

PADDLING WITH HASK,

THE HOUSTON ASSOCIATION OF SEA KAYAKERS

By Joy Farquhar



TUESDAY, MARCH 12: RMSKC members Karen Amundsen, Marsha Dougherty, Sue Hughes, Jud Hurd, Dave Hustvedt and Joy Farquhar drove from our VRBO home in Houston to Lake Charlotte (Wallisville).

Five HASK members met us at Cedar Hill Park. This area is part of the US Army Corp of Engineers' Wallisville Lake Project, the largest cypress swamp along the Texas coast.

The kayaking was slow, yet fun, paddling Mac Bayou while listening to local stories, and the explanation of the hot water and sulphur pipes from a former oil and gas operation in the area.

After lunch we crossed Lake Charlotte in headwinds and small waves to Mud Lake. There we paddled a tight winding channel [photo on the next page] among the swamp cypress trees. We saw an owl, great blue heron and white ibis. Karen saw four roseate spoonbills. The return to Lake Charlotte in the late afternoon had higher winds and waves. The trip mileage was approximately 11 miles.





Following the leader into Mud Lake

After we got back to the put-in we were met by HASK member Chris Arcenaux, who cooked a crawdad feast for us at the park. These were raised in crawdad channels on special farms, collected live and brought to us in a huge mesh sack. They were cooked in large vats of boiling spiced water. Added to the pot were corn, potatoes, shallots and mushrooms. Dipped into Chris's special cajun sauce, we ate our fill; they were yummy!



Dave, with a crayfish



EDITOR'S NOTE: Crawdads, crawfish or crayfish? It doesn't matter, they are all the same crustacean. Which term is used depends on where you're from. Most live in freshwater but some can live in brackish or salt water. They all burrow.

Around 6:00 we left to caravan home behind Jud and Dave. We lost each other in traffic but we all arrived safely back to our rental house.



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13: It was 70° and raining! The prediction of foul weather and a no-paddle day was as forecast. Marsha and Karen went to the Houston Art Museum to see a special exhibit of Van Gogh. Jud drove the rest of us to see Pelican I island off the coast of Galveston. We saw large ships at this international port, large waves and light rain but no lightning. We spent the morning at the Naval Museum. A highlight was boarding the submarine USS Cavalla which sank the Japanese aircraft carrier Shokaku, involved in the attack on Pearl Harbor. We also toured USS Stewart destroyer escort, which sailed 30 missions across the Atlantic with a crew of more than 200. The museum made a bit of history come alive.

To finish the day we drove to downtown Galveston for food at Millers Seafood Restaurant. While waiting at this popular spot, we walked to the windy waterfront to look. and some waded in the water. It was worth the wait; we had delicious seafood and Shiner Bock beer.

On the way home people bought shrimp to cook for dinner; they were cheap and so fresh you could hardly smell them.



At the Galveston beach



ASK members Bruce, Grant and Kathleen led the Armand Bayou paddle. The "Be Gator Safe" sign was a first for the RMSKC paddlers.

THURSDAY, APRIL 14: We had a long drive with tollway stops and a meeting time of 9:30 at Armand Bayou, but we were early!

There were different trees, more deciduous ones, some leafing out, and white wild roses, and other blossoms which we tried to identify. We saw large hybrid ducks, black bellied whistlers, a small blue heron, kingfishers, cardinals, ibis, large and small egrets, large turtles and lots of alligators. We actually had two encounters from submerged gators but no mishaps. The fun but slow paddle back to our launch spot for lunch left us no time for another proposed two-hour paddle in the other direction. It was sunny enough and warm enough for no jackets and no rain, but we had a meeting with HASK in the evening, so we left at 2:30 and returned home.



Our evening drive to the Greek restaurant meeting place was a traffic jam nightmare. HASK was very gracious about our late arrival. We met their members, there were about 40 in attendance, and learned about their club and activities. They have paddles, parties and skill training sessions. Sue had a power point presentation about RMSKC. It was a big hit and a number of their members indicated an interest in coming to Colorado to join us, and especially for a possible Lake Powell house boat trip in 2020. It was an easy drive back home, thank goodness!

FRIDAY, MARCH 15: We got up early to arrive for our Buffalo Bayou paddle at 9:00. We were early again! We were met by HASK members, and Paul who left and joined us at the halfway point later. Briar Bend Park was our put-in; it was quite a challenging portage down the hill and into moving water.



Our lunch stop around noon on a sandbar was most welcome. We heard stories about Hurricane Harvey in 2017. We paddled 15 miles and stopped around 3:30 at our car shuttle downtown.

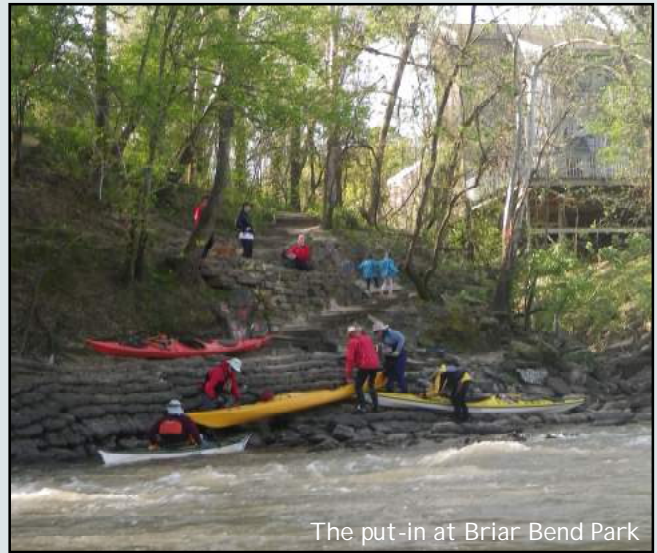
The ones who drove back to the put-in to get the cars followed much of the water route, with an excellent commentary about Houston, especially the effects of the flooding from Harvey, which had cut north and south Houston completely off from each other for weeks!

SATURDAY, MARCH 16: The group, minus Joy who went to Plano to visit friends, met more HASK members to paddle out across the Intracoastal Waterway. It was gray and windy. They ate lunch on an oyster shell beach, and decided not to go farther to reach a barrier island where they had planned to walk up and over to see the Gulf of Mexico.

The RMSKC paddlers were impressed with the level of safety-consciousness of the Houston paddlers; the person paddling sweep was tracking the slowest paddler so closely that at first she didn't even realize he was there. HASK was interested in the kayak camping we'd done, and wanted to know about packing for multi-day trips and the food we carry.

The weather could have been better, and it was the next week, but the Houston club could not have done more to provide us with a broad introduction to their paddling environment, and to show us a wonderful time.

People on the trip: Karen Amundson, Marsha Dougherty, Sue Hughes, Jud Hurd, Dave Hustvedt and the author of this report, Joy Farquhar.



It was a different scene totally: through the bayou, which was more like a river which runs right through Houston, with small whirling waters, trash, shoreline of huge expensive houses, golf courses and some ibis.

