

# **BWCA/Quetico Trip 2003**

**Wednesday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003 - Thursday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

## **The Drive up**

Normally, my trips start on Thursday, usually around noon. We drive all day, and all night, arriving at the outfitter around 7:00am. We usually stop at the Gunflint Lodge for licenses, and then start our trip. This usually leads to a really tough first day with limited fishing.

This year, we decided to tackle the problem a little differently. Instead of leaving Thursday, we decided to leave Wednesday night, around 8:00pm. It really only requires an additional ½ day of vacation, which is not too bad.

This year, the trip consisted of all “veteran” trippers, with over 30 years of experience in the BWCA combined. GadgetMan and Flukemeister would partner together, and Bellman and I would partner together. I have been on trips with GadgetMan and Flukemeister, but had not ever been on a trip with Bellman...but we had fished and camped together many, many times.

For the first time in a long time, we managed to leave my house on time. We chose to drive through Chicago, which is always a crapshoot, but this time, it worked out to our advantage, and at least one hour of less driving. The drive seemed to pass much quicker this way. We stopped in Duluth for breakfast at Perkins, and even had time to hit Gander Mountain, which we did.

Once we made it to Grand Marais, it was time to eat again...we decided to hit the Gunflint Tavern. What a GREAT choice. We messed around in Grand Marais a little, and then hit the Gunflint Trail, headed to our outfitter, Superior North.

We made it to Superior North by about 3:00pm. We had decided earlier to stay in the bunkhouse. Earl's bunkhouses are not the best, but the price was right, and the screens kept the bugs out. Since we were not allowed to cook in the bunkhouse, we decided to have dinner at the Trail Center. Dinner at the Trail Center was GREAT. It was very good food, at a, very good price. I even purchased some souvenirs before the trip started.

This was DEFINITELY the start of a GREAT trip.

**Day 1:      Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

## **Cache Bay and Slate Lake**

We had planned a very different trip this year. It would include some old water, some new water, and some unknown water. We had decided to play it by ear, follow the fish, and see what would happen.

We were up bright and early Friday Morning, had breakfast at Superior North, and headed out. We were the first tow of the morning, so that made wait in line at the Cache Bay ranger station a little more tolerable.

Jason was on duty when we hit the ranger station. He asked us where we were headed, and gave us some pointers. We managed to get out of the ranger station in record time. I think we were in, processed and out in about 30 minutes.

After checking in at the ranger station, we told Jason that we were going to review the pictographs, and do some fishing. Instead of viewing the pictographs, the group decided to fish some of the coves on Cache Bay. GadgetMan and I had fished most of these coves in the past, so we knew what to expect. Fishing some of the coves on Cache Bay proved to be a good idea. We were able to target some smallies, and some northerns. In fact, the largest northern of the trip was caught in a cove on Cache Bay.

After fishing for about 2 hours, we decided to start heading for Silver Falls, and the 130 rod portage into Saganagons. Before reaching the portage, the group decided that that we should cache the food supplies needed for the last couple days. After all, we had planned on being back on Cache Bay with 1 or 2 days to spare. We knew we didn't want to carry 8 MRE's all over the park, so we decided to find a good tree and hang them in a drybag. I'm not sure this is legal, but it worked out ok.

After hanging the food, we decided it would be a good idea to GPS the point.....just in case.

The Silver Falls portage is really more like a highway. There are some tricky areas, but generally, the portage is pretty good. On the Saganagons side of the portage, we decided to have some lunch. Both canoes headed into the lake, and out there, we dug into our pre-packaged lunches.

I think I need to explain the lunches we used on this trip. For this trip, we decided to take "lunch packs". Bell had used these "lunch packs" in the past and talked our group into trying them this year. Basically, the lunch packs are a gallon Ziploc bag. In this bag, you put all the snacks and food for lunch for 1 person per day. So, 8 Days, by 4 Guys means 32 lunch bags. These bags had the following items: 1 slim jim. 1 candy bar, usually a payday, 1 package of crackers, 1 package of cookies, 1 pudding cup, 1 fruit cup, and finally, 1 small package of gummy fruit. These lunch packs worked out GREAT, but the lunches ended up weighing 3x all the other food items combined. I like the idea, but I think it can be a little lighter. Maybe next year, we will address this issue. The good thing about the lunch pack though. It really does eliminate the need to carry additional snacks. Basically, any snack you would need for the day was included in your lunch pack.

Anyways, after lunch we decided to fish around Silver Falls, and the portage from Saganagons to Slate. We were beginning to see a pattern. It was looking like a prespawn pattern. This was good. We wanted to catch the smallmouth coming up. It is always a crapshoot this time of year. Sometimes you're too early, sometimes, your late...other times, you hit them just perfectly. I have only personally hit them perfectly a couple times.

Once we felt we had thoroughly fished the areas around the Slate portage, we headed into Slate Lake. A couple quick walleye were taken. Walleye would be eaten for dinner. What a GREAT way to start a trip.

Bell cleaned the fish, while GadgetMan, Flukemeister, and I setup camp. We chose the island campsite on Slate. This was not a great site, but it served the purpose. From here, we could reach some of the better fishing spots in this area within a couple hours. This area was also familiar territory, so finding a fishing pattern should not be too problematic.

Everyone was pretty tired, so we ate an early dinner, and headed off to bed.

**Day 2: Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

## **Moose Bay on Saganagons**

Everyone woke up pretty early. We had initially planned on fishing Slate Lake today, but change plans, based on the previous night's fishing. Now, we were headed to some magical coves on Saganagons, and if possible, Moose Bay. The paddle from Slate to the magic coves on Saganagons is about 2 solid hours. We did this without fishing, which is amazing for this group.

We fished the first magic cove for about 1 hour, landing a few decent smallmouth bass, but not really hitting the really HUGE females. We decided the fish were in a prespawn stage in this part of the lake. Some were coming up, but not the big females that we were expecting. When the fish are prespawn, there are a couple things you can do. You can wait them out, and hope the bigger fish come in later, as the water warms up, you can fish deeper, or you can look elsewhere. We usually look elsewhere. Sometimes you can find warmer water, and those fish tend to be further along.

The second magic cove was similar to the first magic cove, but we did manage to catch some better fish. Still, the fish here were also prespawn. In a couple days, the huge females would be moving up, but waiting is always a crapshoot. We decided to continue moving down the lake, looking for warmer, and warmer water. Eventually, we ended up in Moose Bay

Moose Bay was our planned final destination for this particular daytrip. The water was really down, so we had to portage into the lake off of Moose Bay. In the past, we would always scope out the lake from a distance, trying to find the areas that look like they should hold fish. On this particular body of water, there were about 10-12 places that proved to be PERFECT for smallmouth bass. We also found quite a few places to catch some walleyes. Northerns can basically be caught anywhere there is water, and we generally like catching them, but hardly ever target them specifically. One point of interest on this lake is near the very end. A small stream of water coming into the lake held more than its fair share of 4lb smallmouth bass. We fished Moose Bay, and this little lake for about 5 hours, managing to catch numerous smallmouth bass, and few keeper walleye.

We were at least 3 hours from camp, so instead of dragging 4 decent walleyes 3 hours, we opted to clean them in Moose Bay. Since the water was still really cool, we simply changed the water every ½ hour or so, until we reached our camp. At camp, we had fried fish, and some Jambalaya. Talk about good food.

We talked about our plans for tomorrow. Initially, we had planned on heading to the top of the lake, but instead, we chose to visit another decent body of water, that we had tripped to in the past. Blackstone Lake.

**Day 3: Sunday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

## **Back to Blackstone**

I had been to Blackstone Lake a couple years ago. I had lobbied for a return trip for a couple reasons. First and foremost, we had caught TONS of smallies there in the past. Second, Blackstone Lake offered a chance at a HUGE northern, and maybe even a laker. It was decided that our trip to Blackstone would be a single overnight affair. With that in mind, we decided to take enough provisions for 1 day only. The rest of the food and other gear was left at Slate Lake. Here is another place where I'm not too sure we were legal, but I'm not sure. We left most of our

gear under a tarp on a campsite on Slate. If we would have just simply cached the gear, we probably would have been legal, but since we left it on a campsite, I'm pretty sure we were breaking some sort of rule. Looking back, we probably should have taken all of our gear. What if we would have lost some of it, or it was stolen or even worse, ransacked by a bear. Who knows, but it would have definitely ruined the rest of the trip.

We woke up pretty early, around 4:00am. Had a quick breakfast of oatmeal and shelf stable bacon. Once we were finished with breakfast, we broke down the tents, and sleeping equipment, stashed the vittles vault, and secured the tarp.

There are 3 ways into Blackstone. The first way into Blackstone is a 298 rod "hell" portage from Bell. This portage is up, down, and all around. Just when you think you're done with the portage, it heads uphill again. The second way into Blackstone is a series of 3 unmarked portages from Slate Lake, into a couple unnamed lakes, and then finally into Blackstone Lake. These portages are all pretty flat. In really wet years, the portages can get pretty sloppy. The first portage is around 80 rods. The second is 160 rods, and pretty marshy. Finally the third portage is around 60-70 rods. The final way into Blackstone is the "Blackstone River." This is basically a meandering creek that leaves Blackstone Lake, and dumps into Saganagons. We have taken this route out of Blackstone in the past. We decided to take the 3 unmarked portages from Slate Lake. This has been the best way in the past.

The portages into Blackstone were pretty uneventful. They were a little marshy, but other than that, they were not too bad. We made Blackstone in about 3-4 hours. A good little daytrip, but I'm glad we decided to take some gear, and planned on camping.

There is a 5 star campsite on Blackstone. We managed to miss this campsite the last time. This trip, we camped there. What a GREAT site. We had planned on spending 1 full day on Blackstone. This would not be the case.

Since we arrived at Blackstone before noon, we decided to fish the upper part of the lake first. Bell and I managed to catch some pretty decent smallmouth, but no significant numbers. I think we ended up catching around 70 smallies, and didn't break the 4lb mark once. This was not normal. No one in our group had caught a 4lb smallmouth on this trip yet. Normally, at least 1 4lb smallmouth or greater is caught by someone everyday on our trips. The fishing so far on this trip had been great, but we still were not catching the size we had expected. Since MRE's were planned for dinner, Bell and I stayed on the water well past dark.

Back at camp, we met up with Flukemeister and Gadgetman. They were also in agreement. The fishing here on Blackstone was not as productive as had been expected. We had managed to catch good numbers of smallmouth and northern, but none generated excitement with regards to fish size. It was decided that the group would break camp after the morning bite, and head to the Boundary Point area of Saganagons. Since it was getting a little late, we decided to fish around the campsite, instead of traveling to the back of Blackstone.

**Day 4: Monday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

## **Boundary Point and Beyond**

Bell and I woke up really, really early, had a couple breakfast bars, and headed out. We were up and on the water by 6:00am. The morning bite on Blackstone proved to be MUCH better than the evening bite the prior night. Bell and I managed to catch numerous 3lb smallies. I think we ended up catching nearly 100 smallmouth over the 24 hours we had spent on Blackstone. Both groups decided to meet back at camp at 10:00am. Since it was beginning to rain, Bell and I headed back a little early. At camp, we quickly gathered our gear, packed up our tent, checked around camp for anything left, and headed out. I could quickly tell that a cold front was pushing

in. The wind was out of the Northeast, and the rain was pretty cool. On the way out of Blackstone Lake, I managed to get a GREAT picture of an eagle leaving the perch. What a cool picture. I only wish my camera had a better optical zoom. Oh well. We managed to make it back to Slate by around Noon. The rain had slowed down, so we took off our rain gear. It looked like the rain was done. At our Slate campsite, there was another group of canoes checking out the site. Evidently they were looking around for our group, wanting to see when we were leaving. We told them we were breaking camp, and that they could start setting up their camp. It was beginning to rain once again, and I didn't feel the need to make them wait, and setup in the rain.

The paddle to Boundary Point ended up being pretty uneventful. I could tell the rain coming in was part of a cold front pushing into the area. Bell and I had opted not to put our raingear back on when we left Slate Lake. Now, the rain was coming down pretty good, and it was COLD. The long paddle to Boundary Point seemed to make the rain warmer, but this was a dangerous situation, and I really didn't understand how dangerous until we stopped to make camp.

After about 3-4 hours of paddling, we made the Boundary Point area. We chose the campsite directly south from Boundary Point. This campsite is on a cluster of islands. After landing at the camp, and getting out of the canoe, I started shivering. It was not an uncontrollable shiver, but I was definitely cold. The rain had stopped, but the wind was blowing from the north at about 20 mph. This wind, along with about a 30 degree drop in temperature put the wind chill at about 30-40 degrees. I was pretty cold, and started to worry about hypothermia. Were talking about probably 1 minute or less for me to understand the situation, and realize that things could get out of had pretty quickly. I headed for the fire ring.

I have always heard of people leaving a fire ready to be lit.....You know, everything in place in the fire ring, with paperbark covering the whole thing. Well, this particular fire ring had JUST that. Someone had taken the time to gather pine cones, pine needle twigs, and some other really quick fuel, and had arranged it into a teepee in the fire ring. Covering the entire thing was paperbark. Even through the driving rain that we had experienced a couple hours earlier, everything seemed to be dry. I pulled out my lighter, placed it under some of the paperbark, and presto..immediate warmth. Whoever had build this "prefire" definitely knew what they were doing. My crew and I are forever grateful. I'm pretty sure I could have gotten a fire started, but this definitely helped.

After warming up, we decided to try our luck at fishing. By now, it was getting pretty late in the day, and we had only fished for 1 or 2 hours. Lots of traveling, and not much fishing. Flukemeister and I opted to stay in camp, while Bell and GadgetMan tried their around the islands near Boundary Point. After a couple hours, they came back with a couple fish to eat for dinner.

Dinner plans called for fish, mashed potatoes, and stove top stuffing. I also decided to make one of the 3 desserts we brought on this trip.

The dessert would be a Jiffy No-Bake cherry cheesecake. These are really pretty easy to make, and they setup GREAT in the BWCA. We had 2 frypans along for the trip, so we use one for making the 9" piecrust. Basically, you premix dried milk and the cheesecake mix prior to your trip. Add the correct amount of water, whip it into shape, and pour into the piecrust. Put all this in a double ziplock bag, and either chill in the water, or on the waters edge. Either way, it will setup in about 1 hour.

Just after dinner, it started raining again. We all were pretty beat, so we decided to go to bed. Tomorrow, we would tackle the top of Saganagons Lake, and maybe Rat Bay.

**Day 5: Tuesday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

## **Eastern Saganagons and Rat Bay**

Day 5 would bring blue skies, wonderful weather and GREAT fishing. We had planned on fishing the easternmost part of Saganagons today. Since this would be about a 2 hour paddle, we opted to get up really, really early. A quick breakfast of Oatmeal, coffee, and stable bacon, and Tang would start the morning right. We were able to do breakfast and hit the water in record time. I think we managed to hit the water by 6:00am, which is pretty good.

Saganagons is a HUGE lake, and there are TONS of areas where you can catch fish. We only managed to hit maybe 10% of the total lake, fishing spots that looked likely to hold the type of fish we were targeting. Sometimes we would find fish, other times we would not. Today would be one of those magical, fish finding days.

GadgetMan and Flukemeister opted to fish the islands, using jerkbaits. Bell and I decided to try something different. We had both used jigs in the past, and had actually managed to put decent numbers, and size in the canoe, using jigs. We both had confidence using a particular jig called a Bitzie-Bug. These jigs are just about perfect for fishing smallmouth bass. I was prepared, bringing about 30 of these jigs in a rainbow of colors. Since the other guys were fishing the islands, we decided to fish the long, steep slopes on the northern side of the lake. This proved to be a GREAT plan.

Bell and I managed to catch nearly 100 fish on that Tuesday. These fish were HUGE, nothing over the 4lb mark, but we managed to catch over 30 3lb smallies, and nearly 50 over 2lbs. This was by far one of the best number and size days I have ever had in the BWCA. It rivals the day GadgetMan and I had on the X-Spot a couple years ago. The fish were coming up, and they were aggressive. They were busting the jig. Funny thing though.....that was the only bait that they would take. They would not take a spinner, they would not take a spinner bait, No rapalas, no jerkbaits. They were only interested in the jig. I think it matches the crawdad perfectly, and these fish were feeding up. Years of fishing has taught me that a crawfish is just about the BEST bait for spawning fish. Here's my thoughts on the matter. First, if the fish are actually on the nest, they KILL the crawfish. This is survival instinct. Second, if the fish are simply feeding up, they love crayfish because they are easy to catch, and they pack a ton on nutrients and protein. The trade off of eating crayfish over shad, or baitfish is simply too great. The energy expended chasing a baitfish outweighs the energy gained. At least, this is what I've been told. I don't know if it is true or not.....but I do know those smallies slammed the jig on this particular day.

GadgetMan and Flukemeister had a similar day using jerkbaits. They targeted every island where the humps were coming out of the water. These spots have traditionally proven good on other lakes. There was no reason that particular pattern would not hold true on this lake.

Around lunchtime, Bell and I spotted GadgetMan and Flukemeister. We paddled over to their canoe to discuss the fishing. They were in fact, having a very similar day. While in this area, we discovered some very interesting artifacts.

After discussing the days progress, Bell and I decided to fish for smallies for a little longer, and then try for some lakers, and maybe actually target some walleye. Either Saganagons does not have any lakers, or we SUCK at catching them. Bell and I tried for nearly 3 hours to catch lakers. We bottom bounced, trolled, etc, and were not able to catch any. We did manage to troll up a HUGE northern, but nothing else. After trolling for 3 hours, we decided to target some areas around the Moose Bay for walleye. Using twister tail jigs, we managed to catch 4 really decent keeper sized walleye. These were once again, headed for the frying pan. Nothing like fish for dinner again. Normally we don't eat fish this much, but when you catch a walleye, and we don't

catch too many of them, we usually take it back for dinner. After all, walleye is the BEST eating fish on this planet.

After dinner, we start making plans for the rest of the trip. The fishing was GREAT today, but we still wanted to find somewhere where the fish are simply on fire. Normally, our group would not leave a spot where the fishing is as good as it was today. After much discussion, we all decided to break camp early in the morning, and head to McEwen, and Glacier.

## **Day 6: Wednesday, June 11th, 2003:**

### **Falls Chain and McEwen Lake**

For the past 4 years, I've tried to convince other members of our group to try some of the Falls Chain lakes. Well, I finally got my wish. Based on the previous few days of fishing, our group decided to search out new territory. We headed to McEwen and Glacier Lakes. This would be the furthest that anyone in my group had been before. Actually, I think Flukemeister, BassMan, and Flukemeister's son went deeper last year, but this would DEFINITELY be the furthest into the park that GadgetMan or I had been.

Since BassMan and I had packed much lighter than the other two, we decided to try to single portage all the Falls Chain portages. Most of these portages are not really too long, and were pretty easy to handle.

Also, since this was the first time into this part of the lake, we decided to fish a little on the way in. We figured it would take about 8 hours to make it to McEwen from Boundary Point. This estimate is based on fishing while we paddled to our destination lake. Qpassage had told us about a GREAT campsite on McEwen, and we were hoping to make it to that site.

We fished below and above most of the falls on the way to Wet Lake. One of the little lakes before you get to Wet Lake was loaded with largemouth bass. We caught a few of these, but they were mostly smaller fish. We also managed to catch some HUGE northerns. Since this was a travel day, we really did not fish Wet Lake too hard. At the portage into McEwen Lake from Wet Lake, we fished the small waterfall coming out of McEwen. Here, we managed to catch a couple decent smallmouth bass, but nothing to write home about.

Once in McEwen Lake, we started fishing for smallmouth pretty hard. The bay where Wet Lake portage comes into McEwen was loaded with small male bass. Impossible, was McEwen already spawned out. While on Wet Lake, someone had told us that the smallies were done on McEwen, but our group really didn't want to believe them.

It was around 3:00pm by now, and everyone was getting a little tired, ready to call it a day. On the way to the campsite, I decided to try for a laker. Since BassMan had caught them the year before, he was the designated expert. BassMan rigged up a 2 oz lead bucktail jig, and I rigged up a blue and gold Rapala Shad Rap. To get the Shad Rap down to the fish, I used a 1 oz mojo weight. This rig was setup like a lindy rig, where I put on the weight, then a barrel swivel, then 36" of leader, and then finally tied on the Shad Rap. After about 30 minutes of slow trolling, I hooked into a MONSTER. I fought this fish for about 20 minutes. It was HUGE, about 10 lbs. Once the fish was ready to give up, I reeled it in. To my surprise, it was a northern, and not a laker. DANG. I really wanted to catch a laker.

After releasing the northern, I dropped the rig down again. This time, I noticed that we were along a huge rock ledge, and I could tell from the terrain, that the water was DEEP. In no time, I had a hookup. This fish felt like nothing I had ever caught before. I was sure it was a laker.

Sure enough, after a couple minutes, I reeled in a 3 lb laker. I took a couple pictures of the laker, put it on the stringer, and continued fishing.

BassMan and I were nearing the campsite, when I noticed something in the water. This was about 100 yards east of us, near the middle of the lake. We both decided to investigate. After we closed to about 50 yards, we noticed that it was moving, and not only that, but there were 2 of them. We continued paddling, until we were within 20 yards. It was a mama moose, and a baby moose. I figured they had swam the entire lake. WOW. I figured the lake at this point was about ½ mile wide. Maybe even more. I convinced BassMan to get me even closer to get some pictures.

After checking out the moose and calf for about 10 minutes, we decided it was time to get serious about catching some lakers. Flukemeister, and GadgetMan had already made it to the island, and were picking out the BEST campsite for themselves. BassMan and I decided that we would take whatever was left, and figured a couple more lakers would be GREAT for dinner.

The wind was roaring pretty good right about now. BassMan and I figured we could use the wind to our advantage. We found a spot about ½ mile upwind from the campsite, and drifted back to the campsite, bouncing jigs and my crankbait along the bottom. We figured this was probably the best, and easiest pattern to use to catch the lakers. It didn't take long. After about 5 minutes of drifting, we found an underwater shelf that was holding lakers. First, I caught one on my crankbait. Within a minute BassMan had hooked up with another laker, but it got off at the boat. We both set our lines out again. BassMan hooked up again. While he was fighting the fish, I cranked in my line. While bringing in my crankbait, I hooked another laker. Way COOL.....we had a double. By this time the other guys were noticing our action and decided to join us. We told them not to keep any, because we already had four in the boat. I figured that was plenty for the four of us. We had caught 4 lakers in about 20 minutes. This was DEFINITELY a highlight of the trip.

BassMan and I headed back to camp. While I cleaned out the canoe, and setup our tent, BassMan cleaned the lakers. After getting the tent setup, I quickly gathered some wood and logs to build a fire. I knew it would take at least 1 hour to get a decent bed of coals for the baked lakers. After a couple of hours, Flukemeister and GadgetMan came back with another laker. GadgetMan caught it, and since it was his first laker, he wanted to keep it. No matter, a couple of the lakers we caught were small, so this would just add to the feast.

That night, we had baked lakers, smothered in lemon pepper, and olive oil margarine, StoveTop Stuffing, and mashed potatoes.

As I stated before, the McEwen campsite is a 5-star campsite. GREAT tent pads, an enormous gather area with sitting logs, contoured lazyboy seats, and a great firepit with a view. If you have never been there, you owe it to yourself to visit.

## **Day 7: Thursday, June 12th, 2003:**

### **Glacier Creek and Glacier Lake**

We woke up to a cold, wet miserable morning. The weather had shifted a little, and it was beginning to get noticeably colder. The wind was blowing out of the east, and it was bringing some really cold weather. It had basically rained all night. Fortunately for BassMan and I, we decided to take one of the camp pads that had not been cut out of the hillside. Once it started to rain, the water ran down the hill, and into GadgetMan's and Flukemeister's tent. They woke up to a wet mess.

I was dead dog tired, and really didn't want to do any paddling today. GadgetMan and Flukemeister had originally planned to fish around McEwen, but changed their plans, and decided to head for Glacier Lake. I knew that would be a TON of paddling, and quite frankly, I was not up for it. BassMan and I were both in agreement, and decided to stay around camp. I normally need to take at least 1 day off during these trips.....mostly for my own sanity, but this time, I really need it to recuperate. I was tired, and didn't want to put in back-to-back-to-back HARD paddle days. We were planning on leaving McEwen tomorrow, with a destination of First Bay. If I was going to make it tomorrow, I really needed to take today off.

Since we were taking it easy, we decided to gather firewood, and stoke up a huge "white man's fire". That is exactly what we did. We lounged around camp and the island all day. Around 4:00pm we decided it sure would be nice to have lakers again for dinner. With the idea of catching some more dinner, we loaded up the canoe, and headed out to our "sweet spot".

It didn't take long. Within 30-40 minutes, we had caught another decent stringer of lakers. We took the fish back to camp, cleaned them, and waited for the other guys to arrive. We waited for at least 2-3 hours. Around dark, we decided it was time to start dinner. We were both starving. Dinner tonight would consist of Red Beans and Rice and lakers. WOW, what a combination.

The Red Beans and Rice were nearing completion, when we finally saw what looked like a canoe coming from the Glacier Lake portage. When the other guys finally arrived at the campsite, they looked like death worn over. They explained how they had HAMMERED the smallmouth in Glacier. Not only decent numbers, but also pretty decent size. According to GadgetMan, Glacier was better than the X-Spot on Cache Bay. Flukemeister and GadgetMan caught nearly 140 smallmouth bass, with most being over 2lbs, and many being over 3lbs.

They were happy that we had started dinner. Not only did we gorge ourselves on lakers and Red Beans and Rice, but we also decided to make another dessert. For dessert, I made an Oreo Cheesecake. This is similar to regular cheesecake, but instead of using the pie shell mix that comes in a cheesecake packet, I replaced it with Oreo cookies. I also crushed up some Oreo cookies and added them to the batter. This was a GREAT addition.

Everyone was pretty tired, so we went to bed pretty early. Tomorrow would be another KILLER day of paddling and portaging.

## **Day 8: Friday, June 13th, 2003:**

### **Back to Saganaga**

We knew this day would be a HARD day of paddling and portaging. GadgetMan and Flukemeister, were both spent. The previous 2 days had taken their toll. BassMan and I felt pretty good, especially since we took the prior day off. We didn't do any major paddling, and only barely did any fishing. Heck, when the lakers are practically jumping in the boat, why work too hard to get them. They are actually, what I would consider, the best fish to eat while in the Boundary Waters. I know I have stated that walleye are the best, but I figure it this way. If you are going to fry or pan fry a fish, then by all means, walleye are the best. But, if you plan on baking the fish, the laker is the BEST...hands down.

BassMan and I had decided once again, to single portage. Our gear we really light now, especially since MOST of the food was gone. I was really glad that we decided to stash the last 2 nights of rations on Cache Bay. I also came to the conclusion that GadgetMan has some really cool gear, and all of it is top of the line, lightweight stuff, but he brings TOO much of it. When you have as much stuff hanging from the outside of the pack as what is inside.....well, you get the picture. I gave him grief about this all week.

By the time we made it to the food cache, we were too tired to even think about fishing. It was already 3:00pm, and we still had at least 1 more hour of paddling. Once we made it to First Bay, we took the first campsite available, which by the way is the one we ALWAYS take. It is a little point of land just as you enter First Bay. No one ever uses that site, but it actually is a pretty good little campsite. There are 3 pads, and a great put in and take out spot on either side of the site. BassMan and I decided that fishing for us was officially over, and we broke down our fishing gear, and prepared for dinner and bed. I'm not too sure, but I think GadgetMan and Flukemeister actually went out fishing, and brought back some smallies or walleye for dinner. At any rate, for BassMan and I, our trip was essentially over. What a GREAT trip it was.

## **Day 9: Saturday, June 14th, 2003:**

### **Headed Back Home**

Our pickup was not until Noon, so BassMan and I decided to sleep in for once. I'm sure we slept until 9:00am or so. Once we started getting around, we made some coffee, had some oatmeal, roused the other guys, and started breaking camp.

The paddle to American Point was pretty uneventful. We arrived just as the outfitter was arriving. Perfect timing. We quickly loaded our gear and the canoes on the towboat, and headed back to civilization. On the way in, I wondered what had happened over the past 10 days. What had transpired in the real world....was everyone back home ok. I always get a little anxious at the end of a trip.

At the outfitters, we took our showers, packed our gear, made our obligatory phone calls home, and then hit the road.

As always, on the trip back home, we started planning next years adventure.

I will say this.....This trip was by far, the BEST that I have EVER taken in the Boundary Waters. All of the guys in this group worked well together.