

## A Trip Around the US

In the summer of 1965, Joanne and I would be moving from Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana to New York City. We decided this would be a good time to take a big trip around the US. So we left all our belongings at her parents place in Illinois and departed for our first big adventure.

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in April of 1965, Joanne and I drove to Ely, Minnesota with our new canoe which we named “Water Ouzel”, a colorful name for the American Dipper, a small grey bird which inhabits swift mountain streams and swims under water. We were going to take a long trip in The Boundary Waters area. This area is a chain of lakes that starts in the US and goes into Canada. Between Lakes you portage your canoe on your shoulders to the next lake. In this way you’re able to go from any miles without seeing civilization.

So, we put the Water Ouzel in to the wfirst lake and began our journey into the Boundary Waters area. When we got to the end of the first lake, I lifted the canoe onto my shoulders and portaged to the next one. We had provisions for several weeks of travel, but we were expecting to catch fish to add to our diet. When we crossed over into Canada, a customs officer assessed a fee for carrying a fishing pole into Canada. We thought this was rather odd, but we paid.

Each night we would sleep in our tent and sleeping bags. We tried to pick spots where bears were not a threat, but we could hear them from time to time in the distance. Each night we took all our food and edibles and tied them to a rope and suspended them from the branch of a treeHigh enough so a bear would not be able to reach them.

On the second day we began to encounter incessant rain and that made camping rather difficult. Starting a fire was a real challenge, and we used all of the techniques we knew to do this. We did have a few matches, but we needed to find dry material for kindling and this was not easy. One technique we used was to strip bark from a birch tree, break it into small strips, place a match underneath and then fan the flames gently until you had a fire going.

I began fishing for lake trout. The technique is to use a sinker to let the line go down as far as possible and then hold the rod between your knees and paddle the canoe around until you feel a resistance on the rod. Then you reel it up slowly and from down in the depths you see a fish coming up on your line. Lake Trout are a beautiful fish. The flesh is almost the color of salmon. I caught several most mornings, brought them back and then Joanne would cook them over an open fire.

With the incessant rain, I caught a cold and ended up actually losing my voice. I was unable to speak and had to just whisper. This was really an added difficulty to the already trying circumstances of sleeping out, encountering bears, cooking your own food and portaging your canoe. Fortunately, we lucked out when we met a Canadian couple who were manning an observation tower used to detect forest fires. They



invited us to come up for dinner, and we accepted. It was so nice to meet other people in the wilderness and have them serve us hot food.

After several days of canoeing and portaging, we retraced our steps and crossed from Canada back into the US, finally ending up at our car. We then put the canoe on top of the car and left for our next stop.

Since we had never seen the great Plains areas of the Dakotas, Montana and Wyoming, we decided to drive through those areas and look for bird species that we had never seen. On the advice of several local bird washers, we were able to find Sprague's Pipit and Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker. At 1 point, we met Stuart Keith who was one of the founders of the American Birding Association. We told him that we would be relocating to New York City, and he invited us to come see him in his office at the American Museum of Natural History.

We had made arrangements to meet our good friend Malcolm Jenkins, who years earlier, had introduced us to birding. What followed was one of the most incredible and perilous events of my life. Malcolm and I decided to put the beautiful canoe which I had only owned a few months into the Merced River. Joanne was to pick us up downstream. Fortunately, before getting into the canoe, we put on life jackets. We then launched the canoe into the river. I knew immediately this was a big mistake. The water was swift and deep and there were many big rocks with the water cascading over and around. After no longer than one minute, the canoe capsized and Malcolm and I were thrown into the churning water. I remember being downstream from the canoe and, as it came toward me, I feared being crushed against a rock by the water and the canoe. I ducked under the canoe so that I was on the pop right opposite side and began to fight for my life, trying to get to the shore. I couldn't see Malcolm anywhere, and I feared for him as well. Finally, I fought my way to the shore and dropped on the ground in exhaustion. Then, I saw Malcolm. We had made it without injury. I could have easily drowned if I had not had on my life jacket. Joanne came back in the car looking for us. We both got in, and drove downstream looking for the canoe. We saw two halves float by and when they encountered rocks, they were broken into pieces by the powerful water. I really didn't care about losing the canoe. I was just glad to be alive!

Next, we drove further into California where we parked the car, organized our backpacks and climbed up to the John Muir Trail which is located in the Sierra Nevada mountains and passes through Yosemite and several other national parks. We traveled a circular route and eventually ended back at the car. We then drove to the Pacific coast where we enjoyed seeing sea Otters floating on their back in the kelp.

Finally, we drove to the Rio Grande Valley of Texas and then up the Texas coast. We saw several interesting birds. We then returned to Illinois where we retrieved our possessions that we had left. Somewhat later, we left for New York City. That is the story of another memoir.

