

Odds + Ends:

- Spencer stream
 - Moosehead Lake
 - Lower Moose River
 - New Hampshire: Androscoggin + Ammonoosuc
-

Day 40, July 22 -

16 miles, Stealth Camp on the Dead River

I got to Long Falls Dam just before midnight last night and slept in the car. Around 6:15 am the shuttle driver met me: a sweet and thought-full man named Andy who runs Cry of the Loon Outfitters in Jackman. It took over 2 hours for him to drive me about 19 river-miles north to Fish Pond on Spencer Lake... as they say in Maine, "You can't get the-ah from he-ah!" but Andy got me there anyway, via lots of ~~at~~ dirt logging roads. I launched in the cool air of a cloudy morning, mackerel skies filtering the direct sun I've gotten so used to.

This is another solo adventure for me,

although much shorter than the Allegh. ②
I'm doing an odd little section that I figured
it might be hard to convince others to
do with me: a small remote lake; nearly
8 miles on Little Spencer Stream and
Spencer Stream, and far most of that
you must walk your canoe because
it's too shallow to paddle; 6 miles of
up stream paddling on the Dead River;
and 9 miles on the ~~West~~^{East} end of Flagstaff
Lake. It is the section we were about
to paddle when the thru-paddle team
broke up, except I'm doing it in reverse.

Spencer Lake was rather gloriously
beautiful, with steep rocky hillsides right
at the edge of the shore. I found the
unmarked and seldom-used portage trail
easily enough... I imagine that only
thrupaddlers use it, since this would be an
odd section to pick for a shorter trip.
I paddled through the first deadwater, and

had to hop out of my canoe and ③
walk ~~to~~ it along in the shallow water.
The rocky stream-bottom is slippery
and treacherous, with rocks shifting
and tumbling underfoot as you try to
find a secure place to step. I banged
my ankles a fair bit at first, then
got a bit better at it over time. More
of the stream was navigable than
expected, and I was very happy I
decided to do this section going down-
stream. I startled a great blue heron
and a bull moose with funny asymmetrical
antlers still in velvet. After about 4 hours
I finally reached the Dead River — much
less time spent on the awkward wading than
I'd anticipated! I portaged around Grand
Falls, and managed to drop my green "daypack"
drybag in the water at the dock upstream
of the falls. I had to jump in and
swim after it! It's a rather cool day,

so being soaked thru made me a bit grumpy, but the 3/4-mile walk back to the canoe and 3/4-mile portage dried me out a bit. I found the first ripe bunch-berries of the season, and ate some for a snack! ④

The dead river is glassy and smooth above the falls, making it feel more like lake paddling than going upstream on a river! I intended to camp at Philbrook landing campsite, but it had a driveable road leading right to it, and I don't like to camp in road-access sites when I'm alone (a policy that served me well on the Appalachian Trail), so I kept going. Soon an inviting cedar tree beckoned to me, and I found a soft flat patch beneath it just big enough for my tent. I will leave no trace at all here, not cooking here or making a fire, and be out early in the morning. I hope the cedar will send me healing dreams to prepare me for tomorrow's visit to the campsite where we decided to end our threepaddle team.

Day 41, July 23

(5)

20 miles, Long Falls Boat Launch

Last night a beaver came and swam and gnawed and tail-slapped just below my tent! I have been wondering where all the beavers are - there were so many in Minnesota and I've seen so little sign of them in Marhe. I saw 3 more in the early morning as I paddled towards Long Falls Dam.

Above the dam was the nine-mile paddle to Hurricane Island, where it all fell apart (or at least, where we admitted it had fallen apart). The low gray skies and intermittent raindrops matched my mood. I pondered my resentments for a while, but then a headwind kicked up and made me work for it, and there was no energy for stewing.

The ~~to~~ water level on this lake has fallen at least a foot since I was last here, revealing a pleasant little ~~to~~ sandy beach at the landing spot. I tied up the canoe and walked up to the campsite. Someone had added a little patio table to the site, and there was a bit of trash in the fire pit. I had

no real plan, but I cast a circle, called the ⁽⁶⁾ four directions, and invoked the goddess who has been watching over my summer adventures. I lit a bundle of cleansing herbs, and walked around the fire circle as the healing smoke filled the air, releasing my feelings of bitterness and resentment as the herbs burned. I let the bundle burn down completely, until only the stalks were left, and spoke a gratitude over each of the stalks, naming each of the gifts that has come to me since our team dispersed - from the abundant support of friends to the apparent healing of my shoulder. I hadn't brought any tarot cards, but a playing card lay in the fire pit, so I picked it up and turned it over: the ace of diamonds, which corresponds to the Ace of Pentacles in the tarot. A card of beginnings, not of endings! I tucked it in my pocket, thanked my goddess and the directions, and released the circle. I felt lighter.

Time to paddle back. The sun has come out! I will stop at a little beach to swim, then head back to Unity ahead of schedule.

with time for a day of rest before I ⑦
tackle the Moosehead Lake crossing with
a friend on Thursday!

Day 42, July 25 - 18 mi, Rockwood Boat Launch

Moosehead Lake! I drove up here with a friend to do this lake crossing as a daytrip in Metamout, the red Kevlar canoe that served us so well in NY, VT, and Western Maine. It's been about a month since I've paddled this canoe, but I still love it, and this sort of wide-open lake is just what it excels at. The weather is excellent, blue skies and only mild breezes, with the sharp-sided faces of Mount Kineo and Eagle Mountain giving texture to the wide-open views. We put in at Northeast Carry and paddle south. My buddy is one of the few people I've paddled with this summer who is more experienced than I am, and we have fun exchanging form tips and teaching each other fancy strokes. Our laughs echo across the lake as we talk and joke. We pull up on a little gravel beach ~~some~~ for lunch, and marvel at the warmth of the water as we take a midday swim. As we paddle south again, he

starts to sing a song I learned with Zev and Ida, and I join in, grateful for how the sting has left these shared traditions after my ritual of release on Hurricane Island: (P)

Walk with me and we will see
the mystery revealed

When one day we wend our way
up to the farthest field...

The song opens us and aligns us, and soon he is sharing words of grief and praise with me and with the waters, tears running down his face. We put so much of ourselves at hazard when we let ourselves love deeply, but the immensity of the lake can hold all of it. It is an honor to witness.

At lunch we had discussed the difference between "going for a hike" and "going to visit a god" - which can look the same from the outside, but feel entirely different from within. As the sheer rock face of Mount Kineo rises from the lake ahead of us, I know without asking him that we both see the God within this massive stone face, and ponder it

in wonder as we get closer. Finally floating ⁽⁹⁾ directly under the hundreds of feet of sheer cliff, he speaks to the Mountain, apologizing that our people have forgotten the old ways of honoring it's spirit. I don't feel the need to apologize, and simply speak to it in the ways I knew how: howling like a grey wolf, slow and slightly mournful, and scattering herbs from my prayer-pouch across the water. We share a long lingering reverence, and finally paddle on. I wasn't expecting to have such a powerful encounter with the land today, but here we are. It feels sweet to share it with someone who understands.

As we paddle to the boat launch, he sings me bawdy Cornish folksongs, and then we reach the shore. I bid the lake good bye - far - now, but I will be back in just a few days... paddling the Moose River with other friends until we end up just in this spot... stitching Maine together, river by river and lake by lake.

Day 43, July 26

(10)

0 mi, Attean Landing

After shuttling one car to Rockwood, I arrived with two friends at Attean Landing after dark. The caretaker informed us that all the nearby campsites were already full, but graciously agreed to let us camp in the overflow parking meadow. It was the first time in a long while that I've had cozy company in my little tent! We fell asleep to the sound of beavers slapping on the Moose River and loons singing on Attean Pond.

Day 44, July 27

16 mi, Lower Narrows campsite on Long Pond

We woke up at 5am and were on the water before 6am to beat the crowds of Saturday boaters. We took the road less traveled by, paddling north past Jackman and down the lovely Moose River, cooking our breakfast on a gravel bar several miles down the river. I am delighted and amazed to have found friends who are quite happy to get up this early! This is my first voyage in the canoe I bought last week, a used Mad River explorer Royalex boat with three seats! I am excited to see how it performs on the rapids tomorrow.

One of these friends is a birder, and I am ⑪
very happy to have her enthusiasm and
knowledge on this part of the trip. We also
saw lots of beavers! The day grew hot, and
around midday we reached Long Pond, and I
switched out of the middle seat, where I had
been trolling for fish with one of the flies
that Warden Mark gifted me up in the Allagash
(and caught a shiner, but it was too small to
keep). We paddled down to a breezy point
with a shady maple tree and took a lunch
and siesta break. The perch were jumping
in the weeds and two bald eagles kept
diving for them but coming up with empty
claws. After a pleasant rest we paddled on
to our campsite. We flowed very easily into
evening chores: putting up the tent, gathering firewood,
and cooking a feast of wild rice, venison jerky,
atlantic wakame, and a farm-fresh eggplant
contributed by the farmer in this group! Yum.
We had a fascinating discussion about racism and
colonization - one of my companions is descended
from the indigenous people of Venezuela, and
prompted us all to ponder the delicate balance

⑫
between putting down roots in a community that loves you versus seeking your heritage among strangers. That is something I often think about as a European-American - how much should I look to the homeland and the traces of my people's old traditions, and how much do I embrace the deep feelings of the Northeast Woodlands being my home? Both feel essential.

Day 45, July 28

15 miles, Island Campsite on Brassna Lake

We were on the water by 6 am again, paddling through the quiet rosy waters of dawn. At the east end of Lang Pond we re-entered the Moose River, and were greeted by some fun little Class I-II rapids! The water was low, and the current wave through the rocks with lots of sharp twists and turns. I was very pleased with how this new canoe handled in these conditions, responding instantly to all my steering strokes from the stern and turning on a dime! We even negotiated a

90°-turn to steer precisely through a divot in a 2-foot ledge drop with complete success - my old canoe would have been swept sideways for sure! We had a lot of fun on the rapids, then pulled out before the falls for our 3.4-mile portage on logging roads and woodland trails. This spiffy river canoe is about 25 pounds heavier than the old Kevlar canoe, but my companions packed incredibly light (I was very impressed!) and enthusiastically took to the challenge of wheeling the canoe up the logging roads and carrying it overhead on the woodland trails. We were quite hot and sweaty by the time we reached the river, so we jumped in the water to cool off just as a little rainstorm began to pummel the surface with fat raindrops. We ~~we~~ laughed as the water danced and rippled all around us, and lingered in the river like freshwater mermaids. When the

rain passed we loaded up the canoe and paddled into Brassua Lake. More rain and wind soon blew up behind us, but all at our back, so we kept paddling despite the whitecaps. After the storm had begun to roll past us I saw a low lightning strike just beyond the misty ridge across the lake, and some lazy thunder came rolling past us, so we paddled to shore and took a late lunch break to wait it out. The electrical activity passed quickly, and we paddled across the lake to the island campsite. It took a while to find it, but when we did I was delighted to discover that it had a logbook with many notes from people who have camped here over the last ten years. We seem to be the first to stay here this year, which was confirmed by the thick layer of pine needles covering the fire pit. We cooked a

early dinner and then sat around talking about everything (relationships, spirituality, interesting movies) for hours. Our evenings are so spacious and relaxed, thanks to our early mornings! Finally, the sun went down and we fell asleep.

Day 46, July 29

8 miles, Rockwood Boat Launch
We attempted to sleep in until 6am, and then lay around discussing our dreams for a while. Once we got up, camp was still packed up lightning-fast - this crew just can't help being efficient, and I appreciate that so much! They tell me it's a by-product of working on small farms. Our member who is brand-new to canoeing practiced her steering strokes in the stern for the first few miles - she has picked up the skill very quickly. After a short portage around the Brassua dam I took the stern and steered us through some mild

whitewater (still loving how this canoe steers!) and then down the last miles of the Moose River and out onto Moosehead Lake, with Mount Kineo's majestic face before us. We landed our canoe at the Rockwood Boat Launch, and I said my farewells, first to the lake, then to my companions. This little crew has been so sweet, full of enthusiasm, gratitude, good listening, giggles, willingness, and appreciation. I have now completed the entire Maine NFCT (aside from a few miles around Mud Pond Carry that proved too remote and short to return for - although Jackie says she will return with me to paddle them next year!). Each leg of the journey has held a different piece of healing for my sadness over the break-up of the original thru-paddling team. The story has not been as neat and tidy as I might have liked, and involved far more friction and heartache than I had

expected, but the unflagging support of my beloved friends has carried me through. What a gift it has been to discover how much I am loved and to share this journey with more people than I ever expected to.

I thought my goal of building queer feminist community had failed the day Ida, Zev, and I parted ways, but instead it has expanded to include so many different people! What has risen from the ashes has the eerie beauty of a thing I never could have planned.

Now I head back to the coast for a community grief ritual, a final D+D game, and a celebration of Lughnasagh (the Celtic festival of First Harvest). Then I bid my Maine community farewell and head to New Hampshire to canoe the Androscoggin and Ammonoosuc rivers with my Vermont friends Andy and Ari (who were both a part of my Minnesota wild food adventures last fall).

Day 47, Aug 2

17 miles, camped near Pontook Dam
Got up early to drive to New Hampshire, met up with Ari and Andy, shuttled our cars, and put in just below the dam at the headwaters of the Androscoggin River. We started off with a rather dramatic class III rapid with big waves all across the river. We bounced along the river quite merrily, taking on a bit of water, but it was easy enough to bail out boat once we got through. We rotated ~~ed~~ positions in the canoe for the rest of the afternoon, letting everyone take a turn steering through the beautiful rapids that the Androscoggin has to offer. Spirits were high and the river carried us swiftly. We made camp among the fir trees, cooked a delicious meal of wild rice, venison, and ~~beets~~ + onions that Ari brought. As the light faded we all crawled into my tent and had sleepy discussions ~~about~~ about the beauty of Tolkien's

sentence structure. Wonderful day.

Day 48, Aug 3

17mi, Frizzell Campsite

We rose early and were greeted by a thick mist on the water. We portaged around the Pontook Dam and ate our breakfast rice, and ran the last rapids on this river as the mist lifted. Beautiful!

We pulled out and packed up for the steep 3.8-mile portage. Thank goodness for those portage wheels! We were continually passed by noisy 4-seater ATVs driving on the road - there were dozens of them! Very unappealing. Yet it is still a joy to be on a trip with two buddies who are completely thrilled to tackle a long portage with me. We put in on the tiny Ammanusuc and headed downstream. It is a windy, shady little river with many silver maples arching over the water and pleasant sandbars to take breaks on. We wound our way

through the oxbows, then had to get out and walk the canoe for a few miles when the "rapids" proved too shallow to navigate. This tired us out, and ~~the~~ our arrival at the campsite was very welcome. Yesterday we covered 17 miles in 5 hours, and today we covered the same distance in nearly 11 hours. Whew!

Day 49, Aug 4

8 miles, Normandean Campside
 We got on the river by 7am and enjoyed the smooth curves of the river's deeper sections. We saw a great blue heron, ospreys, two green herons, and several white-belted cows who trotted down the riverbank in alarm when we approached, then looked down on us in grave bovine concern ~~and~~ after they regained the safety of the bank. We had a breakfast of left over rice

curry by the side of the river, then were able to line the canoe through the breached dam that stretched across the river. The waterway took us into gravelton, where we portaged around two more dams, then took out at the Normandeau campsite. We'd caused virtually all of the New Hampshire NFCT! What a lovely weekend of stray paddling, cheerful portaging, bad puns, nerdy conversations, and good-natured reminiscing over the joys and absurdities of the wild food adventure in Minnesota last fall! Now I return home, mostly to begin teaching my fall programs, but also to seek paddling partners for the last three sections of the trail that remain - all in Vermont and Quebec. The journey isn't over yet.