



Houston Canoe Club
Waterline



www.houstoncanoeclub.org :: Volume 2009 :: April

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The Waterline is the monthly newsletter of the Houston Canoe Club, Inc. The Waterline is made possible by your dues and critically depends on member contributions. Please submit items to HCC's Newsletter Editor, Linda Gorski at LindaGorski@cs.com.

The Waterline is prepared by an on-line newsletter editor written by Fraser Baker, HCC's Webmaster.

Next Meeting Announcement

- When:** April 08, 2009
Where: Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet, Houston, Texas
Directions: First driveway, North side of Bissonnet, just East of Hillcroft.
Speaker: Skip Johnson
Speaker Bio: Skip Johnson is an architect who also builds boats! See the article below for more information about his most recent project.
Description:
-

Be sure to set this date aside on your calendar, then come out to support our speaker and club.

Last Meeting Minutes

Date: March 11, 2009

Recorder: John Ohrt

Minutes: HOUSTON CANOE CLUB GENERAL MEETING March 11, 2009
Bayland Park Community Center Commodore Bill Grimes called the meeting to order and gave a short presentation to help members maximize their use of the club website. New members and visitors were greeted. John and Cindy Bartos gave a program on Top Ten Tips for Paddling. Fraser Baker presented a short video of John and Anne Olden demonstrating proper tandem whitewater technique. An award was presented to John and Anne Olden in recognition and appreciation of their many years of service to the Houston Canoe Club. They are moving to Boise, Idaho. Fleet Captain Donna Grimes gave the trip report: past trips included Armand Bayou, Lake Stubblefield, the Great Unknown trip in Big Bend, Boquillas Canyon in Big Bend, the Buffalo Bayou Regatta, and the San Marcos Clean up; upcoming trips were discussed which included a discussion of the new TP&WD paddle trail on Buffalo Bayou. Bill Grimes announced upcoming events at which he hoped to promote the club to get new members, and he asked for volunteers to help out. Business Meeting: Commodore Bill Grimes discussed the work to date of the Membership Enhancement Task Force. The Task Force plans to produce promotional materials such as brochures to help promote the club, but needed club approval to proceed with the expenditure. A motion was made and seconded "that the club would fund promotional materials from the amounts in the Reserve CD, the total cost not to exceed \$3,000.00, and that each item to be purchased would require the approval of the club officers before it was ordered. The motion was discussed, voted on and passed. The meeting was adjourned.

Please contact HCC's recorder, John Ohrt, if there are any omissions or corrections.

New Members

Member Name: Terry and Kathleen Burgess
Membership Type: family
Member's Family:

Member Name: Charlotte Donner
Membership Type: individual
Member's Family:

Member Name: Billy Welborn
Membership Type: individual
Member's Family:

Member Name: Kathryn Shuler
Membership Type: individual
Member's Family:

Member Name: Polly Buenger
Membership Type: individual
Member's Family:

Member Name: Milton (Skip) Johnson
Membership Type: individual
Member's Family:

The HCC cordially welcomes new members to our club. New members are the life blood of the HCC, so be sure to provide opportunities for all our new members to paddle by coordinating more trips.

Market Place

Items For Sale

Items Wanted

Item: Yakima Basket

Description: I'm looking for a basket to attach to my Yakima racks. I drive a 2009 Ford Explorer but I don't think that matters since the basket should fit on any of the Yakima racks.

Contact Name: Linda Gorski

Contact Phone: 713-557-1496

Contact Email: lindagorski@cs.com

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Please contact the Newsletter Editor to post any items that you may have for sale or desparately need.

Skip Johnson, Avid Boat Builder

April 8, 2009

by

Linda Gorski

Our speaker for April, Skip Johnson, is a semi-retired architect who is also an avid amateur boat designer and builder. His program will highlight the building of his newest boat, the EasyB. According to Skip, he built the boat on a strict deadline of only one month so he could paddle it on the HCC's February 2009 trip to the Great



Unknown of the Rio Grande. The trip was led by Louis Aulbach, author of the definitive river guide to this section of the river. Skip has also built many boats for the Texas Water Safari and was the subject of a PBS/Texas Parks and Wildlife documentary on boatbuilding (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brld8jPK6oA>)

Skip has lived in the Houston area for almost 40 years with his wife Susie. He has one son and two granddaughters. In addition to building boats, he also designs and builds beautiful paddles, one of which he is shown here using

Skip Johnson paddling the EasyB.

Photo by Linda Gorski

to paddle the Easy B.

Buffalo Bayou Paddling Trail Dedication April 16

by
Linda Gorski

Members of the Houston Canoe Club have been invited to join other nature enthusiasts and government officials to celebrate the official opening of Buffalo Bayou as the newest Texas Paddling Trail at Briar Bend Park on Thursday, April 16 at 10:30 a.m. At 26 miles long, Buffalo Bayou will be the longest paddle trail in the state of Texas, beginning at Highway 6 and flowing downstream to the takeout at Allen's Landing downtown. The trail will eventually be extended another 10 miles to the Turning Basin.



The newly built put in at Briar Bend Park will offer paddlers an easy way to access Buffalo Bayou

Photo by Linda Gorski

Among those who will participate in a press conference and ribbon-cutting ceremony at Briar Bend Park are Houston Mayor Bill White; City Council Member Pam Holm; Carter Smith, executive director of Texas Parks & Wildlife Department; Joe Turner, director of Houston Parks & Recreation Department; and Chuck Carlberg, chairman of Buffalo Bayou Partnership. BPA Board President Ty Kelly will serve as emcee for the event. The Houston Canoe Club and other paddlers have been invited to be on hand to “inaugurate” the newest state paddling trail. HCC member Bob Arthur, who is also a member of the BPA, has been instrumental in the development of the Buffalo

Bayou Paddling Trail.

As part of TPWD’s Texas Paddling Trails network, the Buffalo Bayou Paddling Trail will include maintained put-in and take-out locations with interpretive information, safety tips, phone numbers and maps conveniently located in kiosks. There are nine segments of varying lengths to the paddle trail; some can be paddled in an hour, while others might take several hours. For example, the segment from Briar Bend Park to Woodway/Memorial Park takes 3.5 to 4.5 hours, depending on water conditions.



Bob Arthur on the steps of the new put in at Briar Bend

Photo by Linda Gorski

“We want people to realize what a rich experience Buffalo Bayou offers, whether through paddling, hiking, bird watching or taking photographs,” said Ty Kelly, BPA Board President. “This dedication will bring much greater public awareness to this incredible asset that is right in our own backyard.”



Louis Aulbach and Fraser Baker carrying a 17 foot tandem canoe to the landing at Briar Bend Park

Photo by Linda Gorski

"In a state that's about 94 percent privately owned, public waterways are vitally important," says Carter Smith, TPWD executive director. "Designating this stretch of Buffalo Bayou as a paddling trail will help show people another side of Houston and afford them the opportunity to enjoy its natural beauty on the water. With the dedication of Buffalo Bayou, we now have 16 state paddle trails, eight inland and eight coastal, all of which provide excellent recreational experiences."

Following the ribbon cutting, a light lunch will be provided by Gables Residential, a developer and manager of apartment communities dedicated to Taking Care of the Way People Live®. Representatives from REI, with a store located at Westheimer and Voss, will also be on hand with a kayak and samples of paddling gear. They will answer questions about paddling and equipment.

The City of Houston's Briar Bend Park is located in the Briar Bend subdivision at 7926 Woodway, Houston, 77063, just west of Voss, and is maintained by Houston Parks and Recreation Department.

For more information about the dedication, call the Bayou Preservation Association at 713-529-6443 or log onto the website at www.bayoupreservation.org. For information about Texas Paddling Trails, please visit: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/paddlingtrails>.

Huge HCC Turnout for San Marcos River Cleanup March 7, 2009

by
Donna Grimes

I have been paddling with HCC now for over 20 years, and have helped clean the San Marcos River, one of my most frequented hill country rivers, for at least ten times.

When I first went, HCC was so well represented, we were given the prime paddling area, plus another area since 25 – 45 people would show up from HCC. Those were the days of the famous (or infamous) Leonard Hulsebosch who beat the bushes getting people out and on the water. I loved those trips. We worked hard cleaning our favorite river, and then that evening, joined with other clubs from across the state for a nice dinner. Paddling people are just nice people!



Anne Olden gives instructions to the group

Photo by Donna Grimes

But over the years, HCC's attendance to the San Marcos River Cleanup has dwindled. One year, I remember there only being four of us. I must admit, I haven't attended in a number of years, but this year, being the Fleet Captain and being married to the Commodore, I felt the need to go.....and I'm so glad I did! I had forgotten how much fun and how dear seeing others can be. Plus, we had 24 people and the size of the group was invigorating. I loved seeing so many HCC people out there –some I hadn't seen in a long time.



Jim Barton filled his boat with trash

Photo by Donna Grimes

This year, John and Anne Olden led the HCC group. Anne divided the 7 mile section into two parts, taking half the people from Schull's Bridge to Shady Grove Park, while the other half cleaned from Pecan Park Retreat to Schull's.



Photo by Donna Grimes

We were then off to the races – going around each other, looking for any little piece of rubbish. Bill and I tandemed (forgetting our own bumper sticker which says, "Canoe Solo; Sleep Tandem"); it's hard when both of us are so independent and used to getting the boat to do what just ONE person wants, but we found much less trash than I would have thought.



However, some of the people amazed me. Of course, Jim Barton, not only found large items to put in his small solo boat, he then surfs a wave with them.

As you can see from the picture, people were busy cleaning the river. Beer cans, coke cans, fishing lures, flipflops, tires....you name it; we found it.



One young couple amazed me — Laura Lee and Terry Wright. They

Laura Lee and Terry Wright cleaned up and ready to eat after a hard day's work.

Photo by Donna Grimes



The group have emptied their boats.

Photo by Donna Grimes

precarious places in order to pickup a small can, jar, or piece of plastic. I think Terry must be an acrobat.



Thank goodness there was a drop off of the trash before Cotton Seed Rapid. Here we could clean out our boats, and then only paddle a short distance before going through the rapids..

Billy Welborn and Louis Aulbach make it through Cottonseed Rapid.

Photo by Donna Grimes

This of course, allowed people the freedom to enjoy playing at Cottonseed. The water was low, but we had people eddy hopping, surfing, and just having fun

That evening, we went to the park for a delicious barbeque dinner and great fellowship. You might recognize some of these people from around the State and from Houston.

I'm so glad I attended the cleanup and hope next year, you'll join us.



The Clean Up Crew lining up to eat barbecue.

Photo by Donna Grimes

Y'all Come Trip on the San Marcos

by
Harmon Everett

Donna announced "Y'all come!" to a float for March 21 and 22 on the San Marcos, so a bunch of us showed up. Ken Anderson, Jim Barton, John Ohrt, Karen Geiger, Calvin Doody, Harmon Everett(me) and Donna and Bill Grimes came and camped and played in the water. We stayed at the newly renamed San Marcos River Retreat campground, a fine quiet campground right on the river.

Karen and Calvin and I showed up Friday night, but I didn't know them, so I set up camp separately. I spent a couple of hours recording the sound of the rapids, which turned out very nicely as an mp3 file (If you are interested, contact me, Harmon, at one of the meetings). Karen and Calvin watched the bats and the stars come out.



Molly the Mop with Bill



The sky was clear and stars were bright until about 7 am, when the fog rolled in, and it was cloudy until about noon thirty Donna and Bill arrived around nine and the rest of the crew straggled in around tenish, and we decided instead of splitting into two groups as planned, we would all go down starting from camp and take out at Schulls both Saturday and Sunday. Donna brought a little mop named Molly, who had her own PFD.

There was a group of canoeists who were poling up and down the river for the day. HCC member Robert Naeger was working with that group, not going with us. We all signed off on the trip, loaded Molly on Bill's canoe and she took her position on his front airbag like she knew what she was doing.



Along the way we found a ball and played Calvin Ball for a while, spent time practicing eddy turns. Jim spent lunch time surfing the breakers at the Spanish Cemetery.



We spent a while playing at S-Turn, and finally made it to Schull's and the take out. After pizza and chips and dip, Bill set up the projector and computer and projected photos from our day on the back wall of the bathroom. We found out that the waterproof Olympus camera, as nice as it is, requires a non-standard connecting cable, and a non-standard flash chip, so we weren't able to see Ken's photos other than on

his camera. We will look forward to seeing them at the next meeting, since he also got some spectacular video of some of the better spills of the trip.

On Sunday morning, we changed plans again, and instead of retracing our trip from Saturday, we went to play at Rio Vista park in downtown San Marcos. I had never been there before, so was very interested in the three manmade waterfalls, and the set up for practicing all the different whitewater skills. Ben Kvanli from Olympic Sports Center, who spoke to us just recently, was running a large class there when we arrived. John Ohrt got into his kayak and was running the falls and playing in the water practically before the rest of us got unpacked. Frankly, the top waterfall scared me.



I

Bill, Donna and I all made it down the first big waterfall just fine, but the eddy around the spillway was fierce, and I tipped over trying to do a ferry across below the first waterfall, and ended up going down the next drop still in the water. There



Harmon runs the first drop with trepidation

There were a bunch of children in their own kayaks playing in that pool, and one of them brought me my paddle back. These 8 to 11 year-olds were fearless and astonishing, surfing up and down the drops, rolling constantly and playing bumper cars with their kayaks in the midst of the waterfalls, including turning somersaults in the wash.

If you haven't visited the Rio Vista park yet, it is well worth stopping by, if you are at all interested in whitewater. It's a public park with night lights, so it is open for use for free, day or night. After a couple of hours we packed up and headed home from a delightful weekend.



The three drops of the Rio Vista Dam area offer challenges on three different levels. You can enjoy trying all three.



Look out Rugrats! Harmon is going to surf!

Goodbye to a River ... or a Couple - Anne and John Olden

by
Bill Grimes

John and Anne Olden have been an active couple with the Houston Canoe Club for over twenty years. They have become such a fixture that when they announced their decision to leave Houston and move to Boise, Idaho, many of us were stunned. John and Anne no longer at all the meetings, no longer available to take on a task, lead a trip, give advice?



The Red Hat Purple Dress Blazing Paddles cry over Anne Olden's imminent move.

Photo by Rick Gorski

When I was asked to write some things about the couple, my first thoughts were on John Olden. When I think about John, the word that comes to mind is determination. Although he is usually soft spoken, there is a streak of boldness (or foolishness) beneath that quiet exterior. If the HCC gave out awards

for the most flips while learning to paddle, John would have been one of the recipients. John did not seem to understand that there are places and times where you should walk around the rapid. Maybe that's because he is a Civil Engineer specializing in Hydraulics of fluid flow, and as many engineers (myself included) we assume we have mastered the subject when we master the equations. Whatever pushed John to continually try, he has become a master of whitewater paddling.



Anne attaching a second PFD to protect herself from rocks.

His engineering background led him to study the online water level graphs for several rivers especially the Cossatot and the rivers around the Tetons and Yellowstone National Parks. By studying the historic and current water levels, he predicted the flow upon our arrival and suggested when to go and when to postpone the trip. Nothing is worse than traveling 1,500 miles and finding the water levels are too high or too low to paddle. He assisted U of H Civil Engineering students in their annual American Society Civil Engineers' competition when they designed, built and raced concrete canoes against other university. He taught them how to paddle these unwieldy crafts.

Anne, on the other hand, is an elegant but cautious paddler, not a risk taker, but organized and dependable. She was the first paddler to pull out before the rapid if there was a good probability of a flip. I remember when we stopped after a rapid and began swimming through the rapid with our PFD securely attached. Anne had two PFDs on when she swam, one in the traditional over around the chest and the other around her waist protecting her lower body parts.



John and Anne tandeming expertly through the Yellowstone River in

her lower body parts.

Wyoming

John's determination is evident in his pursuit of Anne Stafford. It was obvious to anyone who was around John when Anne was on the trip, that John was captivated by Anne.



Bill presents the Oldens with a plaque from the HCC

Donna & I (mostly Donna) advised John that he had no chances and needed to walk around that rapid. But, like the advice we gave him in his early paddling days, he was determined, kept trying (and flipping) and John mastered that challenge, captivated her, and they were married in 2001. Donna and I played and sang at their wedding (our atonement for our bad advice). John's determination to master a river

or any task has also influenced Anne. She no longer cautiously walks around a rapid; she now takes on Class IV rapids and succeeds with John standing on the sideline cheering her on. Of course, she most prefers tandeming with John, relying on his water skills. These two certainly complement each other.

We will miss them as they pursue adventures in Idaho. As a token of our appreciation of them and their contribution to HCC, John and Anne were awarded with a trophy by Commodore Bill Grimes.

John and Cindy Bartos hosted a gathering of old HCC members to say goodbye to John and Anne. Ken Anderson gave them a canoeing book for waters in Idaho which all the guests signed.



A small number of the many people who came to the Bartos' house with wish John and Anne farewell.

Goodbye, John and Anne. You will be missed but look forward to your visits as I hope you will look forward to OUR visits to your home in Boise.

Upcoming River Trips

HCC Trips:

Date: Friday, April 10, 2009
Title: Easter in Arkansas
Inclusive Dates: 4/10 = 12
Description: We are planning to paddle Class II - III water in Western Arkansas.
Rain dependant
Possible runs include:
Upper Cossatot River-246 to Ed Banks
Lower Cossatot-Ed Banks to Highway 4
Little Missouri-Albert Pike Rec Area to Highway 84.

camping in primitive area, dining out each night
carpooling is encouraged
whitewater experience necessary
rescue skills probably needed
Skill Level: **Intermediate:** Knowledge of basic whitewater safety, self-rescue and rescue such as retrieving a pinned boat. Able to capture small eddies, run Class 2 rapids confidently, but challenged by Class 3 rapids such as Cottonseed on the San Marcos at say 300-400 cfs.
Contact: Contact Christy Long by phone 281-415-8087, or by email clong1956@sbcglobal.net.

###

Date: Saturday, April 11, 2009
Title: Spring Creek Paddle: ACA Sanctioned trip
Inclusive Dates: Saturday April 11
Description: Join us for a half day or so paddle on Spring Creek near Spring, TX. Harris County has wisely invested access to the Spring Creek Greenway of forested hills clear water, and gorgeous sandy creek beds.

This venue is one of Harris County's gems.

Details dependant on waterflow at the time.

Skill Level: **Beginner:** Familiarity with basic strokes and can make the boat go straight on flat water typically experienced on Armand Bayou, can maneuver the boat on slowly moving water, is aware of basic river safety and can confidently avoid hazards and strainers frequently experienced on Texas' Colorado River or the Buffalo Bayou at a modest flow rate.

Contact: Contact Ken McDowell by phone 713-432-1896, or by email komcdowell@earthlink.net.

###

Date: Sunday, April 12, 2009
Title: Hidalgo Falls Festival
Inclusive Dates: 3/21-22
Description: The eighth annual Hidalgo Falls River Festival will be held on Saturday-Sunday, March 21- 22, 2009 at the TRPA

Hidalgo Falls property on the Brazos River near Navasota. The festival, which is the year's major fund-raising event to maintain paddlers' access to the rapid, attracted more than 200 paddlers and spectators last year. Dealer reps and outfitters will have boats and gear available for demos on moving water, and (based on past years) many boaters will come as early as Friday to enjoy the nice play levels on the river and to camp in the upstream and downstream campgrounds.

Events will include a 28-mile downriver race from Koppe Bridge Landing south of College Station to Hidalgo on Saturday morning, a

Skill Level: **Blank:** Select this level if this portion is not to appear in the listing.

Contact: Contact John Ohrt 713 by phone 713 877 1504, or by email jcohart@gmail.com.

###

Date: Thursday, April 16, 2009

Title: Help with Buffalo Bayou Canoe Trail

Inclusive Dates: 4/16

Description: On this Thursday in April, there will be a dedication of the new Buffalo Bayou Canoe Trail with Houston news and political connections. They would like to have some paddlers on the bayou for the dedication.

If you can maybe do this, let me know. We'll work out the details later. Contact Bob Arthur as well at rwarthur@oplink.net

Skill Level: **select_skill_level:** undefined

Contact: Contact Donna Grimes by phone 713 728 1645, or by email donna.grimes@mindspring.com.

###

Date: Saturday, April 18, 2009

Title: Buffalo Bayou Trails Grand Opening

Inclusive Dates: 4/16

Description: With the Grand Opening of the Canoe Trails, HCC will be involved in taking people down the bayou. Please help out by being there to see the new trails, to work the HCC booth, and to guide

Skill Level: **Neophyte:** Never paddled before.

Contact: Contact Donna Grimes by phone 713 728 1645, or by email donna.grimes@mindspring.com.

###

Date: Saturday, April 18, 2009

Title: Austin Canoe & Kayak Demo Days

Inclusive Dates: Two days 4/18-4/19

Description: Calling all kayakers! The ACK Demo Days are back and bigger than ever in our 4th year. The addition of the Houston demo is the highlight for us as I'm sure it is exciting for paddlers of Houston.

The weekend extravaganzas put on by Austin Canoe & Kayak is the place to

be if you are looking for the chance to test paddle over 50 different

models of kayaks. Save up to 30
Time: Saturday 11am to 4pm Sunday 12pm to 4pm
Location: Independence Park - Missouri City

Skill Level: **Blank:** Blank

Contact: Contact Amy Leggett by phone 512 687 3055, or by email
amy@austinkayak.com.

###

Date: Saturday, April 25, 2009

Title: Buddy Paddle

Inclusive Dates: 4/25 - 26

Description: Have you ever wanted to improve your paddling skills by sharing ideas with someone with more experience? Well, this is the trip for you. We'll

Contact: Contact Donna Grimes or John Ohrt by phone 713 728 1645, or by email donna.grimes@mindspring.com.

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Other Club Trips:

Great Unknown

Great Unknown of the Rio Grande, Texas Feb 23 - Feb 28, 2009

by

Linda Gorski and Louis F. Aulbach

Louis Aulbach led a group of hearty paddlers on this exquisite section of the Rio Grande River putting in on Monday, February 23 and taking off on Saturday, February 28. Participants included John Rich, Dana Enos, Ken Anderson, Steve Beach, Donna Grimes, Skip Johnson, Terry and Kathleen Burgess from Comstock, Chuck Leinweber from Harper and Linda Gorski.

The Great Unknown, called the Despoblado (unpopulated place) by early explorers, is a remote portion of the river that runs approximately 76 miles from Santa Elena Canyon to Rio Grande Village. Mike Long at Desert Sports ran the shuttle. The price was \$242 to pick up the drivers at Rio Grande Village and return them to the put in at Blue Creek. The prices are subject to change.

In the past, the put in for this section of the Rio Grande was at the Santa Elena access near Terlingua Creek. However, the floods in September and October of 2008 rearranged the gravel bar at the put in and made it especially difficult for a



Boats lined up at the very large gravel bar at the Blue Creek Put in

Photo by Linda Gorski

large group. . Mike Long suggested we put in at the Blue Creek Access, a recently reopened put in off Ross Maxwell Drive between Castolon and the Santa Elena Access. This turned out to be an excellent put in with good parking off the main road, a ramp to gravel bar (you could not drive down to the gravel bar as the access was too sandy) and a good large gravel bar for loading boats. Using this put in cut approximately five river miles off first day which is a plus since camping is prohibited between Santa Elena and Castolon

Even though water was low, we averaged 2 ½ miles per hour until last day, but that's another story. The river was running 145 cfs on the Presidio gauge, the only reliable gauge since floods in the fall. The first day is an abbreviated paddle because the shuttle requires three hours, however, we were able to make the first night's camp at mile 14 ½. A small gravel beach provided a landing for our canoes while a grassy terrace was a nice place for our tents. Little did we realize that this would be the best campsite of the trip.

On the second day, we pulled in at Black Dike, a geologic feature that protrudes into the river. The park has a backcountry campsite there. An archeological survey team from Sul Ross University was camped at Black Dike to continue a large scale survey of that area of the Big Bend. We also noted that the large stone circle which archeologists have identified as a winnowing circle had been washed out by the flooding of the previous months.



The group returning from a hike to the bluff above Black Dike. Note the black rock which gives the



Dana Enos, Louis Aulbach, Linda Gorski and John Rich sample some of Louis's great cooking after a hard day's paddle.

Photo by Chuck Leinweber

Our second day on the river was a long day of about 17 miles. Late in the day, after searching for a suitable site for a long time, we found a large gravel bar. The river had cut across a bend and cleared all of the brush from the bar opposite the park's Loop Camp. It was nearing sundown, so we fixed dinner quickly in the fading daylight. All rested well that night.

feature its name.

Photo by Louis Aulbach

Since we had made so much mileage the previous day, we took the opportunity to have a short paddle on the third day. That was fortunate because the temperature that day had rapidly climbed to over 90 degrees by noon. Shortly after lunch, we found a small gravel bar in the bend of the river on which to make camp. There was a secondary river terrace that had some small patches of grass, but a few of us chose to place our tents in sandy places on the gravel bar. The first thing to go up, however, was a tarp. The sun was brutal and the only way to get shade was to erect some man made shelter.



Louis puts up a tarp on a very hot day

Photo by Linda Gorski

Due to the flood waters in late 2008, most of the gravel bars have been completely scoured of cane, trees and tamarisk revealing plenty of good places to camp. The flood caused a change in the channel at the point of the Paseo de Chisos near Woodson's. The main channel was cut off so that the older channel dried out and most of the water went off to the left. Two of our paddlers took the old channel and had to drag their boats several hundred yards before returning to the main channel.

In addition to six days of great paddling, we were able to take some interesting hikes. The group tried to get out at Johnson's Ranch but brush was too thick - the floods did not wash brush from that area. The Pettit's site can be accessed from the rock ledge below a large bluff just past Woodson's. At this site there are ruins of a homesite including a large rock house on the bluff and two other smaller houses on the flood plain. Previously there were several old rusted cars but now there is only one at the site.



Donna Grimes inspects the old rusted car at the Pettits site.

Photo by Chuck Leinweber

Paddling through Mariscal Canyon is probably the highlight of the Great Unknown. It is a stupendously beautiful canyon with amazing

geological features. The most difficult rapid on this section of the river, the Tight Squeeze in Mariscal Canyon, was a real challenge at this level. The water, although low, created a very strong pushing action over a large boulder ahead of the slot to the right and into the

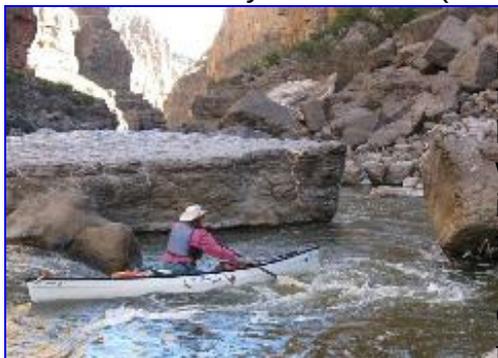


undercut boulders on river right. Except for Donna and Louis who ran it, most of the paddlers had to be shoved out of the eddy above the slot and paddle really hard to get their boats through the slot. In several instances the force of the water just shoved the paddlers back into the eddy. A few of us (including



Paddlers enter Mariscal Canyon.

Photo by Chuck Leinweber



Linda) received several shoves before making it through the slot. This was extraordinary because normally there is enough flow that the water flows right through the Tight Squeeze and it's simply a matter of lining up and going through.

Donna Grimes did a great job paddling through the Tight Squeeze

Photo by Linda Gorski

Our fourth camp was at the cross canyons in the middle of Mariscal Canyon. The site is only a mile or so down from the Tight Squeeze and it was a welcome treat to make another early camp. We scattered our tents on the large area on the Texas shore (see campsite at bottom left of photo). Some of us went high on the grassy slopes while others found small patches of sand among the gravel and ledges closer to the water. The kitchens were set up on the gravel near the boats. The shade from the canyon walls was a welcome relief from the glaring sun which again drove the temperatures on this "winter" day into the 90's.



Our campsite in Marsical Canyon, one of the most beautiful canyons on the Rio Grande.

Photo by Chuck Leinweber

The fifth day was again a pleasant day of paddling. The sun was very bright and we ate lunch below the Solis Ranch on a sand bar in the slight shade offered by the spindliest bush imaginable.



Steve Beach and John Rich enjoy lunch in a tiny bit of shade

Photo by Chuck Leinweber

San Vicente Canyon was short, but beautiful. As we exited the canyon and passed the site of Compton's where a small rapid made things exciting (though not dangerous), the search for a final night's camp began. By this time, the scoured beaches ceased to exist and we soon found ourselves floating close to the San Vicente Crossing where camping is prohibited. At the last moment, a slim, but long sand bar along the brush on the Texas side appeared in a slight curve in the river. This would be the place for our last night on the Rio Grande.

By early morning, the wind could be felt whipping our tents. For the previous five days, the weather, although a bit warm at times, had been relatively calm and nearly ideal. This last morning, things changed. After a hurried breakfast, everyone was eager to pack up and get under way before the deteriorating weather



conditions. Skip and Chuck set out about 7:30 am since they wanted to get an early start



Terry and Kathleen Burgess battle 60 mph winds and choppy water.

Photo by Chuck Leinweber

home. Terry and Kathleen pushed off shortly

thereafter in hopes of paddling their kayaks out of the winds that were increasing. The rest of us set out from camp at 8:30 in the full fury of high winds and blowing sand. The wind was blowing directly into our faces, but with only nine miles remaining, we pressed ahead.

Nine hours later, the main party began to trickle into Rio Grande Village. By 5:00 pm, all of the Great Unknown paddlers had reached the destination. All were weather beaten, sand blasted and wind blown. The persistent wind of 40 to 60 miles per hour (with some gusts reported at the ranger station near 100) made the last day on the river less than leisurely.

But, each paddler showed a determination and a perseverance during this tough part of wilderness paddling that becomes the tales of legend. We did it! But we hope never again in those conditions!

But, then, who knows what the Wild and Scenic River has in store for you?!



Chuck Leinweber, Dana Enos, Louis Aulbach, John Rich and Skip Johnson enjoy a bit of camp camaraderie on our last river night.

Photo by Linda Gorski



Sunset over our last campsite with Skip and Chuck's homemade boats in the foreground and the beautiful Sierra del Carmen in the background.

Photo by Linda Gorski

Buffalo Bayou
Houston, Texas March 16, 2009
by
John Rich

On Monday, March 16th, Houston Canoe Club paddlers were rallied together by Donna Grimes for a photo opportunity in front of the TV camera, at Buffalo Bayou in Houston. The meeting place was Briar Bend Park, a small neighborhood park near the vicinity of Voss and Woodway.

The media occasion was a KPRC Channel 2 news story about Buffalo Bayou and the associated canoe trail, which when completed, will be the longest canoe trail in Texas, running 26 miles from Highway 6 to downtown Houston. First up for an interview in front of the TV camera with reporter Jennifer Reyna was Bruce Heiberg, of the Buffalo Bayou Preservation Association, followed by HCC's own Bob Arthur.



Bob Arthur talks on camera

Photo by Harmon Everett



The HCC paddlers pose for a group photo. From left to right: Ken Anderson, Louis Aulbach, Fraser Baker, Linda Gorski, Bill Grimes, Donna Grimes, Harmon Everett, Tom Loesch, Cliff Peery, Marilyn Peery, John Rich and Jacqueline Webster.

Group photo

Photo by Donna Grimes

Tom Loesch is smiling and ready to go, while Cliff looks serious with his face mask.



Cliff Peery



Tom Loesch

Next up was the task of carrying the canoes



down the zig-zag steps of the steep slope to the water's edge. Here, Donna and Marilyn muscle their tandem boat down the stairs, while Cliff brings up the rear.



With boats at the waterline, everyone stepped aboard, pushed off, and then paddled upstream to a hiding spot around the bend. When the TV camera was ready, a holler was made, and we emerged from hiding and paraded in a long line for the camera. John Rich's boat also featured TV news reporter Jennifer Reyna. We pulled back up to the launch point, Jennifer stepped out of the boat and did a "stand up" - a short speech for the camera, with HCC paddlers clustered together

John paddles with reporter Jennifer in the background.

Photo by Linda Gorski



HCC paddlers in background

Photo by Linda Gorski

After the videoing was complete, the Houston Canoe Club members pushed off again and headed downstream for some quiet time alone.

The Channel 2 TV video segment can be viewed online here:

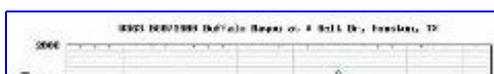
"Buffalo Bayou Offers Its Own Beauty"

<http://www.click2houston.com/video/18952915/index.html>

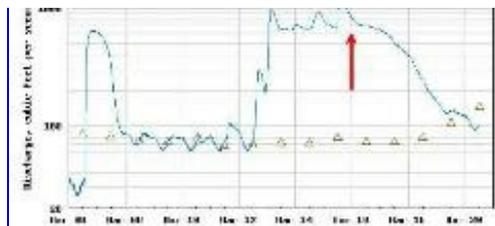


Click this image for a map of the section of Buffalo Bayou that was paddled, as highlighted in blue.

The current was strong due to recent rains and pushed us along at a nice rate, without having



to work hard to paddle. There were almost no obstacles along the way, and even a few fun riffles. Someone has done a tremendous job of clearing the way by chain-sawing the trees that have fallen across the bayou. The next two images are water flow rate and water depth charts, for reference to conditions:



Stream flow rate



Water depth

We paddled about 4½ miles down Buffalo Bayou amongst large beautiful homes, and it was very quiet except for when we passed under the few bridges, where traffic could be heard. There were a few ducks and herons to be seen, and even a snake.



Cliff, Ken & Harmon on the bayou

Photo by Donna Grimes



Jacqueline & John come around a bend

Photo by Donna Grimes

Some sections of the bayou looked like wilderness:



Cliff paddles a "wild" section

Photo by Donna Grimes



While other sections provided reminders that you're in the heart of a large city, and the entertainment of marveling at the large, luxurious homes and manicured lawns.

Large, luxurious homes

About two hours after we started, we arrived at the take-out point at the Woodway bridge, near the 610 West Loop. You had your choice of climbing over large chunks of concrete underneath the bridge, or a bank beside the bridge that was half-sand and half-mud. Most chose the sand-mud. The footing there was okay though, and no one slipped and took a mud bath. In this photo, John steadies the boat while Ken gingerly steps ashore. Our exit was watched with curiosity by a one-legged homeless man, who seems to live under the bridge like a troll.



Slippery footing

Photo by Donna Grimes



Harmon and Ken carry a boat up the hill from the takeout:

Carrying boats up the hill

With the boats at the top of the hill, Marilyn stayed behind to stand guard over them, so that Donna, in her pre-positioned truck, could ferry everyone back to the starting point to pick up their vehicles. Then all we had to do was drive back to the take-out point, load up and go home with a smile on our faces.

It was a very pleasant few hours on the water, with great company, and it sure beat the heck out of working on Monday. I highly recommend it whenever possible.



Boats at top of hill



Thanks to Donna Grimes for organizing the paddlers for this get-together.

Donna

Photo by Harmon Everett

On April 16th at 10:30, again at Briar Bend Park, the official ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held for the canoe trail. Attending will be the Bayou Preservation Association, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Houston Mayor Bill White, Houston Parks & Recreation Department, and other assorted dignitaries. How about you?

The End

Clean It Like You Mean It- Buffalo Bayou - Hwy 6 to Memorial Mews

**Buffalo Bayou from Hwy 6 to Memorial Mews 1.6 miles Saturday, March 28, 2009
8:30 till 11:30 am**

**by
Christy Long**

Buffalo Bayou was about 6', running 400 cfs on the 08074000 USGS gage.

I quote Joline of the Saturday paddlers "it was another terrible Texas winter day". The day started out sunny and in the low 40s and ended up sunny and in the high 60s. It was a great day for doing a good deed, socializing with friends, and paddling down the river.

Donna Grimes organized the group of nine paddlers to participate in the 16th Annual event of the Trash Bash. We were doing our part to cleanup water ways all across the Houston and Galveston area. We came armed with hoes, rakes, and gigs. The Trash Bash organizers provided gloves, drinking water, and trash bags.

With only two and a half hours to devote to picking up trash we could not spend much time in any one spot. But still we picked up enough trash to fill twelve garbage bags. This year I did not see one snake. This surprised me as last year we spotted at least five and nearly paddled over one while performing an eddy turn. Maybe Donna and Jacquelyn saw a few, as they were the lead boat most of the time. Although we saw no snakes I did notice poison ivy along the banks growing strong. We had to portage around a tree that was down across the bayou. The river was low but the flow still posed a danger if you tried to gather trash upstream of strainer. We maneuvered our way down stream eddy hopping and ferrying to pick up as much of the Styrofoam and plastic as we could.



HCC Members Billy Welborn, Ken Anderson, Robert Langley, Donna Grimes, Linda Leatherwood, Paul Woodcock, Bill Grimes, Christy Long and Jacqueline Webster participated in this cleanup event on Buffalo Bayou.

We got off the river about 11:30 and since our take out was across the street from the lunch spot, we ate before we ran shuttle. For lunch we had hot dogs, chips, water, soft drinks, and cookies.

Another nice touch was the hand washing unit near the food table. The unit contained soap, water and towels.

After lunch we ran shuttle and talked about the day and upcoming paddling events; all in all another "terrible Texas winter day on the river".