

Central Iowa Paddlers

Volume 8 Issue 2

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This newsletter is a publication of the Central Iowa Paddlers, an informal group of paddlesport enthusiasts. The mission of the club is to share information, promote recreation opportunities and paddlesport safety, and encourage care of our aquatic resources. The group includes new and experienced paddlers with canoes and kayaks of all kinds. Visit us on www.paddleiowa.org and pass the word!

MEANDERINGS

It's nice to be involved in something that is "in style." Always being a late adopter or, more typically, a "non-adopter" of popular fads, I find it refreshing to have people see my interest in kayaking as a trendy activity. Yesterday when I was at the gas station, someone came up to me and asked what the racks were on my car. When I mentioned kayaking, he told me how much he wanted to try it out, and several minutes later he was back in his car with tips, store names, and the URL for our Web site. Twice this week while paddling around Grays Lake, I've met couples in boats who are new to the sport and excited to be trying out this latest "in" sport.

With this new interest comes a responsibility on those of us who want to grow participation and interest in paddlesports. I've been told that in many of the white water spots, people are showing up with small recreation boats, unfamiliar with their equipment or the water, but ready to recreate what they've seen on Mountain Dew commercials. Recently I paddled up to a family of kayakers who had a daughter floating in the water and a kayak upside down. The family was unable to right the boat and they weren't sure how to get the daughter aboard a boat. Eventually I was able to get things worked out, but it reminded me of the responsibility we all carry for helping people *safely* enjoy our sport. To that end, with this edition of the Newsletter we are including an article by Karl DeLong on SAFETY AND RESCUE. All should read it and learn.

Thanks to the national interest in paddlesports plus the great interest being created locally by Nate Hooegeveen with this book, Gerry Rowland with his water trails activities, Bob Modersohn with his articles in the Des Moines Register, and with a host of others contributing and promoting, we are "the" sport to be involved in. Let's help our new participants learn, enjoy, and be safe!

- Steve Parrish, Editor

A bad day on the water is better than a good day at work

- Plaque seen in ferry boat taking kayakers to Isle Royale

TRIP and NEWS REPORTS

Table Rock Lake, February 2004 by John Pearson

It is February. Impatient with the icy, gray grip of late winter in Iowa, I have come south with my kayak to meet the blue skies, mild temperatures, and open water of southwest Missouri. My destination- Table Rock Lake, a 43,000-acre reservoir formed by damming of the White River in the Ozark Mountains- is a compromise with my wife, who points out that my original plan- a float down the Buffalo River in northern Arkansas- contains elements of risk that, although acceptable individually, potentially court disaster in combination: solo, winter, river, and wilderness. For her peace of mind, I redesign my trip at the last minute, reluctantly foregoing wilderness and flowing water by selecting a flatwater lake in a rural setting. But still solo, still winter, and hopefully still scenic.

Day 1- Indian Point to Kimberling City. My first day is 15 miles through a landscape of partially deforested hills studded with resorts and cottages sprawling between Branson and Kimberling City. Boathouses, full of dormant motorboats hanging silently in dark stalls, dot every bay. Houses overlooking the lake clutter every reach. To maximize my perception of open space, I focus my attention on either the starboard or port shorelines, in alternating sequence, whichever

is less developed. I also learn to paddle close under the bluffs to shut out the view of houses perched on the crests as I pass beneath. The sounds of small engines, barking dogs, and busy hammers reach me across glassy water.

I am startled to hear the yodeling of a loon as I round the peninsula across from Cow Creek and then spot three birds lolling and diving in a bay framed by docks and lawns. I encounter other waterfowl- Canada geese, grebes, goldeneye ducks- and a bald eagle, the big water serving as a staging area for their northern migration. Logslide Bluff is the first cliffy shoreline of my trip, a two-mile run of abrupt limestone ledges standing 20 feet above the lake with steeply sloping hillsides of stony forestland rising another 200 feet. Oak and cedar predominate, but I spy scattered trees of shortleaf pine as well. I land on the southern tip of the bluff and wander briefly into the forest edge, finding dried foliage of little bluestem, oatgrass, and poverty grass mixed with the leaf litter of post oak and chinquapin oak. All of these are indicators of dry, rocky habitats; additionally, post oak is a southern species that barely extends into Iowa, so it is interesting for me to see it in abundance here in a typical Ozark setting. As I approach Kimberling City, I pass a cedar-filled prairie on a rocky hillside. A single fire would restore the grassy character of the prairie by burning the encroaching trees, but the sprawl of houses surrounding the site renders this impossible. Fearful of a costly escape, no prairie manager would dare set fire here. I paddle past the doomed prairie and pull ashore for the night at the Kimberling City campground, landing at the outermost campsite next to a marina.

My kayak seems out-of-place next to the wharves, boathouses, and ranks of motorboats in the marina, but I am abiding by rules set by the Army Corps managers of Table Rock Lake, who have informed me that winter camping is allowed only in established campgrounds associated with a commercial marina. I get water for drinking and cooking from the lake with my filtering pump, taking care to draw it at the tip of the peninsula away from the drippings of oil, gasoline, and creosote that I might encounter in the harbor. After a hot meal cooked on my little brass stove, I scavenge wood from the fire rings of empty campsites in the deserted campground and enjoy a small campfire as I write in my journal. When darkness falls, the hills surrounding the city park are starred with the electric lights of homes and streetlamps.

Day 2- Kimberling City to Baxter. A cold wind is blowing from the northeast as I paddle away from Kimberling City and pass under the Highway 13 bridge. I make my way along the left bank, sheltered from the wind by Cedar Bluff, aptly named for the dense forest of eastern red cedar covering its steep slopes. As I track the winding course of the old White River valley, however, I am eventually forced out into the wind again. While rounding the horseshoe bend at Mill Creek Park, my course becomes parallel to the choppy waves, making me vulnerable to tipping and demanding a tiring right sweep to maintain my direction. I struggle past a rocky point and veer into a sheltered cove on the lee side of a low ledge of bedrock; a sunny, gravelly beach, bright with yellow Ozark chert, is a welcome resting place.

Leaving Mill Creek behind, Evans Bluff rises high in front of me. I skirt its base, looking up at the rocky slopes into more forest of cedar and oak. Across the lake, three knobby hills bear the Ozarkian names of Big Joe Bald Mountain, Little Joe Bald Mountain, and Naked Joe Bald Mountain. "Naked" and "bald" allude not to some hapless mountaineer but to the treeless, prairie-covered hilltops once found here; but like the cedar-filled prairie near Kimberling City, encroaching trees have all but erased the grassy openings. One of the knobs is occupied not only with trees but also by houses and roads.

After passing the confluence of the James River (a major tributary of the White River in Table Rock Lake), I am relieved to see that I am finally leaving the suburbia of Branson and its outlying communities. Beyond Philmont Bluff, the countryside becomes one of rolling, forested hills with a distant view of Pilot Knob Mountain. I stop paddling several times to revel in the openness and wildness in this new landscape of hills, woods, sky, and lake. Long white bluffs form the left bank as I approach the Baxter campground. Isolated cedars lean picturesquely from the cliff face. I spot a prickly pear cactus draped over the lip of a high ledge, the upper surfaces of its large, spiny pads a deep purple color. Dried stems of gray goldenrod and black-eyed Susan dot the bluff, finding tiny footholds in narrow crevices.

My campsite faces north onto the open lake, which is bordered on its east side by the white bluffs I have just passed. To the north and west, the wooded horizon beyond the lake rests in the Mark Twain National Forest. Tonight the hills are dark, free of electric lights.

Day 3- Baxter to Campbell Point. The morning is overcast, the temperature hovering just above freezing. For several days, the weather radio has been predicting the passage of a cold front, and here it is. I know from previous experience that my stove is not likely to work well when cold, so after a perfunctory trial and failure, I pack it away and have a breakfast of fruit bars and water.

With a cold wind from the north, the kayak is once again parallel to the waves while heading west along a cliffy shoreline. On guard against broadside waves, I turn into every small bay I encounter to maximize my passage on protected waters. The shoreline eventually swings north, so I paddle into a headwind. Although slower, this is more stable, and I am glad of the change. I paddle all morning because the wind is too cold to be comfortable outside of the kayak. Besides, I enjoy the rhythm of steady paddling and the revelation of new landscapes as I round points and bends.

Consulting the map, I anticipate that I will find a south-facing shore sheltered from the north wind around a horseshoe bend several miles ahead. A gravel bar capped with oak forest comes into view when I finally reach the spot. As I enter the bubble of calm air behind the bar, the wind drops as if commanded to stop. During the morning, the overcast sky has dissipated and sunshine now drenches the gravel bar. I step out of the kayak into a pleasant enclave, grateful for respite from the cold wind. As expected, the stove roars to life in the warm setting and I am soon enjoying ramen soup and hot tea.

After lunch, I loll on the sunny beach. My campsite at Campbell Point is only a short distance farther and cannot be more appealing than where I already am. Strolling into the forest edge above the beach, I find black oak, blackjack oak, and mockernut hickory. The oaks retain a smattering of brown, marcescent leaves, but although the hickory is leafless, its thick, finger-like twigs, alligator-skin bark, big buds, and the cup-like husks that litter the forest floor from last year's nut crop help me identify it. On the gravelly beach, I find possumhaw, a deciduous, shrubby holly with wands of bright red berries borne at the ends of slender, upright branches; like mockernut, it is a southern species that does not reach Iowa. Sycamore trees stand above the possumhaw, their stately white branches always a startling contrast to the dark limbs of its neighbors. Although they once grew along the streambanks of the drowned river valley, sycamore and possumhaw have discovered the gravelly, intermittently flooded zone between the lake and its high-water mark to be a suitable alternate habitat. Accustomed to more northern waterways, I am always amazed at the absence of cottonwood along Ozark streams. It is commonly the dominant tree species of this habitat elsewhere in the Midwest and Great Plains, but sycamore ("the cottonwood of the South" according to my dendrology professor) appears to fill that niche here.

Day 4- Campbell Point to Baxter. It is cold again this morning, 24° according to the weather radio. Mist is rising from the lake. White frost coats the black fabric of my sprayskirt when I begin packing the kayak shortly after sunrise. I am glad that I pitched my tent in a grove of cedars, protected from the cold night sky and the wind that blew all night. Not bothering with the stove, I have another cold breakfast and set off. I am at the apogee of my trip and must begin the return route today, but before re-tracing yesterday's course, I paddle around Campbell Point to peek at the next reach of river. The forest continues, but the land appears to flatten out, lacking the high knobs that have served as beacons for the past several days.

I swing the kayak around and follow a line of low, cedar-covered bluffs. I peer into the interior of the cedar forest, watching for Ashe juniper. Although the majority of the cedars are the common eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), a second species of cedar tree, *Juniperus ashei*, extends northward from Mexico and Texas to reach its northeasternmost outposts in Arkansas and southern Missouri. My Trees of Arkansas guidebook states that Ashe juniper occurs in Arkansas "exclusively on limestone or dolomite outcrops in the White River Basin and at the

White Cliffs in Little River County.” I am less than ten miles from Arkansas, in the White River Basin, and surrounded by limestone outcrops full of cedar, so the potential for encountering it is high. Compared to eastern red cedar, Ashe juniper is described as having “darker” foliage, “bunchier” twigs, “larger” berries, and a more “globular” shape to the whole tree. As I cruise past the bluff, I see several individuals scattered in the grove that could qualify, but cannot be certain. The ones that appear to be Ashe juniper tend to be the bigger trees, approaching 25 feet tall with a trunk diameter up to 1½ foot. “Big” is a relative term among tree species. The largest specimen of Ashe juniper on record- reported to be near Branson- is only 30 feet tall with a diameter of 2½ feet. Life is hard for trees on these sterile, droughty habitats; with very slow growth rates, the cedars simply cannot achieve large sizes despite being long-lived.

I pass last night’s campsite and then the gravel bar where I rested yesterday. I paddle to the opposite shore and pull out onto a rocky point for a mid-morning break. My kayak rests precariously on a narrow rock ledge projecting into a calm, spacious bay. A spine of white dolomite rises steeply behind me, cloaked darkly with cedars above a band of naked, vertical rock. Tiny prairie openings on rock outcrops where junipers fail to thrive are russet with last year’s growth of bluestem grasses. The forest across the lake blankets an Ozarkian landscape of rolling hills surmounted by high, steep-flanked knolls. I cannot distinguish individual trees at this distance, but I know from hours of shoreside paddling at a more intimate range that I am gazing at ranks of xerophytic oaks covering the stony hills: post oak, black oak, chinquapin, and blackjack, blended with mockernut hickory and cedar. Their bare branches collectively form a black canopy under a bright blue sky that is mirrored in the flat water of the drowned river valley whose winding, entrenched course I have been following for days.

The lake becomes glassy in the afternoon. I glide easily across reaches that I struggled to traverse just yesterday. The still-standing snags of dead cedar trees drowned by the reservoir fifty years ago are reflected in perfect symmetry on the calm surface of the water. So are bluffs, landscape, and sky. I see many birds today beyond the usual gulls and crows: a bald eagle perched in a treetop, a pileated woodpecker flying along a wooded edge, great blue herons fishing in the shoals, killdeer on a gravel bar, flocks of robins along a reach of shoreline, bluebirds flitting in woodland openings, kingfishers flashing past my kayak. Turkey vultures wheel above the land, waiting for the arrival of the warm front that will inevitably push northward into their summer range.

Rounding the last point and coming into sight of Baxter Park, I strike across the bay toward the white bluffs where I had seen the prickly pear cactus. It is the only specimen that I have seen on the entire trip and I want to get a photograph. I spot it almost immediately and climb stair-like ledges for a closer view. Looking up, I see shifting, anastomosing ripples of light projected onto the dark underside of overhanging ledges from the water below. The effect resembles a force field in a science fiction movie through which I might extend my hand into another world. Turning to face the lake, I am awed by the beautiful expanse of calm water and distant forested hills in the low-angled light of late afternoon. A lone cedar tree at the tip of the bluff is silhouetted against the glare of reflected sunlight. I linger on the cliff, watching, watching....

Day 5- Baxter to Indian Point. Returning through the scenic reach north of Baxter, I realize that I do not wish to devote the following day to paddling through the fragmented landscape between Kimberling City and Branson. Pushing through in a single day would mean a 30-mile paddle, but I decide to try. Distance is the challenge today, eclipsing the distraction of suburban sprawl. The outbound sequence of placenames rewinds as I slip past Baxter Bluff, Philmont Bluff, James River, Joe Bald Mountains, Evans Bluff, Mill Creek, and Cedar Bluff. I bypass the Kimberling City campground and am now committed to reaching Indian Point Park for the night. A strong southeast wind crops up in the afternoon, a complication that I had not included in my original calculation. Nonetheless, I pass Logslide Bluff and Cow Creek, then I am in view of Indian Point as the sun sinks low. The western sky is aglow with sunset when I finally pull ashore.

The following morning, I load my kayak onto the car and drive north through blue skies. As I approach Kansas City, I see the bank of clouds that still overspreads Iowa and soon reenter the

gray world of late winter. Ice reappears in the ponds and sodden snowbanks line the ditches. Spring will come, but I am glad that I have already met it in the Ozarks.

Grays Lake Summer of 2004 by Steve Parrish

Tuesday evenings at Grays Lake continues to be a great place to meet and greet other paddlers. Located just south of downtown Des Moines on Fleur Drive, Grays Lake has long been a place to see plenty of canoes and kayaks. It has become even more appealing lately because of the beautiful, lighted bridge that graces the park, plus the park now offer a concession shop and canoe rentals. Canoe Sport Outfitters was a big hit last year when they brought in kayaks, providing free tryouts of their equipment. Now they're offering this exciting addition:

Free Clinic: As part of our "Paddle Safely" initiative, CanoeSport Outfitters of Indianola will host "Start Kayaking Smart" clinics every Tuesday from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Grays Lake. Each clinic will discuss safety, teach basic kayaking strokes, and provide a brief tour of Grays Lake. Each clinic will be taught by an instructor certified by the American Canoe Association in coastal sea kayaking.

Participation in these clinics will be free, but pre-registration will be required in order to maintain a safe class size. All paddling gear will be provided if necessary

Discover the exciting world of kayaking by calling CanoeSport Outfitters at 515-961-6117 to reserve a spot in the next "Start Kayaking Smart" clinic.

Casey Gillum
CanoeSport Outfitters

I hope to see you at Grays Lake this summer!

Elderhostel Kayaking Trip on the Colorado River March, 2004 by Raymond Harden

Just before leaving Arizona, near Las Vegas, northbound U.S. Highway 93 was narrowed to one lane at the security checkpoint. Here two tents were setup surrounded by several police cars and a half-dozen patrolmen milled about the area- all were packing side arms. Two young men that appeared to be just out of high school looked over the two white vans and our trailer containing 17 kayaks and other gear. They seemed doubtful that a group of sixteen of older men and women, ranging in age from early fifties to seventies was going to take little kayaks on the mighty Colorado River below Hoover Dam. After they glanced over toward the older officers, wrote something on their clipboards, and let us pass on to the dam.

The stop at the parking lot on the dam was an opportunity to stretch our legs, observe the road construction, and watch with amusement as two ravens got garbage out of the trash dumpster. This was also the last chance to use a porta-potty. The leaders of our group made telephone calls to the officials that were to lead us to the base of the dam.



From the parking lot there was a good view of the dam and Lake Meade. My last visit here was over



twenty years ago; the water at that time was near the top of the dam. Now I was surprised to see how much the water level had dropped. The past several years of drought, scant snowfall, and heavy water use by southwestern cities have caused the lake level to be sixty-five feet lower. The sides of the dam and lakeshore are now covered with a scaly coating of calcium carbonate making it look like a giant bathtub ring.

Our escort arrived in a white SUV and we were led through a locked gate and down a narrow winding road that had the steepest grade I have ever seen. The driver of our van used the lowest gear and breaks to hold the van back. The passengers had to get out and walk the last fifty yards. We were told that this was for safety, because if the van went out of control only one person would be killed.

I looked up at the huge dam above me and briefly thought, “what if this mass of concrete broke or gave way”?

I was amazed by how quiet it was at the base of the dam. The noise of the traffic and road construction above did not come down to the depths of the canyon. The water was very clear with a greenish hue and its surface was calm but moving very swiftly down the canyon. In a short time we loaded the gear and launched the kayaks and were on our way, heading to our take out point of Willow Beach 14 miles downstream.

For the first mile or two the 400 to 500 feet tall canyon walls blocked the sunlight and we paddled in cool shadows. My wife and I drifted more than paddled our tandem sit-upon kayak. We were straining our necks looking up the reddish sandstone bluffs, occasionally commenting at the intricate design of the rock and we marveled at the ability of barrel cactus plants to grow in the smallest cracks of the cliff.

Several caves that had been formed by the action of the water fascinated us. The first one we ventured into had a hot water spring flowing over the walls that formed clouds of steam as the hot water neared the surface of the cool river. The water dripping from the ceiling of the cave had a slight odor of sulfur. It was also uncomfortably warm when it dripped down the back of my neck and on my bare legs. Several other smaller caves were explored. I was surprised to see small liverwort plants growing on the sides of the rock walls. Their tiny root structures were holding on to the pores and cracks in the rock as they absorbed the water cascading over them. The most beautiful of all the caves was one called Emerald Cave. My wife and I paddled the kayak back twenty feet into the cavity of the rock cliff and then looked toward the opening. Then the water was very clear and took on a bright emerald color. Large fish could be seen swimming on the rocky bottom of the river fifteen feet below.

Before the building of Hoover Dam in the mid 1930's, a catwalk structure was built on the sides of the canyon wall. Most of it is still intact today. We marveled at how it was constructed and

commented on the bravery the workers had to use the walkway. For a quarter of a mile steel rods, in the shape of an "L", were imbedded into the shear rock cliff 30-50 feet above the surface of the water. Boards were then laid on the rods so that a person could walk to the river gauging station. A steel cable was still attached to both sides of the canyon walls crossing the river. The workers had to ride across the river in two places in a hand pulled bucket that was suspended from this cable over the torrent of water below.

At lunchtime we stopped at one of the few beaches along the shore. The beach was formed like an alluvial fan out of a smaller canyon that meandered for about a half mile back on the eastern side of the river. Two other groups, made up of high school or college students, were camped there. They looked at us with a passing interest as the group of Elderhostel people beached the kayaks; there was plenty of room.

One of the reasons our guides chose this spot was because of the hot spring nearby. After our brown bag lunch we walked up the narrow twisting canyon following the small flowing stream up to its source. The water in the stream became warmer the further we hiked. We arrived a waterfall of hot water and climbed a ten foot steel ladder to the top of the waterfall into a knee-deep pool. The uncomfortably hot water was coming from small cracks in the rock and had formed a cave like room in the sandstone. The room had rock walls on two sides and overhead. The other opening of the cave led out into the dry desert plateau where there was no evidence of any water. I climbed a large boulder and got a view of Lake Mohave several miles to the south. Near our take out point, Willow Beach, three big horn sheep were spotted. We watched them feed on the sparse vegetation in the rocky crags and were amazed at their sure-footed movement as they walked on the nearly vertical slope. They looked down at us as we tried to take photographs of them.

My wife and I spent five days with the Elderhostel group paddling in the area. Each day we went to a different place on Lake Mead, Lake Mohave, and the Colorado River from our base at Yesterday's Motel in Chloride, Arizona. Each area had it's own unique beauty. The trip below Hoover Dam to Willow Beach is the part that I enjoyed most and I would like to do it again sometime in the future.

Ever since I read the book RIVER: One Mans Journey Down the Colorado, Source to Sea by Colin Fletcher, 1998, I have wanted to paddle the Colorado River. Maybe some day I will do the entire river float like he did. He was seventy years old when he did this trip, so there is still some time left for me to keep on paddling.

Andaman Sea, Thailand February 2004 by Greg Vitale

Islands dot the Andaman Sea. Many have caves openings. Some of these caves lead to openings on the other side called hong or rooms in Thai. In high tide, the sea floods into these hong. Sheer walls of limestone shaped these rooms which support mangroves, crab eating Macaques, mudskippers, a fish that can live out of water, and hornbills. We saw this and much more.

To get to these hong, we often laid on our backs in our tougher than kevlar "rubber" seacanoes, our faces inches from the roof the cave. It was particularly disconcerting the time my Teva sandals, which stuck up a tiny bit above my toes as I laid on my back pressing on the bottom of the boat, hit a rock. I immediately engaged in panicked wiggling of toes. My foot cleared with the adjustment. I breathed again.

We also paddle in the sea around the islands including Taratao. Taratao was once a prison camp. During the World War II, the staff and prisoners were not given the provisions that they needed. People under the warden's charge were dying from malaria and from starvation. At first the warden sent staff and a few prisoners out in a small boat to beg from the ships that passed in the busy straight.

But things quickly took a turn for the worst when a captain of one of the boats tired of this delay on one of his return trip and intentionally rammed the desperate beggars. On the captain's next trip, the desperate staff and prisoners again boarded his boat but with the intention to steal this time. They had a gun.

Unexpectedly, the captain of the boat pulled a gun, but was shot and killed. It wasn't long after this incident that the Pirates of Taratao were murdering and stealing for profit. The piracy didn't end until after World War II and civil authority was reestablished.

For us though, Taratao was a vacation from the crowded and noisy streets of Bangkok, a city of 10 million, where we were living. On one late afternoon paddle among the mangroves on the Island of Taratao, we saw langurs, a monkey like animal, a python, a monitor lizard, and several kinds of kingfishers.

Lush islands dotted the water as we paddled a tandem sit-on-top kayak or cruised on our support boat lulled by breathtaking scenery, incredible food and tales from the owner of the firm or from his staff of wonderful Thais. Fish would jump or skip across the water near our boats. Sea Eagles soared overhead. We paddled and kept company with dolphins.

We scrambled through backwaters, paddled The Seven Turns River and bathed in waterfalls. We made little floats of bamboo and banana leaves and then added flowers, candles and incense as part of our Valentine Day celebration on this trip. After a wonderful dinner on a large boat, we got into a seacanoë and went into a hong as night was setting. There, with other couples, we lit our candles and set our floats on the water. The falling tide carried them back out into the sea and we followed. After a bit, we gathered up our boats and headed to our island campsite. Magic was all about us, the essence of dreams.

Little Sioux River May, 2004 by Robin Fortney

Back in January, Hank agreed to co-lead a northwest Iowa trip on the Little Sioux River with me on May 7-9. He wasn't sure Central Iowa Paddlers would want to drive to see this small river, but this river is a beautiful example of a prairie stream and I figured that whoever showed up would be the right group. Sections of the Little Sioux have protected water status and there is considerable public land along the river, so it would be worth the effort if we had enough water to float it. Hank and I met at Gillett Grove on Friday evening to check river levels and access points (the nearest river gauge is downstream at Linn Grove and it showed 15.65 feet for May 7). The weather promised to be stormy, and we hoped for some rain since the Little Sioux water level had been dropping. One hearty paddler had set up camp in Spencer's East Leach Park when we got into town. The clouds were heavy and the wind was brisk, so we invited Dick to bring his sleeping bag over to Hank's place. Not being a "weather weenie," Dick declined.

The quarter inch of rain that fell that night didn't add much to the river, but the next day dawned bright, clean and cool. As Hank and I were loading the van, he noticed a flat tire. Not good, as he had planned on using the van to pull his canoe trailer. Fortunately, Dick's truck had a hitch and he was willing to pull the trailer, so they dropped the truck and trailer at a wildlife area located 15 miles downstream. Jerry, Betsy and Jim joined us at the put-in at West Leach Park in Spencer. Hank provided copies of a river map taken from Nate Hoogeveen's new Paddling Iowa book. We thoroughly enjoyed the intimacy of this small meandering river. Wildlife was abundant; we saw great blue herons, two juvenile bald eagles, rough winged swallows, belted kingfishers, red-winged blackbirds, great horned owl, red tailed hawk, mallards and Canada geese with their chartreuse-colored youngsters, snapping turtles, jumping fish and a few dirt bikers. There was a mix of prairie and woodland lining the banks, and the low river level afforded some nice gravel bars for breaks. Betsy and Jerry paddled a tandem canoe as Betsy was still healing up from an

ankle injury incurred on the recent Wapsi trip. Hank was happy paddling his new Necky Looksha Sport, the only kayak in the group. I paddled my Mad River Liberty, hoping for a little sun on my legs; I was too successful and was grateful for aloe vera lotion at day's end.

That evening, we gathered back at the park for a pot luck supper. Hank brought barbecued pork loin and Grandma Hy-Vee provided the rest of the picnic spread. Locals Jim and Letty shared a delicious mystery sauce and we spent a good part of the dinner hour trying to guess the ingredients. Jim also provided the campfire and, while the wind picked up, we enjoyed sharing paddling adventures and learning about the Spencer area. The weather continued to be changeful, bringing wind and a little more rain.

The next day dawned windy, but warm. Letty and Hank's friend Mark and his three kids joined us for Sunday's float trip through the city limits of Spencer. This section was an interesting mix of wild and settled, wooded bluffs and open grassland. Wildlife was abundant here, too. We had wind, a few riffles, and snags to negotiate. The most memorable moments for me included watching Mark's daughters learning to handle a canoe by themselves and watching a handful of young Huck Finns surfing on a plywood board and floating in an open-topped cooler where the Ocheyden River meets the Little Sioux. Dick and I stopped for a break and were met by a herd of deer who aimed to come to the river for a drink; they came to a screeching halt when they saw us and their looks of surprise and curiosity were priceless. Hank noted that he has never seen other paddlers on the Little Sioux, but, when we arrived back at West Leach Park, another group of canoeists were lined up to put in. This gem of a river, like so many others, suffers from some neglect; tires, cans, bottles and other debris were visible here and there. We talked about organizing a river cleanup later this summer; perhaps the Central Iowa Paddlers could partner with local paddlers to bring attention to the Little Sioux. Stay tuned!

Thanks, Hank, for sharing your river with us.

Join Central Iowa Paddlers ... have fun, make a difference!

DUES: \$10 per year
Includes emails, Newsletters ...
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COMING NEXT NEWSLETTER

A book review by John Pearson of On the Water: Discovering American in a Rowboat. Leslie Boyce offers us an article on Canoeing the Silver Springs. *AND MORE!* Please attend some of the events listed below, write up an article, and send it in!

2004 Iowa Paddling Events

Tuesdays at 6:30 "Kayaking Smart" Clinic, Paddle Grays Lake Tuesdays at 6:00.

As part of a "Paddle Safely" initiative, CanoeSport Outfitters will host "Start Kayaking Smart" clinics every Tuesday from 6 to 7:30 pm at Gray's Lake. See Newsletter article above for more information

Wednesdays at 7:00, Paddlin' at the Pits, Skunk River Paddlers

*Meet area paddlers and practice paddling strokes, bracing, rolls and rescue techniques. May 19th to June 30th, meet at West Peterson Park, 1.7 miles east of US Hwy 69 on 180th Street, Ames
July 7th to September 1st, meet at Ada Hayden Heritage Park, Hwy 69 North, Ames*

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Saturday, May 15 Middle Raccoon, Polk County Conservation Board

Join us as we canoe down the Middle Raccoon River which is beautifully decorated with large boulders that were deposited by the last glacier. These boulders provide canoers with an abundance of ripples and rapids. Naturalists will guide participants down the river. We will start canoeing at Lennon Mills Park in Panora and end at the Marlowe Ray Wildlife Area access. Bring food and drink. Prior canoe experience is required.

Fee: \$20; includes transportation and canoes. Departure from Jester Park. Minimum age 10. Registration deadline is May 7. <http://www.conservationboard.org>

Saturday, May 22 Skunk River Canoe Trail

This trip begins at 8am at the Grove Cafe, downtown Ames. We'll paddle from Soper's Mill to River Valley Park, then on to the Youth Sports Complex (near Hwy 30). You'll see the Skunk River Water Trail at its best and at its worst, but you won't be disappointed! Subject to change depending on conditions. Contact Rick [rsdietz(~AT~)yahoo.com or 515 232-1484] or Mark [Mmetelman(~AT~)aol.com or 515 221-2587] for details.

Saturday, May 22 Canoe Introduction Workshop, 1-4pm, Beaver Lake, Dexter

We will work you through the basic anatomy of the canoe and paddle, introduce you to the paddling strokes necessary to control your craft, help you practice and improve your newfound skills and cover basic safety issues. Contact Dallas County Conservation <http://www.dallascountyconservation.org/>

Sunday, May 23 Canoe Clinic, 1-4pm at Hickory Grove Park

Contact Story County Conservation at 515/232-2516 <http://www.storycountyconservation.org/>

May 29 - 31 Flambeau and Jump Rivers, WI

Come paddling in northern Wisconsin on Memorial Day weekend. Dave Kraemer and Mary Duerson invite you to our cabin at the confluence of the Jump, Flambeau and Chippewa rivers. Day trips to sections of the Jump or Flambeau rivers are in the offing, depending on water levels, interest and skills of those who come along. It's even possible to arrange a couple of trips in a day for flatwater boaters and those interested in more aerated sport.

The Flambeau features several sections of Class 2 and 3 drops, as does the Jump, all within easy reach of the cabin. The lake out front offers placid flatwater paddling and some good fishing.

Our plan is to paddle Saturday, Sunday and potentially Monday, May 29, 30, and 31, sleeping at the cabin and running shuttles out from there. The cabin offers indoor plumbing and sleeping for more than a dozen, depending on how convivial you are. There's plenty of room for tents, as well. There's a fire pit. And there's an outhouse. Contact Dave [davek27(~AT~)aol.com] for information

June 4 - 6 North Fork Maquoketa River, Dyersville to Ozark,

This trip is a chance to experience some of Iowa's wildest and most remote places, as well as some impressive limestone bluffs and hemmed-in gorges. **GROUP SIZE WILL BE LIMITED:** Days 2-3 are a river-camping trip, so I must know you are coming at least a week in advance because it affects where we will sleep. We'll need to pack food, water, and camping gear, and may camp in a fairly remote area if there's a small crowd. There's an option to camp in a larger pasture if the group is larger.

Optional Day 1: Friday, June 4 Dyersville to Cascade (length of trip is water-level dependent). Camp Friday evening at Filmore Recreation Area NE of Cascade.

Day 2-3: Saturday, 9 a.m., begin shuttle running; spend a full day enjoying this very scenic river. Depending on group size, camp at Searyls Cave State Preserve (15.5 mile day) or near Ozark Bridge (18.3 mile day). **THIS WILL BE A LONG DAY FOR NOVICE PADDLERS, ESPECIALLY IF WATER LEVELS ARE LOW.** Too-low water levels will mean diverting to a different river, not trip cancellation (probably the nearby Maquoketa, which has more frequent accesses.) Sunday, shorter trip out, head it home (4.5 or 7 miles)

Contact Nate [paddlingiowa(~AT~)yahoo.com] for information.

Saturday, June 5 Learn to Paddle Day

Come and paddle canoes and kayaks at Lake Ahquabi. Call CanoeSport Outfitters at 800-257-6080 for information.

Saturday, June 7 Jax/Ames Outdoor Boat Demo Day, 12-4pm at McFarland Park, Ames.

Contact Ames Outdoor in advance if there are specific Wilderness Systems or Mad River boats you would like to test paddle. <http://www.amesoutdoor.com/>

Thursday, June 10 Raccoon River,

Contact Bob [Johansen.Bob(~AT~)principal.com] for information.

Saturday, June 12 Canoe Basics, Polk County Conservation Board

Come and learn the basics of canoeing and explore the old oxbows of the Skunk River, Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt. A canoeing lesson will make first-time canoeers feel at ease on the water. All equipment is provided. Call to register for 10:00 a.m. - noon class or the 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. class. Pre-registration required, deadline is June 6. Minimum age 10. Fee: \$5. <http://www.conservationboard.org>

Saturday, June 12 Great Iowa River Canoe Challenge , Iowa Falls

Contact the Scenic City Empress Boat Club 800-873-1936 http://www.iafalls.com/empress_new/about.html

Sunday, June 13th Canoe the Maquoketa in Jackson County beginning at the Canton Access.

There will be a lunch at 1:00 P.M. w/programs at the afternoon break. Call 563-652-3783 for more information.

Wednesday, June 16 Des Moines River,

Contact Bob [Johansen.Bob(~AT~)principal.com] for information.

Saturday, June 19 Boone River Canoe Float,

Depart from McFarland Park at 9 AM. Fee is \$15 per person.

Contact Story County Conservation at 515/232-2516 <http://www.storycountyconservation.org/>

Saturday, June 19 Family Canoeing at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt.

Enjoy a 1-hour canoe experience in this unique setting. Great for beginners; canoe instruction provided as needed. Pre-registration (includes canoe reservations) required. Sponsored by Polk County Conservation Board.

<http://www.inhf.org/25event10.htm>

June 19 - 26 Project AWARE, Des Moines River

See <http://www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/04aware.html>

June 19th Pre-AWARE Lizard Creek Float

The Iowa Whitewater Coalition is sponsoring "Paddle the Lizard Day" in conjunction with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Project AWARE. Contact Nate [paddlingiowa(~AT~)yahoo.com]

June 21 - 25 Pass the Paddle, Raccoon Rivers of Dallas County & Des Moines River

You are invited to join this exploration of our rivers for the 5th annual series of public river floats with the DCCD naturalists. The best way to explore, enjoy and understand our rivers is to view them from the end of a paddle, seated in a canoe or kayak. Float for the entire week, for several days or just one afternoon.

This year, we will venture off the "Coon" for one day and extend our river awareness to the Des Moines River with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' volunteer group. Project AWARE - A Watershed Awareness River Expedition - is launching their week long trip as well, focusing on water quality, river clean up and watershed advocacy.

There is much we can learn about ourselves and our relationships to this place we call home as we "Pass The Paddle" from the rivers' points of entry to their exits. To determine how this event can connect to your schedule, watch for more details on our website. <http://www.dallascountyconservation.org/>

Saturday, June 26 5th Annual Timber City Adventure Race, Maquoketa

8 miles of canoeing, 14 miles biking and a 3 mile run.

<http://www.traveliowa.com/calendar/details.htm?id=9295>

Sunday, June 27 World's Largest Canoe Float, East Dubuque, Illinois

Held in conjunction with the Grand Excursion Flotilla 2004. See <http://www.grandexcursion.com>

Saturday, July 10 Iowa River, PCCB

Join us as we canoe down the Iowa River which is one of the most scenic rivers in the state. Rocky bluffs and huge maple trees border this beautiful river. Naturalists will guide participants down the river. Bring food and drink. Prior canoe experience is required.

Fee: \$20; includes transportation and canoes. Departure from NW corner of Prairie Meadows parking lot.

Registration deadline is July 2. <http://www.conservationboard.org>

July (TBA) Upper Kickapoo canoe camping trip

Contact Hugh Clatterback (515-277-1327)

July 10 - 11 Canoe Van Buren Des Moines River

Hospitality second to none on the scenic Des Moines River through the historic Villages of Van Buren.

http://800-tourvbc.com/canoe_vb.htm

Saturday, July 17 Iowa Games

Participate in or just watch the Iowa Games paddling competitions at Grays Lake in Des Moines.

<http://www.iowagames.org/>

July 23-25 8th Annual Badger Lake Bash Dragon Boat Races, Ft Dodge

<http://www.fortdodgedragonboat.com/>

Saturday, July 31 Julia's Full Moon Float, Des Moines River

July 31-August 7 Great River Rumble, 185 miles, Missouri River,

Brunswick to Washington MO <http://www.riverrumble.org/>

Saturday, August 7 River Ripple, Des Moines River, Eddyville to Ottumwa

See www.riverripple.com for information.

August 11 - 15 Apostle Islands, Contact Bob

[Johansen.Bob(~AT~)principal.com] for information.

Saturday, August 14 Boone River, PCCB

Join us as we canoe down the Boone River. During the mid-1800's, several mills were in operation along the river. The remains of a few mills can still be seen today. Naturalists will guide participants down the river. Bring food and drink. Prior canoe experience is required.

Fee: \$20; includes transportation and canoes. Departure from Jester Park. Minimum age 10.

Registration deadline is August 6. <http://www.conservationboard.org>

Saturday, September 11 Great Rivers Marathon, 26.2 miles. No running. Minneapolis

<http://www.greatriversmarathon.org/>

Sunday, September 26 Brushy Creek Lake Fall Color Cruise and Boat Show

Contact Jim (jdodd50(~AT~)hotmail.com or 515-332-2069)

Saturday, October 9th Robin's Birthday Float

**See the on-line calendar at <http://www.paddleiowa.org> for more events.*