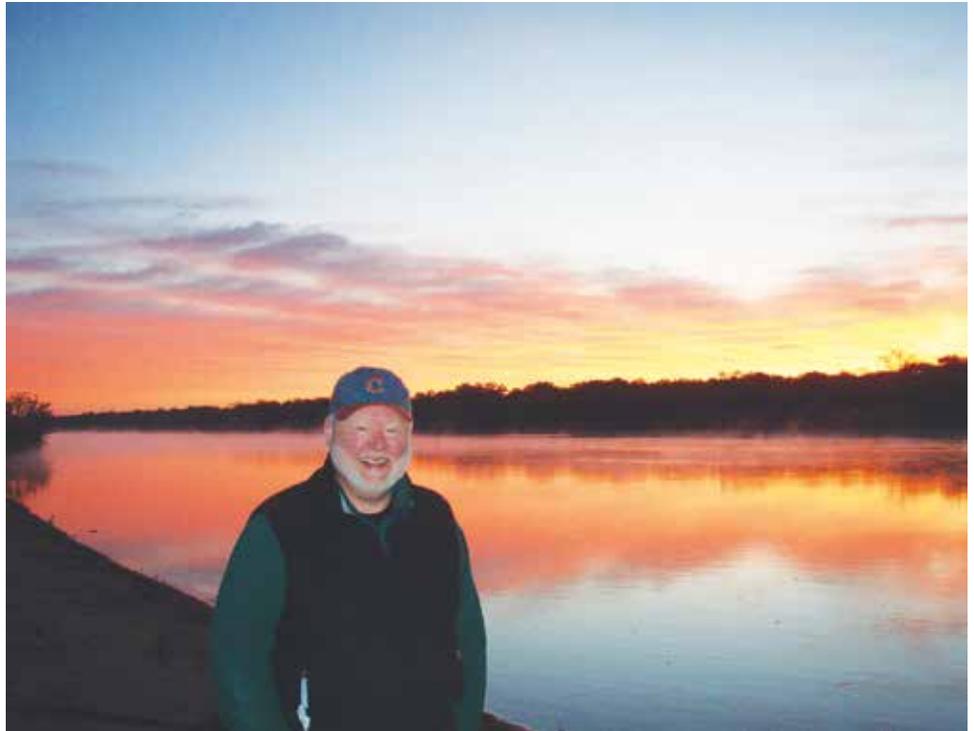
By Lindsay Wood Davis

If you are from the Northern climes, it has probably been more than a few months since you've spent any time paddling. You're undoubtedly itching to get back out there as soon as possible...and Canoeopia, or just the thought of Canoeopia, can really get our imaginations fired up.

Each of us has their own mental picture of what a great day on the water means, and those pictures are certainly not restricted to a single vision. But when my thoughts slide into "it's almost time to paddle" mode, one of my immediate thoughts is the silence, the peace, the feeling of relaxation that I get heading out with a paddle in my hand once again. I can feel my blood pressure going down just thinking of it.

The activities that each of us use to feed that 'Paddlin' Jones" vary just as much as the waters we paddle and the variety of boats that we see on the water throughout the season. To get through the hard water season, some cross-country ski, snowshoe, hike, ice skate, dog sled or toboggan. And, of course, some just hunker down, refusing to leave the proverbial warmth of the fire.

For the past 25 years, part of my winter routine has been to continue the search for the silence



that I so enjoy in a canoe. I find that silence at a retreat house right on the shores of Wisconsin's largest lake, Lake Winnebago. I join about 50 others in three and a half days of silence, being led by a retreat director through a series of what are called the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.

Over the course of this year's long weekend retreat, we were led through a series of lessons and questions. On the second day came a question that took me right back to paddling, right back to one of my favorite places to paddle and right back to one of my top memories from a life of paddling a canoe in Wisconsin that began this is scary 65 years ago. The question we were asked to contemplate, that took me on that journey was this: What glimpses of Heaven have you had in your life?

I read that question in the silence of my room at the retreat house, looking out across the very frozen waters of Lake Winnebago and mentally, there I was, back on the Wisconsin River, on a beautiful autumn morning with dawn just about to break. I had been invited to join a group of solo canoe paddlers on what was always lovingly (and, as I soon learned, very accurately) called The OWL Trip. OWL, in this case stood for Order of Wisconsin River Lovers, and we were certainly that!

We left the Mazomanie put-in about 6pm, paddled downstream



for a few hours and then chose a sand bar on which to camp. The dozen or so paddlers on this trip set up our tents, had a great evening of food, stories and conversation around a wonderful fire, then headed to the kind of sleep that a cool autumn evening in the outdoors so often gives as a gift. I had set up my tent, hoping that I had positioned the entryway towards the direction where the sunrise might greet me in the morning.

For those of us that love the first light, the very first light of day, false dawn can be a real trickster, never more so than when you're peering out of the flap of your tent. I lay there in the intense silence that meant that the dawn wasn't yet there but thinking that it sure looked like it was on the way. I kept waiting, enjoying the silence, but hoping to get a per-

fect view of that first light. Did I ever!

Suddenly, and I do mean suddenly, two things happened in simultaneous precision: The first pink-orange light of day appeared, and 200-300 Sandhill Cranes, unseen in the dark and only 30 to 40 yards away from our tents, all trumpeted in the day, welcoming the sun with what must be the loudest of nature's alarms. For the briefest seconds this is what I saw: The light popping up above the bank of the river, reflecting off the water, illuminating the cranes in their full-throated trumpeting chorus. It was this scene, still etched so clearly in my brain, that answered the question, What glimpses of Heaven have you had in your life? This is what one of my visions of celestial fun looks

See DAVIS page 72



NORTHSTAR CANOES

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"In the global city of our civilization, girded by the high tension of our powerlines, we have abolished the night.... we look up at neon, not the marvel of starry heavens." Erazim Kohak



DAVIS from page 70
like, I realized right then. I still believe that to be true.

To almost anyone, this combination of sunrise and avian chorus would have been memorable. Though it certainly isn't what Heaven looks like to most or perhaps anyone else, in writing about it now, and itching to get that paddle back in my hand, I'm reminded of so many other scenes from the paddling trips and moments of the past:

My wife and I on our honeymoon in the Boundary Waters in the early 70's. A fifteen-foot aluminum canoe that must have weighed 90 pounds, and the badger that blocked our way down the long gravel road as we left Ely.

A trip down the Totogatic River where we passed under a giant eagle's nest. We were being gawked at by three little eaglets until mama eagle stood up and swept her babies back into the safety of the nest, never taking her eyes off us!

Discovering (and not intentionally!) one of Wisconsin's most unexpectedly wild sections of river, the West Branch of the Fond du Lac River, which flows out of the Eldorado Marsh west of Fond du Lac. With a good spring melt, you'll come upon a short piece of river that you'll never forget (we won't!)

The beauty of The String of Pearls, the two dozen or so estuaries along the South Shore of Lake Superior. While not challenging

or technical at all, these beautiful stretches of water between the Big Lake and the shore are a world unto themselves.

I saw my glance of Heaven on the Wisconsin River, but I've had a lifetime of paddling and more to come on the wonderfully varied Waters of Wisconsin. Can't you just picture your own glimpse of Heaven out there? Don't you miss that paddle in your hand? Well, I sure do.

Lindsay Wood-Davis is a happily retired radio obsessive who spent his life in and around broadcasting. He co-founded WVMO, a low-powered radio station that spins great Americana music and broadcasts local high school sports. He's an avid paddler and a part-time philosopher—usually at the same time.

Comings and Goings

Nothing is constant except change, and that's true here at Rutabaga. This year we've had a few staff members move on, which is always a little bittersweet. Bitter because we'll miss them, sweet because they're growing.

Drew, our warehouse manager, decided to head back to school — and I'm always going to support that. We're thankful for the time we had him and wish him all the best.

Kris, our web content manager, took a promotion at a larger company where he'll have more room to grow. That's one of the realities of a small business — if you want to keep growing, sometimes you have to move on. We're proud of him and excited for what's next.

Shannon, one of our finest salespeople, left to become a cook at a state facility serving people who

need 24-hour health care. Knowing his compassion, it feels like a perfect fit. We'll miss him around here.

We also had to say goodbye to two of our favorite shop dogs. Kris's Tucker passed away after a fight with cancer, and we'll miss that old guy.

Ann's sweet girl, Dharma, is deeply missed too, another victim of cancer. There's just something about paddlers and dogs — they seem drawn to each other. We'll miss them both.

The good news? We've welcomed three enthusiastic and knowledgeable new full-time staff members, plus a few new part-time weekend warriors. We're grateful to have them and can't wait for you to meet them.

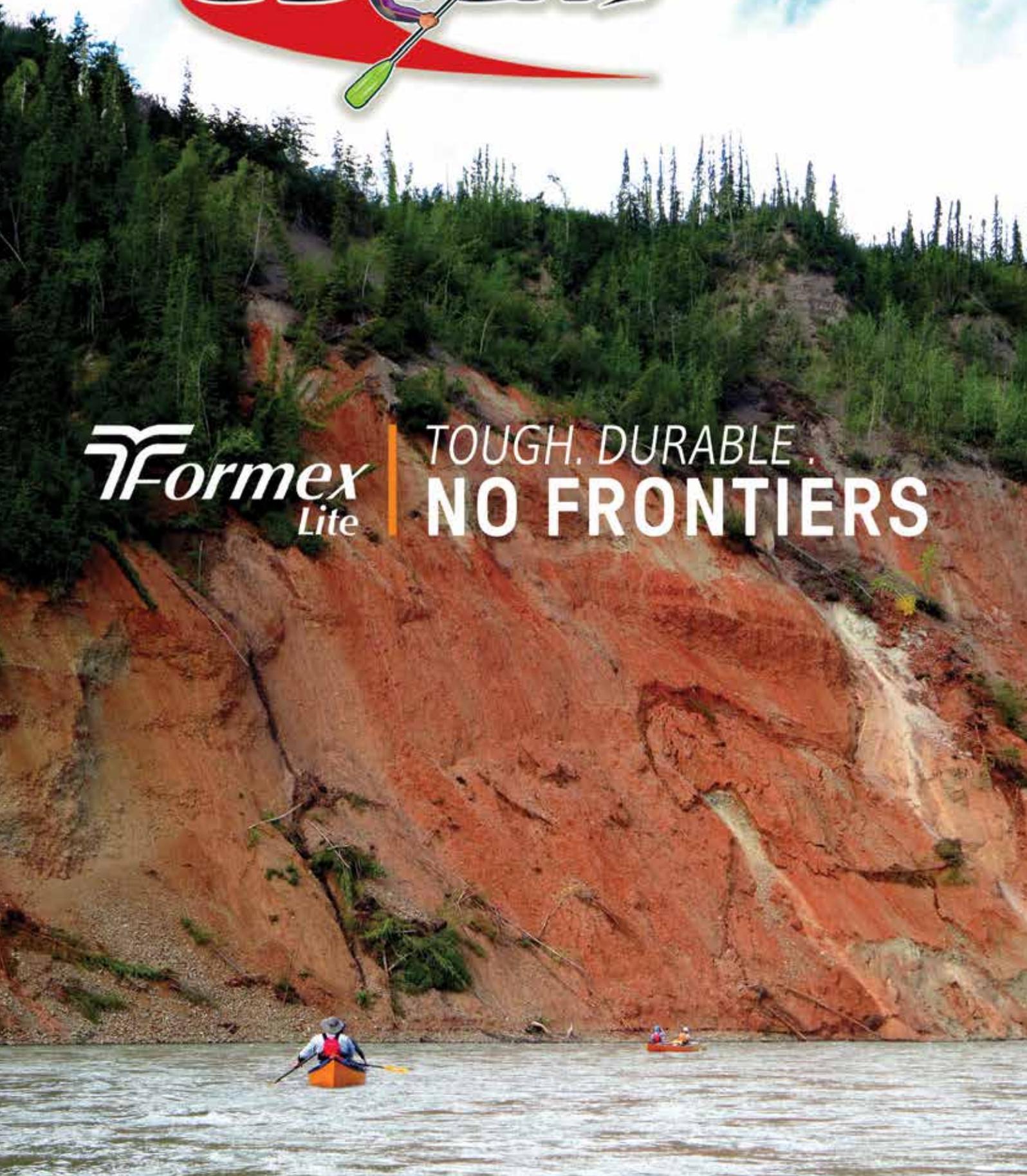
And Ann has a new shop dog.





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