



# Central Iowa Paddlers

Volume 8 Issue 4

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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!*

## MEANDERINGS

**“Community.”** I've long felt this abused term puts people in unnecessary camps and cliques. You read about ethnic and social groupings such as the “Hispanic community” or the “gay community.” It even bleeds into business where I recently heard someone talking about the “accounting community”. It always felt to me like a strained way of classifying people. This summer, however, I've tempered my feelings about the use of this term. Being part of a community doesn't define who you are. It simply means there are others with similar interests that you can look to for support, empathy and enjoyment.

Due to work and health challenges, as well as a death in the family, I really didn't have a paddling summer. But because of the *paddling community in Central Iowa*, I've been able to maintain my interest in the sport. Through emails, phone calls, running into people at airports (I encountered Robin and Hank in Minneapolis, coming back from the Santa Cruz Island trip discussed in this Newsletter) and the occasional discussion at Grays Lake, I've kept up on what's happening, stayed motivated about paddling, and set goals for future paddling experiences. That my friends remembered me while they paddled the Apostles really means something to me!

With the Central Iowa Paddlers, you have an opportunity to get together with others, share experiences, and be part of a community. The rivers and lakes are our meeting places, but so are the Web, the phone lines, and the bon fires in Mingo! Being part of the community helps even when you can't be with others. As I write this piece, I'm in Boston, finishing up a business trip. But before I leave, I've rented a kayak and am going to paddle a stretch of the Charles River. I've been inspired by the articles in this Newsletter and I'm committed to staying a part of the Central Iowa paddling community.

Have a great winter season. Let us hear about your paddling adventures!!

- Steve Parrish, Editor

*"Ideas are like stars; you will not succeed in touching them with your hands. But like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides, and following them you will reach your destiny." - Carl Schurz*

## TRIP and NEWS REPORTS

### **Apostle Islands, August 2004 by Bob Johansen**

In mid August, six of us traveled to Bayfield Wisconsin to kayak among the Apostle Islands. Many of the group had been to the Apostles in the past but had never been able to paddle to the outer islands due to weather and wave conditions.

It took about eight hours to drive from Des Moines to Little Sand Bay, one of the National Park Services launch areas to Lake Superior. The wind, rain, and wave conditions when we arrived prevented us from paddling and we elected to camp on the grounds close to the Park offices. We soon learned from several of the other boaters the previous two days' poor weather had kept them off the lake but the conditions were promising for the rest of the week. The protected dock area had waves crashing into them with splashes of six to eight feet.

We set up our tents and had a leisurely tour of the area. A Hokenson Fishing camp, complete with an old boat and several buildings were close by and were an interesting self-tour. In the late 1800's commercial fishing was prevalent on the lake.

The following morning brought a perfect day with light winds and no clouds in the sky. We kayaked out to Sand Island, 3miles off shore, which had sea caves along the west side. Some of these had room enough to paddle through them as well as along the out side, which we did. After a short break on a nearby sand beach, we paddled on to the island we would be camped on, York. It is one of the smallest islands and consists of 321 acres. It had an expansive beach on the east side where our camp site was located (camp site #3). The Park Service had provided a picnic table, fire ring, tent pads, and a vaulted toilet for the island campers. That afternoon we paddled to Raspberry Island, which had a light house on it. The light house and huge foghorn building had operated from the 1900's to late 1940's and was now restored as historical sites. A Park Ranger resided on the island and provided tours of the facility.

On Friday, Rick Dietz, Travis Konda, Matt Maxwell, and Dave Foster set out for Devil's Island, a distance of twelve miles one way. The island could be seen from York, giving the impression of being much closer. The wind was to their backs and the sea had gentle rolling waves (of two foot



or so) and a crossing was made in two hours at about 6 mph (very strong paddlers!!). There was one campsite on Devils, which was elevated and provided a great view of the area. The sea caves are perhaps the most spectacular of any in the area and many digital pictures were taken. While they were on their trip, Bret Weber and I traveled back to Raspberry Island and then on to Oak Island, one of the larger islands in the group. It had a good sized mountain on it and several trails (one was 11 miles long). We put in on the north end at a campsite and walked about two miles up to an overlook. The island was

noted for having the largest bear population of any of the islands. We did not see any although there was some bear scat and prints. One of the neat experiences we had was coming into the calm waters when rounding the eastern point as you could look down through the clear water to the bottom, perhaps 25 ft. below us. Watching the shadow of your kayak as you glide over a boulder and sand fields was an experience I will never forget. The clarity of the water is what makes Lake Superior so special.

Saturday, Dave, Bret and I had to leave due to obligations at home. It was anther perfect day and the plans for the rest of the group paddled to Sand Island to visit the lighthouse there and then on to the mainland where there were more caves as well as another small island.

We did miss Dave Kraemer and his son, Colin, and Steve Parrish whom could not make the trip this year. They were not forgotten though as we had burritos and a lentil soup dishes for a couple of meals (both recipes provided by Dave and found in the Iowa's Rivers Cookbook) and we toasted Steve with the wine brought by Dave and Bret. Dave had also made a dish called Rat-tat-tan (misspelled, of course, sorry... Travis called it Rin Tin Tin) which was spectacular and went well with the wine. Most of the meals were sort of shared.

The measure of the success of a trip is if you would like to do it again. We all would, and we would like to invite you to join us next year.



Paddling AND Camping at The Apostles!



### **Fall Color Cruise at Brushy, September 2004 by Jim Dodd**

The Day was perfect, and so was the beach at Brushy! Six canoes, two kayaks, all strip built, and one restored wood canvas canoe graced the shore. It was BEAUTIFUL! The winds were light making for an easy paddle around Taylor Island, and a pass-by inspection of the new canoe and kayak launch at the South East boat ramp. If you get the chance, check it out! The staff at Brushy, headed by Chad Kelchen, did a nice job

Back at the beach we were enjoying food and conversation, then around the corner came a vision of the past ...a couple in a 1925 circa Thompson Brothers wood canvas canoe. They were seated in the traditional manner of a courting canoe, the woman seated in the bottom, facing the stern, and the man in the stern paddling. Greg Vital flagged them in. We soon learned how Bill Fletcher had purchased the canoe as a kid, and had restored it twice. It as a delight!

We owe many thanks to all those involved in securing the beach for the one day use! The staff at Brushy pulled buoys early for this event, we appreciate it.

Those who made the day fun, included, Rick Dietz, Greg Vital, Ron Pomeroy, Phil and Bonita McLarnan, Mr. And Mrs. Bill Fletcher, Linn Heibler(spelling) and friend Suzan, and the staff at Brushy Creek!

### **... and more Brushy Creek commentary by Rick Dietz**



We had a great time at Brushy Creek Sunday and had the opportunity to see a refurbished Thompson Boat Works canoe, circa 1925. Thanks to Jim Cooper and the cooperation of the park staff, Jim "Tailbiter" Dodd was able to use the beach again for this year's event. We also made a point to look at two new canoe and kayak launch areas (see photo at end), one at the south boat ramp and the other near the new bridge at the Brushy Creek silt dam (NW corner of the lake).

They've got the right idea, but a bit more sand (and less algae) is in order. I've come across a design for an ADA accessible floating dock/launch which might be something for them to consider.

#### **'04 Great River Rumble on the Missouri River by Greg Vitale**

A rooster called out. The now familiar morning routine was calling again. Reluctantly, I crawled out of my warm but soggy tent after another night of heavy condensation and fog. I was immediately rewarded. Mist swirled as it rose from the Missouri River as dawn spread her many colors.

I was taking in the sunrise, the river and the mist for a moment before I realized what I was seeing. There, flirting in and out of the mist and silhouetted by the sunrise, was a Great Blue Heron. It was standing still on the bow end of a piece of driftwood looking upstream. And then it was gone- disappearing downstream into a thick fog bank.

It was our last day. There were 30 more miles to go. Our total would be more than 185 miles during the seven days of the annual Great River Rumble. Our overnight stop at Brunswick was followed by Glasgow, Booneville, Cooper's Landing, Jefferson City, Chamois, Hermann and finally, Washington. Some of our campsites were literally on the Katy Hiking and Biking Trail that crosses much of Missouri.

It really wasn't hard to crank out the miles, including the 30 mile days. After all, the river was running well above its average 60,000 cubic feet per second common for this time of the year and the wing dams speed the water along. Barges and speed boats were infrequent enough and didn't hold us back either. The time consuming part was getting so many paddlers on and off the river and moving as a group.

The days were marked by gracious hosts, good food and lots of paddling. There was also a good bit of rain, thunder and lightening, blazing sun, big winds and waves. Our paddling was also interspersed with those seemingly random, but infamous, Missouri River whirlpools. The swirling waters easily toss your boat this way and that.

But, my favorite and an unexpected part of this trip, was Judy, a massage therapist. She was following her paddling friends on land, traveling with her husband, Gus. Her ten minute massages were an indulgent luxury amid sometimes crowded campsites seemingly full of snorers that sounded like trains, cold showers and clothes that took on their own alien life as the week passed.

There were other treats on the Great River Rumble besides Judy. Some were as obvious as the limestone bluffs along the mostly remote river we paddled. Friends and new friends among the hundred or so paddlers and volunteers added no less. Other treats were as delicate and unexpected as the locust that I interrupted when I turned my boat upright to begin another day just as it was crawling out from its shell and beginning to dry its wings in the morning light.

Musician entertained us two nights during the week too. I especially enjoyed the river stories in between the songs at Hermann. Mostly though, we provided our own entertainment visiting with each other on the river, in camp and on our errands.

None of this entertainment could compare, however, to the fun that I had paddling a Winonah 23-foot canoe with Bob, Stan and Gail. Besides being a break from paddling my kayak, the boat-with a gunnel width of about 34 inches, was fast. But, what really turned heads was Gail lollygagging around in the boat holding her parasol as the all-guy crew paddled.

I have a bit more to unpack. Still, I'm already thinking about my next adventure on another Great River Rumble. Besides enjoying another river with good company, maybe I'll get a chance to enjoy a turn sitting under the umbrella while I'm paddled downstream.

## **Upper Iowa River, September 2004 by Robin Fortney**

On the last weekend of September, Hank and I headed to northwest Iowa to take part in the fourth annual Upper Iowa River cleanup event. There were about 60 people participating, three times as many as last year. Iowa DNR, Chimney Rock Campground and the local RC&D joined forces to offer free camping, canoes, shuttles, lunch and door prizes. The weekend was perfect: weather was sunny and warm, the river was clear and flowed at a good level, and the moon was nearly full. The group collected a couple truck loads of trash large and small. Overall, the river seemed in great shape. The most unruly sweeper trees have been sawed and cleared, so the river is now almost too civilized. We enjoyed a delicious potluck dinner late Saturday evening (it took awhile to gather up all of the paddlers at the end of the day). Hank and I paddled the Chimney Rock to Bridge 10 stretch on Saturday and then enjoyed the Kendallville to Chimney Rock section on Sunday. Wildlife was abundant: great blue herons, kingfishers, mature and immature eagles galore (including one that had caught a turtle for lunch), a big wood chuck, lots of fish and mussels. The trip was marred only briefly by noisy ATV riders and we had to maneuver around some river cows, but, dressed in fall colors, the Upper Iowa was especially gorgeous.

## **River Ripple, September 2004 by Dave Kraemer**

Saturday, Sept. 11, 2004, was a glorious day on the water. No ugly reverberations of 2001 marred the anniversary of the national disaster. Instead, it was a day for late summer re-creation. I've had too few days on the water this year, the result of a tendency to overbook. So just being out was a treat. But it was fulfilling in many more ways, too. The clear water dripping from my paddle onto the deck of my kayak was only a few drops in the current of a much deeper stream.

The excuse to paddle was the River Ripple, an organized float on the Des Moines River from Eddyville to Ottumwa, a distance of 17 miles. About 85 paddlers, in something like 25 canoes and 35 kayaks, put in at Hardfish Landing. Last I heard, they all took out at Blackhawk Landing at the end. The float is an annual event. A group of us started it in 1999 when I worked at the Ottumwa Courier. The idea was to expand on an existing summer celebration to make a true community festival. The first forays down the river that summer baptized me. People told us the route was too long (it still is!). They told us we would be stopped dead by insurance companies. They threatened to pull the plug on our support. And on the day we ran it, 200 Iowans showed up like mayflies in the morning to spend the first of what would become a series of glorious days on the water.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Al Foster for spiritual guidance in the initial planning, and to Robin Fortney and Jeff and Casey at CanoeSport Outfitters for technical help in making it happen. I learned a lot that first year -- I learned you can't plan enough. I learned to trust in late registrations. I learned the Corps of Engineers is God, or Not. Mostly I learned I have several hundred friends here in Iowa who all love to paddle.

The Courier sponsored the event the first two years. The third year, I had moved to Ames and the event was organized by the YMCA. The River Ripple was dry-docked for a year, then returned in 2003 as a fundraiser for Big Brother and Big Sisters. The Bigs ran it again this year and by all indications, want to keep it alive as a signature event. That's one of the branches of this river for me. Seeing the float stand on its own elicits warm, parental feelings. I had absolutely nothing to do with the planning this year. And this kid's going to turn out all right. Another is that organized floats like this help build awareness of the world around us, and hint at how we can build better lives within it.

On the river, you're down in the green, slipping along on the silvery highway, quiet and absorbed if you want to be, or laughing wet and raucous. That's plenty of entertainment for a lot of people. Iowa keeps looking for ways to bring people into the state. If only it would look at what it has. People actually like Iowa. They like small towns. They like stopping at the cafe for a piece of pie. They like the wide open skies. They like the country roads. They even like the rivers.

The Des Moines Register put together a little thing a few decades ago that has grown to be what half of the rest of the continent has come to identify Iowa with. RAGBRAI could be the single biggest tourist event anywhere, ever. If only we could get those folks from the traveling city

to stay. But sometimes it seems like we do everything backwards. The little towns are dried up. The tree lines are plowed. The rivers are treated like drainage ditches. It seems like a little Midwestern pride in property ought to keep these things in better shape. So getting more people out enjoying the resource, I hope, is one more thing working in favor of the River Ripple.

This year, for the first year ever, I had no hand in organizing this event. I just paddled. That gave me time for some reflection on what this event has become and what it can be. The drive down that morning was fraught with caffeinated ruminations. I will confess that over the past couple of years I've wondered how I could personally reclaim the River Ripple. I've publicly been very much in support of the Bigs and their sponsorship. But I'd be lying if I didn't admit to some private selfishness about this, too. At times others have raised the possibility of moving the Ripple around the state. And I'm hooked in to many more charitable causes now in Ames, which also could use a fund-raiser. So, I told myself on the way down, if the River Ripple looks like it's hanging by a thread, maybe I can uproot it.

A half a day later, I gave up on all those thoughts. And happily. The Big Brothers and Big Sisters are doing a marvelous job of organizing. I still believe wholly in the value of getting people down to Ottumwa and southeastern Iowa, where the local folks feel sometimes put out by the rest of Iowa. More than one Ottumwan has said they love to see paddlers. We're classy guests. We ought to return the compliment. They're good hosts.

As for the statewide value in establishing a kind of riparian Chautauqua, that seems to have moved to Project AWARE, which is doing its own great job of highlighting Iowa rivers as it meanders from year to year. And as an environmental indicator, the River Ripple anchored to Ottumwa over time can grow a value of its own as a core group of paddlers comes to know this stretch of river through its changes.

The Bigs have made a few changes to the River Ripple that seem to be working. First, they shortened the route by about a mile, taking people out at Blackhawk Landing instead of that muddy swamp behind the ball fields. It works a lot better. River Ripple repeats will remember the floating bridge made out of pallets and OSB board. No need for that at Blackhawk. Second, they pushed back the date. The community event that fostered the float has evaporated, leaving the River Ripple to stand on its own. With that, organizer Sue Huff chose a date that suited her own schedule better. Turns out it worked fine.

This year too, they reversed the order of the shuttle, asking people to drop their boats at the put-in at Eddyville, drive their cars down to Ottumwa and ride the bus back to start. Up to this year, we've shuttled people back to their cars after they were done paddling. Shuttling people before the event makes a lot more sense. It compresses the time the buses are necessary (you never knew how long it would take to get everyone off the river). It lets people clean up and load as soon as they're done. And the volunteer job of watching the boats while owners are shuttling is much better accomplished at the beginning, when things are still somewhat organized, than it is in the chaos at the end.

Also new this year was a pontoon boat on the water offering lunch. As you will see, I had plans of my own. I did not take advantage of the hamburgers. But I did buy a candy bar and a pop in between strokes.

For me, the best part of this year's float was that for the first time that I've paddled this thing I didn't have to paddle "sweep." Sweep is the last paddler down the river, in charge of making sure everyone else makes it out. I've put myself there every other year that I've paddled (except 2000, when I stayed on shore to coordinate shuttles) because it's a responsible job. It's also a pain. No matter how the day is going, you are stuck behind lily-dippers who can't make it past the next sandbar without getting out. You have to have a lot of patience at this job.

This year, I put in with the first group of paddlers, but didn't start right away, taking time to sit in my boat, watch from the water as many others launched, and to eat my sandwich. Then I laid into the ash. By the Cargill outfall I'd passed nearly everyone. By the bend upstream of the cabins on the north stretch I took the lead. At Chillicothe I allowed myself a break on the beach until I saw the flash of paddles behind me, then squeezed back in and set off. Made it to Ottumwa before the organizers did in their car. Total time, just over three hours, a good half hour before the next paddler.

The goal was not to get off the water. But to stretch and move makes a body feel good. I need more time on the water like this. Iowa can give me more. It should. It was a glorious day.

## **Santa Cruz Island (Cal), September 2004 by Robin Fortney**

In early September, Hank and I visited his son Daniel in college at UC Santa Barbara on the central California coast (tough place to be a college kid!). It was warm and sunny every day, great weather for beach walking, surfing and sailboarding. I tried boogie boarding for the first time and loved it!

One of the other trip highlights included paddling around Santa Cruz Island, the largest of the eight islands that make up Channel Islands National Park. We took a one-hour ferry ride from the mainland to Scorpion Anchorage and saw sea lions sunning on a buoy and dolphins romping in the surf alongside the ferry. We signed up with Island Packers Inc., one of the outfitters who provide guided kayaking trips to the island. The island is known for its sea caves, arches and pocket coves. Each person was outfitted with a sea kayak, PFD and helmet. We were taught how to get back on the boat in case we were tossed off and how to enter and exit through the surf. The water was clear, and that day was only slightly choppy.

The island chain is a volcanic remnant and the high rocky bluffs appearing to be a conglomeration of lava mixed with rock and sea bed deposits. With a guide's assistance, we paddled around the east end of the island to Split Rock, checking out each of the numerous caves and arches, grateful that the swell wasn't too terrifying as it moved water inside the caves up and down (though I did decline to enter Split Rock Cave). We saw lots of cormorants, brown pelicans, gulls and sea lions. Only one of our group was tossed off her boat, but she re-entered easily. The same person had to take a break on the pebbly shore of terra firma during a bout with seasickness; the tour company had indicated that persons with a predisposition to seasickness should take medication before hopping on the ferry. She was feeling as good as new when we came in for lunch. After a well-earned lunch break, Hank and I hiked the bluff trail until the ferry returned.

Santa Cruz Island is managed by the National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy and is no longer used for grazing. It is a wild and relatively untrammled place, and we would recommend the trip!

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## **Announcements, Tidbits, Tips, etc!**

### **Christmas Shopping by Greg Vitale**

Please consider supporting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Paddle Iowa Calendar featuring paddlers and paddling in Iowa (and elsewhere) by:

- (1) Sending pictures you want to be considered to be in the 2005 calendar. All contributors will be identified on the calendar unless otherwise requested. Please (a) identify the location, (b) event and (c) date where the picture was taken;
- (2) Sending dates for 2005 paddling events to include on the calendar with the following information- (a) dates, (b) title of event, (c) and contact information such as an email address, phone number or a website for further information;
- (3) Purchasing a calendar for \$10.00 from Canoe Sport Outfitter in Indianola, JAX in Ames, or by writing an \$11.00 check (\$1 covers shipping) made out to "Skunk River Paddlers- Calendars" and sending it to Calendars 2510 Pierce Avenue, Ames, IA 50010.

All net proceeds will go to enhance paddling in Iowa such as water trail improvements, safety and water quality issues. The calendars will only be as good as your contribution of events and photos make it. Please act soon so we can print and distribute the calendar in time for Christmas.

If you have any questions or comments contact [greg@skunkriverpaddlers.org](mailto:greg@skunkriverpaddlers.org) or call 515-663-9251. All net proceeds would be used to enhance paddling in Iowa. Thanks for your support.

## Central Iowa Paddlers Fall Party and Bonfire

DATE: Sunday October 24, 2004.

TIME: 3:00 p.m.

PLACE: Lynn Aldridge's Country Estate in Mingo  
Something Barbecued Will be Provided. Please bring  
a side dish or dessert and any paddling photos that  
you want to share.

### Directions:

From Des Moines, go East on I-80 to Mitchellville exit.  
Turn Left (north) on S-27 and go 3.5 miles and turn east(right)  
onto F-34. Go 2 miles to Valeria. Go through Valeria to top of hill  
and turn north (left) onto a gravel road and go 1 mile, then turn  
right and go 1 mile. Turn left onto 126th Street and go 0.5 mile to  
Lynn's place. Her house is the first on the left. It's white and sits  
back form the road. Please Drive slowly up driveway, thanks.  
Call Lynn at 641-363-4451 if you have questions or get lost.

*Special note: Firewood will be provided but feel free to bring ANY of  
your own unwanted incendiary material for the Bonfire!*

### **“If you’re ever in .... “ by Steve Parrish**

Paddling doesn't have to be restricted to weekends in Central Iowa. As a constant traveler, I've learned to find places to paddle in areas near to where I'm working. Some easy ways to find rivers and outfitters include:

- Doing a Google search: “kayaking in \_\_\_\_” or “canoe stores in \_\_\_\_” usually works for me
- Asking the Hotel you're staying at if they have any arrangements with outfitters
- Asking the local College or University. Most colleges near water have kayaks or canoes for the students, and they're often willing to rent to out-of-towners

Don't assume you have to be in a rural location to find a place to paddle. Here are just some of the places I've paddled while in a city on work:

- *Boston*: there's a paddling shop on the Charles River right next to the Waltham Marriott
- *Ft Meyers/Naples/Marco Island*: there are local shops on the beaches or at the resort hotels. But, I recommend you rent a car and go down to the National Park in Everglade City to paddle the Everglades. It's like nothing you'll ever encounter!
- *San Francisco/San Jose*: an hour plus down the road leads you to Monterey. Although it's great to see the sights there, go to Elkhorn Slough and paddle among the Sea Otters, Sea Lions, and Pelicans. The most impressive estuary I've ever seen
- *Portland*: Wow, where do I start? Just go to the Willamette. You'll find a shop!
- *Washington D.C.*: walk or cab to the shops at the foot of Georgetown. Right on the Potomac is a little rental where you can get a boat and paddle up to the Watergate. You'll see some famous Washington sites from a famous river.

Why should work be “work”? Get out while you're there and paddle!

## Central 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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**Send: Articles, pictures .**

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(small letters)

*For more information, visit our website at:*

[www.paddleiowa.org](http://www.paddleiowa.org)



A Brushy Creek *NEW* Canoe and Kayak Launch site (see article above).

Photo by Rick Dietz