



# VOYAGEUR TRAIL NEWS

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## "LET'S TRY OUT THE NEW GUIDEBOOK" WEEK

by Gayle Phillips



**Jim McCullough, our guide, on the Eagle's Ridge Lookout**

My daughter, Shelley, and I and our dog Barney left Saturday, August 10 to investigate Neys Provincial Park near Marathon on our week-long trek. Whenever I am in the Marathon area, I have traditionally stayed at Pukaskwa Park so I took this opportunity to try out the provincial park I had always passed along the way. To my surprise, Dan Wheeler (of Blind River VTC) was standing in the park office waiting for me to arrive! It was terrific to see a familiar face. Dan had planned to join us on our hike on the Marathon Section of the Voyageur Trail on the Wednesday, but was waiting for an important phone call that might have changed his plans at the last minute.

Neys is a beautiful park with a few small hiking trails, spacious campsites, excellent facilities, a great

swimming beach and friendly, helpful staff. I would recommend it highly for families. This trip certainly was a lesson in the difference between our provincial and national parks versus private enterprise, and I have come to the conclusion that we must fight to preserve our park system! There IS a difference—a big difference!

On Sunday, we moved along to beautiful Nipigon and Stillwater Park where we were joined by Linda Badowich and *Sheba-the-Wonderdog*.

Monday morning we awoke to a sunny and warm day, perfect for hiking. At 10:35 am (we were notorious this trip for being 5 minutes late for everything) we all arrived at the trailhead in Red Rock to begin our eight kilometre hike to Nipigon. Bruce Pritchard, Director of M.E.D.A.

Superior, Municipal Economic Development Agency, was waiting to greet our group upon their arrival and invited me back to his office after the hike to discuss any improvements to his trail that I could suggest.

I must say that the helpfulness and friendliness of Bruce, his Administrative Assistant Sheila Larocque and Nipigon in general, was remarkable. If there was an award I could give for going that extra step "above and beyond the call of duty" I would award it to them.

Bruce introduced us to Jim McCullough, a local trail enthusiast who served as our guide. Jim was wonderful. He gave us the history of the trail and showed us all the highlights (like the Nipigon 'cactus') as he lead us through to Nipigon. My particular favourite, the Eagle's Ridge Lookout overlooking Dog's Head mountain, didn't disappoint anyone as we had our lunch there. We watched a sailboat on its way to Nipigon Bay as trains passed far below us.

After lunch, *Sheba-the-Wonderdog* and *Barney-the-Lead-Bottom*, were happy to see the water of Stillwater Creek. Sheba did a perfect dive in and Barney (trying to lay on the sloped shoreline to get a drink of water) went nose first. I think this was his first underwater excursion but it cooled him off. It was a perfect day.

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## "LET'S TRY OUT THE NEW GUIDEBOOK" WEEK

(cont'd. from page 1)

After a good night's sleep, we pushed on to Pukaskwa National Park on Tuesday. What can I say -- Pukaskwa is my favourite. It is located far enough off the main highway that you don't hear transports blowing tires at four in the morning. Its hiking trails are spectacular, facilities are top notch, campsites are private and spacious and the people who are attracted to it are quiet, clean, nature/hiking-type people. I am always delighted to introduce it to someone who has never been there before and this was Linda's first trip.

That evening, we completed the Headland Trail and Linda was later sorry that she didn't bring her camera along, as bad weather settled in the next day and her pictures didn't capture the gorgeous evening we had enjoyed.

The next day set a record--some-where! It had to. The thunder and lightning lasted for twelve straight hours! We didn't dare try the beautiful but rocky Marathon Voyageur Trail and when I talked to Brian Tocheri, Marathon's Economic Development Officer later, he told me that he had pulled his summer students off the trail that day as well because the storm just wouldn't let up.

After huddling under my tarp until 4 o'clock in the afternoon we decided that we had had enough and hiked the Beach Trail and Halfway Lake Trail, rain or no rain. We were rewarded with a fine supply of blueberries to adorn our pancakes the next morning.

Thursday we bid adieu to Pukaskwa, vowing to return, and moved on to Wawa RV Resort and Campground where we were joined by Gale and Andrea Koteles, Bev and Verna Scott and briefly by Mary Beth Russ. Mary Beth couldn't stay, and Bev and Verna were making an overnight stopover on their way to Thunder Bay.



**Our happy "Voyageurs" in front of Mission Falls**

Thursday evening we made our way to Buck's Marina for an evening of "Voyageur" fun in the 26-foot Montreal canoe of Naturally Superior Adventures. This evening was an absolute delight! After a quick lesson in paddling, we made our way around the mouths of the Michipicoten and Magpie Rivers, visiting the site of the old Northwest Company Fur Trading Post, Mission Falls and the beach opposite the headquarters of Naturally Superior Adventures, where we were treated to bannock and tea made over a campfire started (with great difficulty) by hitting a flint into some birchbark. Our two guides, 'Pieter' and 'Michelle', instructed us on Voyageur life, history and provided comic relief the whole time making it a truly enjoyable evening. The threatening clouds cleared just in time to see the red sun disappear behind Lake Superior. Everyone remarked time and time again how much fun it was. I, for one, will be making plans to go back for their Sunday day-long adventures soon.

David Wells of Naturally Superior Adventures greeted us as we returned to the dock, so I asked him which section of the Wawa Voyageur Trail we should consider hiking the next day. He suggested the Michipicoten Road to Highway 17 access. This confirmed a call I had made earlier to Dorothy Egan who suggested the same piece, so we decided that's what

we would do. However, since we were getting a little bone-weary from daily excursions, we decided to cut it short, from Michipicoten Road to High Falls. That way, according to the Guidebook, we would see all the highlights of the trail--Magpie High Falls, Silver Falls and Michipicoten Mission Harbour--without the long access to the highway. As it turned out, it was a good decision as we spent about an hour picking blueberries we found along the way! Also, as we approached High Falls, we came across a washed out section of trail. A huge mud slide (due to the floods that hit Wawa last spring) had obliterated a section of trail. Climbing the slope of mud and sand as it gave way under our feet robbed us of much of our remaining energy so lifting *Barney-the-Lead-Bottom* up to the remains of the trail did me in!

After a swim in the campground pool and/or a good long clean-up shower, we settled in around our last campfire.

Andrea Koteles instructed us on the fine art of making Smores over the campfire. A perfect ending to a great week!

I'd like to thank everyone who turned out and for those who didn't--too bad, you missed a great one!

