



The Voyageur's Companion

Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Canoe Club
www.rockymountaincanooclub.org

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October 2008 issue

COLOR VERSION at <http://rockymountaincanooclub.org/newsoct08.pdf>

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Jeanne Willson, editor

Prezidential Picks

May the best pair win on November 4th. And then on the 12th, we too will have our RMCC elections. Come to the Denver Flagship REI's small meeting room – next to the big one at 6:00. This time we will save you some trouble and RMCC will furnish the dinner from Boston Market. All you have to do is show up and help the club make some decisions for the coming year. See the agenda box in this newsletter.

So, I finally canoed Brown's Canyon. But lest I leave you any longer with the lingering illusion that I aced it, here is the real story. There is a fine line between pushing a bit to improve skills and capabilities versus over-extending yourself. The August 2 Fractions run was in the former category, as my only flip was in a side surf wave that claimed all but 1 of the victims who were sucked into its clutches.

Brown's Canyon ate my lunch. Zoom Flume broke my paddle, Big Drop dropped me, and a few other rapids left my body and ego seriously bruised. I am indebted to at least 5 people who gave me enough direction and support to do several self-rescues. It helps to have people call out "go right" or left, since once you are in the choppy water you have lost the birds-eye view of where the eddies might be. Perhaps the best boaters have already identified their self-rescue locations. Or they don't flip.

So, the moral of the story is... know your own limits and don't put other canoers at risk with frequent or difficult rescue situations. While the Trip Coordinators can certainly tell a person that they are not ready for a particular river stretch, it really is up to each boater to avoid water that is too big and bad for them. Many factors should be considered, including remoteness, portage and evacuation possibilities, water levels and temperature, etc.

It is hard to predict what might bite you. Doug Green was brought down by a Brown Recluse spider while doing Cataract in August, and is still suffering numerous side effects. Then in September, Scott

BUSINESS MEETING

AGENDA

Wednesday Nov. 12 at 6:00pm in the smaller event room at the Denver Flagship REI

- Eat your dinner (provided!)
- ACA Insurance – keep it or not? Modifications?
- Spot Device – buy 1 for club member use?
- Newsletter – move away from paper?
- How to spur more trips and TC's
- Web changes on the radar
- ELECTIONS!!!

McDonald flipped on Sunshine Rapid in the Royal Gorge and dislocated his shoulder badly. He was evacuated on the train. Please wish both of them well.

But the paddling season is nearing an end for all but a few penguins who have drysuits. After the November 12 meeting, we will take a break through the holidays. When January arrives, we will do a New Year's Party – with some discussion of permits that people are going after. This will probably happen mid-month at Mat Bozek's clubhouse in Northglenn, so keep an eye on the web schedule.

Then Wendy Gilmour – a new resident of Colorado Springs – has promised to show photos from her Bonnet Plume River (northern Yukon) trip of this summer and videos of eastern Canada rivers, including the Gatineau. As we have other sources for Canada footage, we will probably do an "All Canada" night in the cold of winter. It will include some photos of the Kootenay by Tom Jacklin and Barbara Olasz who live up there and (we hope) will lead a group of us down that waterway (III-) and their White River – which is actually an unreal shade of aqua-green – next August. Tom and Barbara drove down for the recent Flaming Gorge trip, and he joined us on Lodore in '06.

Let's hope that Halloween is scarier than the election results - - {:(}

Karen A.

Editor's note: remember to go to the link to see the newsletter on line and in color:

<http://rockymountaincanooclub.org/newsoc08.pdf>

A Paddling Venture on Shoshone Lake (Private Trip)

By Bill and Kathy Ashworth

Shoshone Lake in southwestern Wyoming is the largest backcountry (i.e. roadless) lake in the lower 48 states and has been a fantasy destination of many paddlers throughout the years. In August of '08, Bill and Kathy Ashworth of Colorado and Dick Schwind and Lillian McMath of California/Wyoming spent four nights on this fabled lake and lived to tell this tale. The story actually began the previous February when we submitted campsite reservations to Yellowstone National Park's backcountry ranger unit (cost \$20). We were notified in April or May that we'd received our first choices for dates and campsites. Both Dick and Lillian had done the trip years before and recommended we get campsite location tips from a mutual friend in Jackson, and her suggestions were excellent. We requested the first and last nights at the closest campsite to entrance point on Shoshone (Channel camp 8Q9) and the second and third nights at a southern shore campsite about two thirds down the lake towards the western geyser basin (Tranquility camp 8T5).

A little background here: Shoshone is reached by launching on the southwest side of Lewis Lake and paddling three miles along the western and northern shore to the mouth of the Lewis River (or Lewis Boat Channel as it is listed on the Yellowstone maps). The trip begins with a formal visit to the Backcountry office at the Park entrance where your reservation is converted to a permit that's to be displayed at each campsite. There's a mandatory viewing of a film on backcountry "dos and don'ts". Grizzly bear encounters are treated in depth and are to be taken very seriously. Bear Spray, basically nuclear-grade pepper spray, is highly recommended and is widely available at outdoor stores in the Yellowstone region. Along with Bear Spray antidote for the treatment for those lucky enough to get a whiff of their own medicine. We launched, as recommended, at the Lewis Lake boat ramp, with our cars parked nearby. Then it's three miles up the Channel to the southeast corner of Shoshone Lake, which is roughly twelve miles long and varies in width from a half mile to several miles. The first two miles up the Channel is relatively easy paddling but the last mile is too swift and often too shallow to paddle and so you must get out and tow your boat to Shoshone. Dick and Lillian had remembered this as a non-issue given the clear tow path along the river, making lining very straight-forward. Well, the '88 fire changed all that! The banks are now completely covered with dead trees, piled up as if dumped like pick-

up-sticks from the sky. Lining is now impossible and towing from mid-river is required. The last mile took up two and a quarter hours! But the footing was good in one to two feet of water, and the water temperature was reasonable for us in mid-August. Would be considerable colder in June or early July and some have suggested waders for trips that early.

Thank goodness, we'd requested the Channel camp so that we were close as soon as we cleared the Channel. The camps are well set up, with bear-bars (tree trunk cross-pieces lashed 20 feet overhead) and nicely set pit-toilets. Our first and last campsites had spectacular sunrise views and the other site had wonderful sunset and early-morning steam vent views. The heavy load capacity of the canoes allowed us plenty of cooking and creature comfort, including a fourteen inch aluminum Dutch oven which we used for wonderful dinners and Lillian's fabulous upside down cakes. The linked photo site will show one of her more spectacular successes.

Only the southeast portion of the lake were burned in '88 and so Shoshone remains a heavily forested mountain lake which can be explored only on established trails or by boat. And explore we did, especially to the extensive geyser basin on the northwestern side. While we could have made that trip more quickly by crossing to the northern shore at the Narrows (less than a half mile across), crossing are heavily discouraged due to the strong and unpredictable wind and subsequent waves that Shoshone is prone to. Drownings occur nearly every year and almost always during crossing attempts. The Shoshone geyser basin includes all the thermal features you'd find at Old Faithful, West Thumb, or the other Yellowstone sites, but in a natural state - no boardwalks, no railings, nothing in fact to guide or protect the unwary visitor. And the careless do occasionally get removed from the gene pool when they venture to close to the hot pools of this amazing area.

The return trip down the Channel was accomplished quickly and pleasantly (the terrible mile was accomplished in twenty minutes this time) and we reached our car before the afternoon winds whipped up Lewis Lake as it's also prone to. In summary, a fabulous trip, though not for the faint of heart or unsteady of foot. Wonderful scenery, challenging paddling, wildflowers and wildlife galore, fabulous fishing (or the well-prepared). Definitely a worthy check-off for any paddling life list. Below is a link to the photo site (with captions) we created for the trip. The pictures are a combination of Lillian's, a Trevor H. from Google Earth, and the Paddling.net user group.
http://www.kodakgallery.com/I.jsp?c=b6ejy8x8.65vup5yc&x=0&y=3eqd1x&localeid=en_US

A Wind in Our Face Adventure on the Drinking and Churchill Rivers

By Jim Baker-Jarvis

This summer Karen, Aquene (age 17), and I canoed a very remote 140 mile route in North Saskatchewan for 14 days. This trip included rapids and portages that had not been used for years. The first 25 miles were over a mix of lakes and small rivers with a bunch of arduous portages. The next 65 miles we were on the Drinking Water River from its source to its confluence with the Churchill River. We then canoed up the Churchill and up a number of rapids for 50 miles to access a road.



Karen, Aquene, and me at the access point

Hunter Falls on the Drinking River



In this trip we had only our single prospector canoe. Aquene had a nice seat in the center from which she could paddle. As we started our adventure, visibility was severely hampered by dense forest fire smoke, we were expecting to see fire at any moment, but never did. The smoke was so thick your lungs felt congested. Gradually, over the next few days the smoke cleared. We encountered no one from the starting point through the next 11 days until when we came out on the Churchill River. For most of the trip there was no fire rings from previous travelers. This route was designed by us and really no one does this route. Portages between lakes were almost nonexistent after we got in around 25 miles or so. We

had hundreds of square miles of Canadian wilderness to ourselves for most of the trip. This was a dream trip of clear, jewel-like lakes, and solitude. We only fished at camp for food and always caught enough to eat in ½ hour or so. In camp we spent hours cooking bannock and fish around the camp fires and picking berries for pancakes.

We did, however, have the strong winds against us almost every single day, for at least parts of the day. This made traveling a little hazardous on the big 10 mile long lakes. On many of the days, the winds were 20-30 miles per hour. To beat the wind on those days we tried to get on the water by 6 AM, but this strategy did not work on this trip. The wind was howling all night long and we were forced to paddle hard against the wind in big waves for many hours. Having 3 paddlers in a canoe is a real advantage when constantly fighting the wind.

On the Churchill we had to ascend a number of rapids some in the class 3 to 4 range, which may be difficult since the Churchill was flowing about 450 cubic meters per second (12,000 CFS). On one rapid we attempted to ascend by paddling eddy to eddy and then tried to line, we were stopped when the lining because it was too hazardous. We then had to paddle back down the river and find another route up the rapid.

When we got back to the car I found out my Dad had a stroke while we were on the trip. By the time we drove back, he had died in the hospital.



One of our many swims



Portaging on a non-portage trail (Baker-Jarvis trip)

A Novice Trip Coordinators Experience Using ACA Insurance by Doug Hurcomb

It's easy: If I can organize a trip following the clubs insurance requirement, so can you. Do not let the insurance issue stop you from getting involved in trip leadership.

Follow the yellow-brick road: The ACA instructions posted on the club website are easy to locate. The club webpage has an easy to find "Trip Organization" link.

Control, control, control: ACA insurance does not take control away from the trip coordinator; you can still run your trip the way you want to. The insurance enhances group cohesiveness and safety awareness by getting everyone involved in safety. The insurance relieves the participants of vulnerability if an accident occurs before, during, and after the trip.

Monkey see, monkey do: There is help from the RMCC

officers if you need it – just ask.

There is a little additional work to do and some paperwork:

- Prior to the trip, download a few forms and make a roster of participants
- At the put-in, participants pay \$5 and sign the ACA waiver **OR** provide their ACA number
- During the trip, follow the safety plan
- After the trip, mail the paperwork to the trip coordinator

Down the road: The process relieves you of keeping accurate records for long periods because ACA has all the important documentation after the trip. In the case of an accident, ACA will help to protect the RMCC and its members from litigation.



A camp on the Churchill above a rapid

Warning about camping at Lake McConaughy in Nebraska.

by Jerry Nolan

While traveling east to Minnesota, Marci and I thought Lake McConaughy would be a nice place to spend the night. It was a clear day with no rain forecast so we decided to forego the rain fly of our tent. We would gaze at the stars and blissfully drift off to sleep. I awoke at around 3:00 AM for no particular reason and heard a mysterious noise I could not identify. It had a two tone bursting jet sound to it and came and went. Perhaps if I weren't half asleep, I could do a better job of identifying it. First it sounded close then it was suddenly further away. My curiosity wouldn't let me sleep. Suddenly Marci yelled, "Sprinkler!" and in an instant a burst of water came pouring into the tent and hit us from head to toe. I surged with anger and scrambled to get the rain fly up. Another stream of water hit me square in the back as I worked on the rain fly. A woman's horrific scream from another tent pierced the night, then more screams from other sites. The whole camp came to life with people scrambling as if for their lives. We got our rain fly up quickly and searched for dry areas inside the tent. We were surprised how much warmth our wet sleeping bags still provided. I drifted off to sleep plotting how I would get even with the stupid campground managers.

In the morning Marci remarked that this would be a funny story some day. (I'm still not laughing.) She also pointed out some small sprinkler warning signs as we drove away and how she vaguely remembered someone telling us about a sprinkler system that came on during the middle of the night in a campground. We also discovered that primitive camping is available on the sand beaches of Lake McConaughy for \$6.00. We would have taken that had we arrived early enough to discover it. The downside of the beach camping appeared to be that the beaches suffered from a serious litter problem. Lack of toilets nearby would also be inconvenient.



On the return trip we camped at Sutherland Reservoir between North Platte and Ogallala. We chose primitive camping for \$8.00 under some cottonwood trees and found the conditions to be good. The reservoir is actually a cooling lake for an electric power plant (coal powered) that can be seen on the other side of the lake. The water is very warm for wading and swimming. There were flocks of pelicans frolicking on the lake. With binoculars we could see several bursts of water shooting ten feet high into the air like a fountain designed by engineers. Later we learned that this is water being pumped from the primary cooling lake into Sutherland Reservoir.

Karen cooking



Rocky Mountain Canoe Club – Contact Information

Website: <http://www.rockymountaincanoecub.org>

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

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

Please send any updates of your contact info (mailing address, email, or phone number) directly to Kathy at Thanks!



ROCKY MOUNTAIN CANOE CLUB
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In This Issue: Letter from the President

Schedule of events: see web site; call the contact person to sign up.