



# The Voyageur's Companion

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

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March 2012 issue

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Jeanne Willson, editor

You love canoeing if you put in with weather like this! It did clear up.  
(October 2011, Loma, Colorado. Photo by Karen Amundson.)



## The View Down River

Bill Ashworth, President

I'd like to use this first Presidential address of the year as a "State of the Union" opportunity, and the State of the Club for 2012 is strong indeed. Let me tick off a couple of salient points in support of this:

- We're succeeding in both retaining long time members and attracting active new members.
- We've added a number of new Trip Coordinators this year. Partly as a result of a very successful Permit Party and in January (thanks, Carol!) and subsequent lottery, we've got over 20 trips and events scheduled for the coming year (more than TWICE the number from last year) and by far the most active schedule I've seen in my 5 years in the club.
- Volunteerism is up with new officers and Trip Coordinators
- Dues have been reduced to \$10 per family per year, reflecting the savings of an on-line newsletter.

## TAKE NOTE!

### Padding opportunities

Trip Coordinator training, Beginning Canoeing, and a long list of one-day and multi-day trips are on the calendar already. Look at the web site for details.

If you are relatively new to canoeing, please reach out to club members (start with the club contacts listed at the end of this newsletter) to learn more about how to rig and pack your boat for safety and comfort, how to camp by a river, where you can find a camp spot when driving to or from a river put-in or take-out, where you might find a Wilderness First Aid class to take, or what you might cook for dinner in camp. The canoeing classes cover lots of critical safety information, but there is much more to learn than can be taught in one weekend. New canoers may also want to go back to old newsletters for helpful how-to articles.

- Our instruction program includes both free Trip Coordinators Training (the first in 4 years) and well as a low-cost Beginning Canoeing Class.

Here's a quick overview of the 2012 schedule (see the web page for dates and details):

**January** – Permit Party

**March** – South Platte Joint Clubs Paddle Day

**April** – Trip Coordinators Class

**May** – Macintosh Lake, White River (Rangley-Fuel Mt Bridge), Paddlefest 2012, Gunnison (Delta-Whitewater), Beginning Canoeing Class, Niobrara

**June** – South Platte (Brighton-Ft Lupton), Yampa (Hayden-Craig)

**July** – Rio Grande, Rio Chama, Radium Rendezvous

**August** – North Platte (Glendo-Guernsey), Green (Deso-Gray)

**September** – Colorado (Cisco-Big Bend), Green River (Ruby Ranch-Mineral Bottom), Colorado (Loma-Westwater)

**October** – San Juan; **November** – Annual meeting

The **Forum section** of our website is a wonderful tool for looking for paddlers for unofficial trips (e.g. "looking to run the Union chutes on Thursday", etc) but Kaj, our Webmaster, tells me that it's not used much. Give it a try! All you need is your [www.rockymountaincanoecub.org](http://www.rockymountaincanoecub.org) username and password. And if you've forgotten/lost either, just email me  and I'll send you your username and reset your password. You can set your Forum preferences so you'll receive an email every time someone posts a new thread. The Forum's also a great way to buy and sell canoes and canoe gear and get information about paddling. Check it out!

**Paddlefest 2012:** REI in Denver is hosting a first-ever PaddleFest on May 12 and RMCC will be there! This will be wonderful way to promote river paddling to the Front Range community, and to get the club's name out there. Let me know if you help out with booth duty, giving a demonstration, or would like to paddle in the confluence waters next to REI with organizer Bob Cook.

My wife Kathy and I are really excited about the coming year on the water (which includes a first-time visit to the Boundary Waters in September) and hope that you are too. Keep on paddlin' and see you on a river soon.....Bill Ashworth, RMCC President

Portaging the first dam, All-Club Paddle, Evans to Kersey/Kuner, March 2012



## October Arch Adventure

Karen Amundson

*(Inspired at Christmastime by the October 2011 trip down the Colorado from Loma to Westwater, with a stop to hike to Rattlesnake Arches*

*--editor)*

'Twas the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of October, and all through the state

The weather was quite nasty, so the Arch Group slid their date.

Most spent Friday night in Junction, at the Dueckers' house we stayed

So to sleep in warm beds, and a dawn start was made.

We all drove to Loma, and unloaded our boats  
Paddled to Rattlesnake Canyon, and hiked like mountain goats.

Up a faint trail we followed, on a rock wall went Karen

'til the group all kept looking, and finally found the cairn.

Up the steep trail we travelled, using Candace's GPS  
Until we reached scenic views, and we were quite breathless.

Then the top trail was level, and much to our surprise,  
The first arch did approach us, as a sight for sore eyes.

Along this great trail we wandered, seeing arch after arch  
When at last we departed, and sped our downward march.

Jeanne's memory had helped us, from a long ago trip's time  
And to Ken I was thankful, that I wasn't left behind.

Then we jumped on the river, to our reserved camp we hustled  
But only to find there, 8 beer drinkers had it rustled.

So paddling onward very quickly, we found a better site  
Just as the jagged skyline, was turning to twilight.

We set up our tents, and though worn from the plight

Walking up the creek to Rattlesnake Arches Photo: Karen Amundson



We sang and told stories, around a campfire bright.

The next day we paddled, and got to Black Rocks  
But we were skillful boatmen, and kept dry our socks.

So to Westwater we continued, and when finally we did land  
The car battery was drained, and a jump start in demand.

We sprang to our cars, and threw most things inside  
And made 1 last pit stop, before the homeward ride.

And we all did exclaim, as we drove out of sight  
“What a wonderful trip, and to all a Good Night”.

## **Editor’s Eddy Lines: Science, Safety, Skills, and Supptime**

Jeanne Willson

*Science:* The Ashworths will be leading their annual trip to the Niobrara River in the Sand Hills of Nebraska. Here is a bit about the ecology of the area from **Wikipedia**; I hope it stimulates you to look for more about this environmentally significant area:

### **Ecology of the Sand Hills**

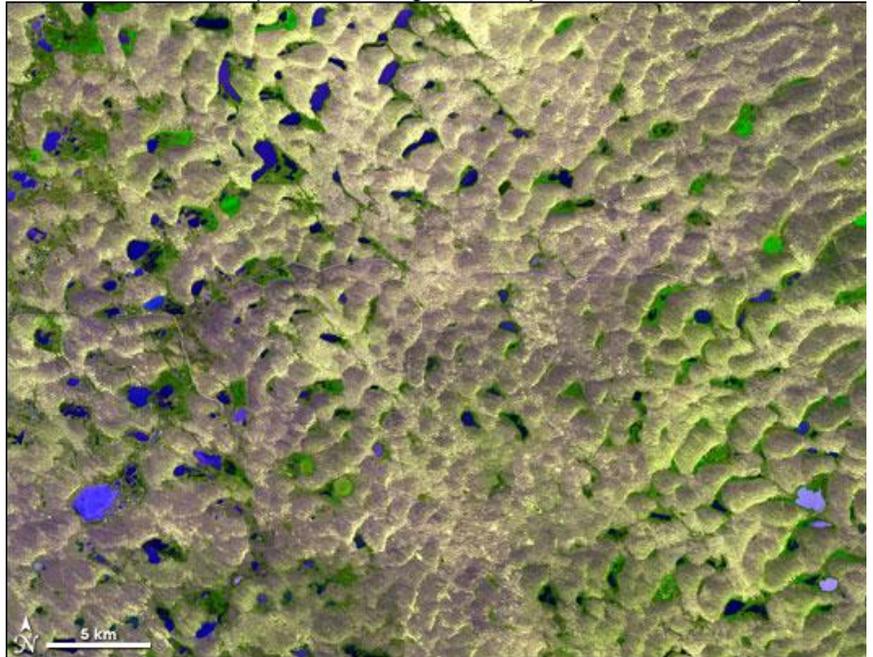
As the largest and most intricate wetland ecosystem in the United States, the Sand Hills contain a large array of plant and animal life.<sup>[1]</sup> Minimal crop production has led to limited land fragmentation; the resulting extensive and continuous habitat for plant and animal species has largely preserved the biodiversity of the area.

The Sand Hills are home to 314 vertebrate species including mule deer, coyotes, red fox, meadowlarks, wild turkeys, native bat species and many fish species.

The Sand Hills' thousands of ponds and lakes replenish the Ogallala Aquifer, which feeds creeks and rivers such as the Niobrara and Loup rivers. These bodies of water are homes for many species of fish. The lakes are mainly sandy-bottomed and provide water for the region's cattle, as well as a habitat for aquatic species. However, some lakes in the area are alkaline and support several species of phyllopod shrimp.

About 720 different species of plants are found in the Sand Hills. Of these, the majority are native, with only 7% exotics — half the percentage of most other prairie systems.

The Sand Hills from space, showing the many lakes that feed the aquifer



The blowout penstemon (*Penstemon haydenii*) is an endangered species, found only in the Sand Hills and in similar environments in central Wyoming.<sup>[7]</sup> The blowout penstemon stabilizes the soil where wind erosion exposes the bare sand and creates a blowout, but is choked out when other species begin to recolonize. Grazing and land management practices used by Sand Hills ranchers have reduced erosion, thus diminishing the plant's habitat.

Many of the plants of the Sand Hills are sand-tolerant species from short-grass, mixed-grass and tallgrass prairies; plants from all three of these can be found within the Sand Hills ecosystem. These plants have helped to stabilize the sand dunes, creating an ecosystem beneficial for other

plants and animals. Better land management and grazing practices by the ranchers of the Sand Hills have led to less erosion over time, which has kept the natural landscape of the Sand Hills mostly intact.

Many species of insects are found in the Sand Hills, including dragonflies, grasshoppers and mosquitos. There are also many types of spiders. Due to the ephemeral nature of both alkaline and freshwater lakes throughout the region, coupled with the wetland marsh areas, mosquito populations increase during the summer months.

The Sand Hills are part of the central flyway for many species of migratory birds, and the region's many bodies of water give them places to rest. The ponds and lakes of the region are lay-over points for migratory cranes, geese, and many species of ducks. Species found year-round include the [Western Meadowlark](#), the state bird of Nebraska.

The Sand Hills is classified as a semi-arid region, with average annual rainfall varying from 23 inches (580 mm) in the east to less than 17 inches (430 mm) of rain in the west. Temperatures range from lows of -30 °F (-34 °C) to highs of 100 °F (38 °C).

**Safety:** Bill Ashworth and I (Jeanne Willson, your editor) attended the Colorado Mountain Club's second annual Backcountry Incident Review Conference. Four actual events were reviewed and presented by the real trip participants to remind us all about what happens when bad things happen to good people. We heard from the heart attack victim on a short hike not different from the hikes we take on our canoe trips; we heard how trip participants pooled their ace bandages and other first aid supplies to wrap a wound on a horse that had fallen on the trail and gashed open its belly; we learned how escaping a terrible, violent lightening storm on the Matterhorn caused the death of two highly experienced mountain climbers; and we had a grim reminder of how long an emergency backcountry rescue can take (one to two days or more) even for a very serious injury. I strongly encourage every canoe club member to take advantage of the great backcountry

RMCC on the Niobrara, 2011



training provided by the Colorado Mountain Club, including their inexpensive but highly professional 16 hour Wilderness First Aid class, which is taught three times a year. I am even more determined to carry my SPOT satellite messenger on our trips, and I encourage others to do so as well as it can greatly reduce the time required to get rescued when cell phone service is not available.

### ***Skills:***

There are still a few pool sessions this spring. Wake up those paddling muscles with a few laps around this large pool. If you have never gone but you are interested, contact any of the club contact folks to get your questions answered.

### ***Suppertime:***

**Contributed by Bill Ashworth**

#### **Baking on the River**

Like a number of others in the RMCC, I started my paddling in rafts. And one of the delights of rafting is the presence of Dutch Ovens in the kitchen box. So when I migrated over to canoes 15 years ago, I was frustrated that the 20+ lb weight of a cast iron Dutch Oven meant no baking on river touring trips. The addition of a 14" cast aluminum DO a couple of years ago means that we could bake again BUT at a considerable cost in space, weight, and prep and cooking time. This DO, by the way, weighs 7 lbs and rides in its own PFD.

However, a new option has arrived! In preparing for an upcoming Boundary Waters trip, we were introduced to the BakePacker that cooks on a single burner camp stove. The system is basically an aluminum insert with a high profile grid that fits into any 7.5-8 inch diameter pot (the OpenCountry 4 qt pot is perfect) and uses grocery store 1 gallon plastic storage bags (Ziploc or standard). Typically, the dry ingredients are transported in the bags, then mixed in the bag with liquid at camp, and placed in the pot on top of the BakePacker insert. Cooking time at a medium boil is around 30 minutes and results in a completely cooked but not browned texture. So far we've tried pizza (pictured), biscuits, and apple cobbler (with reconstituted dried apples). Everything's been great and we're looking forward to trying cornbread, cakes, and bannock bread. The BakePacker costs about \$20 and is available on-line from the company and from a few paddling outlets. Let me know if you'd like to borrow

Please note that in general it is difficult to find a beautiful, totally flat and level, polished granite slab on which you may cook. This is true even in the lovely Boundary Waters.

BEFORE:



mine (but I get to taste your gingerbread!)

Canoers Bill & Kathy approach one of the numerous waterfalls on the 24 mile stretch of the Niobrara near Valentine, NB



## PFD Selection, Use, Wear & Care

*Selections from the United States Coast Guard website*

See the full article here:

<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg5214/pfdselection.asp#wearandcare>

### RECREATIONAL BOATING PFD SELECTION:

**TYPE I PFDS / OFF-SHORE LIFE JACKETS:** Best for all waters, open ocean, rough seas, or remote water, where rescue may be slow coming. Abandon-ship lifejacket for commercial vessels and all vessels carrying passengers for hire.

**TYPE II PFDS / NEAR-SHORE BUOYANT VESTS:** For general boating activities. Good for calm, inland waters, or where there is a good chance for fast rescue.

**TYPE III PFDS / FLOTATION AIDS:** For general boating or the specialized activity that is marked on the device such as water skiing, hunting, fishing, **canoeing**, kayaking and others. Good for calm, inland waters, or where there is a good chance for fast rescue. Designed so that wearing it will complement your boating activities:

- Inherently Buoyant Type III PFDs
- Inflatable Type III PFDs
- Hybrid Type III PFDs

**TYPE V PFDs / SPECIAL USE DEVICES:** Only for special uses or conditions.

See label for limits of use.

**BUOYANCY:** Most adults only need an extra seven to twelve pounds of buoyancy to keep their heads above water. A PFD can give that "extra lift," and it's made to keep you floating until help comes. But a PFD is a personal flotation device and it's important to get the right one for you.

Your weight isn't the only factor in finding out how much "extra lift" you need in water. Body fat, lung size, clothing, and whether the water is rough or calm, all play a part.

Read the label on your PFD to be sure it's made for people your weight and size. Test it as shown in the next section. Then in an emergency, don't panic. Relax, put your head back and let your PFD help you come out on top.

#### **TRY YOUR PFD:**

- Try on your PFD to see if it fits comfortably snug. Then test it in shallow water to see how it handles.
- To check the buoyancy of your PFD in the water, relax your body and let your head tilt back. Make sure your PFD keeps your chin above water and you can breathe easily.
- Be aware: your PFD may not act the same in swift or rough water as in calm water. The clothes you wear and the items in your pockets may also change the way your PFD works.
- If your mouth is not well above the water, get a new PFD or one with more buoyancy.
- A PFD is designed not to ride-up on the body when in the water. But, when a wearer's stomach is larger than the chest, ride-up may occur. Before use, test this PFD in the water to establish that excessive ride-up does not impair PFD performance.

#### **WEAR YOUR PFD:**

- Most drownings occur way out at sea, right? Wrong! Fact is, 9 out of 10 drownings occur in inland waters, most within a few feet of safety. Most of the victims owned PFDs, but they died without them. A wearable PFD can save your life, if you wear it.
- If you haven't been wearing your PFD because of the way it makes you look or feel, there's good news. Today's PFDs fit better, look better and are easy to move around in.
- One more thing. Before you shove off, make sure all on board are wearing PFDs. To work best, PFDs must be worn with all straps, zippers, and ties fastened. Tuck in any loose strap ends to avoid getting hung-up.
- When you don't wear your PFD, the odds are against you. You're taking a chance on your life.

#### **CARING FOR YOUR PFD:**

Follow these points to be sure your PFD stays in good condition:

1. Don't alter your PFD. If yours doesn't fit, get one that does. An altered PFD may not save your life.
- 2. Don't put heavy objects on your PFD or use it for a kneeling pad or boat fender. PFDs lose buoyancy when crushed.**
3. Let your PFD drip dry thoroughly before putting it away. Always stow it in a well-ventilated place.
4. Don't leave your PFD on board for long periods when the boat is not in use.
5. Never dry your PFD on a radiator, heater, or any other direct heat source.
6. Put your name on your PFD if you're the only wearer.
7. Practice throwing your Type IV PFD. Cushions throw best underhand.

**CHECKING YOUR PFD:**

- Your PFD is required to be in serviceable condition in order to be used on your boat as one of the required PFDs.\
- Check your PFD often for rips, tears, and holes, and to see that seams, fabric straps, and hardware are okay. There should be no signs of waterlogging, mildew odor, or shrinkage of the buoyant materials.
- If your PFD uses bags of kapok (a naturally buoyant material), gently squeeze the bag to check for air leaks. If it leaks, it should be thrown away. When kapok gets wet, it can get stiff or waterlogged and can lose some of its buoyancy.
- Don't forget to test each PFD at the start of each season. Remember, the law says your PFDs must be in good shape before you use your boat. Ones that are not in good shape should be cut up and thrown away.

**Rocky Mountain Canoe Club Information**

**CLUB CONTACTS**

President	Bill Ashworth
Treasurer	Kathryn Mutz
Newsletter	Jeanne Willson
Schedule, Web	Carol Duecker
Membership	Gene Ehlers
Website	Kaj Toivonen
Conservation News Roundup	/ Jerry Nolan
Quartermaster	Doug Hurcomb



***In This Issue:*** The View Down River; A Different Trip Report on Rattlesnake Arches and the Loma Trip October 2011; Editor's Eddy Lines (Science – The Niobrara and the Sand Hills, NB; Safety, Skills, and Suppertime: Baking on the River); Is Your PFD Ready To Do Its Job?

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

**Membership:** \$10 per year, per household. See Membership section of our website for forms and information.

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