



# The Voyageur's Companion

Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Canoe Club

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October 2007 issue

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Jeanne Willson, editor

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## Message from the Interim President

By Karen Amundson

Greetings, and I hope you have had a great summer full of paddling. The officers have been busy with several initiatives that I will mention here, and we will have more details for you at the annual business meeting and potluck from 5:30 to 8:30 on November 9 at the downtown Denver R.E.I. store.

We have developed a set of By-Laws for RMCC that describes the purpose and organizational structure of our club. After it gets a few more final touches, I will send the document out in a distribution email, Jeanne will put the draft on the web, and we'll have paper copies at the 11-9 meeting where we can discuss and vote on it.

As many of you know, there has been some discussion around incorporating the club so that we can obtain insurance. We have identified the steps that would be needed at the state and IRS levels to make this happen. In a meeting at Don Perko's house, the officers have voted unanimously to not pursue this any further. It would involve a fair amount of work to make it happen and also to maintain that status, and we feel that it will be better to focus our current attention on strengthening our waiver and trip processes.

Jeff Oxenford and Don Perko are teaming up to define a Trip Checklist, Waivers, River Guidelines, and the methods for using these items effectively. While none of us want to create a bureaucracy, we think that this process can be streamlined and help protect the club from legal situations. Jeff has a legal contact that is deemed the expert for ACA and other paddling organizations who will provide assistance with this.

I'm happy to report that most of the current officers have agreed to continue – either in their current positions or in a different position. We have added a Vice President and removed the Secretary position. A Membership and Publications office will expand the duties of the current Membership officer. These will be further defined in the By-Laws.

We will need a new Events Scheduler as Ned Banta is ready to retire from that position. Thank you, Ned, for handling trip and event publicity for 2 years. I am especially familiar with how much work that can involve. There will be an opening for the Conservation Chair, and people may want to volunteer for Quartermaster, Webmaster, Email List Manager, President or Membership & Pubs.

We will show some trip slides in the background at the November 9 meeting, but the main events will be the potluck followed by a few business topics and then elections. I hope to see most of you there.

# Rocky Mountain Canoe Club – Contact Information

**Website:** <http://www.rockymountaincanoeclub.org>

**E-mail list:** Check the web site for new information.

**Membership:** \$20 per year, per household. See Membership section of our website, for forms and information.

President	Karen Amundsen
Treasurer	Paul Holscher
Trip coordinator	Ned Banta
Membership	Karen Maley
Advertising	Karen Amundsen
Conservation	Greg Jankowski
Instruction	Bob and Jill Stecker
Instruction	Jeff Oxenford
Email list Manager	Don Perko
Quartermaster	Doug Hurcomb
Webmaster	Jeanne Willson
Newsletter editor	Jeanne Willson



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## Green River, Flaming Gorge to Swallow Canyon Boat Ramp, Sept 3-5, 2007

by Doug and Kellee Summers

Kellee and I have become accustomed to an annual Green River Flaming Gorge run every year for eight years during Labor Day weekend. Since we've lived in Hawai'i now for the last 6 years, we only get on the river once a year and we know you can rely on the Green's flow. As is often the case when traveling, we both managed to pick up a minor bug, so neither of us was feeling quite up to par during the long ride to the river.

We camped for the night at Mustang Ridge, a campground on the reservoir on Sunday night, September 2<sup>nd</sup>. Kellee worsened a bit in the night, an ominous sign. After a restless night, we didn't roll out of the tent in the morning until about 10:30am. After the standard stops in Dutch John for gas and shuttle services, and a trip to Little Hole to reserve our campsite for night one, we headed for the put-in at the base of the dam. We signed up



for Big Pine I since Trail's End was so bad last year.

A thunderstorm was moving through just when we were readying the boat at the put-in. It was pretty windy as well. We decided it couldn't get much more interesting, so we went ahead and put on. We pushed off about 1:30pm. The weather was a little rainy. It's not quite as much fun to do the top stretch of the river when it's cloudy and rainy; you can't see the fish very well, and the minor rapids can keep you a bit chilled.

We had no problems with mother-in-law, the biggest of the minor drops in the top section, but we did have an odd spinout earlier. Somehow, we managed to catch a sleeper in one of the riffles. Nothing big, just kept our hips loose and spun off like we've gotten used to doing every once in a while.

We rolled in to Big Pine I campground about 4:30pm. The weather was beautiful by now – no rain, and only a few minor clouds. Kellee was still feeling a little under the weather. Doug had a cold one and started setting up camp while Kellee took a nap down by the water. About 5:30, Kellee came up to camp and spotted a black bear in Big Pine II camp! We thought it was really cool at first, but then when we wanted to let him know we were there so he would go away, he wouldn't. He saw us and wasn't afraid at all.

He circled his way around camp to get a closer look at us. We yelled and threw rocks, but it was obvious the bear was not going to go away. After a few tense minutes, the bear decided to approach directly. We grabbed the food dry box and cooler and jumped into the canoe. He arrived at our tent just as we pushed back from the river bank. The bear started checking everything out.

From the boat, we continued yelling, doing paddle slaps, and banging on pans. We know they can swim well, but it was pretty obvious he wasn't interested in us; he was interested in our camp. At one point, he had heard enough noise and threatened a charge. You know instinctively what it means when a bear's shoulder hair stands up, he grunts, and then thrusts forward at you. We stopped making so much noise after that! Every time he got close to the tent, we yelled more to distract him, but to no avail. There was no food in there, just our dry bags containing clothes and toiletries. He eventually collapsed the back of the tent, then bent the poles hard and collapsed the front. After ripping the door with a couple of easy swipes of his claws, he pulled both dry bags out and started gnawing on them. After losing interest in the tent, he checked out all the remaining gear at the picnic table – rubbing all over everything – PFDs, rainfly, etc. Over the course of about an hour and a half, with us yelling and slapping the water, he worked back and forth through the campsite visiting everything at least a couple of times. At one point, he walked down to the water's edge where our 6 gallon water jug was open and rubbed himself on it. Amazingly, it didn't tip over. If it had, we'd have been using the water filter for the rest of the trip.



From the boat, we began to worry about remaining daylight, especially with him in possession of most of our gear. Just in the nick of time (about 30 minutes before sunset), he eventually bored of us and our camp. With a couple of powerful thrusts, he scaled the canyon wall and was gone upriver. We raced up there, grabbed everything, cleaned up the camp a bit, and threw it all into the boat. We went downstream to Pugmire Pocket on the opposite side of the river.

Doug bent the tent poles back into approximate shape and took a look at the tent. With a lot of duct tape, and the rainfly for additional cover, we managed to have protection from the bugs that night. We had no further incidents in the night, but we definitely didn't sleep much.

The next day, we had a nearly perfect left-side run through Red Creek rapid. We pulled in to Jarvie Ranch for lunch, and reported the bear incident. The rangers were very interested, and wanted a full report. They ended up closing all camps on river left from Little Hole down. The rest of the trip was uneventful (just how we like it).

After returning to Colorado Springs we sent images of the bear to the rangers. It turns out that a week after our trip, a bear was acting similarly at Mustang Ridge campground and was "harvested" (the ranger's words) by a

hunter. They thought it was our bear until a week after that signs of another bear were found at Stonefly camp on the river (upstream from Big Pine).

We've come to expect lots of wildlife on this stretch, but it looks like folks need to be prepared for bears as well. We have run in to bears many times in different places, but nothing makes you appreciate the power of a bear until you meet a bad bear. Then you realize what problems you can get in to. A child, or a late-night encounter could have easily ended much differently. So next time you're on this section of the Green - or perhaps on any of the desert rivers -- you might consider whether you're ready to have a bear encounter. It could happen! And never forget your duct tape.

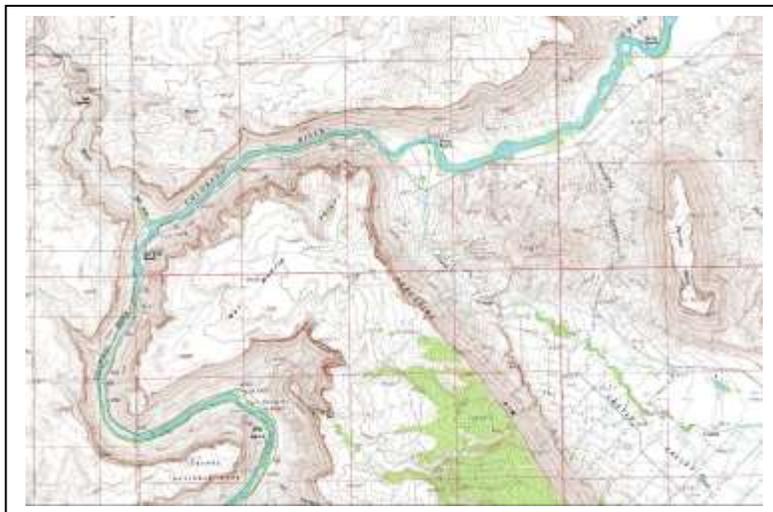
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## **Down a Muddy River: The Colorado from Cisco Landing to Big Bend, August 2007**

**Doug Kretzmann**

(Editor's Note: H is Helen, Doug's talented and ever-calm wife and mother of their boys C and I, two delightful young kids not noted for calmness.)

The map gives a flavour of the expedition - high dramatic red rock canyon walls, vast perspectives whenever the walls opened up. We put in near the ghost town of Cisco, UT, some thirty miles upstream of the map. Actually not wholly a ghost town, there is a general store, five miles off the interstate. The story goes some football player came from Cisco, made his pot, and retired back home with a gregarious wife, who opened the store in an attempt to get some company. Buying an ice cream there after the trip is apparently hazardous. The chat will take an hour or more.



Blazing heat at the put-in, I labored for an hour or more packing the barge while H ran shuttle. The boys swam until their lips turned blue, sat in the sun until they were hot again, then swam some more. Mud pies filled in the vacant minutes between these activities. After the loading, tossed out a fishing line with some Powerbait (blood flavour, mmm) which attracted a 1lb catfish in about 30 seconds. More casts brought more fish, but all small. Off down river after a bit more than two hours' wait, with a flotilla of 9 boats. There were many years of paddling experience floating down the river, including Jerry Nolan who wrote the book - well, maybe not the book, but the web page at least - on this stretch of river. What this translates to is a loose assemblage of at least 9 eccentrics, the spouses or spousal equivalents who put up with them, and our two kids. Luckily since we all canoe, we're all eccentric in much the same ways, so within the group we appear perfectly normal to each other. This is occasionally quite comforting.





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Fish Ford BLM campsite is very attractive, but is road-accessible. This means at any moment drunken rednecks in 4x4s may descend and render the site uninhabitable, so we skipped it, and went on down to another site. It too had a rough road in, so there was an old sofa above the river next to a 10 foot diameter fire ring mounded high with beer cans. Ah well. The hinterlands were clean, flat, and cottonwood-shaded, so we took it. As we were coming downriver, there was an incessant hum filling the air. At first I thought power lines, but no. Next theory was the tamarisk beetles, specially imported to kill the alien tamarisks sucking the rivers dry, but this was mere speculation. Upon landing the true source was revealed: vast formations of mosquitoes wheeled and dove down upon our shrinking flesh. We can report that the Repel Lemon Eucalyptus (non-DEET) formulation does work well, but we didn't get 6 hours of protection, only about 3 or so.

More labor, unpacking boat to set up tent, kitchen, snacks, etcetera. Oy. I need an easier tent or a smaller family. Money can solve only one of these problems, so I guess it's retail therapy for me this fall; when I'd rather be camping, I'll be tent shopping.

Shattered in mind and body, I went to bed early. The boys stayed up at the campfire, half an artificial log in the world's smallest firepan, while Jeff and Jeanne played guitar and everyone sang. We all lay on top of our sleeping bags sweating for an hour or two before it cooled enough to sleep. Poor C woke up a few hours later, retching. Poor H took care of him, the five times he woke to throw up. I think he had some bad river water from all that swimming. Of course all these excursions into the mosquito zone allowed the tent to fill up with ravenous bloodsuckers. In the morning the roof of the tent was covered in swollen bugs, too full of blood to fly. Ech. We left C to sleep in the tent while we staggered around packing up camp. This turned out to be a mistake. There were enough hungry mosq's left in the tent that he got devoured alive. On Tuesday at school, they refused to let him in without a doctor's certificate to prove that he did not have some infectious disease rash, obtaining which of course consumed all of H's Tuesday morning.

After cleaning up the puddles of sick on the sleeping bags, sleeping pads, tent floor, groundsheet and shoes, I was ready to start the packing of the dry bags preparatory to starting the packing of the boat. I couldn't see us finishing all this before the launch time, but we had so many helping hands, we were packed before some of the other boats, a first for me in family canoe camping. Thanks Jeff.

On down the river, C perfectly frisky and chirpy, H and I drooping rather. This is a good kid trip, when they get bored we just throw them overboard and let them swim for a bit. After this flat water stretch, there's a day of significant named rapids, which keeps everyone's attention for the most part: though the boys were chatting about Lego in the middle of Ida's Gulch while we had to stare doom in the face, a half-mile of rock spotting and dodging in the equivalent of a loaded 18-wheeler. The Old Town Penobscot 18'6" is a fine boat, but no-one would accuse it of nimbleness, particularly when loaded with 800-odd pounds of people and gear. Momentum, ah we have all the momentum we need to blast through anything, but a turn has to be put on the calendar well in advance, and co-ordinated between bow and stern. "I'm not yelling at you dear, I'm just communicating the turn" sometimes works to patch things up.

Flat water to Dewey Bridge, then a few miles to the first named rapid, Onion Creek: a two-stage rapid with an easy entrance of substantial waves lulling you into complacency, then a sudden boulder garden riddled with holes and pourovers. We took a poor line, I didn't see a rock in time, H was able to get her end of the canoe

around it but my end of the barge bounced off. Luckily Ian knows enough to highside, plus that momentum took us past the rock before it could react and grab us (yes, rocks in whitewater have both animas and animus).

Campsites below Onion were almost filled with rafters, but we got the last good site with cottonwoods. Magnificent views across Professor Valley to the Fisher Towers, could not be better. Much too hot to do anything except drink beer in the shade and swim, so that's what we did. Children got bored and fought, a hazard of single-family trips, with not enough playmates to keep the interest up. I think they were also tired and ratty, late night Fri getting to the hotel (we are weenies, yes, but I'm not prepared to try and camp with kids and a 10:30pm arrival), followed by late night and broken sleep on Sat. They needed lots of attention, but we needed to cook dinner and make camp, so it all got a bit fractious. Eventually simmered down with kids fed and tent up. Someone's washing up at the river added a few spaghetti fragments to the mud load of the mighty Colorado, and brought several fat carp in to forage. I plopped a lump of blood-flavour Powerbait upstream of one of them, which charged in with its back showing to gobble it down. Ian pulled it in, about a 3-pounder leaping and flapping in the mud. A handsome fish, though carp get no respect in the USA.

Breathlessly hot again in the night. One tent was pitched in a fine-looking site, below a red cliff, under a cottonwood. That red cliff acted as a radiator, releasing the heat of the day gently throughout the night, and blocking the cooling breezes. We were camped in a much less attractive site, but the winds came through beautifully. Hah. H's ambition for the night was not to be thrown up upon, and have no-one peeing in her shoe. This was a low bar, but it was in fact achieved, hooray.

Next day a variety of rapids. Mostly the obvious route was the correct one, slightly L or R of center, ride out the big waves with a bit of back paddling. Ida's Gulch is on the USGS map as Rocky Rapids, and is the rapid I remember as White's. The pictures show C doing his 'see/hear no evil' imitation near the bottom of IG rapid (I never knew he was doing that, was looking somewhere else at the time ;-). When I asked him, he said he finds the bigger rapids scary, but he still enjoys canoeing, just not some rapids. Ian on the other hand laughs all the way down, the bigger the rapid the more laughs. The pictures are by [Moab Action Shots](#). They have photographers camped out on the river, taking pictures of everything that passes. I didn't know who the photogs under the umbrellas were at the time, but on the way into Moab to Kaleido-Scoops (ice cream shop) we passed their store, and I figured it had to be online. This suggests a new way of rating rapids - those with a photographer camped next to them, must be something significant. Class II rapid, or a Class Photo rapid, hm.



The real White's rapid wasn't anything much, some very big waves and one pour-over that really should be missed, but a straightforward line through it. We had lunch below the rapid, on the first actually sandy beach of the trip. All the other beaches looked like sand, but turned rapidly into a viscous grey mud below the waterline. I'd slipped in said mud and torn a toenail half off. This was quite painful, plus the fine murky waters infected the wound. When I took the bandaid off on Tuesday night, I could see and smell rotting flesh below the nail, yech. How does a doctor remove a toenail ? with

anesthetic, large forceps, and a burly nurse. How... interesting.

Took off the river at Sandy Beach, yes it was. Unpacked boat, humped gear up the sandy hill to pack it into the

car, to take it home and unpack it again (a pattern is emerging). Back to Moab for aforementioned ice cream, very nice, and trundle on home for six hours. The boys went to school on Tuesday without having had a bath since Thursday night. Luckily they'd swum a lot, and boys are supposed to be muddy, so it wasn't too noticeable.

Many thanks to [Dave Allured](#), who put the whole trip together with his usual calm efficiency.

## Rodeo Rapid ©Mark Zen

A few years ago, I attended the RMCC Rendezvous, just for a day trip, which would cover a piece of the Colorado River I had never paddled before. This stretch of river also included Rodeo Rapid, a Class III, which feigned ease. I took my throw rope and stood by as everyone ran the rapid, giving me a good idea of where to line up and go through. It's only about fifty feet long (as I remember). Once everyone that had wanted to run it had run it, I took my turn. From witness descriptions later, and discussions with other paddlers, I determined this order of events as I kayaked through the rapid:

I did not lean back for enough to keep my bow from diving. The bow hit a submerged rock, tipping me over to one side. I braced, my paddle broke and I finished going over, half a paddle in each hand. Then, one paddle hit a rock and stopped. I continued moving into the paddle, sticking the shaft through my thigh, only stopping because it hit the bone. That was lucky, or it would have punched all the way through my leg, like an apple corer does to an apple. One nice neat circular hole; it was very fortunate for me to have done this at an angle, so there was a small piece of flesh holding the "core" in place. The hole was more "c" shaped than "o" shaped. I felt it, not knowing at the time what happened. While I was in the water, I pulled my leg up and saw I was bleeding. A kayaker, not in our group, paddled over to check on me. I told him I was bleeding, and was worried, due to location, it was my femoral artery. Nope, would have died before getting to the shore. He got me to shore quickly, and had already yelled to the shore crew my condition. The folks on shore were running for first aid kits.

We packed my leg with sterile dressing held in place with an elastic bandage. The group shuttled my boat and me to the road side of the river. The kayaker tied his boats to his roof, then mine on top. The ER would need the exact time of injury, so they would know if they could leave the "plug" in my leg, so we also started the stopwatch feature on my wristwatch.

They did save the plug, my leg was fine. I recovered and paddled many times since.

Now for my point. Would I sue the trip coordinator (Dave), the gentlemen (Sammer), who's helmet I borrowed just for the rapid? How about the kayaker who hauled me ashore and helped me with my boat? I don't know him. On the other hand, should I sue RMCC, at least for the medical bill, or my deductible anyway? Nope. File it under "sports mishap" or "Recreational Mis-Adventure." I drove myself to the closest Emergency Room to my home, had my wife meet me there. Would I have done anything different if I did not have medical insurance? Nope. Sewing it closed myself wasn't really an option. Would I ask anyone for money? Nope, I didn't then, still wouldn't now. The most upsetting thing to me, about the whole situation is never getting the kayaker's name. He pulled me off the river, shuttled me to my car, then tied my boat on my roof, and since I got a cell phone signal, he waited until I got a hold of my wife, and she knew what was going on. Thank you, whoever you are.



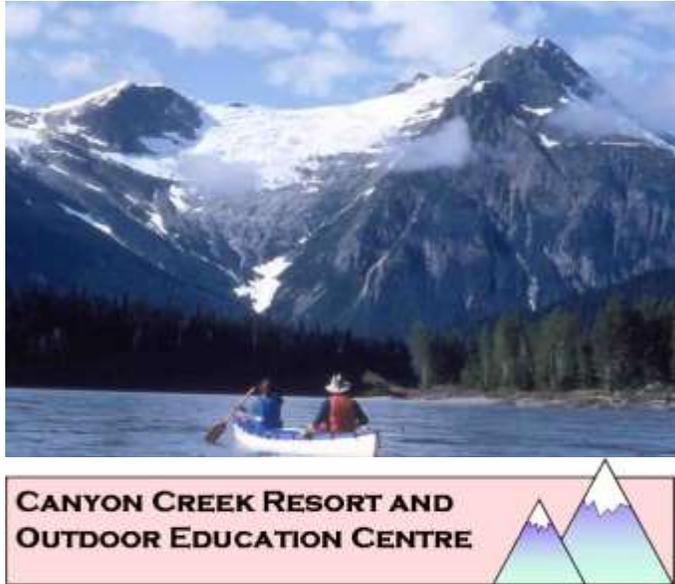
Lastly, I am comfortable that my wife would never sue anyone should the "worst case scenario" ever happen. Unless someone ran me over intentionally, or pushed me off a cliff, or some other heinous thing, then she might hunt them down herself. Otherwise, "accident" means "accident." She can accept that. It doesn't mean she wouldn't grieve, but both of us feel strongly about any "recreational accidents." They do happen. I also know the rest of my family would honor her wishes. We've rafted Royal Gorge at the maximum flow allowed, so it was a solid Class V. We knew either of us could fall out and drown, or get pinned between the raft and a rock, and die; that's part of the adrenaline rush of going in the first place.

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## **Ashes to Splashes: A Middle Fork Epic (Part 1)**

**By Karen & Greg Jankowski**

In the week before leaving for our trip, we had already heard that fires had caused the Main Salmon to be closed to all river traffic, with structures lost at MacKay Bar (Salmon, Idaho). Rangers warned that anyone with respiratory problems should not be going due to the thick smoke. We bought dust masks on the drive in and wondered what we were getting into.

The Middle Fork was running at 1.6 ft, a very low flow that forced the commercials to start at Indian Creek. 26 miles down, which meant flying in guests and their personal gear. Then the boats and the rest of the gear were deadheaded (rafts without passengers) down from Boundary Creek.

After nearly 800 miles of driving we turned onto the dirt road going to Boundary Creek only to find a ROAD CLOSED AHEAD sign in the middle of the road. We stopped to look at the sign boards to find fire maps, and other notes, with none pertaining to Boundary Creek. So we proceeded to Boundary Creek. We passed a large fire camp at the intersection; the smoke was a thick haze in the air as we turned down the road.

### **Boundary Creek**

Upon arriving at BC we found our other two Colorado paddlers, otherwise the campground was completely empty. Maybe everyone else knew something that we didn't?

Before setting up camp, we took a look at the river from the top of the boat ramp. The water was crystal clear, with a very rocky bottom clearly in sight. With that we then settled in with our Idaho pair arriving just before dark.

In the morning we drove down, ran the boats down the ramp with a belay from above. Our merry group consisted of Idahoans Don Griffiths / Fearless Leader and Mark Smith / Safety and Quartermaster with front range Coloradoans Scott MacDonald / Navigator, Garrett Downs / Bear Defenses and ourselves Karen / Medic and Greg / Water Provider. As we were packing the boats another group arrived consisting of 2 catarafts that had agreed to do the support, with 4 inflatable kayaks with 2 couples, both wives pregnant.



Our paddles were hardly wet when we got into the 1<sup>st</sup> rapid, appropriately named First Bend Rapid, then a lot of rock gardens. I don't think that there's a single rock that doesn't have a touch of red on the top. There were more than a few times that it seemed we were turning like mad just to get a rock that we otherwise may have missed.

Very soon we were scouting Velvet Falls. Our hosts showed us the way through and we all followed with success.

Velvet Falls with one of our Idaho members showing us the line and moves.



**Trail Flats Campground**

We got to our 1<sup>st</sup> night camp early in the afternoon to find a wonderful hot spring on the gravel bar just under the camp. After getting settled in and having a soak, we found that the locals were very well trained to



recognize boaters and their gear as a huge dinner bell. The MicroBears went into the canoes with no hesitation whatsoever and found any open containers of food as an open invitation to enjoy the buffet. Some of our group hadn't quite figured out the rules of engagement and got a little peeved when finding their food gone. When sitting the MB's would come within a foot of you while looking for a handout. In spite of watching a lot of Chip & Dale when much younger, these guys became pests in a very short time. Due to this we attempted to implement a counter training plan that resulted in camp defensive measures whenever a MB invasion started. Since we were sitting on a gravel bar we'll leave it to your imagination as to the defensive measures used.

While in camp, the wind was strong out of the south, which resulted in one of the fires blowing up to our southwest. Watching the smoke billowing up became the entertainment/concern of the afternoon, it stayed to the west of us. At times the bottom of the smoke cloud was lit with an orange glow.

In the morning, we were visited by the PDG's (Pregnant Duckies Group). The couples stayed by their boats while the cat drivers stripped down to enjoy the hot spring. While soaking they expressed the dissatisfaction of group dynamics in their group. It seemed that every decision was impossible to make and stick to and one of the pregnant ladies had already taken numerous swims, some of this due to her paddling the most unstable duckie. With her being a hard shell kayaker the duckie was not treating her well.



The 2<sup>nd</sup> day started with The Chutes, a long rapid that defied memory to remember, and with all of us going to plan B in all different parts. We spent a lot of the time doing more rock coloring in between the rapids. This is not to say that the rocks in the rapids were left uncolored; we got at least 2 in Velvet alone.

### **Dolly Lake Campground**

This turned into the most picturesque campground on the entire trip; it also had the nicest swimming hole in front of the camp. Complete with a rock in the middle to swim out to soak up the sun while traffic went on by.

Again the MB's were out in full force, going into bags that were right next to the owner. Again we did our duty to discourage this behavior, some with a single shot approach others utilizing a shotgun type of

defensive measure. No matter what method they were back within minutes to try again, any open food on the ground was gone within minutes.

Another group of commercials passed by in the afternoon, with one of the rafts pulling into the eddy in front of camp. He called out that our canoes were the best method of boating the Middle Fork and that this campground was the one on the trip that he always wanted to camp at. Since the rafts came down in one day this was never possible.

### Lake Creek rapid

A deep lake with trees in the river was the first indication that we were coming up to Lake Creek. After paddling down the lake we pulled out on the gravel bar on the right. Walking to the top of the drop the first thing noticeable was the large ponderosa in the middle of the river, just below the drop. The river has been moved over about 50 feet by the debris flow from the flash flood last year. The lower part was scouted and ran using other trees in the middle to key in on. All during the scout and watching others run through. There were airplanes flying low overhead either taking off or landing at Indian Creek.



### Indian Creek

With the thoughts of future campsites on our minds we cruised into Indian Ck. To find a large group already there, a sweep boat, 10 rafts, 2 cats, 4 IK's, amounting to 30 to 40 boaters in total. Someone came down to inform us that the river was closed and the Forest Service was evacuating everyone due to a fire downstream. We landed the boats, and walked up the ramp to the ranger station. At the top of the ramp was a twin Otter airplane loading boater gear into it. Another 12 or 15 boaters were milling about, with literally tons of gear all in piles, along with 4 solo canoes. All talk was of the fire, and a lot of stuff was being given away, starting with big muffins, proceeding to beer, ice, Southern Comfort, (with a raft guide *very quickly* showing us how to carve a V into a block of ice, then holding the block to your lips pour the SC down the V, white liquor shots??) culminating in us acquiring a large 15 to 20# bag of fruit. This giveaway was due to the fact that the only other option was to pay to have it flown back out.

We were finally able to find one of the rangers, to find that indeed the river was closed. The FS was indeed evacuating the river due to a fire near Loon Creek that was on both sides of the river. We were given access to a sat phone to make arrangements to be flown out and we were told that the rangers were going to be flown out the next day.



Up at the airstrip there were piles of gear every where. The planes were arriving within minutes of each other, then loading the gear and passengers. On takeoff they were flying out to disappear in the smoke in less than a mile of the strip. When the planes were on the ground a lot of scheduling and load management (will it fit??) was taking place with the pilots. We got quotes of about \$2000 to haul our gear, boats, and ourselves out to Stanley, ID. There we hoped to get with our shuttle company to not shuttle our cars to the takeout.



The Indian Creek beach from l to r a pile of boats & gear to be flown out, the PDG's on the river at the same time ( they used our planes to fly out), 2 groups of commercials with a sweep boat, in front the stacked river boxes,

guides discussing the situation, and our canoes. At this time the traffic light was red and a mandatory detour was in place.

Down at the bar (beach) the commercials had built a huge stack of gear boxes, they put the most valuable gear on the inside, with a wall of boxes surrounding them. On top they had placed the plywood raft floors to form a table. This now was becoming a full bar with 8 to 10 bottles liquor, and a lot of drinks being made.

In the midst of all this partying was the serious talk of options, present FS info, what gets left behind, go or not go, what planes are available. Will all parties be forced to fly out, what gets left behind, how can it be picked up later.

#### THE PARTY

To try to define the party atmosphere, imagine a large group of raft guides sprinkle in a little bit of private boaters, now add FREE liquor, beer, & food and you have a small idea of what was going on.

As the party got going another river guide showed how to get a little more entertainment out of the MB's, using a paddle to toss them into the air about 3 to 4 ft. He placed a paddle blade on the ground and had a bag under the shaft near the blade, he placed a muffin crumb on the blade. He sat with his hand on the grip, when a MB got on the blade, he popped the thing into the air, they scrambled frantically with all paws but were right back again within minutes to get to the food. These were no ordinary MB's, these were some of those Idaho back country militant/commando trained units that were sent to all the campgrounds.

While getting to know everyone there, we were introduced to Les Bechtel the co author of 'River Rescue' and owner of one of the raft companies there. His stories were fantastic and it was a pleasure to get to know him.

The feast was in the making with 8 or 10 guides making the preparations, on the other side of the bar. Being an officer of the club has taught me well, so being a diplomat between the privates and the commercials I offered up our bag of melons, pineapple, grapes and other fruits to the feast. They invited us to make a fruit salad and we all got the invite. In starting to make the salad we asked if anyone had an extra knife for us to use, we were given a very nice roll of knives that would have made any chef proud. It was fun to see how the passengers were treated a mealtime, these were no amateurs.

The music being played was a Jethro Tull album, with the talk among the guides (think mid twenties in age) being of Steely Dan and Pink Floyd, they must only have classic rock for a radio station in town. However,, it was great seeing these kids enjoying the music of our generation.

#### THE PARTY

This party will be very hard to beat as the best river party ever; the stories were fantastic, the company delightful and all were having a good time.

Now I have to remind all that Karen was outnumbered 5 to 1 on the trip, so here goes some male point of view. One of the commercial guides was a girl that had just turned 26 two days before. Her dad was one of the commercial owners. This girl could put anyone to shame with how fast she could put up & take down a tent. She



was always involved in something going on from making a fantastic salad for the feast to cleaning up afterward. To say that she was friendly would be an understatement, so someone in our group said that she was a true river goddess. You'll get no argument from me in giving her that title; she was truly born and raised on the river.

Throughout the night there were still phone calls being made and received with one of the calls resulting in the commercials getting a contract to haul out the fire gear that had arrived by helicopter earlier in the day. This meant that they could now float all of their stuff down the next day rather than having it all flown out. It also meant an early departure in the morning.

So now we knew that the rafts would be heading down in the morning; however, our only plan that we got from the FS was we were being forced to evacuate. The sweep boat captain offered to take our Dimension down and store it at his shop. But with his hauling the gear down that offer went up in smoke (sorry couldn't resist). So with all that we headed to the tents wondering what tomorrow would bring.



#### Trilander Dimension stuffing

In the morning the two planes that we had ordered came in, with one of them being a DeHaviland Trilander, this being the biggest plane flying into IC. This was due to trying to get a 16 ft Dimension into a plane. Otherwise the other option of getting it down on the sweep boat, a very kind offer from the captain of the sweep, went up in smoke due to them getting their load of fire gear to haul down. The next option was to leave the Dimension at the ranger station with our ID paddlers offering to come in to paddle her out. After doing a trial fitting we discovered that a Dimension can make it into the plane, this due to the rocker of the canoe, anything flatter would never make the corner, as it was we left a little red on the airplane also, in addition to the thousands of red rocks.

The next morning we awoke to find the commercials all getting ready to depart, they had gotten a contract to haul fire gear down to Simplot Ranch. As we were doing the Dimension stuffing we found that they may let some of us down after all. This was the umpteenth different plan that we had heard so far that morning, but being a better option than flying out, we let the PDG's use our planes to get themselves flown out, the cats had to cut their frames to fit in the plane.

#### Green light to depart

After waiting all morning, we finally got the OK to proceed on down the river to the Little Creek Ranger Station, once there check in with the ranger before proceeding on down.

Little Creek ranger station In the afternoon we went in search of a hot spring noted on one map but not on the other. We found it about a mile below the bridge on river left. It came out of a hillside then became a small stream. There were a couple of pools built, however both were silted in completely resulting in knee deep goo to step into. We stayed the night at the LCRS, then in the morning got the word that the head of the Challis NF had given us the approval to head on



downstream. We were instructed not to stop and proceed with best speed through the fire zone.

**Loon Creek fire zone**

The party at Indian Cr was the first flashback to the movie Apocalypse. Now, I got the second when entering the fire zone. Most of the fire was the good kind of fire, scrub brush and ground cover burning with little damage to healthy trees. However about 5 to 10% was the devastating fire that resulted in trees being totally burned, this was right near Loon Cr. It was something that all of us were aware of, but still it was scary going through with fires still visible and smoke thick in the air. We passed by the Loon Cr. Area without slowing and proceeded down to Tappan Island to camp.

*To be continued ...*

*Photo credits for the November 2007 RMCC Newsletter:*

*All photos provided by authors except for "Down a Muddy River" photos provided by Jeanne Willson. 1<sup>st</sup> at departure from Night One campsite; 2<sup>nd</sup> across from Fisher Towers, at Night Two campsite.*

*More Salmon River fire pictures:*





Rocky Mountain Canoe Club  
c/o Paul Holscher  
[redacted]  
Englewood, CO 80150

**Schedule of events -- see web site for detailed information or call a club contact person**

Nov 9, 5:30-8:30, Downtown REI; Potluck, business, elections, photos. All are invited!

Nov 18-23 – Rio Grande, Big Bend NP, TX; Class II-III; Paul Holscher, cell: 303-907-1463

Dec 1 – Picture party at Doug Hurcomb's [redacted]. Bring CDs/DVDs to show

*Tentative/probable future events:*

January – Permit party

February – Canoe Smorgasbord at George Meyers Pool

March / April– Pool Session, George Meyers Pool

March – South Platte – Class I, beginners welcome

April– Wilderness Medicine/First Aid course

May – River Canoeing class, Beginner to Intermediate / contact Jeff Oxenford, [redacted]

July – Rendezvous weekend, group camping, many trips & levels, Colorado River