



Central Iowa Paddlers

Volume 8 Issue 3

July 2004

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

As a frequent traveler for work, I am often asked what I do for recreation. When I tell them I enjoy kayaking, the automatic follow-up question is "where"? This simple question has two buried implications. First, it implies I must mean adventure paddling of the white water kind – Colorado, Idaho, West Virginia. Second, it assumes the obvious: surely you don't kayak in Iowa!

People who assume one must travel to paddle are missing the fun of the hunt. Let's review where some of us paddle. The Skunk River Paddlers for several years congregated weekly at Peterson Pits. The name has never been a draw for me, but they tell me it was actually nice! Now they paddle at a newly opened lake at Ada Hayden Heritage Park. Speaking of the Skunk River, in the search for paddling adventure several of us have paddled a stretch of the Skunk that can only be accessed during the spring floods. The spring opens up the flood plains of many rivers in Iowa. Last year during the spring floods Bob Johansen and I paddled above Red Rock in areas that were either farm fields, flood planes, or river. We never knew.

And let's not forget the winters. For at least two years running, on January 1 a sizeable group has put in a couple of miles below Saylorville dam, paddling up to the dam and back, simply because this was the only flowing river in the Des Moines metro. A few times in the winter, I've put in at Prospect Park so that I can slide down the ice into the narrow navigable channel (NOTE: don't try this without some practice, a wetsuit and an exit strategy!). And, many in the area sharpen their skills in the winter by paddling in the pool at ISU.

Where do I tell people I paddle? I tell them I live 5 minutes from downtown Des Moines and most often paddle at a lake 3 minutes from downtown Des Moines (Grays Lake). They give me a strange look, but so what? The point is that there's always a place to paddle in Iowa.

So, push the cows out of your stock ponds, let the kids know it's YOUR turn in the backyard pool, and make your rubber ducky share the real estate in your tub. One way or another put in and start paddling!

- Steve Parrish, Editor

When a man does not know what harbor he is making for, no wind is the right wind."

- Seneca

TRIP and NEWS REPORTS

Canoeing the Silver Springs by Leslie Boyce

On a recent trip to Florida over my spring vacation, Bill and I traveled to an area near Ocala, deciding to paddle our Wenonah canoe on the Silver Springs River. Immediately after launching our canoe from a small park we noticed that the waters of this natural spring-fed river are crystal clear. Strands of eel grass waved on the bottom. Depths ranged from 5-6 feet to much, much deeper.

We began by paddling upstream against a fairly strong current. A 5 ½ foot alligator lolled lazily on a log in the sun only a few feet from our canoe. We saw several herons and ibises wading through the river. The river made many twists and turns as we paddled along, taking us deeper and deeper into jungle-like terrain. As we rounded bends in the river, we would sometimes come

upon “blue holes” – where the river suddenly drops to a depth of 20 to 30 feet. The bubbling of the natural springs prevents any growth of the eel grass that we usually saw on the river’s bottom. The depth of the river at the bottom of the blue hole makes it appear a brilliant turquoise color. As many as 20 fish, including huge needle-nosed gar, swam freely in these holes. They were easy to observe from our canoe since the water was so clear.

We continued paddling against the current until we reached the source of the river, a state park near Ocala. We heard a splashing only a few feet from our canoe and noticed another large alligator swimming there. On the bank in the state park two more ‘gators were sunning themselves (one about 10 feet long). We turned around at this point and paddled all the way downstream to the place where we had left our van. All together we had paddled about 7 miles.

Three days later paddling on a bay near Tampa, two manatees followed us in our canoe. The younger one eagerly allowed us to pet it and scratch its back. Even though Florida is a far distance to travel, it’s our opinion that it is worth it for CIP members interested in spring-fed rivers and a paddling experience very different from Iowa.

Book Review: On The Water: Discovering America in a Rowboat, by Nathaniel Stone, 2002 Broadway Books, New York. 323 pp. Reviewed by John Pearson

This is a neat book about a solo rowing journey from New York City to New Orleans and back again. Inspired by his childhood reading of an 18th-century New England fisherman’s adventure, Nat Stone rowed an 18’ sculling boat from New York Harbor north to the Erie Canal, west to Lake Ontario, south to the Ohio River (including a portage over the Great Lakes Divide), southwest to the Mississippi, then south to New Orleans. After a break, he switched to a slightly shorter, but broader boat to row down the Atchafalaya River to the Gulf of Mexico, east along the Gulf Coast, south along Florida to Key West, then north all the way to Eastport, Maine near the Canadian border. His style of travel was basically a “one day at a time” journey whose camps were discovered spontaneously at the end of each day, not adhering to any pre-planned itinerary. He found a “river-long neighborhood” of friendly strangers who freely offered assistance and support, often including campsites, meals, and companionship. The title of the book is an expression of friendly goodbye that he learned from other boaters: “On the water!”, meaning good luck, happy trails, aloha.

One of the striking themes of his story was the overall “safeness” of the journey - despite some hair-raising moments with barges and storms (and only two encounters with a grump and an uncooperative bureaucrat). The vast majority of his trek along thousands of miles of river and seashore consisted of unthreatening travel through beautiful landscapes populated with helpful people. Another striking theme was his discovery of how much “wildness” is still left in the riverine and maritime edges of America, an impression you would not get from a terrestrial trip of similar magnitude. The jacket cover of the book highlights an evocative quote: *“I take a stroke and lean back, gazing up into the jet skies, bejeweled by the moon and the galaxies of stars. The hull glides in silence and with such perfect balance as to report no motion. I sit up for another stroke, now looking down as the blades ignite swirling pairs of white constellations of phosphorescent plankton. Two opposing heavens. ‘Remember this,’ I think to myself.”*

Middle Raccoon River Float Trip May 8, 2004 by Ray Harden

Seven members of the Central Iowa Paddlers Club, launched kayaks and canoes below the dam at Redfield about 11 AM heading for the access area at highway P58 in the southern part of Dallas County. This would be a five to six hour trip. The leader of the outing was Bob McConkey. It was a beautiful day for float trip; the temperature was in the mid 70’s and puffy cumulus clouds were drifting across the blue sky.

The river was an average of two feet deep but it varied with the width of the river. In some places the river had many shallow shoals and in other areas large boulders which created a mild challenge for the paddlers. The riverbank varied from large bluffs and bedded layers of sandstone near Redfield to steep layers of black topsoil and loess further down stream.

The Middle Raccoon River has three dams upstream from Redfield. These dams allow for the soil and sediments to settle out of the water, letting the water flow almost clear. A mile downstream from Redfield where the South Raccoon River joins the Middle Raccoon River a dramatic change in the color of water occurs. The South Raccoon River is dark umber colored and filled with heavy soil sediments. It is only half the size of the Middle Raccoon but it causes a dramatic color change when the two streams join.

Traveling by canoe is very quiet. This allows a person to get close to wildlife, whereas the noise of an outboard engine or an ATV frightens the animals and they are not seen. Also, more birds are heard as the canoe slips quietly downstream. I heard many more species of birds than I saw. The calls of orioles, catbirds, cardinals, blue jays, robins, and yellowthroats were frequently heard in trees along the river's edge.

I enjoyed watching the birds as I paddled down the river. At one time while I was taking pictures my canoe ran upon a large rock and I was temporarily stuck in the middle of the stream. I thought that I was going to tip over, but I eventually was able to wiggle and push the canoe and get it free.



Photo by Ray Harden

Several times I passed Kingfishers sitting on tree limbs that were hanging over the water looking for small fish. The birds would give a scolding, rattle-sounding cry as they flew away from my approaching canoe.

Mid May is the peak of the spring migration season. It is a great time for seeing birds that do not live in Iowa but just pass through, like the large flock of white pelicans that were circling overhead when we arrived. They were stopping in Iowa to fatten up on their way north to Canada.

Other animals are also on the river. Deer tracks were everywhere. On the sandbar where we ate lunch a Decay's brown snake greeted us. The little eight inch long reptile was at the water's edge eating insects when we beached our boats. I carefully picked it up with a stick and moved it back into the grass so that no one would step on it.

We had an enjoyable float trip down a river that formed thousands of years ago from the melting ice of the glacier that once covered this land. The Middle Raccoon River is one of the best canoeing streams in our area and is well worth seeing.

Several turkey vultures always seemed to be overhead, circling above us, but the dominant species of birds that I saw was the Canada goose. Many nesting pairs were observed. One group had many baby gosling and some were riding on the back of the parents.

The swallows were constantly flying above the water feeding on insects. The barn swallows had made interesting nests of mud under the bridges. Bank swallows were also flying in and out of their nest holes in the steep mud banks along the river.

Flambeau Trip Report Spring 2004 by Dave Kraemer

Never mind Wausau, the Wolf or even the Hatfield releases on the Black River; there's plenty of aerated adventure elsewhere in Wisconsin. Here's your guide to adventures in Flambeau-land.

THE ADVENTURE Ten paddlers ventured to Chippewa County on Memorial Day weekend. The trip was billed as a Flambeau River trip, base camped at the cabin of Dave and Mary, near Holcombe, Wis. The cabin is at the confluence of the Flambeau, Chippewa and Jump rivers. Many paddling opportunities are within easy reach of the cabin, ranging from broad placid

flatwater to some Class 3 and even 4 drops. The idea was to take day trips out to various locations, based on the interests and skill levels of those who showed up.

THE CREW Dave and Mary and their sons, Colin and Michael, drove up late Friday night, stopping for supper in Owatonna and generally poking along. We thought we'd be the only ones at the cabin until mid-day on Saturday, plenty of time for roll practice in the lake, groceries, etc. But upon driving in at 12:30 a.m., in the yard was Doug Robinson, up from Madison, with three boats and a van load of gear. He said he hadn't been waiting long, but his ice was melting. It's wonderful having guests. We'll have to tell you where we keep the spare key. Or not. Bring your own beer if you think you'll be stranded in the yard. Bob Modersohn and Ellen Heath came up Saturday afternoon, followed by Rick Dietz, Carolyn Komar and Monica Booe. Dave's parents and sister joined for dinner on Saturday and Sunday.

THE FISHING Dietz caught a 6-foot Komar in the Jump. Later decided to leave it on his line and use it for bait. That hooked a 14-foot Encore. Kinda bony, but tasty.

THE SWIMMING Ask Doug and Carolyn about that. See the chapter above on fishing.

THE SHOPPING Bake sales are made for U-turns. Especially if it's an Amish guy under blue plastic in a muddy yard, peddling rhubarb pie and cookies. Later, we stopped at a closed butcher shop where the proprietors waved us inside anyway. They plied us with fresh jerky and ground beef for chili, then took only cash on the barrelhead when it came time to pay. Turns out they weren't proprietors anyway, just interlopers. Couldn't get the cash register to work, kept talking about Iowa, might have been related to the owners, or not. Maybe they just needed a little cash to fix a flat on their RV.

THE NIGHTLIFE Nothing beats Hank Williams and Johnny Cash on the listener supported radio station WOJB, broadcasting live from the Lac Court des Orielles (pronounced Couderay, for Iowa folks) reservation in Reserve, Wis. The crew, see above, took about as much of this as they could stand, then dialed up weather forecasts on the Internet. We know how to have a good time.

THE RIVERS Saturday, Doug, Dave, Mary and Colin chose a stretch of the Eau Claire. Depending on which guide book you use, it looked to be either completely flat, or featured with some Class 1 riffles. We put in at Highway H, a sandy, rutted access. It rained as we unloaded, colder than expected. We put in wet, two rec kayaks, an RPM, and Doug's Encore. The river was high and swift, but not out of its banks. Turns out there was no whitewater. We did see eagles, deer, and an otter. It was a very pretty stretch anyway. Takeout was at Highway G. A word to the wise, use the Goat Camp Road shuttle route, the Horse Creek route is for four wheelers and other morons. But we did see a group of sandhill cranes on the shuttle route.

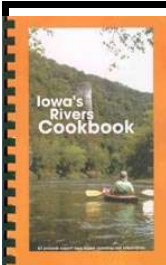
On Sunday, after the arrival of the full crew the night before, we paddled the Jump River in Price and Taylor counties. Two rec kayaks, Doug in his Encore, Monica and Mary in a Dagger Reflection, two RPMs, Rick in his Vortex. It was rainy again. We had some confusion over phone lines and the modem hookup at the cabin. One crew went back to check. The other shuttle crew went ahead to check out the takeout at Big Falls Park. Mosquitoes nearly flew away with the boats. A mile-long stretch of boulder garden follows Big Falls, which is a series of class 3 drops through enormous boulders. We talked a bit about setting safety if we were to run this stretch, but the mosquitoes chased us back into the cars and to the put in. Put in was at a bend in the river at Highway I. It was quiet and made for easy access. We posted two cars downstream, one ahead of Little Falls and one at Big Falls. On the shuttle, Dave swears he saw a wolf cross the road ahead of the cars. Though it might have been a big woodchuck. There were several very nice boulder gardens on the way down. Ellen gained confidence in the rapids, others practiced eddy turns, peal outs, ferries. Plenty of opportunity for low-grade play.

At Little Falls, everyone pulled off the river. Mary, Monica, Bob and Ellen took out. The rest went to scout the rapids, plan a line. Rick first, then Carolyn, then Dave. It was a blast. Much bigger than it looked from the road. Then came Doug. He looked good for a minute, but then water caught his port gunwale. His swim was textbook. But the boat was hung upside down on a rock. Carolyn was the only one smart enough to wear a wetsuit. So we hooked her up to a line and sent her out to rescue the canoe. Missed first time and was swept down river. Second time was charmed and we pulled the boat to shore. We finished out with a quiet stretch to Big Falls. By then we were tired, not ready to do the big drop. We will come back again. Venison, duck and pheasant for supper. Then Monica, Carolyn, Rick left for home.

Monday, Dave, Ellen, Bob paddled the flatwater on the lake. Mary, Colin

and Doug to the Yellow. This Yellow River is described in Mike Svob's "Paddling Northern Wisconsin", pp. 178 - 179. Here's Doug's account of the trip on the Yellow:

"Mary, Colin and I paddled from a Forest Service access ~2/3 mile downstream from Miller Dam to Gilman (village park off Cty B). Did ~7 miles in ~2 hours (current was swift!). I would recommend putting in at Miller Dam, probably a nicer access and a few more riffles. The river is fairly scenic (but not as nice as the Jump or Eau Claire), the first half flowing through National Forest land. Toward Gilman you start to see houses and yards. Level; the river was UP, approaching bank full - so the riffles were washed out. A couple of spots had some 1' standing waves, the river was rising but not too pushy. A couple of strainers and sweepers were the only hazards. Saw some wildlife - birds of several flavors. This section should be a nice canoe float when the water is lower, some riffles and nice wooded banks."



Have you purchased your copy of [Iowa's Rivers Cookbook](#) yet? All proceeds from sales of this book will be used by Iowa organizations and clubs for river-related recreation and conservation projects, such as low-head dam modification or removal, opposing river habitat destruction, and creating canoe accesses and whitewater runs. And, this editor can attest that there are some OUTSTANDING recipes and great ideas for paddlers, backpackers, and landlubbers. It's a unique gift idea! Available at Canoesport Outfitters and JAX Outdoor Gear, and at weekly sessions at Grays Lake and Ada Hayden Heritage Park.

Cedar Bluffs Trip Report, May, 2004 by John Pearson

The trip to Cedar Bluffs State Preserve on May 1 started with seven people who met to paddle canoes and kayaks from the Cedar Creek Access. Nate Hoogeveen (author of the new "Paddling Iowa" guidebook) and I met Pete Eyheralde (naturalist for the Mahaska County Conservation Board), Don Mott and friend Diana from Perry, and Dave and Janine Bell from Iowa City at the Cedar Creek Access, where a reporter from the Oskaloosa Herald photographed our departure. The weather was sunny and mild. The water in Cedar Creek, although amply deep, was barely flowing, here being mainly backwater extending upstream from the Des Moines River. A high, steep bank opposite the put-in supported upland forest with an eye-catching population of Sweet William (*Phlox divaricata*) in full bloom, but mostly the creek banks along the two miles to the preserve were lined with narrow bands of bottomland forest trees- silver maple, cottonwood, boxelder- and sandbar willows that screened crop fields on the adjacent floodplain.

As we paddled into the preserve- where wooded bluffs rise abruptly from the floodplain- an hour later, Pete pointed out an otter slide on a steep, muddy bank. We pulled ashore on a mudbar (happily, it was dry and firm), where we met Elizabeth Hill, who had hiked into the preserve along the trail. She is a college student (originally from Iowa City) from Evergreen College who is writing a guidebook to hiking trails in Iowa. After lunch on the mudbar, Pete led our group (now numbering eight) on a tour of the sandstone bluffs that are the namesake of the preserve. Rising 100 feet above the floodplain, the bluffs appear wooded when viewed from the river, but hiking along the river under the forest canopy reveals sheer cliffs of exposed sandstone. Geologically, the sandstone cliffs are lithified stacks of ancient sandbars deposited in the streambed of a river that flowed (some 300 million years ago during the "Pennsylvanian" geologic epoch) from the Appalachian Mountains toward a seacoast in what is now the Great Plains. The yellow, cross-bedded sandstone, once the lowest point in the Pennsylvanian landscape, is the highest point in today's landscape because the sandstone has resisted geologic erosion better than the softer shale that once surrounded it.

As we wound our way up and along the base of the cliffs on a steep, narrow "goat path", Pete pointed out interesting botanical features, including the prominence of black maple (*Acer nigrum*)

on the cool, moist, north-facing bluffs and the local abundance of the rare Goldie's Fern (*Dryopteris goldiana*) on talus along the shaded cliffs. We saw other species of fern as well, each growing in a different microhabitat: rockcap fern (*Polypodium virginianum*) clinging to blank walls, walking fern (*Asplenium rhizophyllum*) covering mossy boulders, and fragile fern (*Cystopteris protrusa*) and maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*) growing in deeper soil below the outcrops. The spurred flowers of colombine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) were just beginning to flush and were only palely pigmented with red and yellow. The first wave of spring ephemerals had already passed, so we saw only the leaves of Dutchman's-breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), but did find fresh flowers of its cousin, squirrel-corn (*Dicentra canadensis*).

We climbed up the wooden staircase and found ourselves in a dry, open oak forest dominated by white oak (*Quercus alba*) and oak sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*) at the crest of the hill. Elizabeth pointed out patches of *Polytrichum* moss and *Cladonia* lichen. A prairie-like atmosphere was promoted by scattered sprigs of leadplant (*Amorpha canescens*) and a surprisingly large flowering patch of yellow stargrass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*). Pete informed us that the Conservation Board has been managing this site as a kind of savanna by thinning the woods via the removal of ironwood trees that once crowded the understory. From the blufftop deck overlooking the river valley, Pete pointed out the contrasting textures and colors of the deep green, fully foliated floodplain forests (dominated by early-flushing maples and cottonwoods) and the yellowish, partially foliated upland forests (where the dominant oaks were just beginning to leaf out). He also pointed to a distant tree on the floodplain that supported the nest of a bald eagle. We parted company with Elizabeth, who lingered in the preserve hunting mushrooms before walking out to her car. (She later informed me that she "hit the jackpot" with morels after we left.)

Returning to the boats, we saw a solo canoeist approaching from downstream. Ron Wilharm (participant #9) had paddled downstream from his home along the Des Moines River to the Cedar Creek confluence, then paddled a short way upstream to find us. Just as the last paddler was pushing off from shore, Tom Cady (participant #10) emerged from the brushy edge of the forest. Tom had also hiked in along the trail. He will be conducting a detailed inventory of the preserve's flora this year for the Preserves Board. It is surprising that a preserve of such botanical regard as Cedar Bluffs still lacks a comprehensive survey, but 2004 will mark the end of that problem.

Now with eight paddlers, our group proceeded a short distance down Cedar Creek and onto the Des Moines River. After floating slowly down a sleepy little creek, emerging onto the wide, swift river was like merging onto a high-speed freeway from a country road. The current swept us quickly along the shoreline, which was increasingly populated with homes ranging from mansions to bungalows as we approached the take-out at Eveland Access. Due to the strong flow, we covered the final six miles in only an hour with effortless paddling. After packing up, several of our group adjourned to dinner at the "Kinfolks" restaurant in nearby Attica.

Here are some weblinks related to the float trip...

Oskaloosa Herald article:

http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=11434874&BRD=1623&PAG=461&dept_id=180614&rfi=8

"Paddling Iowa" from Trails Books: <http://www.trailsbooks.com/books/bookdes/PadIowa.html>

Iowa Native Plant Society: <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~herbarium/inps/inpshome.htm>

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

DUES: \$10 per year

Includes emails, Newsletters ...
And Fellowship!

Membership, Dues, Emails for CIP list

Lynn Aldridge

laldridg@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

1500 Crown Colony Ct. Unit 620

Des Moines, IA 50315

515-284-6910

Send: Articles, pictures .

For more information, visit our website at:

www.paddleiowa.org



NOTE: The above cartoon was provided gratis by the artist.

Check out his fun website at: www.frikoutdoors.com

COMING NEXT NEWSLETTER

Your editor provides handy hints, like “don’t back over your \$200 carbon fiber paddle.” Our sojourners from the Apostle Islands report in on the trip. **AND MORE!** Please attend some of the events listed below, write up an article, and send it in!

2004 Iowa Paddling Events

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/>

August

Tuesdays at 6:30

Grays Lake with CanoeSport Outfitters staff, CIP and IA Whitewater
Call 1 800-257-6080 for information.

Wednesdays at 7:00

Skunk River Paddlers: Paddlin' at the Pits
Wednesdays at 7pm, Ada Hayden Heritage Park

August 11 – 15

(NOTE: event full, but call to
be a backup)

Apostle Islands, Please contact Bob Johansen at 515 964 7671 or
email johansen.bob (AT) principal .com/ or Rick Dietz at 515 232
1484 or email rsdietz (AT) yahoo.com..

Saturday, August 14

Boone River, Polk County Conservation Board
<http://www.conservationboard.org:8080/>

September

Wednesdays at 7:00

Skunk River Paddlers Paddlin'
Wednesdays at 7pm, May 19-Sept 1, Ada Hayden Heritage Park

September 2- 6

[Rainsbarger Daze](#) Steamboat Rock (Iowa River) 641-868-2246

Saturday, September 11

[River Ripple](#) Des Moines River, Eddyville to Ottumwa

Saturday, September 11

[Great Rivers Marathon](#) 26.2 miles. No running. Minneapolis

Sunday, September 12

Pelican Festival, [Polk County Conservation Board](#)
<http://www.conservationboard.org:8080/>

Sunday, September 26

Brushy Creek Lake Fall Color Cruise and Boat Show
Contact Jim (jdodd50(~AT~)hotmail.com or 515-332-2069)

October

Saturday, October 9th

Robin's Birthday Float

TBA

[Prairie Rapids Paddlers](#) October Paddlefest

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

Have you ever left for a float and realized you've forgotten something: paddlefloat, spray skirt, even a paddle? I finally sat down and typed up a ***Kayak Checklist***, put it in plastic and posted it in my garage near my boat. Here's my list:

EQUIPMENT

Paddle
Paddle Float
Bilge Pump
Spray Skirt
Sponge
Paddle Leash

MISC.

Water/Food
Cell Phone
Cell Phone case
Dry Bag
Straps& Roping
Equip't spares

CLOTHES

- Paddling Jacket
- Boots
- Wet Suit
- Hat
- Sun glasses

MISC, cont

- Sun Screen
- Maps
- Phone numbers

Happy Paddling !!!!