



The Voyageur's Companion

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

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August 2011 issue

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Jeanne Willson, editor

The View Down River

Bill Ashworth, President

Whew! Finally home for a few days! As a newly retired sixty-something, this summer I finally had an opportunity to do all the trips that presented themselves and these took us to rivers in Nebraska, Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah, and Idaho as well as several right here in Colorado. All these trips were great, but perhaps most memorable was a late July permit with CA rafting friends on the Main Salmon (my first return in 20+ years). Kathy did fantastically well in her first big water paddling in our 14' inflatable canoe; at 18K cfs, the self-bailer canoe was a necessity). The photo shows our last camp after an evening thunderstorm.

Schedule. I hope your summer paddling has been equally rewarding. The club schedule has been reasonably busy and we've got some great trips yet to come before we put the boats away in the attic for the winter. After the rescheduled Rendezvous, we've got a Labor Day Flaming Gorge trip, a September Canyonlands trip, and an early October Rattlesnake Canyon-Ruby Canyon Colorado trip. Come on in, the water's fine!

Roster. After a gap of a couple years, we will be mailing out paper copies of the RMCC Roster at the end of August. Those at Rendezvous will receive their copies early. Though we lose some members each year, new ones keep our numbers healthy. The new Roster shows **124 currently registered members for 2011.**

Rendezvous. Hope to see many of you at the Rendezvous at Radium where I'll be desperately trying to capture one of the Dutch Oven competition awards (or die eating). Most of the "helper" assignments have been filled and we have a number of trip leaders signed up.

See you down the river,
Bill

TAKE NOTE!

Rendezvous

Due to high water, the Rendezvous will be held August 19-21. It's your first time? No worries! Contact any of the officers or organizers to ask any questions you might have. It's a fun and friendly time, so come!

Stephanie Wells attended last year, and had this to say:

"This was a great trip for me because I got to do some class II-III with some experienced folks. Especially Debbie, who mentored me and instructed me through a practice roll-over and escape before we set out. THANKS DEBBIE!"

Flaming Gorge trip

A Labor Day favorite, the Flaming Gorge trip takes you down the clearest river in the West through ponderosa-filled red rock canyons. The trip features two nights camping riverside, one portageable Class III rapid plus 22 named Class II rapids including several drops, and a stop at the historic Jarvie Ranch. Contact Bill Ashworth to sign up.



Above: camp on the Main Salmon. Photo by Bill Ashworth.

May Paddling with a Frisky Mother Nature

By Karen Amundson

May found me on three long weekend paddles, with Mother Nature playing constant tricks. Jeanne's Gunnison Trip in early May had a long paddle in to the layover camp and a gorgeous hike up Dominguez Canyon. But the cfs doubled over two days to 6000 and it rained the entire third day on our paddle out.

A non-RMCC trip down the Rio Chama was delightful except for 2 cold nights. I often manage freezing evenings with 2 sleeping bags - - 1 like a blanket over the other warmer 1. We were on the river at the same time as some BLM folks and water engineers who were studying the river to try and implement a more natural set of peak flows. See the attached meeting invitation, and I have additional contact info if you want to follow their progress.

But the Slick Rock to Bedrock section of the Dolores over the Memorial Day Weekend trumped the other two due to a day and a half of winds up to perhaps 50 mph!! The wind was so strong that:

- It blew a neighbors tent into the air, flinging all the stakes so far that a few were totally lost
- It convinced several of us to add multiple guy wires on our tents to be tied off to trees and bushes
- It threw 3 kids off of a small duckie and blew it high into the air and up the bank
- It blew a raft up against 2 of our canoes with an oar splitting Dianne Donovan's lip and causing a goose egg bruise on Jean Jennings' shin
- It completely wore out our 2 solo paddlers and caused 1 tandem to swamp and flip
- It forced us to stash our canoes in the tamarisk to keep them from rolling away!!!

Bison on the Niobrara River trip, May 2011. Trip leader: Bill Ashworth. Photo: Kathryn Mutz



But this was better than the Slick Rock to Bedrock trip of 2009 where we had frigid hail 4 times in 1 day. This time we found in both of the windy camps that there is a quiet space right at the bottom of the cliff and that this is a delightful kitchen, dining room, and storytelling environment.

Our trip started at 600 cfs near the beginning of the 10 day release, and finished at 1000 cfs. The McPhee engineers gradually stepped up their release by 50cfs every couple of hours, and it took that water about 24 hours to reach Slick Rock.

View of the Smith River, MT. Photo by Tom Jacklin. July, 2011



The river initially was twisty and meandering and fun to paddle. That progressed to a section where you had batches of huge rocks to pick through, many as big as vans and a couple the size of school buses. The 4 class III rapids were challenging, and we all came through them upright. We were able to find the petroglyphs and bird-like dinosaur tracks on the last day. The takeout was a zoo, but people and dogs were polite and helpful. Since I've had good weather twice on the confluence of the Dolores and San Miguel down to Gateway over Memorial Day, I'm hoping to catch balmy days on the Slick Rock section in the future.

Frog Rock Rapid on the Arkansas

Lyn Berry, former RMCC President

October 9, 2010

Unfortunately, a rafter may be trapped beneath the big rock of Frog Rock Rapid about 3 miles north of Buena Vista. This is the result of an accident that happened earlier in July. Recently, there has been much publicity about this rapid and possible actions in the river to find the woman and/or alter the rapid to make it safer.

I live within a mile of Frog Rock rapid and am very familiar with this section of the Arkansas River. A number of boaters have died from this rapid over the last several years, so Frog Rock has been labeled by many as a killer. This is an unfortunate distinction.

As with any rapid, if boated using the proper precautions and exercising appropriate skill, it can be run enjoyably and safely. Attached are three pictures, with my annotations showing this rapid at very low level, much too low to be run. I have attached a picture at high water for comparison. Two different routes are indicated. It is indeed fun and interesting to examine this rapid when the water is very low. Look at all those exposed rocks!!

In the winter, when the water level is even lower, I have looked under the big rock (sort-of) from shore and noticed not only how under cut it is but also has a nasty looking assortment of logs.

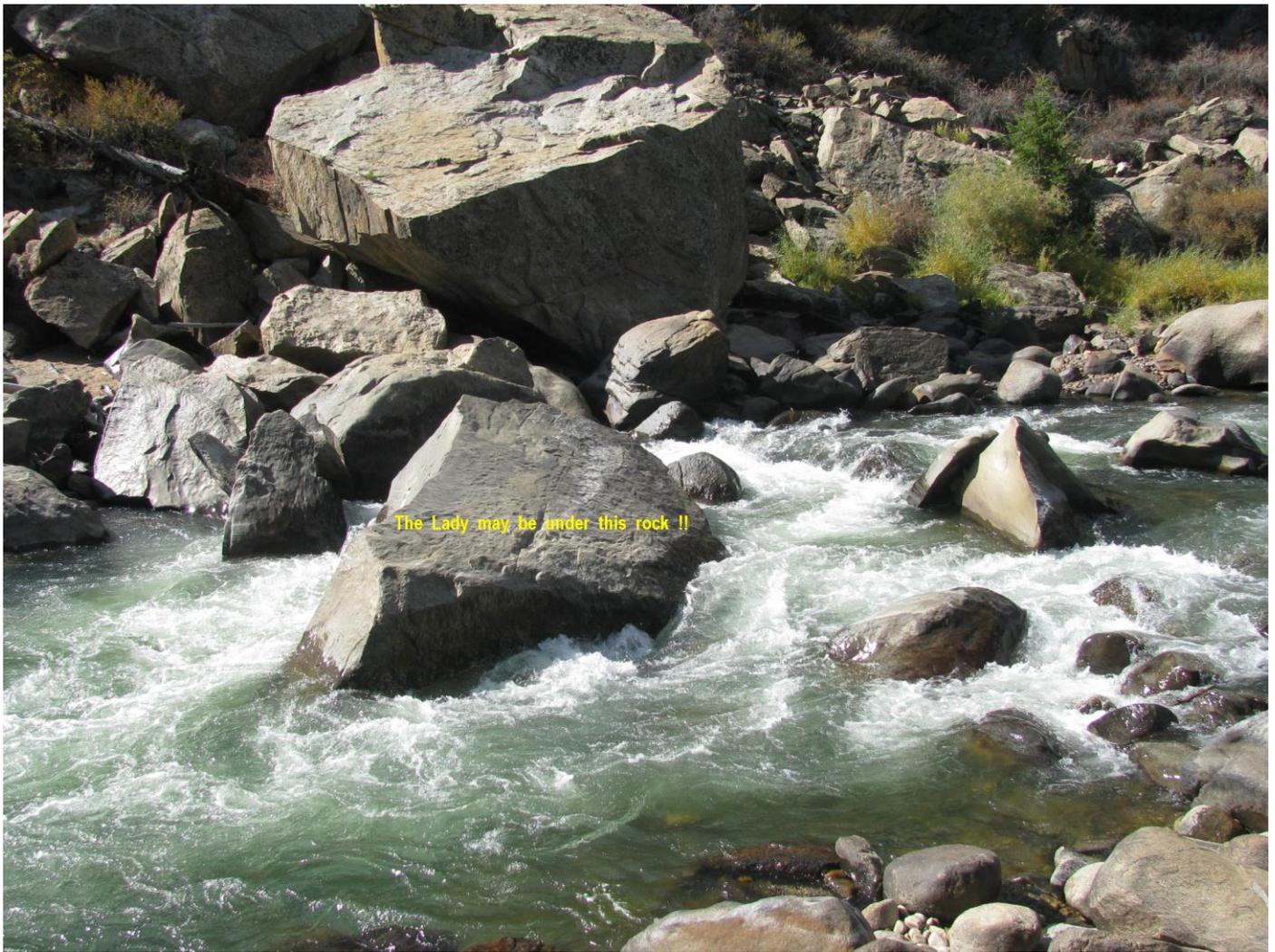
If the water is high enough, I run down the left side. See green-route in pictures. If the water is too low for the left, I run the right side making a somewhat skillful cut to the left past that particular rock. See the red-route in pictures. To do this right side wrong would have serious consequences.

I do not know what happened to the raft at the time of the accident. The water was high –but I do not know exactly how high. The rafters likely were doing the right side and high-sided on the big frog rock a.k.a "the sieve". The people were all likely thrown upstream. One person did not appear afterwards!

I do not think it necessary or appropriate to expend the effort at building a temporary coffer-dam to divert the water away from the frog. I also do not think it is a good idea to remove or alter the rock or change the rapid.

The missing woman may be under the rock shown by the purple arrow.





Frog Rock follow-up, spring 2011:

There has been a big change. Real BIG. Early fall the various agencies attempted to find the entrapped person, and were successful. Glad for this. They essentially built a coffer dam to divert water away from the big rock. They removed the dam when finished.

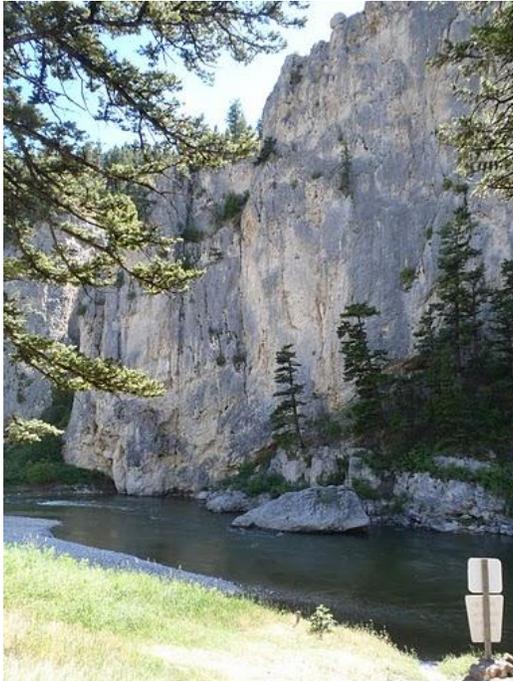
However, they also channelized the left side (river left) of the river, taking away almost all of the rocks on that side. The big "frog rock" was left alone. So now it is a trivial easy-class-two run down the left side of the river. Or so it looks now, but keep in mind that the water level is very low. As I look at the rapid with this low water level it is not possible to tell how the river-right run, that I had always done, has been changed, if at all. Wait till spring-summer and the whole rapid will have to be scouted and re-evaluated.

Best to all and best wishes for a good and safe 2011 season on the rivers.

--Lyn Berry

Editor's Eddy Lines

Jeanne Willson



Smith River, Rattlesnake campsite, one of the prettiest. See Picassa slideshows from Karen here:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/103886968733978723319/201107SmithRiverMT?authuser=0&feat=directlink#5638238751560538914>

And Tom has videos on YouTube; search Smith River Canoeing; his photos are here:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/lh/sredir?uname=ocoe101&target=ALBUM&id=5633127809114684113&authkey=Gv1sRqCJfWpq70q-jNw&feat=email>

This year, I've visited rivers in Colorado, New Mexico, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana. I've also hiked many times in the high alpine this summer. Do you know what has struck me the most? The birds. There are thousands upon thousands of birds on our rivers; even now, in late July on the Smith River in Montana, the birds were singing and calling 18 hours a day and eagles cruised overhead at least hourly. But the montane and subalpine areas are nearly silent.

The contrast has brought home to me how important our rivers are to birds. But the silence in the mountain areas is also due to the huge die-off of not just lodgepole pines but many other conifer species as well. Our limber pines and bristlecone pines are threatened by the white pine blister rust; our spruces are losing the battle in some places against the budworm as well as bark beetles. As the lodgepole pine areas become more inhospitable to birds, the mountains will be even quieter. These massive die-offs span New Mexico through Alberta and British Columbia to Alaska. This is not just a Colorado problem. Nor is it just a North American problem. The great pine and spruce-fir forests of the Russian taiga (boreal, coniferous forests) are also infested by 300 species of bark beetles and massive tree die-offs are occurring there as well. While there is a temporary increase in insects that the songbirds depend on, the insect populations crash after the trees die from the blue-stain fungus carried by the beetles. And so rivers, always important to birds, now take on the role of song bird sanctuary...any questions??

Safety: Paddling.net has an article (found here: <http://www.paddling.net/sameboat/> on Tamia Nelson's "In the Same Boat" page) called "Thunder? I Wonder...More Thoughts on Seeking Shelter From the Storm" about getting caught in a thunderstorm on a lake 3 miles from camp> Bottom line, from Nelson's article:

Is there any hard and fast rule dictating what to do when you hear thunder? Well, the [US National Weather Service](#) thinks so. And their advice? "When thunder roars, go indoors!" In other words, they urge you to take shelter in a "safe building" or vehicle *as soon as you hear thunder*, since lightning can travel many miles from the storm clouds that gave birth to it, striking down as a "bolt from the blue," sometimes with deadly effect. This is very good advice, of course. But there's an obvious problem, isn't there? Backcountry boaters are often many miles away from any sort of building or vehicle. (Tents and canoes don't count, I'm afraid.) So the Weather Service's hard and fast rule proves a bit hard for a canoeist or kayaker to apply in

practice, as the Service readily acknowledges: "[Y]ou are not safe outside," they admit. That's wonderfully short and to the point, even if it is more than a little disquieting. Which brings us to John's second question:

Once you hear thunder, is it safe to hang about on the water until you know the storm is headed your way? In a word, no — as the preceding paragraph implies. That said, I confess that this is one rule I've often ignored in the past. But I've underestimated lightning's reach. The Weather Service doesn't equivocate. When you hear thunder you're already within range of the storm's big guns. It's time to get off the water and under cover.

Easy to say, but hard to do. On an open-water crossing in a small boat there's little recourse but prayer. If you're paddling on inland waters, however, you should begin casting about for a refuge ASAP. Since buildings and vehicles are likely to be in short supply, you'll have to make the most of whatever the country affords. Give tall, solitary trees a wide berth. Avoid clearings, hilltops, and ridgelines, too. You don't want a room with a view, after all. You'll get the best odds when you hunker down among a uniform stand of not-too-tall trees. Are there no such trees to be seen? Then look for a sheltering valley."

So now you know ...

Safety, Part 2: Thank you to Carol Duecker for committing to taking a Wilderness First Responder course. Remember that RMCC is providing a rebate to RMCC members who take first aid classes. A Wilderness First Aid course will be taught through the Colorado Mountain Club this fall; the course is taught by medical and search and rescue professionals, and it's packed with information and hands-on experience. Take it!

Safety, Part 3:

What to do when the mosquitoes are winning? A Yampa near-victim (Ken Werner) models gear that works! The Yampa has different, bigger, nastier mosquitoes with a more painful, long lasting bite that is more likely to cause an immune response in people than we have on the Front Range. This species of mosquito is partial to floodplains and the Yampa has many square miles of floodplains for mosquito breeding. Many of the 3,500 species of mosquitoes spread diseases such as West Nile, malaria, encephalitis, meningitis, and heartworm. Certain mosquitoes in the US are invasives from other continents, just as leafy spurge is.

Skills:

Basic Canoeing class ran on the last weekend in July. Thanks, Jim and Karen Baker-Jarvis, for providing the class and giving some newer members great new skills and experiences. We hope to see you at the Rendezvous!

Ken Wenker means business ...





Mat Bozek navigates a rapid on the Twin Bridges run of the Colorado, August, 2011

Hawkmoth caterpillars on the Smith River, and the scourge of leafy spurge:

More on leafy spurge: <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/natres/03107.html>





The Leafy Spurge Hawkmoth Caterpillars, *Hyles euphorbiae*, have been introduced from Europe to help control leafy spurge, an invasive weed in North America. Carol and Werner Duecker identified, and Karen found and photographed, both color morphs (red and yellow).

Leafy spurge: Cattle won't eat it; it grows like the weed it is; sheep and goats WILL eat it; still, control is very difficult for many reasons including its toxicity and its underground root & food storage system that may grow 15 feet deep. VERY common now.

Rocky Mountain Canoe Club Information

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In This Issue: Editor's Eddy Lines: Thunderstorms; summer Rendezvous;

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

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

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CANOE CLUB

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