



The Voyageur's Companion

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

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August 2010 issue

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Jeanne Willson, editor

The Presidential Press

Karen Baker Jarvis

First some ramblings. I believe having a good experience, fellowship, challenge, and fun on our canoe trips are the most important goals after safety; difficulty is less important to me. It's the journey, being in the present, and not the end goal that matters most to me. Jim and I have canoed together since 1975 in Minnesota, Canada, Wyoming, etc. We met on the Kettle River in Minnesota as a tandem team in a C2, running Hell's Gate Rapid (Class 3) in 1975.

Can you believe that the summer is already coming to an end? Time flies when you are having fun. Some things of note over the summer: Jim and I organized a rescue class in April and found ACA certified Instructor Sammer Elias, with assistant Justin Gilbert, to lead the class. We had about 20 attendees. It was very successful. Because we had so many signed up it was broken up into two classes, one on Saturday and one on Sunday.

In the classes we had to swim a couple sections of Clear Creek at Golden and walk across the river using various safe methods. The temperatures were cold (water temperature in the 40's and air temperature in the 40s-50s). We all learned a lot about rescue in general. We practiced a taut rope exercise to stabilize someone with a foot entrapment and had to swim over a simulated strainer (a piece of PVC) in the river. We were given a test at the end of the day where the instructor went downstream and constructed a rescue scenario and then the class came down and attempted the staged rescue. There was also a beginning canoe class offered in June taught by us.

The Rendezvous was very successful. We counted around 45 attendees. There were many trips on the class 1+ to 2+ runs. The food was great with the cook-off and potluck. We had a group of very good paddlers that joined us from the Houston Canoe Club and also paddlers from Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina.

TAKE NOTE!

Fall trips:

Labor Day – The Colorado River, Cisco to Big Bend, or Flaming Gorge (Green River from the dam)

September: Loma to Westwater

Be sure to contact the trip organizer as soon as possible!

Dolores River, May 2010



The group had been touring the West and we invited them to attend the Rendezvous. We also had some fun music on Saturday night led by Jeanne. We would like to thank Bill Ashworth, who did most of the organization, and all the other members of the club that helped out. It was quite successful. The trip Jim and I organized on the San Juan in early April was cold, but fun.

Kaj has developed a new website, which is, I believe, an improvement over the last one. There is a trip on the website from Cisco to Big Bend on the Colorado scheduled over Labor Day. Doug Hurcomb is toying with the idea of a Flaming Gorge Trip over Labor Day.

We plan to have a club meeting in late September or October.

Karen Baker-Jarvis

Editor's Eddy Lines

Jeanne Willson

Safety: I'll be brief. Drip marketing here, folks – The Colorado Mountain Club will teach its Wilderness First Aid class twice, once in August and again in November. Try it; you'll like it!

On another topic, Richard Ferguson wrote: "I was looking at the ACA email, and noticed that they indicated that wetsuits must be worn if the water temperature is below 50F, or the combined air + water temperatures are under 120F. I suspect that we don't always follow that rule." Good reminder, Richard!

Feature story

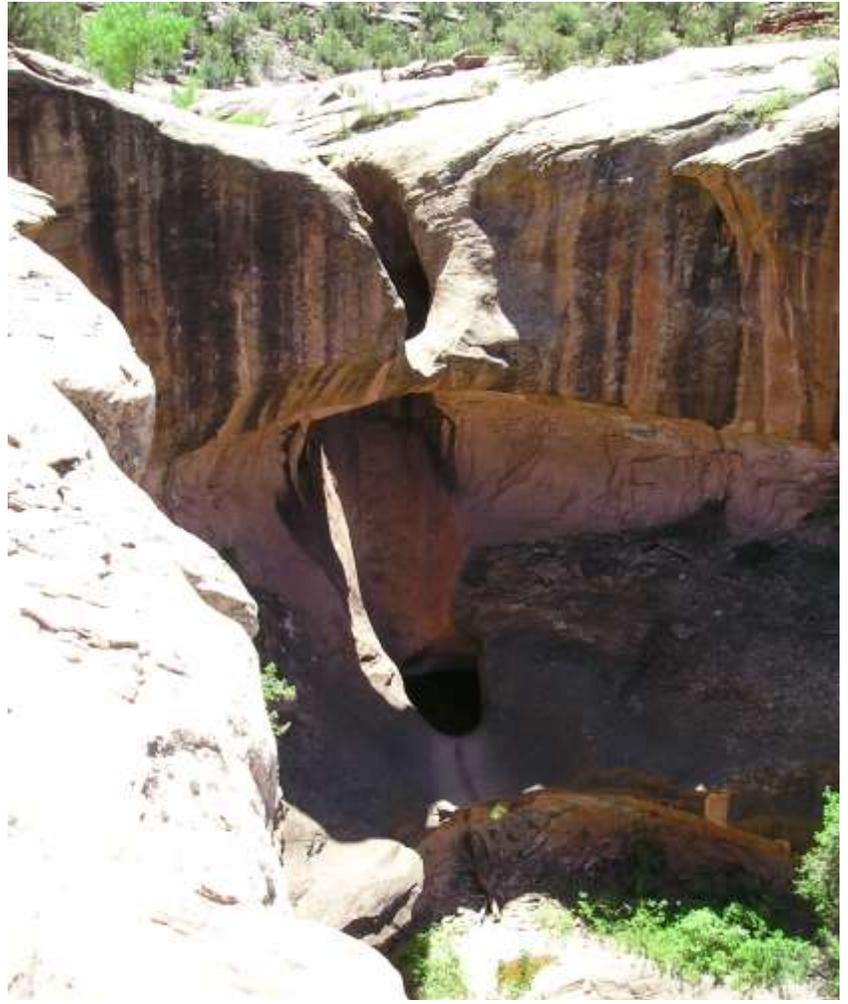
Dolores to Gateway

May 29-31, 2010

Karen Amundson

The Magnificent 7 – Bill and Joanna Cook, Howard Brown and Maribeth, Jan Zinkl and myself, with Doug Summers in a solo – set out to navigate a piece of the Dolores that had never been done as an RMCC trip. We had car-camped Friday night a mile up the Dolores from the confluence with the San Miguel, and opted to put in there and catch the bottom part of Trap Rapid. Soon the San Miguel added 1000+ cfs of water to the 1000 being released from McPhee Reservoir for several days.

Horizontal arch on the Dolores River



Big water and old flume supports on the Dolores . Photos by Joanna Cook except where noted.



We enjoyed various views of the 10 mile flume attached to the canyon walls. It had been built back in 1890 for a gold mine, but was never completed. Then we skirted big waves in a rapid to stop in the prettiest campsite to have lunch. We all scrambled along the left of a side canyon and Joanna and I made it to the “waterfall below a very unusual horizontal arch”. See picture.

We saved the Red Canyon hike for another day, the river reluctantly rejoined the road (hwy 141), and we started looking for a campsite.

Our 1st choice was overrun by 2 loud dirt bikes. The second camp couldn't be found. I scaled a sandy wall to see if the “mushroom rock” (3rd) camp was appealing, but only found a guy using a large battery to push river water over dirt in an effort to extract gold. Finally Doug located a good sandy beach not shown on the map. Here we found deer prints and bobcat tracks in the hardened sand.

Sunday we made good time for 9 scenic miles and then stopped to scout the III-Peregrine Rapid. It was short but exciting, and nobody flipped. After 1.5 miles we enjoyed the Maverick Canyon Rapid (II) and a rare nice landing at a camp with a 3 mile round trip hike to Juanita Arch. As we started hiking, the side canyon grew more lush and the trail varied from rock hopping around pools to cliff hanging ledges with great views.

Wild Four O'Clocks on the Dolores River



We were starting to doubt our path finding, but finally found the spectacular large arch. Technically it was probably a bridge. With little daylight remaining, we set up camp, feasted, resumed our wine tasting, and enjoyed another fire.

Yellow columbines grace the canyon walls. Rare east of the Divide, they are more common on the Western Slope and in northwestern states and provinces.



Monday's lineup included 10 miles of paddling with 4 longer rapids. Salt Canyon Rapid (II+) woke us up, and we soon covered the 4 miles and arrived at Bullwood Rapid. The guide rated it "III at 5000cfs and II+ at lower flows" but I would have to give it a III+ at 2100cfs based on the considerable carnage that ensued.

Doug was hit by a big wave and then a rock and went over so fast that he couldn't grab his boat. Jan and I avoided his route but were still punched by a series of boat-filling waves. We watched helplessly as the other 2 tandems filled with water and eventually flipped. But we managed to paddle our submerged boat over to an island and bailed – 2 solar pumps and 1 bucket – for what seemed like an eternity.

We rejoined the other 2 tandems who

were taking stock of lost items and a bit of boat damage. While Doug ran down the road in pursuit of his Ocoee, the majority of the tandem paddlers called it quits and so we all pulled over 6 miles short of Gateway to unload. We sent Maribeth hitch-hiking, then completed the shuttle. Meanwhile, a pickup spotted Doug's boat and gave him a ride. But twice he arrived at the bank too late or without an approach to the water. Again he went into marathon running mode with his paddle, scuba booties and helmet. His 3rd attempt was thru a field with 2 llamas and a horse and he swam out to catch the boat and ride it in to Gateway.

Dolores, 2010: Resting ...



Morning light on the red rock canyon of the Dolores (Doug's photo)



So what had been a delightful trip morphed into the only time I've ever seen all of the canoes consumed by a rapid. We were happy that nobody was injured, and Jan and I went to Glenwood Springs to soothe our bruised egos.

P.S. from Joanne – *Bill and I benefitted from the trip as a learning experience and made a visit to Canoe Colorado to have a "tighter ship" for rapids. The weather and the canyons were BEAUTIFUL with all the wild flowers, especially the yellow columbine perched on a cool grotto wall at the first lunch stop.*

P.P.S. from Doug on 6-17 – *I'm almost rid of the last bit of scab left from one of the rocks on Bull Canyon Rapid! Now if my bruised ego can recover, I'll be good as new ;-)*

P.P.P.S from Jan - *You could say that I found the trip to be a "positive experience" and "lots of fun plus excitement." Also I was impressed by how well the group worked together after the debacle at Bullwood.*

Kathryn Mutz writes; My 2010 paddling high point was the sunsets on the Green River, especially at Spanish Bottoms and the Fort.
Editor's note: Kathryn sent me some other stunning photos that I'll have to share later due to tech troubles.

The Stop Sign: A Cautionary Tale

Richard Ferguson

Most of us know the three standard paddle signals, point to river left to tell other paddlers to go left, point to river right to tell other paddlers to go right, or hold your paddle high horizontally to signify “Stop”. But have you ever stopped to think about when you might use the stop signal?

On a recent paddle trip, I happened to be some distance in front, and was going around an island in the river left channel. As I was approaching the end of the island, I went around a corner and saw a tree overhanging the river on river left, just below the island. I dove for the island, which almost stopped the boat and pointed the boat upstream, and then considered my options. I figured that if I let myself drift backwards to the end of the island, I could do a hard ferry and avoid the tree. This worked, with a little stress, since the current was fast.

But then I realized that this was a hazard to the three boats following me. I got out of my boat, and held my paddle to river right, hoping that they would take the river right channel. The other three boats saw my signal. Unfortunately, only one of the three boats took the river right channel; the other boats were past the end of the island, so were naturally reluctant to work upstream to get to the right channel. As the two boats in the river left channel approached, I continued to point to river right, figuring that these other two boats, being forewarned, could make the same move that I did. The first boat was unable to avoid the tree, but slipped between the branches, and came out the other side right side up. The second boat hit the tree and flipped; the boat and paddler continued downstream. This started a rescue effort to help the paddler and catch the boat.



Spanish Bottoms on the Green River (Kathryn Mutz)

Let's think about this story for a minute. At some level, I did what I was supposed to do; I signaled that the other boats should go river right, giving them some warning. But it did not work; the two boats following me were not able to duplicate my move, and were swept into the tree. Using 20-20 hindsight, I should have held up the stop sign. I certainly knew what the stop signal was, but somehow did not judge this hazard meriting a stop. Did the fact that I had never used the stop sign before cause me to not consider it? Did the fact that I rarely see the stop sign used get me out of the stop mindset? Did the fact that the other two paddlers were more experienced than I play a role in my decision? I made it without having advance warning, why couldn't they make it with advance warning? But that isn't good enough. I should have held up the stop sign, since there was a significant hidden hazard associated with the left channel. Luckily, the consequences were not serious, except for one paddler being shaken up.



View of the Dolores River Canyon

I am going to be a lot more likely to hold up the stop sign in the future. Low head dams? Stop. Trees sweeping over the river that are not easy to avoid? Stop. A big rapid that merits scouting? Stop. Any hidden hazard, stop.

When do you use the stop sign? Have you ever used it? Why? Did you ever wish you used the stop sign when you didn't? Did you ever wish that another member of your party had signaled stop? It's something to consider, and maybe discuss with your paddling partners.

Rocky Mountain Canoe Club Information

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Newsletter and submissions formatting, in brief:

- Article titles: Arial bold, 14pt, dark blue; author: Ariel normal 12 pt; both left-justified; Sub headings: Arial Italic.
- Body: Times New Roman 12pt, black. Paragraphs block-style.
- Photos: 0.5 MB (500 KB) to 1 MB

In This Issue: Swiftwater Rescue classes; Wildlife on the Waterways Part 1; Finding River Flow Information; Fruita to Westwater trip description

Schedule of events: May trips: Niobrara, Dolores

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

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