

Chesapeake Paddler



Publication of the Chesapeake Paddlers Association, Inc., Volume 18, Issue 3

May 2008



The Loons of the Adirondacks Turn Five

by David T. Moore

The "Loonacy" began as a whim. For years Elizabeth and I spent two to four weeks on the shores of Blue Mountain Lake in upstate New York's Adirondack Park relaxing, playing music, hiking, and kayaking. I had mentioned the area to a number of fellow CPA members and several folks had traveled north to explore the region. In early July 2004, I decided to schedule a trip north and listed it on the CPA calendar. A little advertising on the list server, at Pier 7, and at Georgetown, and we had a crew for a week of paddling beginning Labor Day weekend.

I quickly discovered how much work organizing such a trip could be, especially with only four weeks of evenings to do it! There was housing to arrange, a chef to hire for our suppers (that part was easy as I already had a chef from the music week I organize), tee shirts to design, and a commemorative map book to create. Then there was the paddle planning. Twenty years of visiting the region paid off here, as I knew where much of the interesting water was and where I had "always wanted to explore."

The best part of early September is that there are few or no bugs. Everyone arrived on our first Saturday and we made a leisurely drive to Long Lake for dinner at the Long View Lodge (our meal plan began on Sunday evening). I learned an important lesson that evening: Groups larger than three do best with a fixed price menu.

Sunday finally dawned and we hit the water for a 16-mile paddle up the Bog River Flow to Lowe's Lake. The week expanded our horizons. We explored Sue Bauer's favorite, Indian Lake, surfing and playing tag with the wind among the eskers. A photograph of our foray to the falls at the south inlet of Raquette Lake made a national magazine. We capped off the first year with two paddles: one around Blue Mountain Lake ending on Castle Rock and a long haul down motor-less Little Tupper Lake and up the river to the Rock Pond that is one of its headwaters. Subsequent exploration of a feeder creek up to an impassible beaver dam ensured we were late for supper. Lesson two: Never plan supper for earlier than 7:30 PM if you want to be on time.

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Piracy Season Opens



Spring has sprung, pollen is in the air...and the Pirates are back on the water! Piracies are a little mini-vacation each week where you modern-day Huck Finn's sneak away from whitewashing fences and spend some quality time on the river of your choice. The following are reports from some of our best. Let's hear from the rest of you.

Pirates of the Potomac—Tired of paddling in the same waters, seeing the same boring buildings and coves? Join the Pirates of the Potomac on Wednesday evenings. Depending on the tides and the mood of the group, we can paddle north under the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, which is usually clogged with motorists, and go into Old Town Alexandria by the expensive waterfront condos, the city docks with the yachts, and the numerous parks on up to Reagan National Airport. Or we can go south, paddling through the ever-

Dick Rock, Len Thunberg and Brad Roberts,
Pirates of the Potomac

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We agreed that while we might not be included on the newsletter masthead, we'd be a CPA paddling group – *an annual one*. However, we had a problem. Piracies simply did not make sense in the Adirondacks despite the histories of the many robber barons who had (and whose great grandchildren still have) places in the park. We agreed that perhaps we should be a “loonacy” after the many loons we saw during the week. The name also resonated with the character of the first trip. A CPA paddling group was born.

The next three years saw us explore in more detail the park and its waters. We paddled the historic Raquette Lake-to-Blue Mountain Lake route (three times), carrying our boats over William West Durant's *other* railroad to the steamboat docks on Lake Utowana. We explored Indian Lake, Lake Abenakee, and Forked Lake – where we saw more loons in a couple of hours than we have seen everywhere else over the past four seasons. Big

Moose Lake, scene of the Chester Gillette–Grace Brown tragedy captured by Theodore Dreiser in *An American Tragedy* (and Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift in “A Place in the Sun”), and the first five Fulton Lakes soon lay behind us. Always there were favorites that we visited over and over, as well as other lakes tantalizingly close that remained unexplored. The [photo albums on the web](#) grew in number, each photo different and significant to those of us who were there and familiar to those who were not:

Mountains or hills, autumn foliage, and paddlers on dark water; some were sunny, some cloudy. Another lesson we learned was that this was a great place for people to try out their trip leadership skills. The growth in returning paddlers was noticeable and noteworthy.

Mary Jo's cooking became something we looked forward to each year. We expanded from the Blue Mountain Lake Inn and Curry's Cottages to the cabins at Prospect Point. Some of us tried camping. We had music in the evenings and scotch by the fire near the lake. Full moon paddles and northern lights graced our nights. We paddled in sun and rain, day and night. We paddled long and short distances. And *always* we paddled to eat!



We PADDLE to EAT photo by David Moore

We always had someone watching the end of the “90 Miler” paddling race from Old Forge to Blue Mountain Lake. Last year (2007) we discovered what a really windy day is like and how much surf these lakes could produce when the water is moved around by 25 mile-per-hour winds. We learned to use the lees of points and promontories to ease our paddling and how to really surf the waves. We also mourned the death of one of our own, sunk by cancer the previous autumn. Each year, new paddlers joined the Loons, swelling our numbers to over twenty in 2007.

We return again this year for our fifth season. Again we will be at Curry's Cottages and the Blue Mountain Lake Inn. Some paddlers have arrangements for the cabins at Prospect Point. Mary Jo will again cook for us. As always, this is a week long trip for paddlers of all skill levels. We can find water to suit almost anyone. While some of us like the longer “go and see things” paddles, there are other opportunities for shorter adventures. There is also hiking and birding as well as museums; and as our credit card companies can attest, great shopping.



Landing at Curry's photo by Yvonne Thayer
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Indian Lake and the High Peaks photo by David Moore

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- Eugene Buchanan, Editor-in-Chief, *Paddling Life*
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Adirondack Loonacy (Continued from page 4)



Lake Abenakee, 2007 photo by David Moore

The dates this year are 30 August to 6 September, 2008, with an option to stay an extra night. There is a great craft's fair the day we traditionally leave. How does one sign up? Simple: You email me, David Moore, dtmoore@mac.com. We do a pre-trip interview (CPA rules for trips apply here). The available number of beds (everybody gets one of their own!) and the number of leadership qualified people who sign up are what determines the maximum size of the group. Costs are based on how densely we occupy Curry's Cottages and the Inn. This depends on the group's makeup. We do get a price break, as it is the end of the season.

It is a great week and those of us who are returning again this year hope you can join us. By the way, photos of past years forays are to be found at: <http://homepage.mac.com/dtmoore/index.html> (season 1, 2004) and http://web.mac.com/dtmoore/My_Site/Welcome.html (seasons 2 through 4, 2005-2007). See you in Blue (Mountain Lake) at the end of August!