



# The Voyageur's Companion

Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Canoe Club  
[www.rockymountaincanooclub.org](http://www.rockymountaincanooclub.org)

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June 2008 issue

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Jeanne Willson, editor

COLOR VERSION at <http://rockymountaincanooclub.org/colorjun08.pdf>

## Paddlemoanium – aka the Prez' Letter

By Karen Amundson

Be apprised that everyone I mention in the letter deserves a big **Thank You**. I promise not to moan about anyone or anything -- except for 2 outbreaks of hail on the Dolores Slick Rock to Bedrock run. It was a great trip led by Gary Faust, and I finally got to experience that section of river.

I'm delighted to report that we had three successful trips over the Memorial Day weekend. Weather and high water were dished out via tent-shredding winds on Jeff Oxenford's Niobrara and via scary, sleeping-bag dampening water on Mike Langello's Six Mile Gap.

May was especially busy with three events designed to garner new members and fulfill our swap with REI for meeting space. Bob Cook invited me to speak at one of the new Paddle Meetup group's meetings, so I showed photos to a plethora of paddlercraft people.

Then Jeff O., Jeanne Willson, and I gave a presentation at the Denver Flagship REI, with videos of famous paddlers, a demo of various clothing, and photos of 10 easy rivers. Now I have heard from 2 sources that the Aikens and Kerry Edwards demo paddling duds the best -- by starting with it all on and then stripping. Next time we will either need to pull them out of retirement to show us the routine, or better yet recruit some young, good-looking new members into the club for this purpose.

And finally, Gail Campbell organized our booth at REI Paddle Days. Jeanne W., Doug Hurcomb and I assisted, and we must have talked with most of the 373 people that attended that big event. Jeanne was dazzling the guys with demos of how hip movements should be used in her new Esquif.

Some of the newer club members and Jeff O's class grads are going on Bill Ashworth's June 14 Brighton to Ft. Lupton run. My June 21-22 Yampa – Craig to Duffy trip is great for beginners and we usually see a variety of birds.

The Rendezvous at Radium – July 18-20 this year – is always a great social event, and it offers numerous fun stretches of day paddles. I still remember arriving at my first Rendezvous and being totally amazed at seeing about 50 cars with 1 or more canoes on top.

Thanks to all of the current officers who are doing a great job of running the club, and also to Dave Allured who on several occasions has shown us the ropes and dug up files for us. Gail C., Kathy Ashworth and I emailed and called about 50 people to improve the accuracy of the roster in this newsletter. In the future, please send any updates of your contact info (mailing address, email, or phone number) directly to Kathy.

I'm delighted to see better than average runoff in Colorado, but disappointed to hear of the multiple drownings (unrelated to our club). Hopefully you all will remain safety-conscious, and our club will continue its mostly injury-free journey.

Many Happy Paddles,  
Karen A.

# The Dolores River, Slick Rock to Bedrock, May 22-25, 2008

By Jeanne Willson with contributions from Karen Amundson, Lyn Berry & Jeanne Younghaus

Karen A, April, 2008: *Jeanne! You can't miss the Dolores! There hasn't been enough water to paddle it for years! This year there will be boatable releases!*

Gary F., Day Two: *This has got to be the all-time coldest, most miserable I've ever felt in the outdoors.*

Gary F, later, to wife: *It was a little chilly, but not bad. The sun came out and the canyons looked gorgeous!*

Jerry N., not on trip: *Don't worry. It never rains much here. This is the desert.*

Here are some surprises about the Dolores. First of all, it exists. In the 20 years I've lived in Colorado, and being relatively new to river canoeing, I haven't given much thought to SW Colorado – I thought it was pretty much just uranium mining, Ouray and the San Juans, and Mesa Verde. No. If you drive the 140 miles from Grand Junction to the Dolores put-in at Slick Rock, you'll drive through wild, isolated, canyons of unimaginable grandeur. First you cross the Uncompahgre Plateau through the strange and stunning Unaweep canyon; you are flanked by tall walls of billion-plus year old gneisses and schists and pegmatite dikes. You can't see the younger sedimentary rocks from the canyon floor, but you can drive up a side road and see that they are there, set back and eroded away from the edge of the ancient rocks. Unaweep crosses a divide – all the more strange for a canyon! – draining to the Gunnison on the east, and the Dolores on the west.

Then when you reach Gateway, you are again in Red Rock country. It's National Park-quality scenery, but too remote and rugged to host a national park! It's a drive you should make some time in your life.

As you get close to the put in, there is a stretch of rolling sagebrush rangeland that you must cross to get to the Slick Rock put-in. The sense of being just kind of NOT in a civilized part of the world, possibly on a different planet, is quite strong.

All of a sudden, you arrive at the put-in and it could be a busy Wal-Mart parking lot except for the lack of pavement and the lack of a Wal-Mart. But people are

schlepping packages back and forth – dry bags full of groceries, bulk purchases (beer), and lots of other items.



**Figure 1 Lyn, Jeanne Y, Jeanne W, Karen, Alison, Gary**

When we arrived, it had been raining for much of the previous 15 hours. Hard, driving, drenching rain. (We had all taken shelter the night before – Karen at her sister's, Lyn and Jeannie at a motel, and Alison and I were rescued by Jerry and Marci Nolan in Grand Junction.) The temperature was in the high 30s, and the wind was blowing strong. The Dolores was running its controlled release of 2100 cfs – plenty full and fast for a narrow canyon river – but all the way across Colorado we had watched the surging, swollen Colorado River, and even the normally sedate Gunnison was too full to canoe. The conditions were inauspicious for our trip, but we decided to go for it. We did spring for the shuttle service to get our cars to Bedrock, which cut out at least 3 hours of extra driving.

The first section – our first day – goes through private land, no camping allowed. With the wind and raw weather, we wanted to stop early. But we aren't telling where we stopped. We had a nice hike up a draw and over a hill. Pleasant but not stunning desert open canyon scenery, lots of things blooming – senecios, fendlera, penstemons both scarlet and blue, cushion daisies. We cooked and ate our gourmet potluck dinner, did a few tunes around the campfire, went to bed, and it started raining again.

Another surprise about the Dolores: It's a 50 mile trip and almost 35 miles of that is in a deep, dark, narrow, closed-in canyon. Our entry to the canyon on Friday: Wet tents in the morning, 46 degrees. A respite in the rain allowed us to eat a good meal and pack. This section is still easy going on the

river – various class I bigger water but nothing difficult. We passed the Gypsum put-in, which is the point of no return on this river. For the next 35 miles, there is no way to leave the canyon except by the river. The river is closely flanked by canyon walls typically 200 to 400 feet high but often up to 500 or 600 feet above our heads, with the maximum being about 900 feet; the relief is greater if you count the high plains beyond our view from the river. While these canyon walls were huge, they also kept the occasional sunshine out and effectively channeled the storm winds that continued to come up over the trip.

Then the rain started again. Remember the wind and the temperature? After the wind blew at just pre-hurricane strength & the pounding rain started, a hard long hailstorm pummeled us. We dove in our bags for more clothing. The rain continued. We paddled. The wind came up again and with it terror of what would come with it. More hail. More wind, more rain, more hail. More clothing, if we had it. Three times it hailed on us on the water, and a fourth in camp. We paddled just to stay warm and try to stop shivering.

Don't tell Gary's wife. This is all our little secret.



**Shelter from the hail storm**

We started looking for camps. But the willows, poison ivy and tamarisk have all grown up along the riverbanks and we looked at place after place where we couldn't beach the boats, or there were no tent sites, or rafters were already occupying the site and refused to share.



**Ambush Rock, Lyn & Jeanne Y**

Finally, after 22 miles of paddling, we found a rock ledge just long enough for our 5 tents. The cactus was plentiful, and blooming; red penstemons bloomed all over. We moved in and it started raining and hailing again. At least now we could take shelter in our tents, where I hung up wet clothes inside the tent (optimist!!). Finally it let up enough to cook dinner; for a while I thought it was going to be sunflower seeds and Kashi bars for dinner. We went to bed early to stay warm, and fell asleep with the roar of the river doubled as it reverberating against the canyon wall beside which we slept.

The next day gave us our first respite. Pleasant, fun paddling, a bit less distance, a nice but short hike at Spring Creek, Spring Creek Rapid and more, and a truly stunning campground at Coyote Wash that provided room and time to wander, or rest, or hike. The wildflowers were lovely, the geology was fascinating. That evening, the stars blinked out as the clouds again covered us.

Lyn Berry speaks:

What a wonderful river: a beautiful red-rock canyon; plenty of birds (especially at night (!)); a great water-level: high enough to be fast and challenging, but not intimidating; no problem with

finding good campsites; challenging weather, but not too cold (most of the time).

Have to say that this Dolores trip was the most varied weather-trip of all time: from very cold rain & hail with wind, to a good sampling of the more usual hot & sunny days. On our “worst” weather day (Day Two), we were out-maneuvered for a campsite at the Grotto by another group. For ourselves, we found a nice spot a mile or so further down stream. Tents had to be snuggled against the base of the cliff which afforded reasonable shelter. (see picture) The little bit of rain that afternoon and evening was not quite enough to dampen the enthusiasm of the group.

Day Three:

After our little hike, we ran **Spring Canyon rapid**. Nearly everyone ran the right side, which was a straight shot. Lyn & Jeanne did go the left side, but they easily avoided the nasty rock wall.



Never has a rock ledge been such an inviting place to sleep!

Jeanne W:

Day Four, Coyote Wash to Take-Out Rapid (not yet on the map; see below) On Day Four, we faced all the Class III rapids. One Holer poured water in 3 of our 4 boats, but no one swam (in fact, no one swam the whole trip). All of the other rapids offered fun rides. Ambush Rocks – NOT a named rapid -- took us by surprise as the guide book doesn't tell you that there are rocks behind the rocks around which you must quickly navigate, or bounce off of, as you wish (or must). Day Four also gave us a short, don't-miss hike to clear and numerous tino dino tracks on an ancient mud flat, and several panels of pictographs. Our hike was sunny and that alone made everything look better!

Lyn and Jeanne Y. :

Some of the comments heard shortly after running **ONE-HOLE rapid**:

“Scared shi..\*&\*.less, went anyhow”,

“Where did that hole come from?”

“Took path less travelled”,

“Right Right Right Ohh Well!”

“Did everyone see the pretty rock on the left?”

“Better to not use the right channel.”

By the time we all finished with **S-Turn rapid**, everyone realized it was time to go home and come back another time/year for more rapids. What a fine rapid: great waves and holes so it does require some artful maneuvering.

Lyn & Jeanne did do this same stretch a second time a week later. Still the same fine run, but have to say the weather was the more-desired hot, sunny, dry and typical Dolores weather.

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Jeanne W:

At the take-out, after four days of grey, cold weather and cold water, I didn't feel my usual end-of-trip regret. We hadn't been there 10 minutes when we all heard a thunderous booming not far upriver. The shout went up – Rockfall! – and we ran to a vantage point where we saw a hundred feet of rock dust rising on River Right against the canyon wall. We couldn't see whether the many tons of falling rocks hit the water, but it appeared that they did. So perhaps there is a new rapid on the Dolores, Take-out Rapid.

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# Summer River Rendezvous

## 2008

July 18 late afternoon through noon on July 20  
Colorado River at Radium

### Welcome

Everyone is invited to Rocky Mountain Canoe Club's Summer Rendezvous on the Colorado River. This is our big group event of the summer -- a fun weekend of river canoeing, camping, socializing and picnicking. The location is the Radium group campsite southwest of Kremmling, Colorado.

Newcomers and novices are welcome! There will be river trips for most skill levels. You must be a member, or the guest of a member, to participate. Memberships may be purchased in advance by mail, \$20 per year, and forms may be found at [rockymountaincanoeclub.org](http://rockymountaincanoeclub.org). You may also join at the Rendezvous.

### Directions

From I-70 in Silverthorne, take Hwy 9 North almost all the way to Kremmling. About 1-2 miles before Kremmling, turn left on County Road 1 (dirt) AKA Trough Road. Go west and south approximately 15 miles to intersection with 11 Road where there should be a sign to Radium. Turn right onto 11 Road and go about 2.5 miles to the Radium BLM recreation site, which is on the left just before the road crosses the Colorado River.

For those of you coming from west of Frisco, take I-70 to the Wolcott exit. Take Hwy 131 north 15 miles to State Bridge, then right (northeast) on County Road 1 (dirt) about 10 miles, then left on 11 Road, about 2.5 miles to the Radium campsite as above.

Drive through the parking lot to the rest rooms near the boat ramp. Turn left here onto the campground loop road. Camp at either the RMCC group camp site at the north end of the loop, or one of the five individual camp sites. Look for cars with canoes on top; also our large canopy may be set up.

### Facilities

The campground includes toilets and tent and vehicle camp sites, some with fire pits. There is no drinking water, electricity, or trash pickup. Be prepared for hot and cold weather, perhaps strong winds and rain.

### BLM Fees

Fees for the group camp site are \$1.00 per person per night, and that includes vehicles. If you camp at any of the five individual camp sites, the fee is simply \$6.00 per night for all persons and one or two vehicles. If you come for the day only, without camping, it's \$3.00 per vehicle.

After you choose your camp site, go to the self service pay station at the main entrance. Fill out a separate payment envelope for each vehicle. If you use the group camp site, write "group site" on the envelope. If you share one of the \$6.00 camp sites, write "share" and the campsite number on the envelope. Enclose fees as described above, keep the payment stub, and deposit the envelope.

Camping fees also cover your daytime use of the Radium and Pumphouse boat ramp areas. Be sure to keep the payment envelope stub displayed on your dashboard.

For trips starting or ending at State Bridge, there is a \$3.50 per person fee to park on private property, or a free under-the RR-track access might be used.

Also this year you will be required to purchase ACA insurance, or be an ACA member. The fee is \$5.00 per person for the weekend, but it is waived if you already are an ACA member. All folks are asked to sign a roster during the Saturday run or at the canopy for Saturday dinner or Sunday breakfast.

### Waivers

All non-ACA people must sign the ACA waiver, which is your agreement that you know you are taking risks on the river trips, and that you are taking full responsibility for your own safety and participation. ACA members have already signed the ACA waiver and don't need to sign it again.

### Advance Schedule (Subject to Change)

Trip organizers are needed! Possible runs include Pumphouse (Class II+ with a bit of III), Yarmony Bridge to State Bridge (Class II+), State Bridge to Landing Strip or Catamount Bridge (Class I with a II), and many others. We traditionally have trip options for novices as well as higher skill levels. Please volunteer if you could run a trip. At the Radium campsite we will have a white board where trips can be listed and participants can find out details (leader, departure time) for trips they may be interested in. Unless otherwise noted, all trips meet on the campground exit drive, vehicles ready to go, at the time indicated.

### Friday

After 4 pm      Set up -- a few hands needed

### Saturday

9:00 am      Day trips TBD; Bill Ashworth will lead State Bridge to Landing Strip / Catamount

10:00 am      Diana Preusser will lead Yarmony Bridge to State Bridge for latecomers and slow risers.

6:00 pm      Social hour. BYOB and maybe an appetizer.

7:00 pm Dutch Oven Cook-off and Pot Luck Supper

**Sunday**

7:30 am Pancake Breakfast  
9:00 am Day trip(s) to be determined

**Special Events**

**Dutch oven cook-off contest and pot luck, Saturday evening, 7 pm.** Attendees will vote near the end of the dinner for best A) Dutch Oven Main Dish, B) Dutch Oven Side Dish (dessert, veggie or bread) and C) Non Dutch Oven Item. All Dutch Oven and other masterpieces need to be ready by 7! Real useful prizes – instead of the usual medals – will be awarded.

Everyone is welcome to join in the food! Bring an appetizer, salad, side dish or dessert to share even if you are not Dutch oven cooking.

**Group Pancake Breakfast, Sunday morning, 7:30 am.** Bill Ashworth and Karen Amundson are making the 'cakes. Please bring toppings for the pancakes or a side dish such as bacon, potatoes, eggs, fruit or juice.

**Help Needed**

To volunteer for any of the following, please contact any of the organizers below:

- Organize a trip
- Partner with a beginner or novice
- Set up and take down the group canopy

- Bring fire wood and manage a fire
- Site clean-up and trash removal on Sunday morning

**Reminders -- What to Bring**

Boating:

- Boats, paddles, floatation bags, painters
- Life jackets, throw bag, first aid kit, bailer
- Sun protection (sunscreen, sunglasses, hats)
- Water, lunch, snacks
- Dry bag, spare clothes, rain suits

Camping:

- Water for drinking & washing
- Cups, dishes, silverware, cooking stuff
- Fire pans, charcoal, marshmallows, maybe firewood
- Chairs, tables, tents, bag, pad, etc.
- Guitars, harmonicas, musical instruments
- Libations, ice, party supplies

**Organizers**

- To volunteer and for general questions contact one of the following:

- Don Perko
- Karen Amundson



**RMCC welcomes new and returning members (NOT in order) Monica & Jeff Marsalis, Tim and Kathy Northrup, Dave Rogers, Brian Rogers, Ray Crockett, Steve Subber, Chris Huggett, & Lynne and Glenn Carpenter on the June 14 South Platte trip.**

## Personal Locator Beacons – report on the SPOT

By Jeanne Willson with inspiration from Jill Stecker and Don Perko

Just because I'd like my (adult) children to come running if I get myself into a scrape on a wilderness trip, because I often hike alone, and because I lead many trips (hiking, canoeing) where anything can happen, I decided to purchase a SPOT, one of 3 or 4 commercially available satellite emergency communication devices. Mine works like this: (1) set up your friends-and-family list on the web at home, along with any changes to your brief message (example: Jeanne is OK on the Dolores); (2) turn it on and send one of 3 messages by pressing a button:

- I'm ok; just checking in (SPOT will send an email to your list with your location mapped on Google Maps! How cool is that? It can also send a text message to a phone without the map link.)
- It's NOT life threatening but I really need you to get help to me (again, only your friends and family are notified, and your location information is sent, too); or
- Critical, life-threatening emergency; please sent help immediately (a wide-coverage rescue system is notified of your emergency, as is your selected friend list, and all efforts are made to locate and rescue you immediately.)

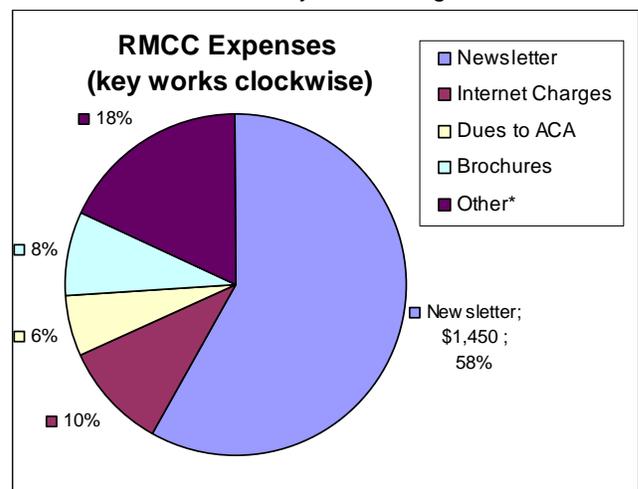
There is also an optional (extra charge) tracking system that sends normal trip progress updates to the findmespot.com web site, and your friends can go to the web site to follow your travels. The basic charge is about \$150 for the unit and a \$99 annual subscription. Optional rescue insurance is available.

Big plusses relative to other available units in my opinion are (1) overall low cost, (2) ability to send a positive, "I'm OK" message, (3) ability to avoid calling the helicopters but still get help. Negatives are (1) no local signal homing beacon, just GPS coordinates are sent to your rescuers, (2)

It's not as easy as you'd think to figure out the buttons, which would be a BIG problem in an emergency when thinking straight can be tough; (3) no feedback on the unit re. whether a message was sent successfully; (4) No way to send communication such as the type of emergency, and no way to receive communication such as "Hang in there, we are on the way." I hope that some of these negatives are fixed through inexpensive design upgrades; the communication limitations are probably far too expensive to fix.

## A Typical Year of RMCC Expenses

Based on several years through 2008-05



### \* Other includes:

Large tent, 1/2 of a TC Class, Awards, Radium group site fee to BLM, Admin - stamps, checks, P.O. Box, etc.

## Rocky Mountain Canoe Club -- Contact Information

- Website:** <http://www.rockymountaincanoeclub.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.





**ROCKY MOUNTAIN CANOE CLUB**

c/o Kathy Ashworth

[Redacted]

Boulder, CO 80308-1064

TO:

**CLUB CONTACTS**

President	Karen Amundson
Vice Pres	Don Perko
Treasurer	Kathy Ashworth
Newsletter, Web	Jeanne Willson
Schedule	Bill Ashworth
Membership	Gail Campbell
Advertising	Greg Jankowski
Conservation	Jerry Nolan
Instruction	Bob & Jill Stecker
Instruction	Jeff Oxenford
Quartermaster	Doug Hurcomb



**In This Issue:** Letter from the President; Dolores River; SPOT emergency beacon; Rendezvous information

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

June 14 – Brighton to Ft Lupton, beginner trip/ Bill Ashworth

June 21-22 – Yampa River, Craig to Duffy/ Karen Amundson, [Redacted]

July 19-20 – Whitewater Canoeing class at the Rendezvous/ contact Jeff Oxenford, [Redacted]

July 18-20 – Rendezvous weekend, group camping, many trips & levels, Colorado River

August, TBD – possible Gross Reservoir, Loma to Westwater, Flaming Gorge

October 1 – 2008 Summer Highlights Meeting, REI Denver - 6:00 members only potluck followed by 7:00 - 8:30 Show and Tell (for public) of the summer's canoeing activities