

# 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](http://www.paddleiowa.org) and pass the word!



## **SPECIAL WINTER EDITION !!**

### MEANDERINGS

***"A person who has a cat by the tail knows a lot more about cats than a person who has read about cats." -- Mark Twain***

"So, why do you guys do this every year?" asked the Des Moines Register reporter at our New Years Day Paddle. I could only paraphrase Mark Twain's comment (above), but the reporter understood that the idea is to seize the New Year; not wait for it to happen. I bought my first kayak many years ago during the fall. I assumed I wouldn't get to test it out until the next spring. Fortunately, though, I went to Canoe Sport Outfitter's Expo in February and heard Gerry Rowland's lecture on winter paddling. I immediately bought winter gear and, by the next week, was paddling the Des Moines River. This winter has begun with ice storms and cold temperatures. The lakes froze early and the Winter Solstice Paddle had to be cancelled. But, Iowa's weather hasn't stopped us from paddling when we can, and getting together to talk and plan for future paddles. As a tribute to the hearty Iowans who don't let our winters get in the way of our passion, for this first time in 13 years we're publishing a *WINTER* edition of the Newsletter. Enjoy. - Steve Parrish, editor -

### **REPORTS**

**Upcoming Paddling Events – Mark Your Calendar!**

- ➔ **2009 season CIP planning party will be held at Robin Fortney's House on Sunday, January 25, from 2-5 p.m. (more information to follow)**
- ➔ **2009 Armchair Paddlers Series (more details to follow):**
  - **On January 18, 2009, Mike Delaney will report on Raccoon River Watershed Association activities**
  - **On February 8, 2009, Ned McPartland will present a program on the Rio Grande**
  - **On March 2009, Bill Graham will present a program on the Green River**
- ➔ **Canoe Sport Expo February 13-15 in Indianola. See [www.canoesportoutfitters.com](http://www.canoesportoutfitters.com)**

**A Letter from Luke Wright, Construction Technician, DNR River Programs**

(a note from Robin Fortney: below is information and pictures on construction of a new portage trail around the dam at Alden. CIP volunteers and others helped construct the portage)

*Greetings Water Trails Volunteers,*

*Well, Saturday was a good as it gets! I can't tell you how much I appreciated the group that appeared for the workday at the Alden Dam*

*Our volunteers ranged from eight years to us old geezers. Jackie Gautsch crawled out of her sick bed and drove the farthest from North Liberty, barely beating out the Brodigan Brothers, who miraculously built a small fire from wet wood. Rilee Scheuermann, who is now involved with AmeriCorps, posted the event on Keepers of the Land volunteer website and a local paddler, Marion Gehrke, came and was a true spontaneous volunteer! Rilee brought the DNR Water Trails equipment and with use of the Gator and Bobcat work went very smoothly.*

*I noticed that several groups were represented and these include Central Iowa Paddlers, Iowa Rivers Revival, the Natural Heritage Foundation, the Skunk River Paddlers, Iowa Whitewater Coalition, AmeriCorps, and the DNR was well represented by IOWATER, Trails and Water Trails. I also spotted some past AWARE volunteers and other river folk!*

*Thanks very much to all these good people.*



**Safety: Winter Paddling** by Steve Parrish

Although many of us feel winter paddling is the most fun paddling that can be experienced in Iowa, it can also be the most dangerous. In this past season I can think of several situations where what could have been disasters were merely occasions for laughter, simply because the paddlers were dressed for the occasion. During one of the Full Moon Paddles at Lake Red Rock, a paddler dumped. Because he was wearing a wetsuit and was near others who could help, he was able to safely reenter his boat and was warming up at a fire shortly thereafter. Because two safe winter paddling rules were followed, no harm occurred from his accident. The winter paddling rules are to *have gear* and *have support*.

**GEAR** In cold water, a wet suit or dry suit is an absolute must. The paddler must dress for the water, not the air, and wet (or dry) suits help keep the core warm. During an immersion a paddler's muscles will exhaust well before hypothermia sets in, so it is important to have as much of the body insulated from the water as possible. The feet and hands are key areas for protection simply because they are so quick to get cold. Everyone has their own preferences, but many Iowa winter paddlers sing the praises of pogies. These neoprene wonders secure around the paddle and give the paddler a warm blanket of insulated air with which to hold the paddle. I can report that every since I bought my pogies I have never had cold hands while winter paddling. One last form of gear that is essential, and often forgotten, is an emergency bag. Most winter paddling in Iowa is on rivers, especially below dams. The fallen paddler can often walk out of the river, but that is not the end of the risk. The emergency bag should have warm, dry clothes, a means of communication, and other gear to support a long walk or wait.

**SUPPORT** Have I winter paddled solo? Yes. Do I recommend it? No. If properly clothed, winter paddlers stay as warm as fair weather paddler. The issue is if something goes wrong. The margin for error is greatly decreased in winter paddling. First, if the paddler spills, the muscles can lock up quickly. Second, even if the paddler self-rescues, the body now risks hypothermia. Finally, the waterways are typically deserted. Help on shore is not readily available. Paddling with others is the safety valve for all three of these risks.

There is an excellent video on cold weather paddling on You Tube. Watch this video, not to be frightened of winter paddling, but to understand the importance of being prepared:

<http://www.nasbla.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1>

**CIP Fall Party: A good time was had by all!** Pictures by Diane Lowry

Our thanks to Sandy Thompson for holding the CIP Fall Party at her country estate in Winterset



Go to [www.paddlelibrary.org](http://www.paddlelibrary.org) and click "enter library," read the rules and click "go to library". Once you find a resource you want to borrow, click on "borrow from library" and it will bring up an email format to John's email address. The subject reads "I want to borrow an item from the library". Type in what you want to borrow and then John will get back to you with the cost for shipping, usually around \$1.50 media rate.

### **Paddling Library continues as a valuable resource**

The Paddling Library is a great success. We all appreciate what John Wenck has done to give us instant access to resources that are sometimes hard to find or downright unavailable. Here's how to access the library:

**A REMINDER:** be aware of a new website: <http://www.outdoorsiowa.com>. This is a place to document personal experiences in Iowa's natural places. See Matt Scott's trip report from this website.

**ALSO,** a reminder of the always excellent website [www.paddlingiowa.com](http://www.paddlingiowa.com).

### ***A tidbit from Outside magazine, January 2009.***

**In a feature entitled "Wellness 2009", an Olympic mountain-bike racer named Adam Craig reported "I used to have lower-back pain." "In 1998, I learned how to paddle, and I haven't had a back problem in a bike race since." Asked to comment on athletes' comments in the article, Dr. Michael Joyner, a leading exercise researcher at the Mayo Clinic stated: "Kayaking is a natural way to train your core and upper body. Reduced lower-back pain is consistent with this."**

## **TRIP REPORTS**

### **Waffle Day Float by Steve Parrish**

A cold December day when the temperature is a teenager and the wind is an adult typically is *not* a time to paddle. But then again, some of us are children at heart ... and see paddling these conditions as a grown up form of a snow day. Time to defy what nature has thrown at us. So, on December 7<sup>th</sup> paddlers from Knoxville, Des Moines, and Ames convened at the Iowa Arboretum



in Luther for Waffle Day. After filling up on breakfast calories, we drove to a newly constructed putin to the Skunk River, just south of Ames. Eight hearty enthusiasts donned winter gear and slid through ice into the near frozen Skunk with the intent of paddling a 6 mile stretch that was reported by Rick Dietz to be "reasonably open". The wind had

been vigorous for two days (gusting into the high 30 mph range), but that had helped break up much of the ice in the river. As we paddled to the south, the wind pushed both us and the ice chunks downriver. Although we all reported seriously chilled hands and feet, the camaraderie kept our spirits warm, and the trip flew by. We enjoyed occasional chats and stories, but often found we needed to paddle simply to stay warm. Because we all had adequate cold weather gear, the only serious challenge of the trip was negotiating our way into the river (banked ice and snow) and then out of the river (for the same reason). Actually, there was one further challenge. At the debriefing session held at a local watering hole, one paddler required the help of some local patrons in getting off his tightly clinging dry suit. We suspect the ladies helping our paddler assumed from his attire that he was a newly arrived spaceman. *Picture by Diane Lowry*

**Four Blades are better than Two!** *This picture was taken by Admiral Scott Evans of the Red Rock Armada at the December 2008 Full Moon Paddle. These monthly events have turned into an excellent way to make new friendships, renew old ones, and learn about paddling from seasoned paddlers. Don't miss the opportunity!*



#### **Middle Raccoon River-P28 to Cowless Access** by Matt Scott (from [www.outdoorsiowa.com](http://www.outdoorsiowa.com))

Everything was in our favor for this fall paddle on the Middle Raccoon. Thanks Lynn Aldridge with Central Iowa Paddlers for sending out a last minute invite for this trip. Temperatures were in the mid 60's with a calm wind and water flow was excellent.

I was a little concerned the night before the trip since the [USGS monitoring gauge](#) indicated 250 cfs (cubic feet per second) with the trend line declining. Nate Hoogeveen's, [Paddling Iowa](#) book indicates 400 cfs as a pleasant ride down the Middle Raccoon so I was expecting to drag bottom. The morning of the paddle I checked the water flow one more time and was surprised to find the gauge reading 600 cfs. Apparently, the Lake Panorama Association had released water from the dam overnight and that created ideal flow for our paddle.

Eight people showed up for the paddle that started at the P28 bridge boat ramp. As we entered the river a 3.5 mph current allowed us to navigate the river with minimal effort.

It wasn't long before we came upon some riffles. The high volume of water enabled us to glide through them without banging or scraping the boats. Larger boulders were the only concern in the mild class 1 water so we steered clear to avoid a dump in the cool water.



*Our CIP President Ray Knight is featured in this picture at the Middle Raccoon trip. We think that may be a whale on his port side! -editor-*

Most of the leaves had blown off the trees leaving a rookery with a dozen nests visible. There were also many mature Bald Eagles soaring high in the sky. The young eagles put on the best show as they flew low along the treetops.

High water covered the usual sandbars but hunger pangs kept us scouting for a spot to eat lunch. The perfect location finally revealed itself and even included a picnic table. As we ate, the eagles continued their air show above. Part of the group decided to stretch their legs with a short creek walk. They returned with seeds, molars from a large mammal and buckeyes.

Our lunch break was past the halfway point in the trip so we soon hit the take out at Cowless Access. On this trip I took the attitude of quit while you're ahead. I could have spent another couple hours on the Middle Raccoon but with such a pleasant paddle behind me why complain.

### **New Years Day Paddle** by Steve Parrish

DAM 1 - Saylorville: The weather was beautiful. High 20s, mild winds, slight overcast. The boat ramp was open and the Des Moines River below the Saylorville Dam was mostly clear of ice. The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual New Year Days Paddle was going to be a good one. When I showed up early to check out conditions, I was greeted by a photographer from the Des Moines Register. Later joined by a reporter, they chronicled our trip. The next day, the Metro section of the Register had an article with pictures, plus a video on their website. They had chosen a good year to report on our event.

9 boats went out, 7 of them making it up to the dam. The water was running fast, forcing a good workout onto those who wanted to venture all the way up. Eagles were everywhere, seemingly enjoying watching us paddle and prattle. Fisherman on shore greeted us and the reporter interviewed us. Compared with the subzero bitterness of the year before, this was as good as it gets. With the fast moving water, the downstream return paddle was a blink of the eye and we were all too soon back on shore.

DAM 2 – Red Rock: For some of us, the fun was not over. A caravan of kayak and canoe wracked cars drove Southeast towards the next dam. We stopped in Pleasant Hill to enjoy lunch, compare holiday stories, and check in on the Iowa Hawks bowl game. Then on to Pella and the south side of Lake Red Rock, where the water flows out of the dam into a channelized Des Moines River. 8 paddlers, 6 of them holdovers from the morning paddle at Saylorville, put in at the river on the afternoon of January 1. Iowa paddlers were geographically well represented. In addition to locals from Ames, Des Moines, Knoxville and Pella, Keith Garret from Muscatine and Vic Senter from Centerville made the long drive to join us. By this time we put in, the temperature had climbed above freezing and the winds had calmed further. The river was wider than below Saylorville and had it had fewer chutes to contend with. The skies were painted black and white with eagles plying the skies and scooping the river. The fast flowing river quickly pushed us downstream towards the first bridge. We pulled out onto the shore in order to take advantage of some photographic opportunities (see below). We became a clan of clowns as we tried to climb an ice hill to get to the top of the bank. At one point, my slipping caused me to become the bowling ball and Diane Lowry the pin. It was time to call it a day! Our 1 ½ mile paddle back upstream was much less raucous. We had to work tired muscles, plying our paddles through a 2 mph current. But, at the end, we knew we had started the year successfully, and on OUR terms.



*Scott Evans and Diane Lowry take a break from paddling to audition for the movie "Into the Wild"*

### Iowa Paddlers Membership

**DUES: \$10 per year**

Includes emails, Newsletters ...  
And Fellowship!

**Membership, Dues, Emails for CIP list**

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**Send: Dues, email announcements**

**Newsletter, Information, Questions**

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