



We're now in the bunks at our outfitters. Katie and I have just watched the B.W.C.A. Video; I found it extremely informative. Our outfitters are very kind; they offered to bring a cooler of drinks to our cabin later tonight!

We actually gave them our leftover cookies (a good many of them) and they gave the container back saying they were the worlds best. Well, the cookies truly are fantastic; they're from my mom's secret recipe and they are rather fresh.

We've got about an hour to spare before we go to supper, so I'm just going to write.

What else is there to do, since we're not even at the site yet?

When I look from my middle bunk, I can see some of our packs, a gravel road, trees and the occasional car drive slowly by. The cabin has electricity, which will probably (hopefully) be the last light bulb I'll see for five whole days!

Dad, Katie, and I are all showered, and Dad and I have already dressed for camping. Right now, Dad is trying to figure out a way to keep his cooler from leaking, which it has already done. Whoops. Not much harm done, though; some of Dave and Katie's clothes got wet, but they'll dry eventually.

Going to eat now.

We ate at this fantastic little place called The Trail Center, and it was probably the best food I've ever had, or at least in a long time. We're all beginning to settle down now, and it's almost dark. Probably as soon as it's completely dark, we'll call it a day.

Our tow comes at around 8 a.m., I think, but we'll all be up probably at 6:30 in order to make a 7 a.m. breakfast. I've got no idea how anyone could be thinking of food, I'm sure we're all stuffed to the max. Haha.

I think I'll go ahead to bed; it's been a long day of travel and Katie and I both need more rest.

## *5 minutes later*

Yeah, the rest thing? Hasn't happened.

We've now dubbed Katie "Goose" and are waiting for things to call Chris, Dave, and Otha. I'll be forever MadNat, but that's just fine with me; I did come up with it myself.

Earlier tonight Chris threw his glasses case at Otha; Otha spent about ten minutes trying to get it back to Chris. I thought that was rather comical.

Everyone has now figured out how obnoxious I really am. Haha. This is going to be a very... eh... interesting week.

Now Dad is about to return from the restrooms and turn of the light, so I must close for the day.

## Day Two - Ester Lake

After over six hours of hard paddling and portaging, we're finally able to set up our tents and relax a bit. It is extremely quiet, compared to how loud it normally is. We're all beyond beat and getting ready to lie down for a nap. Katie is already half asleep; I don't think she even notices all the flies swarming around the camp.

We all got up out of bed around 6:30 a.m. and took our gear down to the dock. At 7, we sat down to a breakfast of pancakes, sausage, hot chocolate, coffee, orange juice, and eggs for Otha. After we finished eating, we waited until 8 a.m. for the tows we would be taking.

At around 9ish, we arrived on Sagonaga and began the "real" camping. We canoed for a few hours through Sagonaga into First Bay, into Second Bay, and searched for about an hour for the entrance to Third Bay because my dad (being the expert that he is) forgot where it was, and then we reached the Swamp Portage. After tackling (for want of a better word... or lack there of) that, we canoed for a bit through more of Third Bay and then reached Monument Portage.

Monument Portage is eighty rods with a few rocky patches and hills. We covered that easily enough and, after Kate and I were both in Canada and the U.S. at the same time, we paddled on Otter Track Lake. We soon stopped for a lunch of peanut butter and jelly bagels at what appeared to be an old campsite. It was there that I discovered I really like hot lemonade. Go figure.

And then we paddled literally right across the lake and met the dreaded Ester Portage. As it first starts, it's actually quite easy going; and then it goes uphill. I thought it would never end, but Dave, Katie, and Chris came back across and said, "Just a little bit further, and then it's all downhill."

Relieved, I started walking quicker up the rocky incline and soon saw that Dave, Katie, and Chris were trust-worthy people; it went downhill.

After resting for a bit (and downing the rest of my lemonade), I had to do it all over again, but twice. After that was finished, we all rested leisurely on the bank and then reentered the canoes. Thinking it'd be easy going, I paddled semi-weakly; there wasn't a point in going too fast, for we didn't really have any place specific to be. And then it started white capping. Boy, was that joyful (insert high sarcasm here).

Seriously though, it was pretty rough on us all (hence the impending need to nap) and it took us a great deal longer to get to the camp than we had initially anticipated. It was good when we did get to the large island we're now staying on; a group we know from home, Mark Arsenault's group, is staying on the same island as us. They pointed us in the general direction of our very cozy campsite.

For supper we ate steak, potatoes, and cooked onions. Along with water, as is to be expected; we ARE on a lake. Then we talked about some things and now we go to bed.

## Day Three - Ester Campsite

It's around 2 ish in the afternoon and we're getting ready to eat a lunch of B.W.C.A. Pizzas. So far today we had a breakfast of pancakes and pre-cooked bacon, along with hot chocolate. After we had finished and cleaned the dishes, we set out in our canoes to try our luck at fishing.

We were expecting a slowish day, for the skies are "blue-bird". After a while, though, Dad and I found a few coves with small-mouth nests and caught ten fish in all. Dad had five "dinks" and one at an estimated four pounds. I had one three pounder, two one pounders, and one "dink". In my books, I out fished dad.

Lunch is almost finished so I'll close for now.

Katie, Other, and Chris played cards for a few hours after lunch, mostly cribbage until I joined, then we played Speed and Pass the Pigs. Pass the Pigs is probably one of THE best games I've ever played and it is DEFINITELY a must-have.

After we'd finished goofing-off, we headed back out to Rabbit Lake for some Lake Trout fishing. It's amazing how boring something can get when it's not productive. Take trolling for lake trout; I caught absolutely nothing and was falling asleep in the canoe, practically, until I hooked something, that is. I hooked a Laker so large that I could not move it more than a foot from the bottom of the lake. When I handed my poll to Dad, it jerked off the hook.

Slightly later in the evening, I hooked another Laker that was probably about two or three pounds and lost it right at the top of the lake. Katie and Chris both caught one Laker each, which we towed back to camp, baked over the fire, and ate with red beans and rice with chicken (Katie had Ramen).

## Day Four - Ester Campsite

Our breakfast consisted of flavored oatmeal (pop tarts for Katie), hot chocolate, (hot cider for me) and, of course, water. Then we hopped into the canoes and paddled to Hansen to try and catch some fish.

After we had caught a whopping number of ZERO fish at all, we paddled to Link Portage and ate some lunch, consisting of peanut butter and jelly wraps (peanut butter wraps for Katie and sausage and cheese crackers for Otha). Once finished, Katie and I decided to walk the portage to Gift Lake. What we saw was... both amazing and terrifying at the same time. A good 50% of what we saw was burnt out trees and dirt. And then to think of how close that came to being Hansen or maybe Ester? It is very scary.

Once we had gawked at that for a bit, Chris and Otha decided to try their luck at Gift while Dave, Dad, Katie, and I went back to Hansen. It didn't take too long before us four were done trying and headed back to camp.

Once we arrived back at our Ester campsite, Katie and I decided that we were going to play cards, so Dad found Otha and Chris's deck for us, along with Pigs. After a while, Katie and I were completely lost in our games (consisting of War, Egyptian Rat Screw, Speed, and Pigs); I was even beginning to beat her at Speed. Soon, though, Otha and Chris returned as we were playing a game of ERS (or was it War???) and we had to stop so we could eat. Supper was chicken Fajitas (grilled cheese for Katie), which was so very

good! Our desert was Oreo cheesecake that looked like... well... let's just say it looked interesting. It didn't really set well so we ate a puddingish cheesy cake (or chudding... haha).

It was extremely rich and I could barely stomach the richness, but I ate it all the same. Once we'd finished, Katie and I finished whatever game we were playing (Katie won) and then all six of us played two games of Pigs (Otha won the first, which I didn't even have a point in and I won the second by a long shot.)

After that was finished, Dave and Dad went fishing (they caught twenty-one fish) while Chris, Katie, and I sat by the lake on a rock and talked for hours. While talking, Chris built a "sun" with small sticks, and when Katie asked what it was, he said a sunset; we kind of made fun of him for that one.

## Day Five - Third Bay Campsite

Our day started at around 6 a.m. C.S.T.; well, more like 'their' day. I didn't get up until around 6:15 or so; I had taken Benadryl rather late at night and I hadn't completely slept it off. Anyways, we got up and had a breakfast of pancakes (blueberry for Dad, Dave, and I) and hot chocolate (or water). Then we broke camp in about two and a half hours and pulled out into the canoe around 10:30ish.

We paddled directly across from our campsite to the Cliffs of Ester and began our climb. Through slight paths, this trek was not simple by far, but it was well worth it. When we got to the very top (at least 1000 feet from the ground), we not only saw Ester but also what we believed to be Rabbit Lake; and Otha managed to get on bar of service on his cell phone.

I guess you could say we called everyone important or close to it; I got to talk to my mom, and so did Dad. Katie called her mom and spent some time on the phone with her and I don't even know whom Otha called; he was on the phone for at least thirty minutes.

After we'd spent some time goofing on the phone and taking pictures, we started to climb back down. Going down was much more difficult than the opposite; I slid half the time (on my bum as Katie might say). All in all, we did get down without too much difficulty and made it back in our canoes safe and sound.

We then began our journey to where we are now paddling across Ester to get to the treacherous Ester Portage. Not much to report on that except that the mosquitoes there were probably the worst all week. Once we had conquered that, we hopped in the canoe and paddled to the Monument Portage where I took an uber amount of photographs. I even got a picture of Christ holding a snapping turtle that couldn't decide if it was Canadian or American, in the very accurate words of Otha.

Once we'd finished Monument, we entered the swampy Swamp Lake where we saw four Loons at once: two adults and two babies. I got a few uber good photos of them and Katie and I kept "awing" over the babies.

What was neat about our paddling today was that we had the wind to our backs and it REALLY helped us along. Dad and Dave agree that that rarely or never happens, but, because it did, we really cut our canoeing time probably in half. We got to the Swamp Portage and traveled that easily enough.

Dad saw a campsite directly across from the portage and that is where we set up camp. We really haven't done very many interesting things here, but a few things pop out in my

mind. Take the little toad Chris spotted and Katie caught; it was either suicidal or extremely daft. The toad kept jumping out of Katie's hands and onto the ground, where I would pick it up. It would then leap to freedom and end up on its back; then the process would repeat itself. We eventually let it free, though.

Some time after that, we were fishing from the bank and Katie caught a twenty inch-long Northern Pike. She wanted a picture, but absolutely refused to hold it, so my dad got stuck holding the pike in front of Katie while she touched it with one finger. It was rather funny, actually.

And then, just a few minutes ago, Chris caught another turtle, this time a red buck.

We've now figured out that the turtles are mysteriously popping up on our campsite in order to lay their eggs. We've seen four turtles around (and by around I mean REALLY close) our campsite while we were fishing and such. Speaking of fishing, we did some after we ate our small supper. Katie tied on hers and my hook and we both caught fish from the same bait. I got a small mouth bass (rather small; maybe five or six ounces) and Katie got a smallie as well (probably the same size as mine, or close to it) and also that Pike.

When we stopped catching fish where we were, we went over to where Dave was and started fishing; Kati and I caught nothing, but Dave, on the other hand, caught a small mouth bass with his leech and magical light-up bobber. The fish was oh... five... INCHES! He said it was pathetic; Katie and I called it a sardine. I made him pose for a picture with it; you can barely see the fish in it.

After we finished fishing, we went up to the fire and joined the others for a cup of hot cocoa. During this, we began to hear a thumping noise coming from the woods. It took a minute, but Dave diagnosed it as being a rough grouse beating its chest as it searches for a mate. Katie and I about wiggled out before going back to the bathroom; I went first and made it back. Katie, on the other hand, heard a garbling/gurgling sound and freaked slightly, practically running back to camp.

## Day Six - Third Bay Campsite

Right now it's pouring down rain and we're all in our respective tents. The breeze/wind that came with the rain feels extremely good in the stuffy tent. Katie and I have been playing cards for most of the time. Or, at least, when we weren't sleeping.

Today Dave and Dad got us up at around 6 a.m. to go fishing on Zepher. We had pop tarts for breakfast in the canoes shortly after we reached Zepher. The portage there was over flowing with water because a beaver dammed it up; it was treacherous. The fishing there was some of the best we'd had all week; I caught my largest fish ever. It was a 3-pound small mouth bass that took me forever to reel in; it was caught on a fluke at "Nelson Point".

The fluke truly was the magic bait for the first part of the day; three of four casts led to a bite; two of three bites led to a fish. They were all (for me, at least) small mouth bass. Dad caught some bass and northern pikes, but no walleye. He was pretty sure that one of the fish I barely missed was a nicely sized walleye; it got to the surface and then jerked off the hook.

After a spell, the fish stopped biting so we decided to head on back to camp. When we got there, Chris and Otha were out fishing away from our camp; shortly after this, the wind really picked up a lot. Dad and Dave knew it would start raining soon, so we pulled all of the non-water-proof materials into the tents.

I went to the latrine before it got too windy; just as I finished and was headed back, the rain came. I sped-walked up to camp as the rain began to pour and when I got there, I saw no one; they had all sheltered in the tents.

I went to Katie's and my tent and unzipped the rain fly; Katie was there and we unzipped the door about halfway before I bounded in. She practically had to pull me inside, but after some seconds, we were sheltered away with the rain fly and doors zipped tight; it wasn't long until we heard and felt and saw the rumbling thunder, pounding rain, and flashing lightning.

Katie and I took nice long naps to rejuvenate ourselves; when we awoke, we noticed the rain had stopped and Dave came to let us out. After we'd eaten something, Dad, Dave, Otha, and Chris told us they were going fishing; Katie and I opted out saying that we wanted to rest our arms for the long paddle tomorrow.

Dave and Dad, however, left our fishing poles, some grubs and jigs for us to use while they're gone; Dave lent us his multi-tool just incase. Katie knew how to take off a fish, but I wouldn't hold one and she didn't particularly like to either. So we went down to the lakeside and began to cast out, hoping we actually DIDN'T catch anything, so we wouldn't have to touch a fish and take it off.

After about thirty minutes of casting and not catching anything, it began to rain again. Katie and I hastily (yet carefully) put our fishing gear up; she took care of the bait while I went and zipped the rain flies on all the tents and grabbed a deck of cards. Once finished, we both headed to the tent and jumped in.

For a while we played Speed, ERS, and War, but then we got bored and tried to sleep. After we took some nice naps, Katie pulled out her iPod (barely charged, haha) and we listened to music. We discovered that we liked a lot of the same songs and sang along to most of them.

Eventually Dave, Dad, Otha, and Chris all came back and we had our supper and cleared up a few things, ready to depart the next day.

## Day Seven - At the Outfitters

We got up bright and early and prepared ourselves to pull out and catch our tow. We broke camp successfully and had some breakfast, loaded the canoes and paddled out towards American Point where we would catch our tow. There were no portages to be made today.

While we paddled, we actually attached Dad's and mine and Katie and Dave's canoes together and made it an easier paddling experience. We talked about possibly taking a trip next year while we paddled and laughed when we accidentally (on purpose) splashed each other.

We hit on American Point and unloaded everything from the canoes and waited for the tow to come along. We saw it and quickly loaded up and then we were off.

Dad, Katie, and I talked while we were towed back, looked at pictures, and laughed at the memories of the trip. It was probably one of the best experiences of my life.

Anyways we got back to the outfitters safe and sound and began to load the car; after taking nice, long, hot showers. After that was done, Katie and I called a few people on our cell phones and chatted to them for a while and then we ready to leave.

### *Some hotel in Wisconsin*

We just dropped Katie and Dave off at this one hotel. We said our goodbyes, gave a few hugs, and said we'd keep in touch. They've got to catch a plane back home tomorrow (more like later today because it's like... one in the morning now) so I suppose that they'll just go right to sleep.

Gosh, this trip was probably the best thing I've ever been a part of before in my life. I made a GREAT new friend with Katie, and was able to joke around with some people who I'd scarcely known before now. This is one thing that I'll never ever forget.