



The Voyageur's Companion

Newsletter of the Rocky Mountain Canoe Club

www.rockymountaincanooclub.org

February 2013

Jeanne Willson, editor

Possibly the best windbreak by a riverbank in Utah! Ruby Ranch/Mineral trip Oct. 2012



TAKE NOTE!

Paddling opportunities

Permits and rejections are arriving... Permitted river trips generally require intermediate to advanced skills; as for any trip, participants must be accepted by the trip leader.

Paddle the Pool in Arvada alternate Sundays; see website for details.

All-club paddle March 23 on the S Platte River. *"We do it because we can!"*

READ the article on cold water exposure at the end of this newsletter.

The View Down River

Bill Ashworth, President

With snow in the forecast for tonight, it's sometimes difficult to imagine that spring is coming – but it is! And the annual season opening Joint Clubs South Platte paddle is just a month away. Now, did I repair that tie down attachment from last fall on the tandem???

Anne Fiore, our new webmaster, and I have been working on the club website recently and it occurs to me that many

Bighorn on Deso-Gray



of you may not be aware of all the useful features to be found there. So let me give you a guided tour.

First, EVERYONE who's a member of the club is automatically registered on the website. Some of the site is available to the public but much of the useful areas are reserved for registered users. What if you've forgotten your Username? Or your Password? No problem! Just drop me or Anne a line (our emails are in the Contact section of the website) and we'll send you your Username. And with that, you can reset your own Password.

Once on the site, head for EVENTS. You'll find the **Schedule** there. Right now, there are only a handful of 2013 trips listed. But Carol, our Scheduler, is working with Trip Coordinators right now on what promises to be a very full and varied paddling season. Did you know that you can set a flag for alerts on the Schedule page so that you'll receive an email each time a new trip is posted. It's one of the benefits of registering! You'll also find helpful links on the Schedule page that explain in detail what the River level ratings mean.

Under RMCC TRIP ORGANIZATION, you'll find lots of useful information about planning and executing a successful trip as well as a terrific "**Where to Paddle**" table with dozens of great destinations anywhere from ½ day to a day away from the Front Range.

In the MEMBERS section, you'll find **Club Newsletters** going back to 2006. And you'll find a **Gallery** where you can view and post photos of club trips. In the **Forum** area, you can read and reply to postings from other members on a wide variety of issues including gear for sale, access issues, and where to paddle. And here again, you can set a flag to sends you an email when anyone posts to the Forum or when they reply to one of your posts.

Lots of interesting stuff – check it out!

Thanks to all who have responded to my Training Questionnaire. We're putting together the training schedule now and hope to have it out in early March.

And here's a heads up that member (and former Membership chair) Gene Ehlers is home recovering from open-heart surgery and is doing well. He'll be off the water most of the year but he'd appreciate a phone call or email from club friends.

Keep on paddlin'

Bill

Deso-Gray trip August 11 to 18th, 2012

Karen Amundson

Rather than tell the usual story of boat incidents (one flip, one pin, two full swamps), I am going to focus on the wonderful set of (mostly) mammals we saw - - via pictures and a few facts about them. These pictures were all taken on this trip. Much of the information was taken from [A](#)

The Elkman! (a.k.a. Tony Littlejohn)



In the order seen:

Coyote – This single guy was at the river, probably for a drink. The coyote is the most abundant carnivore in the Southwest. They mostly eat rabbits (which they can outspint), rodents, and mammalian carrion. They communicate through both olfactory (leaving distinctive feces) and auditory methods – bark, growl, yip, whine, and howl.

Beaver – A couple of these toothy animals made enough noise to wake people up in our first camp. This member of the rodent order attracted some of the earliest European explorers to the West. Denis Julien, a French-Canadian trapper, left his inscriptions in the 1830's and 40's around Canyonlands and Arches, and he also left one in 1836 near our Chandler Canyon layover camp. On large rivers such as the Green and the Colorado, they live in dens built into the banks. The opening is below the water line and leads back to a den platform which is above the water line. The beavers that live in smaller tributary streams and wetlands build the classic dam and lodge combination. Beavers may live more than 15 years.

Thirsty coyote



Wild horses



Wild Horses – We saw a half dozen of them in two groups, grazing on tall slopes along the river. Six years ago on Deso I had seen a couple of old horse skeletons, but no live horses. Many feel that the number of wild horses in the West has gotten too large, and there is disagreement over how to manage this. A recent, new method is to shoot females (at some distance) with a contraceptive drug that renders them infertile for more than a year. This method is gaining momentum, but is very labor intensive.

Elk – We did a mile and a half hike up along Jack Creek to a lovely dripping springs grotto. On the way we saw thousands of elk turds and finally 2 elk carcasses in and near the creek. This area must be a popular place for them during cooler seasons, or the dry weather may have forced them to the river more recently.

Bear – The first one came down to the river for a cool soak and didn't seem bothered by us drifting by. On our layover hike up Chandler Canyon, we saw a huge bear that dashed away up the trail ahead of us. Then on the return we saw a juvenile that scrambled into the thick brush of the spring fed creek. We also noticed a tea bag in bear scat at the elk campsite, Jack Creek #2.

Mule Deer – A few deer were hanging out near the Rock Creek Ranch. Does usually give birth to twins, whose lack of odor and spotted coloring are their only protection for the first few weeks. This is the only species of deer that spring on all four legs simultaneously – called stotting – instead of running.

Bighorn Sheep – This group near the mouth of Chandler Canyon let us get close enough for good photos. They often inhabit rocky slopes where their excellent climbing skills help them escape predators. During the late fall rut, males charge at more than 20mph and the loud head butting can be heard miles away. Females give birth to one precocial (not fully developed) lamb in the spring. They eat equal amounts of shrubs and grasses.



Woodhouse's Toad – This amphibious fellow was near our Chandler Canyon Camp. The distinct white stripe down the back identifies it as a Woodhouse as opposed to one of six other species shown in the “Naturalist’s” book. It inhabits canyons, streams, and marshes, wherever moisture is sufficient.

Northern Leopard Frog – This is the widest ranging amphibian in North America, going from northeastern Canada to California and even above 11,000’ in southern Colorado. They live near permanent water that has rooted aquatic vegetation and hibernate at the bottom of ponds from October to March (depending on elevation).

Bison! – Or is it technically a buffalo? While we were exploring the old log buildings and pens of the McPherson Ranch, what should appear but a bison!?! Probably he was coming for a drink of spring water. This was on the Ute Reservation, and we had to wonder how he got there.

Differences in physical characteristics

- Bison have a hairy fur coat on their body which grows thicker in the winters as a protection from the rugged environment they live in. Buffalo do not have thick fur.
- Bison have very sharp horns which they use for their defense. A buffalo's horns aren't very sharp but are longer than a bison's.
- Bison have a huge hump over the top of their front two legs which Buffaloes do not have.
- Bison also have a thick beard that circles around their rib cage but Buffaloes do not have a thick beard.
- A bison’s temperament is associated with its rugged structure and it can be a very aggressive animal when threatened. Buffalo, on the other hand are peaceful animals, which allowed it to be domesticated.
- Buffaloes grow up to 5 feet in size while bison may grow to 6 feet.
- Bison can run faster than buffaloes.

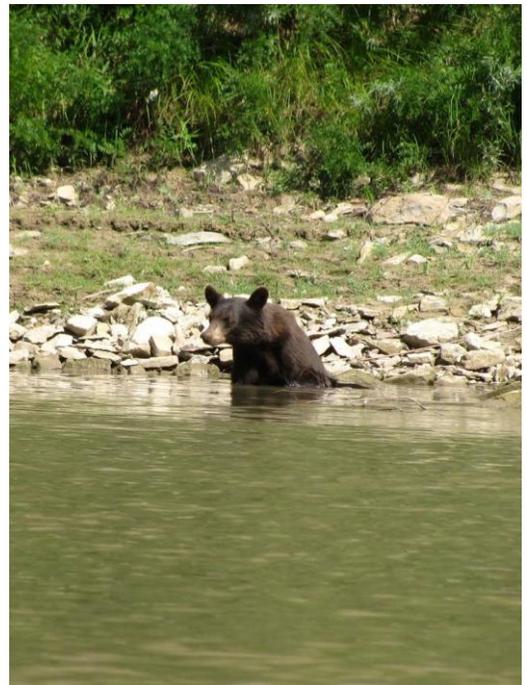
- Buffaloes can weigh between 800-1200 kg while bison can weigh up to 1400 kg.



Kit Fox – Or maybe it was a red fox, moving along a rocky area high above the river, with none of us quick enough to pull out our cameras. The Kit Fox has oversized ears and tail compared to the Red Fox. It eats mainly jackrabbits and kangaroo rats, but also reptiles, ground nesting birds, and insects. They bark to alert other foxes, growl to intimidate, and yelp in fear.

We saw dozens of blue herons, but not a lot of other birds. Insect life included some ants, dragon flies around the springs and streams, and luckily very few mosquitoes.

The Deso Bear



Petroglyphs on Deso add four more mammals to our bestiary.



Some canoeists like to do Deso at > 5000cfs to get the big wave roller coaster effects that entertain their children. This low water – 1350cfs – trip exposed thousands of rocks and made some of the rapids more difficult. Our 3000 cfs trip in July, 2006 was a nice water level, and we had no flip/pin/swamps at all, though it was before Joe Hutch rapid was made more difficult by a flash flood.

Ruby Ranch to Mineral Bottom, September 12, 2012

Janet Mallory

Eight of us (three tandem canoes: - Katherine M and sister Susie, Bonnie with friend Bob H, John M and friend Susan, and myself and friend Barbara in kayaks) packed our boats at Ruby Ranch on the Green River in Utah. I choose a commercial car shuttle, so some of us camped here the night before. We were the only ones here on a Wednesday night and the ranch was clean and pleasant. The drizzle went away as we launched. The next five days were sunny, windless and nearly cloudless.

This is an easy class 1 trip, with no waves unless the wind picks up. With 45 miles and five days, we picked a leisurely pace. In the mornings some people hiked early while it was still cool, while



others enjoyed their coffee on the beach watching the river. The spectacular beauty of these desert cliffs is refreshing escape from our usual busy lives.

Now it is winter. When I have a few minutes in the morning I like to sit at my computer with my coffee and search things like "paddle a canoe/kayak" or "swift water rescue" or "white water rescue". I find a lot on You Tube. There's everything from basic (never swim against a current - the current will win), to so far advanced I would never try it. I like to see the videos where swimmers go from the defensive position (head upstream, feet up downstream) to more aggressive swimming techniques (rolling while stroking). I saw one where the swimmer went to a rock and used his feet to push toward his chosen landing. Like back paddling in a rapid to give yourself more time, this can slow you down also. Of course the chosen landing is critical. I recommend the slowest, most gentle slope you can see downstream a reasonable distance. Avoid climbing out on cliffs when you can. Setting the goal is important; you must have a goal to be able to reach it.



The Green River: Ruby Ranch to Mineral Bottom

So I'll send a couple of pictures from our camps and go back to coffee and videos. They can't replace a class for hands-on experience, though I feel safer with some ideas to help make decisions out on the rivers. And I have used many of these techniques.

Costa Rica Rios!

Bonnie Gallagher

The simplest way to describe my two weeks in Costa Rica is with the single word “WOW!” I cannot say enough nice about our tour operator, the people in Costa Rica, and the wonderful rivers we paddled.

The weather was a perfect 72 degrees most of the trip and water temps allowed us to paddle in shorts and a shorty paddle jacket. Our accommodations were consistently delightful and we had home cooking by the senora for breakfast and dinner. Our evenings were delightfully planned with a local chocolate producer one evening and a local dance instructor getting everyone involved dancing on a different night.

Bonnie in Costa Rica



Toucans, parrots, howler monkeys, and venomous snakes (in the serpentarium tour) were some of the animals we were able to see. We also had the good fortune to see a sloth. One morning the Montezuma Oro Pendula, a beautiful bird with a golden tail, woke us up at 5:00am with his constant call. We paddled 10 miles into a remote jungle camp where we stayed overnight for 2 nights, enjoying a zip line tour of the canopy and an afternoon of rest, before paddling out 16 miles on the third day.

The water can be as easy as Class II and as difficult as Class V. We spent most of our trip on Class III and IV water. I saw flat water/moving water canoes in their boat house so I am assuming that somewhere they also have flat water sections. Some people were in duckies for the Class II and III water and then moved into rafts for the Class IV sections. There was a non paddling tour option as well as a mountain bike option.

The tour company we used was fantastic and was willing to do everything I personally asked, as well as everything our group as a whole asked. They specifically outfitted an Outrage canoe for me the way I like it. On Day 6 of the trip, as a group we asked for a huge change. They completely changed around our last two days of boating, our lodging, and meals to make it so more people could paddle more days. Costa Rica Rios wants to make your trip exactly the way you want it!

I truly enjoyed myself for 2 weeks and I am sure I will be going back again next winter.

Editor's Eddy Lines: Science, Safety, Skills, and Suppertime

Jeanne Willson

Science: Karen A. has provided us with a fantastic collection of natural history notes to enhance our enjoyment and understanding of many of the animals that we encounter as we travel the rivers of the Western Interior.

Safety: Janet shared some great tips on swift water rescue and paddling in general! We can all profit from reviewing these and other safety tips, and slow winter Saturday mornings is a great time to do it.

PLEASE READ the article here on cold water exposure. The companion article about drowning was published here a couple of years ago and is worth reviewing. The author is one of the most highly experienced water rescue experts anywhere.

Skills: Canoers want to know!! Tom Waymire asks this: Open canoes splash a lot of water into the bow going through standing waves. Might the club members have suggestions on practical ways of deflecting the water while still allowing room for the bow person to paddle and maneuver? Readers' answers will be printed in the May/June newsletter.

Suppertime:

Asian tofu dip

Semi-soft tofu, drained
4 T peanut butter
1 or 2 T soy sauce
2 green onions
Garlic, fresh or otherwise
Ginger, fresh or otherwise
Juice of one lime

Mix and serve to your fellow canoers with bread sticks, carrots, cabbage, broccoli florets, celery, crackers, etc. as you wish.

The following article is reprinted here with permission. As we push our canoeing seasons and paddle in cold water, it's vital to understand this information. Much of this information applies during much of our paddling season as our rivers are often cold from snow melt or being released from the bottom of deep reservoirs such as Flaming Gorge.

The Truth About Cold Water

BY MARIO VITTONI ON JULY 9, 2010



[Photo By wili hybrid](#)

I'm going to come right out and tell you something that almost no one in the maritime industry understands. That includes mariners, executives, managers, insurers, dock workers, for certain – fisherman, and even many (most) rescue professionals:

It is impossible to die from hypothermia in cold water unless you are wearing flotation, because without flotation – you won't live long enough to become hypothermic.

Despite the research, the experience, and all the data, I still hear “experts” – touting as wisdom – completely false information about cold water and what happens to people who get in it. With another season of really cold water approaching, I feel compelled to get these points across in a way that will change the way mariners behave out there on (or near) the water.

What follows is the truth about cold water and cold water immersion. I know that you think you know all there is to know about hypothermia already (and maybe you do), but read ahead and see if you aren't surprised by something.

When the water is cold (say under 50 degrees F) there are significant physiological reactions that occur, in order, almost always.

You Can't Breathe:

The first phase of cold water immersion is called the **cold shock response**: It is a stage of increased heart rate and blood pressure, uncontrolled gasping, and sometimes uncontrolled movement. Lasting anywhere from 30 seconds to a couple of minutes depending on a number of factors, the cold shock response can be deadly all by itself. In fact, of all the people who die in cold water, it is estimated that **20% die in the first two minutes**. They drown, they panic, they take on water in that first uncontrolled gasp, if they have heart problems – the cold shock may trigger a heart attack. Surviving this stage is about getting your breathing under control, realizing that the stage will pass, and staying calm.

You Can't Swim:

One of the primary reasons given by recreational boaters when asked why they don't wear a life jacket, is that they can swim. Listen up, Tarzan; I swam for a living for the better part of my adult life, and when the water is cold – none of us can swim for very long. The second stage of cold water immersion is called **cold incapacitation**. Lacking adequate insulation, your body will make its own. Long before your core temperature drops a degree, the veins in your extremities (those things you swim with) will constrict, you will lose your ability control your hands, and the muscles in your arms and legs will just flat out quit working well enough to keep you above water. Without some form of flotation, and in not more than 30 minutes, the best swimmer among us will drown – definitely – no way around it. Without ever experiencing a drop in core temperature (at all) over 50% of the people who die in cold water, die from drowning perpetuated by cold incapacitation.

You Last Longer than You Think:

If you have ever heard the phrase, "That water is so cold, you will die from hypothermia within ten minutes." then you have been lied to about hypothermia. For that matter you can replace ten minutes with twenty, or thirty, or even an hour, and you've still been lied to. In most cases, in water of say 40 degrees (all variables to one side), it typically takes a full hour to approach unconsciousness from **hypothermia**, the third stage of cold water immersion. But remember, you must be wearing flotation to get this far.

We are all different in this regard, but I once spent an hour in 44 degree water wearing street clothes and my core temperature was only down by less than two degrees (I was not clinically hypothermic). It was uncomfortable to be sure, and I wouldn't recommend finding your own limit, but it probably would have taken another hour to lose consciousness, and an hour after that to cool my core to the point of no return. The bodies efforts to keep the core warm – vasoconstriction and shivering – are surprisingly effective. The shivering and blood shunting to the core are so effective, that twenty minutes after jumping in (twice the “you'll be dead in ten minutes” time), I had a fever of 100.2.

Rescue Professionals Think You Live Longer:

There is a good side to the misconceptions about hypothermia. Should you ever be in the water in need of rescue, you can be certain that the Coast Guard is going to give you the benefit of every possible doubt. When developing search criteria – search and rescue coordinators use something called the Cold Exposure Survival Model (CESM): It is a program wherein they enter all the available data about the victim (age, weight, estimated body fat, clothing, etc.) and about the environment (water temp, sea state, air temp, wind) and the software spits them out a number that represents the longest possible time you can survive under those conditions. I plugged my own information into it once and it said I could survive for over 4 hours in 38 degree water wearing nothing but a t-shirt and jeans and no flotation. I can tell you from experience that the CESM is full of it – I'd give me 35 minutes tops – but the error is comforting. If the program that determines how long I might live is going to be wrong – I want it to be wrong in that direction.

Out of the Water is Not Out of Trouble:

I lost count of the number of survivors I annoyed in the back of the helicopter because I wouldn't let them move. I had a rule – if they came from a cold water environment – they laid down and stayed down until the doctors in the E.R. said they could stand. It didn't matter to me how good they felt or how warm they thought they were. Because the final killer of cold water immersion is **post-rescue collapse**. Hypothermia does things besides making everything colder. Victims are physiologically different for awhile. One of the things that changes is called heart-rate variability. The hearts ability to speed up and slow down has been effected. Getting up and moving around requires your heart to pump more blood, being upright and out of the water is also taxing, then any number of other factors collide and the heart starts to flutter instead of pump – and down you go. Victims of immersion hypothermia are two things; lucky to be alive, and fragile. Until everything is warmed back up – out of the water and dry is good enough – mobility comes later.

Did You Learn Anything?

If you did, then hopefully you'll use it to make good decisions when it comes to being safe on and around cold water; good decisions like these:

1. When working on deck, wear flotation. This includes, especially, all fisherman in Alaska. I couldn't find more recent research, but the 31 Alaskan "fell overboard" casualties in 2005 died from drowning, not cold water. Not one of them was wearing flotation. Many couldn't stay above water long enough for their own boats to make a turn and pick them up.....over a life jacket.
2. If you witness a man overboard – getting the life ring directly to them is critical (vital – step one – must do it). Make certain that all-important piece of safety gear is not just on your vessel, but readily available and not tied to the cradle.
3. When working on deck – wear flotation. I said that already? Well, when I quit reading search reports that end with "experienced" mariners dying because they thought they understood cold water – I'll come up with better advice.

For more advice about how to handle an accidental immersion into cold water – please watch [Cold Water Boot Camp](#) – it is one of the best 10 minutes on immersion hypothermia ever produced. For even more advice, ask me a question on the discussion boards.

ScoutingThree Fords Rapid on Deso, 2012



Rocky Mountain Canoe Club Information

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In This Issue: A tour of our web site; A Deso-Gray Bestiary; Ruby Ranch to Mineral Bottom; Science, Skills, Safety, and Suppertime; The Truth About Cold Water; Costa Rica Rios!

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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Bonnie went to Costa Rica to canoe in the jungle and all she brought back were some beautiful pictures!

