



The Voyager's Companion

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

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February 2011 issue

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Jeanne Willson, editor

The View Down River

Bill Ashworth, President

As your recently elected club president, let me introduce myself. My wife Kathy and I joined the club about three years ago, not long after I moved here from the San Francisco Bay area of California. I'd been a member of a river canoe club there and was delighted to find kindred spirits here on the Front Range. I brought along my Old Town Appalachian tandem, Bell Yellowstone Solo, and inflatable SOAR tandem canoe and soon acquired a Mohawk XL-13 solo from an RMCC member. I've been serving as Trip Coordinator for the past several years and Kathy is a past Treasurer. Since joining, we've enjoyed and led many trips with the club on the Front Range, and in Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, Nebraska, and Utah.

Bill and Kathy Ashworth



Based on the enthusiastic responses at our January Permit party, we'll have a full schedule of trips in store for us once spring rolls around. A few of these have been entered on the web schedule, but most of the rest have pending dates. Look for a snapshot of upcoming events elsewhere in this newsletter. Most of these are weekend events but we're always looking for day paddle opportunities. Contact me if you have any suggestions for additional trips.

If you haven't already done so, check out the new club website (same old URL – rockymountaincanoeclub.org) with lots of new features. These include:

TAKE NOTE!

Basic River Canoeing

- Class will be taught in May
- Learn basic tandem strokes, how to read a river, eddy turns and peel-outs
- Learn critical safety skills including how to pack and outfit your boat to minimize property loss and personal injury in case of capsizing. (Also learn how to avoid capsizing!)
- Meet new friends and learn more about our club.

Non-members welcome at the class! Look for final dates and details in future emails or contact Karen and Jim Baker-Jarvis if you are not a member.

All-Paddleclub Trip March 19

See story and information in this issue, page 8

A user forum: use this to ask questions of our paddling community, arrange paddling meet-ups, sell or acquire used equipment, etc

A gallery: use this to post or view photos of trips.

*****A huge THANK YOU to Kaj Toivonen for our new web site!*****

Last year, RMCC added safety training to our inventory of club-underwritten classes (it was a **Swift Water Rescue course**) and this year we're investigating adding a class in **Wilderness First Aid**. Look for details later in the spring. But RMCC-sponsored classes aren't the only way for club members to increase the safety levels of their paddling trips. Consider adding one or more of the following to your activities in the coming year: take a first aid class from the Colorado Mountain Club or Red Cross; add or augment a first aid/rescue kit to your river gear, practice low and high braces at the monthly Arvada pool sessions, purchase and self-study a book on River Rescue or Wilderness First Aid, practice non-verbal boat commands, etc. This is of course just a sampling – use your imagination and see what you can come up with.

Nobody goes home hungry from an RMCC permit party.



Paddling the Colorado through the Grand Eric Hermann

A memory and a dream: Some 30 years ago, standing on the South Rim with wife Connie and son Eric, and seeing a far-off glint of river, wondering what it could possibly be like down there. Years later, as a paddler, I dream of this. Now, among 14 other, more experienced men and women in seven rafts and two, sometimes three, kayaks, I am the oddball in a 10-foot Esquif Detonator Canoe. Friends Karen Roth, Mark Klug, Joe Schmid and Katie Christensen have conspired to invite me, knowing how much I've wanted this. They and the others on Mark's permit are so experienced, and so helpful. Sadly, our most experienced river-runner, John Fischer, has dropped out at the put-in. He felt head-achy and disoriented—and too risky for a wilderness journey. Doctors later diagnosed a brain hemorrhage. He said to keep his raft, dividing its rowing among us, and all his food and supplies. But we missed him already.

The First Rapid is Badger Creek, mile seven, is not a big rapid by Grand standards. "A jaunt," I thought, but no: This was big, by my standards, all leaping waves and so amazingly fast. Its entry tongue seemed to fly into the turmoil at 20 mph! It introduced me to the standard procedure in the rapids: Get a crossing momentum in the tongue, punch a lateral, and

Quite a moment, looking so bold, when I had actually missed my line in the quieter water just right of the big wave. Especially funny is that, a split second after this, the wave collapsed--you can see it collapsing under the right side of the boat, which flipped instantly. Luckily, I rolled back up, screaming ecstatically. This is Soap Creek Rapid, Mile 20.



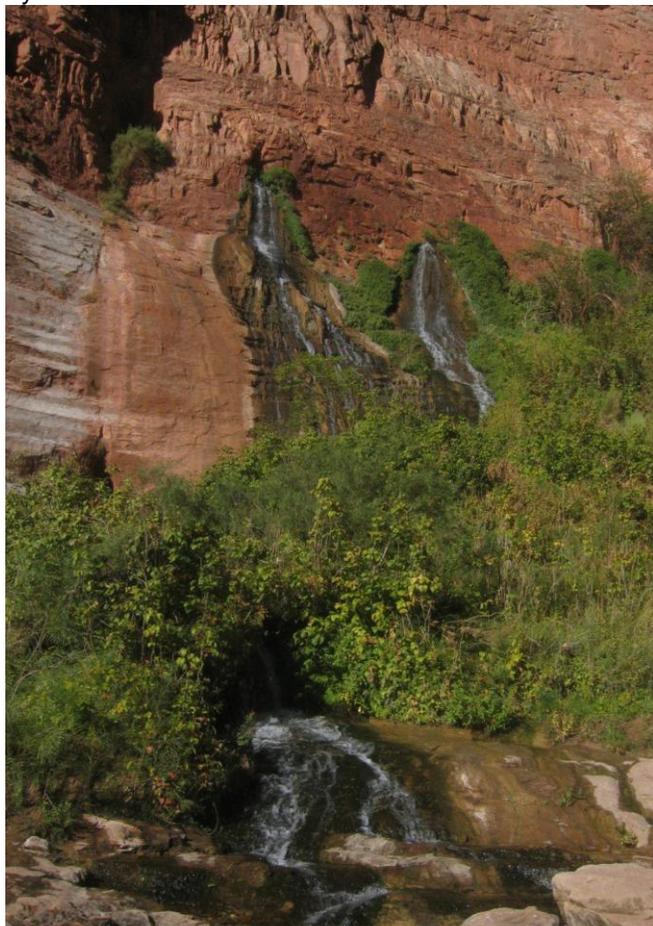
skirt the main wave train, usually to the inside of the curve.

But a rogue wave and two missed rolls left me swimming in tow behind Matti Wade's kayak. In maybe 85 rapids, I would swim about five times.

Next came Soap Creek Rapid, mile 11. We camped right at its head so I could listen to it roar at me all night. Its tongue ended in a vee wave about eight feet high, and I just took aim at the wave's center, hoping it wouldn't surge just as I topped it. Of course, it did, and over I went. Yikes, most of the rapid was yet to come. "I gotta roll, cannot fail..." and I did just that. Hooray!

The Grand offers a fast training course: Ten named rapids churn between mile 20 and mile 30, called The Roaring 20's. They average 4 or 5 on the Grand Canyon's 10-point scale of difficulty. I thought I could just transfer that difficulty to the usual 6-class scale, but it doesn't apply here; the water is so fast and the waves, eddy lines and whirlpools so powerful they just demand their own scale. So, getting spanked once or twice more in this stretch wasn't surprising. However, I was learning—better lines and stronger braces. A lesson, first taught by Kent Ford: Learn to use your strokes as braces to combine control and stability. This demands even more timing. In other rivers you do the moves: you decide to eddy or to surf. Here, the river does it to you, at its whim. One big lateral surfed me backwards about 20 yards left, only to surf me back again 20 yards right. It was a thrill! Braces kept me upright while the river played with its new toy.

Eric reports that half of the vegetation here is poison ivy.



The Larger Rapids: House Rock, class 6 or 7 at mile 17, named by Powell for its huge boulders along its outer curve, and their house-sized holes, was a big challenge for the rafters: Almost all the water roars to the outside of the curve, toward those holes, and rafters must ferry strongly against that power. At mile 76, Hance, class 8, brings larger waves and holes everywhere in its half-mile run. But four of our rafters are professional guides, and Mark and Eric had rowed it before. Joe had kayaked here, but had rowed only the Yampa—at big water, though. Here he ran terrific lines with strong, precise ferries. Skilled kayaker Jeremiah rowed for the first time. All tracked these curves cleanly. Our kayakers, John Gross and Mitch Riley, were so good they just looked for big waves to surf. For me, however, House Rock and Hance were easy sneaks, like the Poudre at medium water, and I cut through the rocky side channels, though in Hance I rejoined the center to ride out some wild waves. However, I became complacent in smaller rapids, like Son of Hance. Here was hole about 15 feet wide, and I couldn't evade it, so I squared off and punched it hard. The river slammed me into a backward surf—enjoyable for a moment—then into a side surf, where I looked like a banana in a taco shell! Then it spat me out below, where John helped me climb quickly back into my water-filled boat.

Sockdolager is a long class 7 streak through the Inner Gorge of slick schist walls, with no escapes, no real sneak runs, though I entered a bit left to miss a few waves. Again I came out “dry”—only two inches of water in the boat.

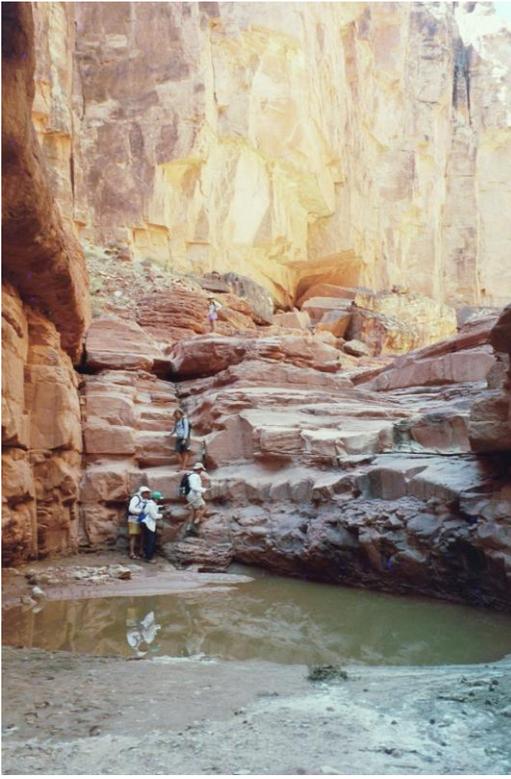
Discretion and a blessing: Ahead lay four big rapids in so-called Adrenaline Alley: Horn Creek, Granite, Hermit and Crystal. But along came Phil and Erica, Bostonian fiancés with a 20-foot raft, just the two of them, and decided to run the big stuff with more company. They were great company in camp, with her laughter and his recitation of Poe's “The Raven,” and Service's “Cremation of Sam McGee,” which I shared, and yes, Phil's offer to piggy-back my canoe if I wanted, since it would fit his huge raft well. A look at Horn Creek Rapid and a fierce headwind convinced me, and I became a passenger. After Horn we scouted Granite, standing next to a three-foot rattlesnake, coiled there oblivious to us and so beautiful and red. I had wanted to canoe Hermit and maybe sneak Crystal but didn't want to delay the rafters, who ran these big rapids without incident. Discretion arose again at Mile 179: Lava, the biggest, baddest rep on the river, has a really easy, accessible portage. Parts of me wish I had attempted it, though I felt 50% sure of a wild swim. Smooth work for the rafters, even though Joe had an oar pop out. Katie and Karen high-sided expertly into the big waves.

The incredible beauty of this river: We were so lucky, with the river remaining clear and green all trip, even though it is frightfully cold—48 degrees below the dam to maybe the 60 by trip's end. Rapid tongues are smooth as polished stone. They drop three to six feet into channel-wide waves that gleam like jade in sunlight or like obsidian in shade. It's so easy to fixate on that beautiful wave for a second or two before diving into the boils below. The whirlpools roil up with a "whoosh" as you suddenly spin and flush maybe 12 feet left or right. The eddies pound the beaches with foot-high waves. People say the Grand is 90% flat water, but almost nowhere is it still.

All the geology I read about unfolds, mile by mile, as ancient strata rise from the river, sloping up to hundreds of feet, with origins in seas or mountains aged in millions of years, even 1.7 billion in the case of the Vishnu schist and Zoroaster granite that wall the Inner Gorge. The schist can be black or a red like rosewood, often polished like the fine sculpture of Henry Moore. When these layers formed, this chunk of earth was somewhere near the Canary Islands, before they drifted with the continents over the ages. The river is "recent," with two ancient rivers joining their beds to form the present course ten million years ago and down-cutting the newly rising plateau. The Colorado Plateau rose, an average of a hundredth inch a year, for five million years, leaving us, five million years ago, with the Grand Canyon. Some lava flows are even more recent--10,000 years ago--now in black masses or hexagonal basalt columns where they once even dammed up the river for 200 miles! These walls tower so high, but are over-topped by more towers, then more, to the distant rims. One night we see a tiny light from the rim, and imagine the lookers there, gazing into the mysterious gorge so far, so inaccessible, beneath them. We flow as tiny specks upon that mystery!

Photo by Jeannie Patton





The unbelievable side hikes are usually short but steep, into slots and grottos, up creeks so clear and lush with red monkey-flowers, maidenhair ferns, watercress...and the amazing rocks. Vasey's Paradise, named by Powell after an expedition botanist, is a waterfall gushing from the Redwall Limestone into the river. We hike up Carbon Creek, cross the ridge to descend Chuar Creek, passing 980 million-year-old deposits that are missing elsewhere in the Great Unconformity. The hike up Tapeats Creek and down Deer Creek is unbelievable: Above Tapeats the Thunder River leaps out of a cave in the Redwall and ribbons down the cliff to join Tapeats Creek. Thunder River, its flow equal to that of the low-water Poudre, is only a half-mile long, and marks the only place in the world where a named river flows into a creek. Deer Creek is a sinuous beauty, clear and water-cressed, that coils into a deep gorge in the Tapeats Sandstone and offers us refreshing showers.

Of course, there is the toll upon the body: 21 days with only occasional baths in frigid water, constant cold feet in the canoe, fingers wrapped in duct tape over the cracks, sandal cuts from the sand, old ankles sprained on hikes, knots in the back from

lugging group gear (rafters carry only steel equipment), cactus spines, drug-overdose of 20 days on Aleve. Cranking the old knees into straps about 2,000 times as I go from a precarious sitting position into a kneel. And of course, sand in everything—every face, every zipper, every cut, all your clothes. Sifting like a gritty



The Ice Box (photo by Jeannie Patton; above rafting photo and photo on page 11 also by JP.)



flour through mosquito netting when the sandstorm winds streak the camps.

And...the scorpion: Ah yes, the little bugger had crawled into the wrap of the dry bag, and hit me like a hypodermic needle as I unrolled it in the morning darkness. Immediate sharp buzz filled the hand, to feel for two days as if I'd grabbed an electric fence and held on. Yet, I had to paddle anyway. Rapids can make you forget all pain, momentarily.

Camps are serene, after they are lugged into place, and beer is cold from the river. Sunsets blaze on sheer canyon walls, ruby, orange and black. The moon—we travel through its phases—rises like a pearl, lacing the rapids' tongues with golden flames, and stars glow sharply so far from human light. We rotate cook crews and make amazing food, in a large kitchen with stove and four Dutch Ovens—Laurie and Betty's deep lasagna, Matti and Miah's peach cobbler—as we tell stories, laugh sing and joke into the night. Well, until bedtime at 8:30 or 9. The sun rises over coffee; we lug the camp to the rafts for another four to 24 miles on the river.

Returning home safely is a delight—to be home with my wife and pets again, and oh, to stand in a warm, sand-less shower—but the Grand Memory is a deep and wonderful one. A view comes, maybe a televised shot from the South Rim into the far-flung vastness of the Grand Canyon. And far, far down there a gleam of the river in its immeasurable passage of time, and then comes that reverie, which says, simply, "We were there."

Editor's Eddy Lines

Jeanne Willson

I hope you are reading Jerry Nolan's Conservation Roundup column. Click here to see one of his latest: <http://www.rockymountaincanoeclub.org/Members/CNRNewsletters.aspx>

Are you ready to get on the water outside yet?

ALL-CLUB Season-opener Joint Paddle Trip

Saturday March 19, 2011 (Snow date Saturday March 26; Check RMCC website for current trip status)

Every year RMCC gets together with other local clubs for a fun and casual flatwater trip. Our fellow clubs this year include Canoe Colorado, High Country River Rafters, Poudre Paddlers, and Rocky Mountain Sea Kayak Club.

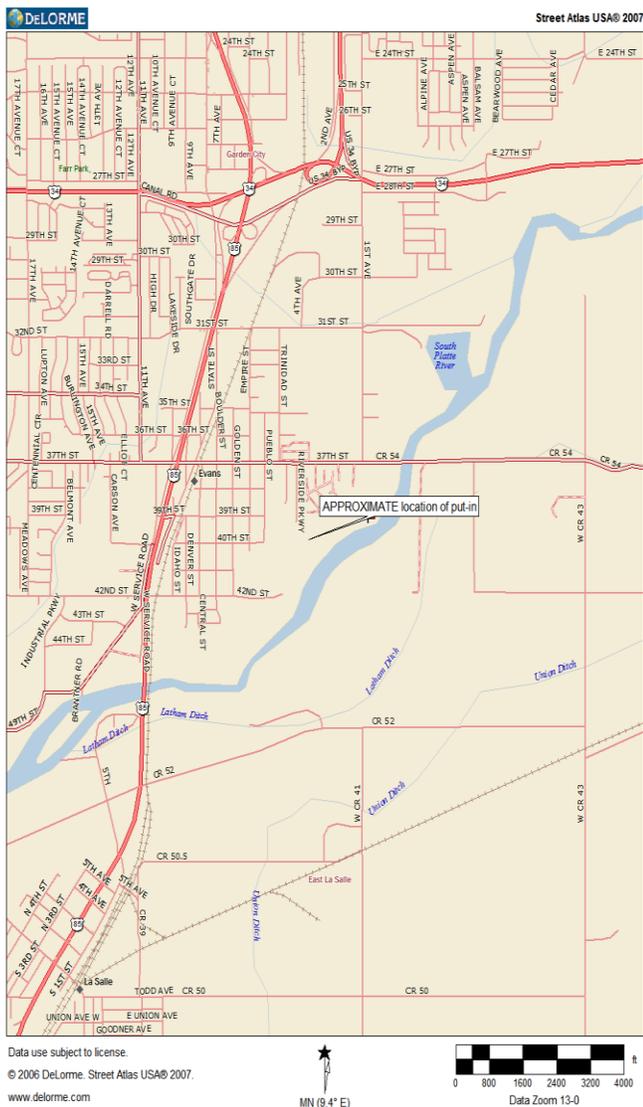
Yampa Canyon 2009



Dinosaur National Park

Everyone is welcome, including beginners, families, and guests. Canoes, kayaks, small inflatables, and other low draft paddle boats are suitable. This is a flatwater (class 1) day trip with two short dam portages.

No pre-registration is needed. Meet at 9:00 am at Riverside Park in Evans, a few miles southeast of Greeley, Colorado. After unloading and a brief meeting, we will run car shuttles at about 9:30, then start paddling together shortly after 10:00.



The main paddle trip is nine river miles from Evans to the Kersey bridge. A lunch stop is included. You can then go another five miles to South Kuner bridge if you wish. Take-out times will be approximately 3:00 and 5:00 pm.

Directions: Go to the stop light at highway 85 and 37th in Evans. Go 1/2 mile east on 37th. Turn right on Riverside Parkway, just after a blue sign for the state patrol. Go 1/4 mile south and enter the park. Bear left through the parking lots. Meet us on the east side of the baseball fields, near the levee.

Signed RMCC waivers and life jackets are required. There will be a variety of typical river hazards: cold springtime water; weather changes; two dams with dangerous currents; submerged and overhanging trees; invisible wires across river; unpredictable changes to river configuration; paintballers and duck hunters shooting; metal spikes; and so on.

Bring your own boat and paddles, warm clothing, change of clothes, rain suit, lunch, water, waterproof shoes or change of shoes, sunglasses, sun screen, sun hat, and dry bag. Kids should be bundled up well.

Please see the South Platte trip page on the RMCC website for more safety notices and other details. If you are new to the club and want to chat about this trip, call any club leader (see "Club Contacts" at the end of this newsletter).

Bonnie's newest paddling partner prefers to go solo. I like his style!



Safety: A set of quick videos with some valuable safety tips:
http://www.ehow.com/video_2354216_cano_e-safety-tips.html

Skills:
(Editor's note: I hope that more of our experienced paddlers will continue to write short pieces about safety and skills to share with others for publication here. If you are not comfortable writing, please give me a call, tell me what you want to share, and I'll write for you, crediting your ideas.)

Tentative 2011 Schedule (based on January Permit Party input)

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Permit/Non permit</i> | <i>River/State</i> | <i>Section</i> | <i>Class</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Status</i> |
|---------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|--------------|--|------------------------------|
| Mar 15 | Non permit | So Platte CO | Evans-Kersey | I | annual day paddle (tentative date) | See schedule |
| April 3 | Permit | San Juan UT | Bluff-Blanding or Blanding to Mexican Hat | II or III | 4 or 5 canoe camping day trip; must be off by 8th | Pending |
| Mid Apr | Non permit | Owyhee OR | Rome to Leslie Gulch | III-IV | 4 day canoe camping (tentative date) | Pending |
| Mid Apr | Non permit | Pecos TX | TBD | III? | 4 day canoe camping | Houston Canoe Club |
| May 7 | Non permit | Gunnison | Delta-Whitewater | II | 3 day canoe camping trip plus optional hike | Posted – see schedule |
| May | Non permit | Bear Creek State Park | REI Demo day | I | Periodic recruiting and instruction | Pending |
| Mid May | Non permit | TBD | TBD | I | Introductory Canoe Class (tentative date) | Pending |
| May 28 | Non permit | Niobrara NE | Valentine | I | 3 day base camping | See schedule |
| May 28 | Non permit | Dolores CO | Slickrock-Bedrock or Gateway to | III | 3 day canoe camping | Pending |
| May 28 | Non permit | Dolores CO | Upper: Bradfield to Slickrock | III+ | 3 day canoe camping | Pending |
| Mid-Late June | Non permit | South Platte CO | Brighton to Ft Lupton | I | Day paddle | Pending |
| Mid June | Permit | Rio Chama NM | El Vado dam to Big Eddy | III | 3 day canoe camping | Pending |
| July 7 | Permit | Yampa CO/UT | Elk Ranch to Dinosaur | III | 4 day canoe camping | Pending |
| July 8 | Non permit | Clear Creek CO | Golden | II | 3 day ACA National Open Canoe Competition; volunteers needed | Jeff Oxenford |
| July 23 | Non permit | Colorado CO | Radium | 1-III | Annual club Rendezvous; car camping; | See schedule |
| Aug 6 | Non permit | Colorado | Rodeo- | II | 2 day canoe | Pending |

| | | | | | | |
|--------|------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----|--------------------------|---------------------|
| | | CO | Dotsero | | camping | |
| Sept 2 | Permit | Main Salmon ID | Corn Creek to Riggins | II | 4 day canoe camping | Pending |
| Sept 9 | Permit | Green River UT | Deso-Gray Canyons | III | 4 or 5 day canoe camping | Pending |
| Oct 1 | Non permit | Colorado CO/UT | Fruita to Westwater | I | 2 day canoe camping | See schedule |
| Nov 24 | Non permit | Rio Grande TX | Big Bend NP | I | 3 day canoe camping | Pending |

Rocky Mountain Canoe Club Information

CLUB CONTACTS

President Bill Ashworth
 Treasurer Kathryn Mutz
 Newsletter Jeanne Willson
 Schedule, Web Bill Ashworth
 Membership Mark Roberts
 Conservation Jerry Nolan
 Quartermaster Doug Hurcomb



In This Issue: Grand Canyon; possible 2011 trips; March 19 all-club Platte River trip
Schedule of events: Winter pool sessions; spring training classes coming soon.

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

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

More big water in the Grand Canyon



ROCKY MOUNTAIN CANOE CLUB

c/o Kathryn Mutz

Boulder, CO 80308-1064

