



Central Iowa Paddlers

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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

“Now is the winter of our discontent” - Richard the Third Act 1, William Shakespeare

I would be less than honest to begin my spring meanderings with a cheery assessment of the winter. For many this has been the winter of their discontent. The economy has not only decimated fortunes; it has hurt families and communities. Though personally blessed with health, family and fortune, it was still disappointing to cancel two planned paddling trips because of job and financial pressures. Even the winter weather has not been particularly cooperative in the Midwest. As my Iowa friends continue to struggle with the results of last year's tornados and floods, friends to the North have been ravaged by the uncontrollable sweep of Red River flooding. We can only hope for a calmer and more prosperous summer.

Yet, in the midst of this challenging winter, so many CIP members did so much. First, we still managed to paddle. From a freezing Pancake Day paddle on the Skunk River to a press-covered New Years Day float below Saylorville Dam, there were CIP paddlers on the waters. Moonlight Floats on Lake Red Rock continued to defy the conditions while the Lake Rathbun contingent cut through veneers of ice in order to ply the waters. Several played Water Polo with their kayaks as others practiced their rolls at indoor pools. Beyond paddling, CIP members had fun. They gathered for cabin parties at Red Rock, met to share and learn at the CSO Expo in Indianola, and gathered at Robin Fortney's to plan for the upcoming paddling year. Finally, CIP members continued to help the community and the environment as activists, educators and doers. The Armchair Paddling Series provided important information on activities such as Water Trails. Advocacy initiatives led to enhanced awareness of environmental issues and challenges. Early spring cleanups helped restore challenged waterways. The winter season, though challenging, proved CIP members to be hearty, healthy and helpful.

- Steve Parrish, editor -

REPORTS

Planning Calendar – Make Your Plans Now!

The 2009 Planning Calendar is available on our website AND being included with the paper copy of this Newsletter. Be sure to check these exciting opportunities out and contact the trip coordinator.

AmeriCorps Rivers Positions by Nate Hoogveen

As part of the federal stimulus, Iowa DNR has applied to receive funding through the AmeriCorps program for a few hundred positions. Five of those positions would be Rivers Crew positions working in River Programs, which I coordinate.

To tell you a little more about how we've evolved, we operate four main programs – water trails, low-head dam public hazard (including stream restoration elements), protected water areas, and Iowa streamkeepers. Our program goals are to expose Iowans to the beauty of their local waters to create a sense of value, to offer recreational experiences that are as safe as possible, to encourage stewardship of Iowa's waterways, and to lead toward the restoration of Iowa's

streams. Learn more about us at: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/watertrails/>. People serving with our team inevitably will experience some of each program, but will develop areas of focus. We'll be looking for at least one person who can assist with outreach and will be in and out of the office, for example, and others who are in the field more or less whenever they are not back in the office working up data. Anticipate stomping & paddling through rivers; physical labor; camping and being outdoors; sometimes in adverse conditions.

AmeriCorps positions need to be looked at as a year of service. There is a modest living allowance, health insurance, an education award, and the knowledge that you are working toward important river projects. You need to be in the right life situation for it to work. Some people do it for a complete change in life direction. In the past, for some, this experience has led to actual jobs with the Iowa DNR. I'm an example of that.

The AmeriCorps river crew would begin with a training session in May. Don't feel as if you need to know everything (such as how to run a total station for survey) coming into this. If you are interested, please send your cover letter and resume to Nate.Hoogeveen@dnr.iowa.gov. In the cover letter, please indicate which of our areas and types of responsibilities best matches your skillsets and interests.

Safety Opportunity Part 1: Cold Water Bootcamp by Steve Parrish

As we move full force into paddling season, it is a good time to review cold water paddling basics. It will be several more weeks before we experience warm waters. I viewed a video entitled *COLD WATER BOOT CAMP USA* that provided not only insights, but several "ah ha" moments concerning issues related to surviving a dunk in cold water. A 10 minute summary version of the video is available at www.coldwaterbootcampusa.com

First, some of the baseline statistics. According to the 2007 USCG Drowning Report, in Coast Guard immersion accidents 8% resulted in drownings when the water temperature was between 70 to 79 degrees. When the water temperature was less than 59 degrees, 40% were fatal. The risk of dying in cold water less than 59 degrees is increased by 500 percent!

In the video, a group of eight hardy volunteers from across the nation were put in cold water (45 degrees) to learn what really happens. Under controlled conditions, these volunteers experienced the three effects of cold water immersion – cold shock, cold incapacitation and even hypothermia. The boot camp demonstrated the difference in response to these conditions, depending on whether or not the volunteers were wearing a PFD. In a word, the difference was shocking. Those with PFDs were cold, but managed the 45 degree temperatures surprisingly well. Those without lifejackets fared poorly. The primary "ah ha" for me was the severity of the cold shock to many of the volunteers and the fact that their muscles locked up long before hypothermia was an issue.

The National Water Safety Congress, the producer of the video, has a simple formula for surviving cold water immersion: 1-10-1. You have 1 minute to get your breathing under control after immersion. Gasping and restriction of air are normal; the trick is to not panic and to get control over your breathing. Then, you have 10 minutes of meaningful movements before your body locks up. Even if you are a strong swimmer, you need be near a boat or shore if you expect to survive by swimming. Finally, you have 1 hour before you become unconscious due to hypothermia. You may be paralyzed from meaningful movement, but you can survive in cold waters for as long as an hour.

The simple lesson from this video is to wear a lifejacket at all times. According to the Lifesaving Society Study (2007), 90% of drownings involved individuals not wearing lifejackets. Why no lifejackets? According to the CSBC/Smart Risk Study (2005) the three most common reasons given for not wearing PFDs were:

- They are close to the shore

- They can put it on in the water
- They don't need it, they can swim

Considering that many drownings occur within 6 feet of safety, these excuses don't hold water [*pun intended*]. To see hearty individuals flounder and lock up within minutes of immersion brought home to me the absolute necessity of a PFD. Several of these volunteers were later immersed while wearing PFDs and they lasted a long time before hypothermia began to set in.

We can talk all day about wet suits versus dry suits, gloves versus poagies, and paddle float rescues versus cowboy re-entries. But the bottom line from the video is to know what can happen if you end up in cold water. It's not pretty, but it's survivable if you are smart about it.

Safety Opportunity Part 2

Diane Lowry tells us *"while I was paddling around Florida by myself (4 days with my own boat) I ran into this capsized sailor I couldn't help him in the water, but paddled back to shore quickly and got help. Aren't kayakers wonderful?"*



Picture by Diane Lowry

Mark Your Calendar: Iowa Rivers Revival's 4th Annual Conference: Embracing Our Rivers, Webster City, IA – May 1-3, 2009 by Robin Fortney

Enjoy Boone River Country and celebrate the early days of spring in Webster City, Iowa – IRR's first *River Town of the Year* award recipient. This year's conference will offer two morning plenary presentations – an inspirational interpretation on the multiple values of rivers by Jon Stravers, followed by an in-depth overview of the Boone River watershed project between The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Soybean Association and Prairie Rivers RC&D. Afternoon break-out sessions will offer a broad range of river-focused topics including recreation, activism and river events, political influence from the local to state level and economic development interests from the local to state level.

Saturday evening's Annual Banquet will include a keynote address by David Faldet (Luther College Professor of English and author of the recently published *"Oneota Flow,"* a book about the Upper Iowa River and its people), presentation of the River Town of the Year Award and a live auction in support of IRR's operational and program initiatives. Auction items will include a hand-painted and crafted wooden paddle by Nancy Crowfoot, Boone River fishing tour facilitated by Brian Stroner, locally-raised grass-fed beef from Jerry Peckumn, hand-crafted piece of furniture by Luke Wright, construction labor from Luke Wright and a paddle tour/trip facilitated by Nate Hoogveen.

Join us for Sunday's Boone River tour by foot, bike or boat (canoe or kayak). The tour includes highlights along the scenic Boone River water trail and will end at Briggs Woods Park for lunch and various demonstrations. Depending on river conditions, the Iowa Whitewater Coalition may be able to do a whitewater demonstration at Baptismal Falls.

Meet new friends or visit old as we unite to celebrate, improve and preserve Iowa's rivers so we can benefit and use them for years to come. Registration information:

www.iowarivers.org or rlehman@iowarivers.org.

New Information on Kiosks on Des Moines River by Robin Fortney



Check out the new water trail information kiosks (photo at left shows the kiosk at Sycamore Access) at Des Moines River accesses in Polk County. Our own John Wenck provided considerable support to Polk County Conservation, including information, editing and photographs, during the design phase. You will find information kiosks at Cottonwood Recreation Area, Sycamore Access, Prospect Park Access, Birdland Access, Harriet Street Access, Pleasant Hill Access and Yellow Banks County Park Access. The kiosks provide a map of the downstream stretch of river, as well as

information about the cultural history of the river, fish and wildlife, and safety issues. Mark your calendar for Friday, June 5, 2009, at 5 p.m. Iowa DNR will host the Des Moines River water trail dedication at Prospect Park in Des Moines. Thanks to a partnership between Iowa Whitewater Coalition, Polk County Conservation, Iowa DNR and City of Des Moines for the kiosks, access and dam safety signage along the water trail.

TRIP REPORTS

Iowa Paddler Meets the Challenge by Diane Michaud Lowry

6 Days, 10 Hours, 35 Minutes. That's the time it took Newton resident John Craun to complete a grueling 300 mile adventure race from Fort Desoto in Tampa Bay, Florida to Key Largo, Florida in March 2009. Even more amazing Craun, 62, made the journey along the southwest coast of Florida in an exquisite handmade wooden sea kayak that he designed and built himself. He selected this particular strip built boat for the race due to its streamline construction and ability to handle well in rough water.

The 9th WaterTribe Everglades Challenge began Saturday, March 7th at 7:00 AM, and officially ended Saturday, March 14th, although all of this year's finishers made it to the final beach by lucky Friday 13th, the day before. Often referred to as the toughest small boat race on the planet, the Everglades Challenge was initiated by Steve Isaac (aka Chief) as an expedition race –



participants must carry all of their food, water, gear, navigation and safety equipment necessary to make the trip. This year's race drew competitors from all over the world, and included sea kayaks, expedition canoes, and various small sailboats. The participants were from as diverse backgrounds as their assorted small craft. Doctors, teachers, boat builders, biologists, were among the many professions represented. They all set off in the early dawn light with high hopes; thirty four boats entered the race and twenty four finished.

Each of the challengers has a tribal name like 'Bumpy' or 'Lumpy', 'SandyBottom', 'KiwiBird', or 'CrazyRussian'; Craun's tribal name is 'Stripbuilder', chosen for his craft of building beautiful kayaks and paddles. These tribal names are used on the WaterTribe website to keep family and friends apprised of their progress. Many participants also use SPOT locators for tracking and safety.

Months of planning and training, and an ability to persevere in adverse conditions are basic requirements to see this journey through to the finish. Blisters, sunburn, chafing, physical pain and exertion, and sleep deprivation come with the territory. Many paddlers and sailors have been known to have hallucinations during the long trip. Tides, shoals, mud flats, wind, waves, and temperature are all factors that can cause a change in route or schedule. Craun felt that his experiences on Lake Superior prepared him for the water and weather conditions he encountered during the Everglades Challenge. In fact, he claims “my trips on Lake Superior have been much more dangerous and rougher than those I experienced during the Everglades Challenge. The conditions were much calmer than I expected and we had no major storms during the race this year. Although the water was considered to be cool or cold by those living in Florida, I thought the water was warm – Lake Superior never gets that warm!”

It may be that conditions on Lake Superior do get dicey without much notice, but kayaking in the open ocean alone at night with sharks feeding near your boat seems equally hazardous. “There were a number of eruptions in the water, while paddling only with the light of the moon, caused by big fish (sharks) along the shore of Cape Sable – they kept me awake and alert!” However, Craun also had the pleasure of paddling with dolphins many times during his trip. “Some of them glided under my kayak only a foot away from the hull, and would turn on their sides and look me intently in the eye as they passed by.”

The other major safety concern was power boat traffic near the heavily populated beach areas. Two Everglade Challengers in kayaks, brothers from Singapore, were thrown into each other from the wake of a large power boat coming too close. One of the brothers broke his wrist in the accident and they had to withdraw from the race. However, the coastal beaches near Sanibel and Fort Myers provided other unexpected delays for Craun. “The beach areas were filled with college students on break and other vacationers. Every time I pulled my kayak up on the beach for a pit stop people would gather around my strip built kayak to get a closer look and talk to me about it.”

There are three checkpoints along the route that each boater must sign in by a specified time. The distance from the start of the race to Checkpoint 1 (Grand Tours) is approximately 67 miles, depending on the route taken. Tides are a big factor in this race, and Craun got into some trouble with shallow water and mud flats blocking his passage as he made his way to Checkpoint 1 (CP1). “It took me well over two hours to find a way from Placida to CP1 which was less than 2 miles away.” After eating breakfast and resting for about an hour he headed out across Charlotte Harbor, paddling most of the day without sleep. It wasn’t until after dark that he began to hallucinate and “see funny things in the water.” At that point he knew it was time to rest for the night.

The distance from CP1 to CP2 (Chokoloskee) is 107 miles. Craun made it to CP2 about the same time as many of the other challengers, but he decided to go around Cape Sable on the outside of the islands rather than take the Wilderness waterway – the inside route that the other kayakers elected to travel. Two days later he paddled into CP3 (Flamingo), a 99 mile trip from Chokoloskee. “Choosing to go around Cape Sable added many miles to my trip,” Craun admitted. However, he still made CP3 ahead of the kayakers who’d taken the inside passage. The last leg of the journey across Florida Bay to the finish is only 30 miles; but it is often considered the most difficult part of the race. Florida Bay is a large, shallow area with tricky navigation due to narrow channels, tides, and strong winds. After waiting out 15 mph winds the night before, and battling wrist pain due to tendinitis, Craun was able to join two seasoned kayakers with an advanced GPS system which enabled them to smoothly navigate their way across the bay. Exhausted, but happy Craun reached the finish beach in the early afternoon on his sixth day of paddling, but not before finding the energy to do a victory roll before exiting his craft and trying to remember how to use his shaky ‘sea legs’.

Completing an expedition race is an incredible feat, but Craun came away with a sense of accomplishment, and a “lot of priceless experiences, memories, and the satisfaction of completing the challenge.” He is already contemplating next year’s Everglade Challenge.

Ice Breaker Paddle By Robin Fortney

One gorgeous river plus nice water level plus a sunny early spring day plus 65° temperatures plus great company equals a perfect day. Skunk River Paddlers' Greg Vitale led the ice breaker float trip on the Boone River on March 21, 2009. The hardy group came from far and wide and



included Greg V and Don W (Ames), Dave K (Rochester, MN), Brian S (Webster City), Ben P and his friend Carl (near Marshalltown), Joe (Cedar Rapids-ish), John (I forget), Adam B (Jewell) and Todd R and me (Des Moines). We met at Bells Mill, loaded boats and shuttled up to the put-in at Bever Bridge (below Albright's Landing). Adam is training for a trip down the Yukon River this summer, so he started up at Briggs Woods and caught up with us by lunch time. He had us sign his boat as he'll be taking it to the Yukon. We knew the water would be cold, so most of us wore wet suits, though

John was plenty comfortable in shorts. In spite of the wonderfully warm day, one could tell winter was only recently over. The water had recently dropped, leaving blocks of ice on shore, and there were mini-glaciers in the shadows. We more or less (I still have a 6-inch bruise on my butt from a chance meeting with a couple of rocks when I tipped) successfully negotiated the boulder gardens. We stopped at Tunnel Mill for lunch, where Dave pulled out ice cream and brownies and mixed up a fancy



dessert for the group – we love your style, Dave! We basked in the sun at a mid-afternoon sandbar break. Brian drug several large pieces of coal up on the sandbar and we talked about the geologic and economic history of the area. The silver maples were in full bloom, and we saw a small herd of deer and a bald eagle nest. The water is fairly clear this time of year and I noticed a few live mussels, a sure sign of a healthy river. We took our time leaving the river and eventually met at a bar/café (the old Capri Lounge in under new ownership) in Stanhope, enjoying the company of fellow river rats before heading home. Before leaving the area, I headed into Webster City to check out the Brigg's Woods Park cabins (nice) and bike trail (fabulous) that runs along the Boone River from town

down past Briggs Woods Park. Iowa Rivers Revival is hosting its annual conference on May 1-3, 2009, in Webster City, so please plan to join us and bring your boat and bike.



Bull Shoals Lake by Steve Parrish

I once saw a sign in a ferry boat that said "A bad day on the water is better than a good day at work." This is an apt description for parts of our spring trip to Bull Shoals, Arkansas. We had

more days of bad weather than good, many time consuming shuttles, and yet we had a wonderful 5 days of early April paddling on a beautiful lake.



Bull Shoals Lake is a Corps of Engineers reservoir on the White River which roughly borders southern Missouri and northern Arkansas. Its massive water shed is tied in with other dam projects in the region including Table Rock to the northwest and Norfolk to the east. With a normal pool area of over 43,000 acres, it is a huge water system carved by hundreds of coves, fingers, and inlets. Keith Garret had planned a “point-to-point” trip starting towards the northwest side of the lake. We would stay at Corps campsites and proceed east each day, ending at the dam six days later. But the massive January ice storms that had ransacked the region from

Kentucky to Missouri, forced the Corps of Engineers to close all of the parks surrounding the lake. If the trip was to proceed, we would have to base camp at White River State Park (immediately below the dam), and then shuttle our way to various putins and take outs. Although our ranks shrank from 7 paddlers to 3 as a result, Keith Garret, Vic Senter and Steve Parrish went ahead with the trip.

Our Saturday drive down there left time to set up camp and put in at the nearest marina. We were immediately struck by the beauty of the very clear green waters. Even though the entire lake was surrounded by downed trees and shredded bushes, the waters were pristine; no detritus, no silt. The next day, we made the 40 mile drive to the northwest to put in at Tucker Hollow. We worked our way down several miles of the winding lake (more like a wide river) in cold winds that were gusting above 30 knots. The bad conditions left the lake to ourselves and we were able to see loons, eagles and heron. Having appropriate cold weather gear, we really didn't notice the cold until we blasted through the winds into our exposed takeout. Out of the water and no longer exercising, the cold was palpable. We also noticed the cold (and rain and sleet) during the evening in our tents!

The next day was simply too cold and windy to venture into the lake. After a visit to the Corps office, we found a protected area for an afternoon paddle in nearby Norfolk Lake (a 20,000 acre reservoir). The putin was, in true Arkansas style, name Buzzard Roost. Once we completed our abbreviated paddle, we used the remainder of the afternoon to hone our GPS skills by finding a 4-stage geocache located at various points near the dam.

The next day, a Tuesday, we made the long shuttle to the northwest again, and put in at the previous day's takeout (Diamond City). The paddling was excellent; cool and breezy, meandering through a lake surrounded by undeveloped Corps lands. The long (over eighty miles), east to west lake has NO bridges from dam to dam, so there is a free dawn-to-dusk ferry that shuttles people and their cars from North to South and back. Even as we passed the ferry, we saw few boats and even fewer people. The next day picked up at our Tuesday takeout, but dropping off the shuttle vehicle was like a scene from Deliverance. We bounced down a hot dusty dirt road, never really sure if we were going to a boat ramp or to a moonshine still manned by grumpy locals. Fortunately, we able to find the take out, drop off a car and drive up to the putin. The weather was perfect: 70s, cloudless, light breeze. The paddling that day alone would have made the trip worth it. One of the things I enjoy most about these multi-day trips is the shore lunches. You never know where you're going to stop and what you're going to see. On this particular day, we found a hilly acreage jutting out at a large bend. With a commanding view of both lake and land, we gazed at the panorama before us, marveling at how great it is to be alive!

Although our game plan included another day of paddling, the weather gods were not willing to comply. Thunderstorms and tornadoes were predicted (and indeed occurred). So, the next

morning we packed up and drove to Iowa. Notwithstanding the cold, winds and long shuttles, we can heartily recommend Bull Shoals, even in bad conditions. This route, particularly if executed on a point-to-point pattern from the northwest to the dam, would make a tremendous week long paddle. *Picture by Steve Parrish*

New Years Day by Robin Fortney

I wimped out this year and didn't join the group on the New Years Day paddle trip. However, I did drive over to Sycamore Access that morning and hike upstream along the river to Cottonwood Recreation Area. The land was covered with ice and the going was tough, but I did catch sight of the paddlers as they headed downstream (see photo at right).



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Lynn Aldridge

laldrigd@uhl.uiowa.edu

(641) 363-4451

Central Iowa Paddlers

P.O Box 17

Des Moines, IA 50301-0017

Send: Dues, email announcements

Newsletter, Information, Questions

Steve Parrish

sbparrish@mchsi.com

5138 Robertson Dr

Des Moines, IA 50312

515-284-6910

Send: Articles, pictures