

Voyageurs National Park Trip Report

June 3 - 6, 2016

Written by Tom O'Neal

Our trip launched at Ash River Visitor Center, with the question 'Will we make it to Namakan Island before the rain starts?' The gods of Voyageurs were kind to us, as we not only made it, but managed to pitch tents, set a tarp over our dining area, and start dinner before the rain began in earnest. If you enjoy the sound of rain on your tent at night, you would have loved this trip.



Linda had mentioned a desire to take up fishing again after a multi-decade hiatus, and this apparently inspired the rest of the group (well, most of the group) to pull out dusty old gear, get licenses, and fantasize about fish dinner. Practicing our casts from shore resulted in multiple snags of lures in overhead branches or, if trees were averted, snagging of lures on rocks on lake bottom. Sam gallantly got into her kayak and attempted (mostly successful) to liberate snagged lures.



Finally, after we had figured out how our gear worked from dry land and confident that, absent further snagging on trees and lake bottom, we could at least reel our line in, our small fleet of 5 fishing craft ventured forth.



We then discovered that a 21" beam kayak does not provide the most stable platform for the multi-tasking of fishing rod, reel, paddle, and significant wind. The net result of our fishing efforts was one bite – good job, Connie! No fish. No dinner. Next time.

On Saturday, we paddled over to the restored remnants of Stevens Resort adjacent to Stevens Island, thrilled once again to return to camp and get dinner started before the rain.

Our hoped for excursion to Kettle Falls was set aside due to weather, but we took advantage of windows in the weather to fish.

We had rain, thunderstorms, wind....we had a wonderful time. Under a tarp we shared stories, tales, laughter...and learned more about each other. One late afternoon, after much thunder & lightning, a full rainbow appeared right in front of the campsite. Beautiful.



Our return on Monday was into seas that had been steadily building with gusts to 35 mph. Patience and solid paddling brought us home to Ash River. As we were crossing the mouth of the river, less than a mile from our destination, a Bald Eagle snagged a fish and brought it to shore to begin his meal. It was viewed by all of us and it was a very cool way to end the trip.