

The Little Bonnechere

The *Little Bonnechere*, as this section is traditionally called, is one of eastern Ontario's best canoeing rivers, with a fine combination of natural beauty, moving water, small lakes and human history. We hope you enjoy your stay here, learn a little of the wonders of this special place, and return again soon.

Natural History

The river, nestled between the higher elevation *Petawawa* and *Madawaska* watersheds, is the smallest of five major rivers

the sounds of *Tennessee*, *Nashville*, *Magnolia*, *Black-Throated Green*, *Yellow Warblers*, as well as Sparrows, Blackbirds, Thrushes, and other birds of the forests and fields.

There are also many *water birds* including Common Loon, Great Blue Heron, Mallard Duck, American Black Duck, and several Mergansers (Common, Hooded and Red-Breasted). *Carnivorous birds* include Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Northern Goshawk, Sharp-Shinned Hawk, Merlin, American Kestrel. At night you may hear any of a variety of owls including Great Horned, Barred Owl, Eastern Screech and Northern Saw-Whet. A *Checklist of the Birds of Renfrew County* is available.

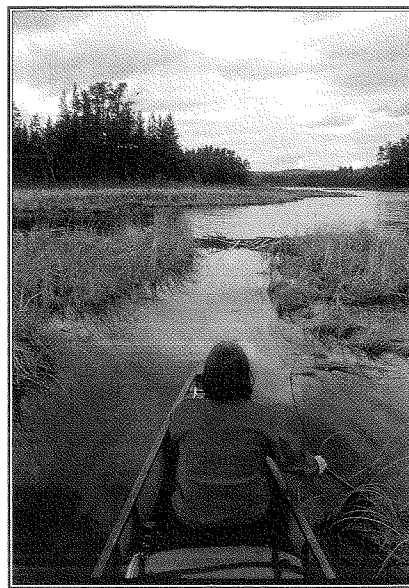
Fish and Fishing

Warm water species like *Smallmouth Bass*, *Northern Pike*, and *Walleye* dominate local waters, with *Brook Trout* in sections. Round Lake is particularly deep and cold, an ideal habitat for *Lake Trout* and *Whitefish*. If you decide to fish be sure to obtain a license before starting your trip. Check *Fishing Regulations* for local rules. We encourage you to practice "catch and release" whenever possible. Major species are noted on each lake on the map (see Legend).

Human History

As for much of Canada, the earliest human stories of the *Bonnechere* are those of *aboriginals* who roamed this region, hunting, fishing with spears and cultivating some crops. For many people, however, the richest stories involve the *logging era* which began here over 250 years ago. The area was virtually unexplored at this time, primarily because of its *distance from regular trade routes*. Large, straight trees were in great demand in England, primarily for their *sailing fleet*, and this land was discovered to be dominated by pristine *red pine forests*.

By the 1840s the *Little Bonnechere* region was attracting enough



The lift-over from Couchain to Stringer

© M.J. Smith

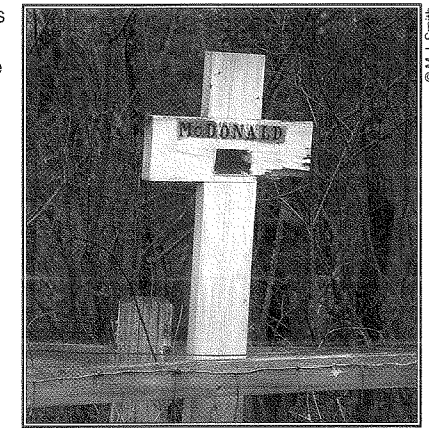
interest that the provincial government hired surveyor *James McNaughton* to map the river. His journal of 1847, "*Diary Relative to the Survey of the Bonnechere River*" (Ontario Archives) provides a fascinating insight to the area, and the hardship of his task. His maps show, for example, a long portage used to avoid the broadly meandering, roughly a 3:1 ratio, section of river close to Round Lake. *Turner's Road*, where it parallels the south side of the former *Bonnechere Airport*, has obliterated part of this old route.

The first lumber camp in this area was established before 1843 at Basin Depot by *Alex McDonell*. It operated for over 60 years as a major point of supply for logging camps on the upper *Bonnechere*. The origin of the "depot" part of the name is obvious, but "basin" came from a widening of the river, no longer visible, about 500 metres south of the depot where logs were dumped to be driven downriver.

Under various owners the settlement grew, so that, by 1884, there were up to 50 people working there. At one time it even included a post office, and a simple hospital, built during an *1892 Black Diptheria* outbreak at *McLauchlin* logging camps. The hospital (see photo), still stands, and, thanks to restoration efforts, survives as the oldest building in *Algonquin Park*. At its most active, buildings lined both sides of the road west of the bridge. There was a blacksmith, harness maker, physician, veterinary surgeon, wagon maker, and general store, even a weekly coach from the train station at *Cobden*.

several gravesites from this era along the river. For all this difficult work they were paid wages that, in 1891, equalled about \$18/month in today's dollars.

One of the sobering relics of this past are the grave markers seen in the Basin Depot area. One is for *Black Diptheria* victims, another for log drive victims. Markers can also be seen along the river, including that of young *Alexander McDonald*, who took ill in the winter of 1888 and died before he could be attended by a doctor. Interestingly, there are few women buried in the area, for they had to be buried in consecrated ground and were therefore often transported to church graveyards further south.



Grave of young Alexander McDonald, 1888

© M.J. Smith

You may notice the large clearing east of the river and south of the road at Basin Depot. That was created and used by the camp of a lumber company in the 1950s. A large root cellar is still visible. The larger building west of the hospital across the road also dates from this era. It was a garage in the 1940s.

The river of the prime logging era looked rather different than it does today. It was

Portages: Longest: 4 Total Portage 1230m.

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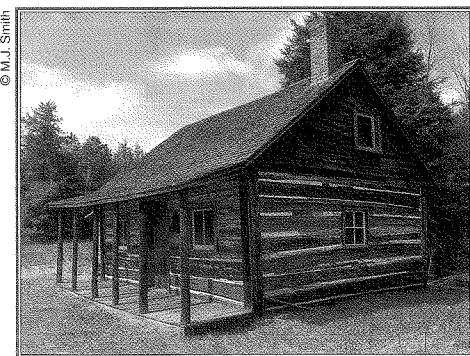
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systems starting in *Algonquin Park*. It begins in the *McKaskill Lake* area deep within the Park and empties, about 113 km later, into the *Ottawa River*.

The course of the *Bonnechere* is mainly determined by *block faults* in the earth's crust, with *glacial deposits* often causing sections to expand into lakes. These abundant deposits of sand and gravel have created ideal conditions for *red, white and jack pine forests* which, along with *poplar*, dominate the area. There are also many open wetlands and swamps of cedar and black spruce which attract a variety of wildlife.

Moose, white-tailed deer and black bear are the larger animals you can see along the river, but there are also plenty of beaver, otter, porcupine and smaller mammals like squirrels, chipmunks and meadow voles. Wolves are found throughout the region and have recently been discovered to be, not grey or timber wolves, but the much more rare red wolf.

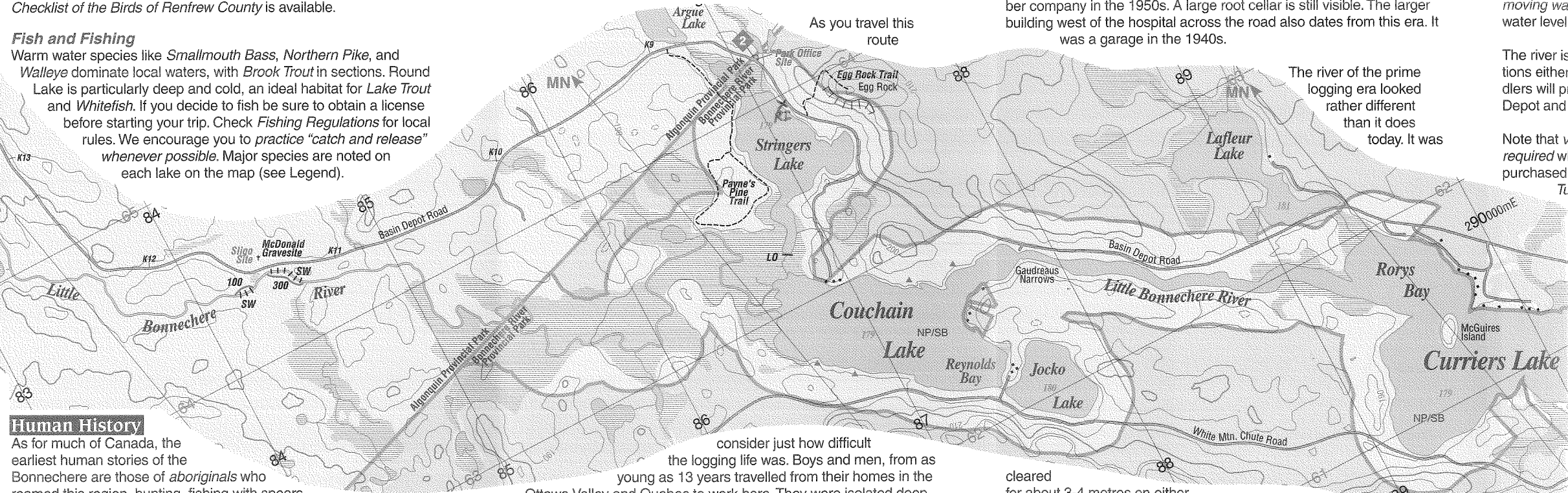
Forest birds are plentiful and the observant paddler can be sure to see *Gray Jay, Blue Jay, Common Raven, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers*. Less easy to see but well worth listening for are



Cabin at Basin Depot

© M.J. Smith

As you travel this route



consider just how difficult the logging life was. Boys and men, from as young as 13 years travelled from their homes in the *Ottawa Valley* and *Quebec* to work here. They were isolated deep in the forest, left camp each day at 4 a.m., returned at 9 p.m., and worked in all weathers. Their season began each autumn with the setting up of a new camp. They cut trees all winter and, using horses, hauled logs on heavy sleds to the river or lakeshore. During high spring water levels they drove those same logs downstream to Round Lake and beyond. It was very dangerous work. Logs were very heavy and awkward, measuring 15 to 18 metres long by up to 50 cm. in diameter. There were many injuries and deaths, and you can see

cleared for about 3-4 metres on either side to make it easier to drive the logs. There were also dams to raise water levels and chutes to ease the passage of logs over rough, constricted areas. There is still logging in this area today, however the method of shipping logs now depends on trucks and roads, leaving the river for quieter activities like paddling and fishing.

Planning Your Trip

Some stats: **Length:** ~35km (Basin to Round Lake); **Time:** 1-2 days;

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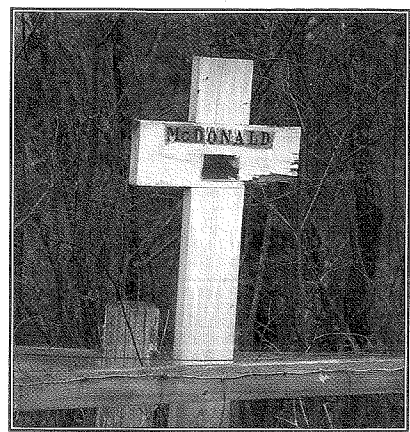
© M.J. Smith

interest that the provincial government hired surveyor *James McNaughton* to map the river. His journal of 1847, "*Diary Relative to the Survey of the Bonnechere River*" (Ontario Archives) provides a fascinating insight to the area, and the hardship of his task. His maps show, for example, a long portage used to avoid the broadly meandering, roughly a 3:1 ratio, section of river close to Round Lake. *Turner's Road*, where it parallels the south side of the former *Bonnechere Airport*, has obliterated part of this old route.

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Under various owners the settlement grew, so that, by 1884, there were up to 50 people working there. At one time it even included a post office, and a simple hospital, built during an 1892 *Black Diptheria* outbreak at McLaughlin logging camps. The hospital (see photo), still stands, and, thanks to restoration efforts, survives as the oldest building in Algonquin Park. At its most active, buildings lined both sides of the road west of the bridge. There was a blacksmith, harness maker, physician, veterinary surgeon, wagon maker, and general store, even a weekly coach from the train station at Cobden.

several gravesites from this era along the river. For all this difficult work they were paid wages that, in 1891, equalled about \$18/month in today's dollars.



© M.J. Smith

Grave of young Alexander McDonald, 1888

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You may notice the large clearing east of the river and south of the road at Basin Depot. That was created and used by the camp of a lumber company in the 1950s. A large root cellar is still visible. The larger building west of the hospital across the road also dates from this era. It was a garage in the 1940s.

Portages: 3 to 7;
Longest: 490m;
Total Portages: 1230m.

The Bonnechere can usually be paddled from ice-out (May) to freeze-up (November), though low water levels reveal more rocks and deadheads. Several shallow swifts may require lining or wading, and occasional beaver dams may require lift-overs. High water levels (eg. early May) can be dangerous in a few key places where rapids, chutes and swifts move water quickly. *Always be alert to changing water conditions and be sure to scout all moving water.* Call a local outfitter or Bonnechere Provincial Park for water level info.

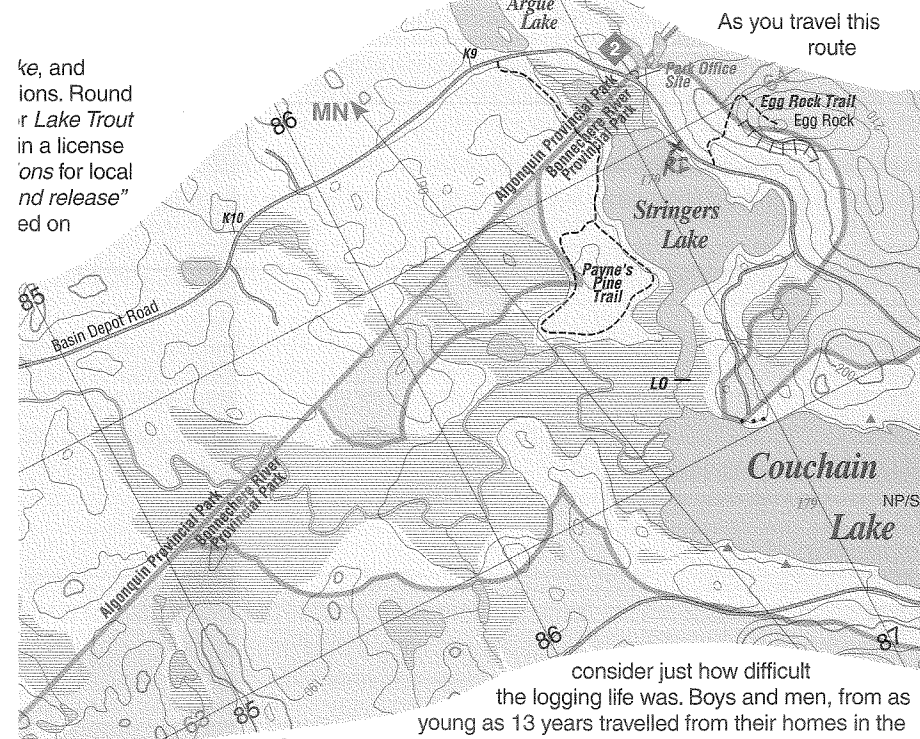
The river is often slow enough for paddling daytrip sections either upstream or downstream, but most paddlers will prefer to start from Basin Lake or Basin Depot and paddle downstream to Round Lake.

Note that *vehicle and campsite permits are required* while in Algonquin Park and can be purchased in person, and in advance, at *Turner's Camp*, a private facility partway down the river. At the moment no permits

While the Little Bonnechere River originates in the McKaskill Lake area of Algonquin Park, well beyond the northwest end of this map, it is not a practical canoe route due to the narrow, log-choked, rocky ravine, through which the river tumbles.

legend

	building		washrooms
	road, parking area		telephone
	minor road, gate		picnic area
	official trail		campground
	open land		access point
	forest	Fish Species	
	index contour-50m	LT	Lake Trout
	contour-10m, cliff	NP	Northern Pike
	form line <10m	SB	Smallmouth Bass
	lake elevation	0 km 0.5	
	lake, bridge, dock	0 mi 0.25	
	river, stream, seasonal	Magnetic North - This map is compass ready if you use the MN lines. If not, declination is 11°57' west of grid north.	
	wetland	Grid System - This map uses the UTM 1000m Grid, Zone 18, NAD 27. An example G.R. using park entrance: Easting: grid line 99 and 0 tenths. Northing: grid line 89 and 0 tenths = G.R. 990500.	
	dam, fall, rapid, swift		
	interior campsite		
	portage in metres		
	park boundary		



consider just how difficult the logging life was. Boys and men, from as young as 13 years travelled from their homes in the Ottawa Valley and Quebec to work here. They were isolated deep in the forest, left camp each day at 4 a.m., returned at 9 p.m., and worked in all weathers. Their season began each autumn with the setting up of a new camp. They cut trees all winter and, using horses, hauled logs on heavy sleds to the river or lakeshore. During high spring water levels they drove those same logs downstream to Round Lake and beyond. It was very dangerous work. Logs were very heavy and awkward, measuring 15 to 18 metres long by up to 50 cm in diameter. There were many injuries and deaths, and you can see

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Planning Your Trip
Some stats: **Length:** ~35km (Basin to Round Lake); **Time:** 1-2 days;

Access Points
There are 7 official access points for the Little Bonnechere, each

indicated by a symbol like this . While other spots may seem ideal for entering or leaving the river, most are private property, dangerous or environmentally sensitive. Use only these:
1. Basin Depot - The highest access point on the river offers a large overnight parking area in a large grassy field on the south side of the road. This is also the most obviously historic site on the river. See *Human History*. A parking permit is required and can be obtained at Turner's Camp.
2. Algonquin Boundary - This access point is the site of a former Park Office and offers a good-sized overnight parking area.
3. Lough Garvey - This site is a day-use

only picnic area and access point.
4. Turner's Camp - This private facility offers overnight parking, camping, and a variety of services including Algonquin camping and parking permits, a variety store and limited camping supplies.
5. Stevenson Lake - A small roadside access point. Use caution when manoeuvring your vehicle here.
6. Bonnechere Provincial Park - a major facility with a full-service 100+ site campground, hiking trails, fine beach, historic attractions, rental cabins and overnight parking facilities.
7. Sheryl Boyle Municipal Park/Round Lake Grocery Variety - This waterfront park, named for a local member of the Olympic flatwater paddling team, has day-use parking, a boat launch, picnic area, toilets and beach. *Round Lake Variety* offers canoe rentals, overnight parking for customers, water from an outside tap, a variety and grocery store, limited camping supplies and a shuttle service.

Route Details
Though we have surveyed the entire river, seasonal water level fluctuations and daily weather can dramatically affect river conditions, therefore the map and description are not definitive. *Always scout*

swifts and rapids. Feature locations are defined by "river right" (RR) or "river left" (RL) when facing downstream. See map for more details.

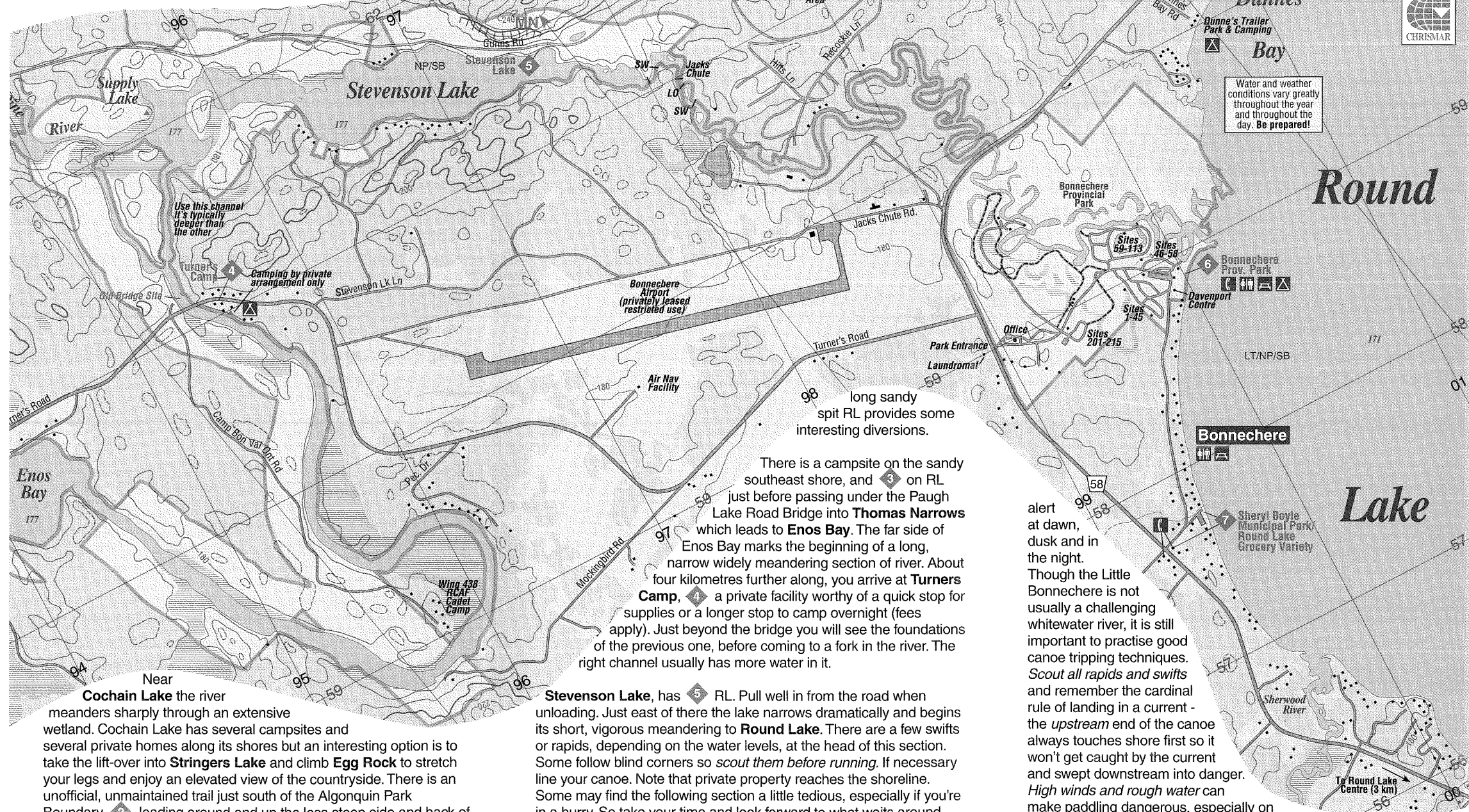
Take some time to quietly explore the **Basin Depot** area, ❶ which has obvious reminders of early settlers and loggers in this area. The first section of river is narrow, at times shallow, and tree shaded. There are a couple of swifts and portages near the **McDonald Gravesite** but many people simply wade their canoes through these stretches. Take a few moments to visit the Gravesite. It provides a poignant reminder of the challenges of settlement life.

narrows into **Curriers Lake** and then through another pinched section to **White Mountain Bay**. *Do not camp on the island here, or any other in the park.* Not only is it forbidden, but island campsites provide protected habitat for wildlife and can be easily overused. **White Mountain**, a large hill RR indicates another narrows in which you'll find a campsite on the south shore partway through. **Beaverdam Lake**, with its marshy south side and

and ❷ further south at **Sheryl Boyle Municipal Park**.

Safety Concerns

Your greatest danger probably comes during your trip here by car, so *drive defensively*, slow down and be especially



Near **Cochain Lake** the river meanders sharply through an extensive wetland. Cochain Lake has several campsites and several private homes along its shores but an interesting option is to take the lift-over into **Stringers Lake** and climb **Egg Rock** to stretch your legs and enjoy an elevated view of the countryside. There is an unofficial, unmaintained trail just south of the Algonquin Park Boundary, ❷ leading around and up the less steep side and back of the rock.

On the northeast side of Cochain, RL, the river passes through a

Stevenson Lake, has ❸ RL. Pull well in from the road when unloading. Just east of there the lake narrows dramatically and begins its short, vigorous meandering to **Round Lake**. There are a few swifts or rapids, depending on the water levels, at the head of this section. Some follow blind corners so *scout them before running*. If necessary line your canoe. Note that private property reaches the shoreline. Some may find the following section a little tedious, especially if you're in a hurry. So take your time and look forward to what waits around each corner. After pssing under County Road 58 a few more meanders lead you past **Bonnechere P.P.** and into Round Lake. There are two access points on the lake, ❹ on the Park waterfront,

long sandy spit RL provides some interesting diversions.

There is a campsite on the sandy southeast shore, and ❸ on RL just before passing under the Paugh Lake Road Bridge into **Thomas Narrows** which leads to **Enos Bay**. The far side of Enos Bay marks the beginning of a long, narrow widely meandering section of river. About four kilometres further along, you arrive at **Turners Camp**, ❹ a private facility worthy of a quick stop for supplies or a longer stop to camp overnight (fees apply). Just beyond the bridge you will see the foundations of the previous one, before coming to a fork in the river. The right channel usually has more water in it.

alert at dawn, dusk and in the night. Though the Little Bonnechere is not usually a challenging whitewater river, it is still important to practise good canoe tripping techniques. *Scout all rapids and swifts and remember the cardinal rule of landing in a current - the upstream end of the canoe always touches shore first so it won't get caught by the current and swept downstream into danger. High winds and rough water can make paddling dangerous, especially on bigger bodies of water like Basin, Couchain and especially Round Lake. Low water temperatures can quickly lead to hypothermia if you fall in. Bears, moose and other large mammals*

Water and weather conditions vary greatly throughout the year and throughout the day. **Be prepared!**

typically avoid human contact, unless they are attracted by food smells, scraps, fish entrails and other signs of unthinking humans. Leaving food or waste lying about is not only dangerous for you, but even more so for those that follow you.

Getting Involved

The **Friends of Bonnechere Park** is a non-profit organization that raises money and provides volunteers for various park-approved projects. For information contact the Friends of Bonnechere Park, 4024 Round Lake Road, RR#5, Killaloe, K0J 2A0.

Recommended Reading

Excellent reference books on local history include: *Discover The Spirits...* by Friends of B.P., ISBN 0-9680630-2-0 *Spirits of the Little Bonnechere* by R. MacKay, ISBN 0-9680630-4

Local Services

Round Lake Variety, located on Hwy 58 just west of the park, offers canoes for rental, shuttles, groceries, and drinking water (tap at the side of the store): (613) 757-2162.

Turner's Camp, just west of Stevenson Lake on Turner's Road, sells interior camping permits for any nights you plan to stay in Algonquin Park: (613) 757-2672 (closed Oct-April).

Other Attractions

There are a variety of worthwhile attractions in this area. Consider making time to visit: **Bonnechere Caves** These were created by water slicing into limestone formed some 500 million years ago from sea bottom deposits. First discovered 1853, opened to the public in 1965. Open May to October: 1-800-469-2283.

Algonquins of Pikwākanagān Pow Wow

The *Algonquins of Pikwākanagān* hold their *Annual Pow Wow* in the third weekend of August, featuring dancers, drummers and artists from all over North America. Golden Lake: 613-625-2800.

For More Information

For Bonnechere Park information and campsite reservation contact: **Bonnechere Provincial Park** 4024 Round Lake Road, RR#5, Killaloe, Ontario K0J 2A0 Telephone: (613) 757-2103 *Stringers → Round* Reservations: 1-888-668-7275 *Saddle: 25km, 6 hours* *Bike: 21km, 75 min*

Algonquin Provincial Park

For Algonquin Park information and campsite reservation contact: General Info: (705) 633-5572 Reservations: 1-888-668-7275

Cover photo © Jim Fraser

About This Map

The **Adventure Map™** series, developed by wilderness mapmakers Mark Jameson Smith and Christine Kennedy, is composed of original topographic maps covering many of Canada's popular wilderness recreation areas. Maps are specifically designed for outdoor adventurers who need an accurate, up-to-date, rugged guide to the wilderness. This map is protected by copyright. © 2005 Chrismar Mapping Services Inc. All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, digital, mechanical, photocopying, or otherwise, without the written permission of Chrismar Mapping Services.

potential danger from terrain, weather, animals and the dynamic nature of wilderness environments. This map is no substitute for preparation, caution and experience.

Many people supported this project by providing advice, information, and encouragement. Our sincere thanks to: B. Frederick, J. Fraser (OP), L. Kennedy, M. & J. Stoneman (GWTR) and outdoors club students of St. Paul High School, Ottawa.

We invite you to help us improve this map, and the **Adventure Map™** series, by sending us your detailed or general comments. Thanks for your support!

Mark Jameson Smith & Christine Kennedy

Chrismar Mapping Services Inc. Box 1277, Uxbridge, Ontario L9P 1N5 Telephone: (905) 852-6151 Facsimile: (905) 852-9474 E-mail: email@chrismar.com Internet: www.chrismar.com 0505