

# PADDLING MISSOURI'S CURRENT RIVER

by Ray Van Dusen

On April 2, 2011,  
Canoe Colorado

did a trip down the Current River in the Ozark Mountains of south-central Missouri. It's a Class I river for the area that we paddled.

Three of us, Jerry Nyre, Eric Niles and I, put in at a low water bridge at Cedargrove and did our shuttle.

The river had a good flow and was wide enough that we had room to move around to miss the trees that were down and in the water. A lot of them point downstream so a paddler has to know how to move his boat sideways. A stern rudder, side draw, a low brace and even sometimes a bow rudder are all strokes that are needed on both sides, and a paddler has to be able to do them at once. The water was fairly clear and the bottom was mostly small rock nearly the whole trip; instead of sand bars along the river it was this same rock that had washed up in high water.

The Current is mostly spring fed, so we didn't have willows growing out in the water like we had last year on the Buffalo River. I've never seen such large springs as on this river; one had such force shooting from the side of the river it made waves up to two feet high like a fire hose spraying into the water.



We saw bald eagles, white tail deer, wild turkeys, more kingfishers than you can count, and a lot of turtles, two or three different kinds.

We had a bit of rain the first night and had a light rain most of the first day that stopped so we could put up our tents and fix supper. That night we had bats flying around and the frogs were so loud that they kept waking us up the whole night.



Limestone bluffs line much of the river

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We paddled around 100 miles and took out at Hawes or Gooseneck landing. We had a shuttle driver that took Jerry's truck home with him and then met us at the take out. We called him from US Highway 60 the night before we wanted to be picked up which really worked well—he was driving up as we carried the first load of gear to the boat ramp.

This is a nice river and I'm glad that we did it. It is a long drive but there's not a lot of traffic and it's on mostly good roads.



Jerry Nyre, of Canoe Colorado, paddling past the redbud trees which were in full bloom in April.



RMSKC member Eric Niles coming out of the cave at Welsh Spring, one of many in the limestone cliffs along the river.

In 1964, over 134 miles of the upper course of the Current River and its tributaries were federally protected as the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, the first national park in America to protect a river system.

Hardwood trees, rock ledges, caves, springs, gravel bars, and towering limestone bluffs line the banks of the river.



Photos by Jerry Nyre and Eric Niles



The author on the Current River