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The MOUNTAIN PADDLER

ARTICLES OF INTEREST
FOR OUR PADDLING COMMUNITY

FOUNDED 1989
ACA PADDLE AMERICA CLUB
<http://www.RMSKC.org>

EDITOR'S NOTE by Sue Hughes

Here are pages of good articles about what Club members have been doing this year, and at the end of last season, too.

I realized as I formatted these trip reports that I hadn't been on very many of them. That caused me think about what I've been missing, which made me load up the boat and get back to the water with RMSKC friends. If you haven't been out much either I hope this issue does the same for you.

Keep in touch, send in pictures and articles, and paddle safely.

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SPRING DAY PADDLES

MARCH 10, 2012: DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME KICK-OFF AT MCINTOSH

A dozen Club members—Anne Fiore, Russ Hardy, Dave and Lou Ann Hustvedt, Andy McKenna, Clark Strickland, Jen and George Ottenhoff, Kristy and Rich Webber, Kate Wallace and Mark Willey—had a nice sunny Saturday morning paddle on Lake McIntosh in Longmont.



Dave, Lou Ann, Jud, George and Jen

MARCH 17, 2012: 11th ANNUAL MULTI-CLUB SOUTH PLATTE PADDLE

By Jud Hurd

The 2012 multi-club paddle down the South Platte was a great success. We had somewhere around 40 craft consisting of canoes, sea kayaks, blow up kayaks, folding kayaks and whitewater kayaks, and a variety of pets. George and Jen Ottenhoff, Dave and Lou Ann Hustvedt, Anne Fiore, Pam Noe, Eric Niles and Jud Hurd were there from the RMSKC.

People gathered at the Evans Riverside Park launch site. There is a short walk from the parking lot to the river's edge and we all helped carrying boats to the water. We then had a brief orientation from the

Poudre Paddler's president followed by the car shuttle to the Kersey Bridge or the Kuner Bridge, depending on how far you wanted to paddle.

Everybody launched and the flotilla was underway. It was a perfect day weather wise and the river flow was ideal, which translated to hitting the fewest sand bars and gravel bars in my memory. The paddle progressed as usual with everyone having a great time visiting and catching up on how their winter had gone. We managed the two diversion dams without any incidents and a good lunch was enjoyed by all at the second dam.

Dave, George and I took a detour and paddled up the Poudre River for about a third of a mile. We thought about padding back to Fort Collins, but



After the second portage

decided that it would be better to stay together and rejoin the group. I swear it felt like 3.5 miles when paddling against even a slow current. We caught up with the group at the first takeout at the Kersey Bridge.

I wanted to test my new waterproof camera and Chota boots so I let a log push me over. Good news, the camera truly is waterproof. Then at the Kuner takeout I wanted to test the theory that if you approach a branch and grab it the top of your body will stop but the river will continue to push your kayak downstream. I am happy to report the experiment was a success; that is exactly what happens. It also gave me a chance to do a second test on my camera and Chotas. They performed above expectations and the Chotas only filled about half-full of water. I am not planning any gear tests at next year's paddle.

GEORGE OTTENHOFF REPORTS: With the warm weather, there was an abundance of birds along the river: red wing blackbirds, kingfishers, hawks and a couple bald eagles.

JEN OTTENHOFF ADDED: This was a good group to paddle with. They had some great suggestions that really helped this beginner become more confident. The scenery was worth the bumps and portages.



Jen Ottenhoff in the gray *Capella* with George in the yellow *Kodiak*

APRIL 28, 2012: 4th SATURDAY "MUD HEN" PADDLE



Clark Strickland

For several years our 4th Saturday paddle on McIntosh has been scheduled the same weekend as the local Recreation Center's *Mud Hen* 5 km. race around the lake. It's always fun to watch the runners and it lets them see kayakers having fun, too. It would be good publicity for RMSKC if we brought our banner, which we should plan to do next year.

That depends, of course, on the weather: Four years ago the trip leader didn't show because it was so cold; we paddled in Oregon-like mist the next year; we were snowed out in 2011; and the wind and waves made some of us

wonder about this year. Jud used his anemometer to measure the wind at 12 to 18 mph; the waves were rolling across almost two feet tall and close together. Ooh-la-la, that meant "intermediate paddler conditions" which would have been good practice if the water hadn't been so cold. Luckily the wind died down and off we went on schedule. [Check this clever website about what winds mean for kayakers: <http://www.sksa-ltd.com/resource/Beaf1.pdf>]

Anne Fiore, Russ Hardy, Sue Hughes, Dave and Lou Ann Hustvedt, Clark Strickland and Stan White did a leisurely circle and then a faster down-and-back for a good three hours of camaraderie and exercise. After some cross-town vehicle and boat shuffling, new member Michael Wyn decided to try beginning kayaking on a less blustery day.



Michael Wyn

LAKE PUEBLO OVERNIGHT

MARCH 24, 2012

By Jud Hurd

Well, it was spring which meant it was time for what is becoming another traditional spring paddle besides the Multi-Club's outing on the

South Platte. That is if you consider two years in a row as establishing a tradition. Brian Hunter and I hooked up Brian's trailer and headed south for Lake Pueblo. This year we were joined by Clark Strickland for the day paddle, and Brian's longtime friend and co-worker, Bruce Paige, for the camping. I met Brian and Bruce at Brian's house and we drove down on Friday. The weather was perfect this year and you all missed out on a great weekend and a great paddle.

The drive down was pretty straight forward. We stopped in Monument for lunch and then on to Lake Pueblo to find a couple of campsites. Last year we camped on the south side at Arkansas Point but that was closed, so we elected (which means we had no option) to camp on the north shore. North Plains campground is the largest on Lake Pueblo but they had only a couple of the smaller loops open this time of year and all those were full or reserved. Juniper Breaks on the north shore was completely open and had lots of campsites. But it doesn't have water and electric hookup which was no problem for us since we were in trailers. We found two beautiful sites with great views of the lake on the cliffs above the lake. We got the trailers set up but it was a little too late to do any paddling so it was time to just relax and enjoy life.



Lake Pueblo from Juniper Breaks campground

Brian cooked a great dinner of shrimp, salmon and broccoli with a little wine to top it off. Laura had made us a Braeburn apple pie which was a perfect ending to a great meal. Brian and Bruce watched the fights in Bruce's trailer. Bruce has a nice satellite dish setup which lets him get his Direct TV service at the campground. I am not a fight fan so I enjoyed watching a movie in Brian's trailer.

Saturday we woke up to sunshine and a clear blue sky with no clouds. It was a cool morning with a gentle breeze blowing. After breakfast Brian and I headed to the North Shore Marina to meet Clark who was driving down for the day paddle. Bruce stayed in camp to work on some modifications to his new camper trailer. Last fall Annette and I launched from the North Shore Marina and the water was low enough that we could park on the sand next to the boat ramp. This year the water was so high that there was just enough room next to the ramp to carry our boats down.



Launch site, Lake Pueblo, 2012

Being able to launch next to the ramp is great since you are in easy walking distance to your car in the parking lot, you have a nice sandy beach to prep and launch, and you are out of the way of launching boats. You are also at the marina so you can take that last potty break before getting into the boat and buy that last minute item you forgot, which was water for me since I forgot my Camelback.

We paddled west along the north shore enjoying beautiful sights and good companionship. The conditions couldn't have been better: no clouds, lots of sunshine, just a slight breeze, and a full lake. But the water temperature was about 40 degrees so we all had on our dry suits. We saw a lot of other paddlers heading out without any cold water gear. We could only hope that they don't tip over because 40° water is very cold and it wouldn't take long for a problem to develop. There were a lot of people on shore fishing and enjoying the lake but we didn't see a lot of boats. Our thinking is that the water was so cold that the fishing hadn't really turned on yet.

One of the reasons I like to paddle Lake Pueblo is the water—it is very clear and you can see deep into the water. Today was no exception and I enjoyed watching the lake bottom glide silently beneath my hull as we leisurely made our way along the shore. We poked our nose into a large cove and stopped for a rest break. Then we continued west crossing the lake a couple of times as it narrows down on the west end. We picked out a nice landing and enjoyed a lakeside lunch while sitting on large driftwood trees.

After lunch it was time to head back and we pretty much just traced our course back. We passed some tall poles that were erected on the northwest shore for birds to nest, and we enjoyed watching a number of osprey on their nests. None of us turned on a GPS for this trip so we aren't sure how far we went. Clark did wonder at one time if the lake had been stretched out since we left as it seemed such a long way back. We got to our put-in and ended a wonderful day on the water. It was a perfect first paddle of the season to get us back into the saddle after a long winter's layoff. I want to compliment this group for doing a great job of staying together on the paddle. Clark and Brian said it was because there were only three of us but I prefer to attribute it to outstanding leadership by the trip leader.



Clark Strickland and Brian Hunter

After getting all our gear loaded we headed back to camp. Clark was able to stay and have dinner with us and he brought the beer. I was really glad he did as you know how good that first drink of a cold beer tastes after a long day on the water. Bruce joined us for some of Brian's appetizers of cheese and crackers. I also had crackers with cream cheese covered by a really nice roasted pineapple and haba ero dip. For dinner Brian cooked up bratwursts and I made a large skillet of German potato salad. We enjoyed the food while reflecting on the day and looking forward to the rest of the summer. Clark had to get back home and Brian, Bruce and I watched some TV at Bruce's.

Sunday morning we didn't have time to paddle as I needed to get back to Fort Collins. But we did have time to take Brian to the archery range below the dam and we shot for about a half hour. That was a nice way to finish off the trip. I hope to make a fall trip back to Lake Pueblo so be looking for the announcement and join me for another great paddle.

BRIAN'S NOTES: Along with the shrimp, salmon and broccoli we also had asparagus and baked potato. We could do without power because we had a generator. Clark is a great guy to paddle with. The trip leader even arranged to have properly spaced out-houses on the day paddle.

CLARK'S NOTES: Lots of fishermen, but no fish that we saw. Hot on land but pleasant on the water, including in our dry-suits.

JACKSON LAKE DAY TRIP

By Jud Hurd

Gary Cage, Anne Fiore, George Ottenhoff, Mark Scott, Marsha Dougherty, Brian Hunter and I got together for a day paddle on Jackson Lake just northwest of Fort Morgan.

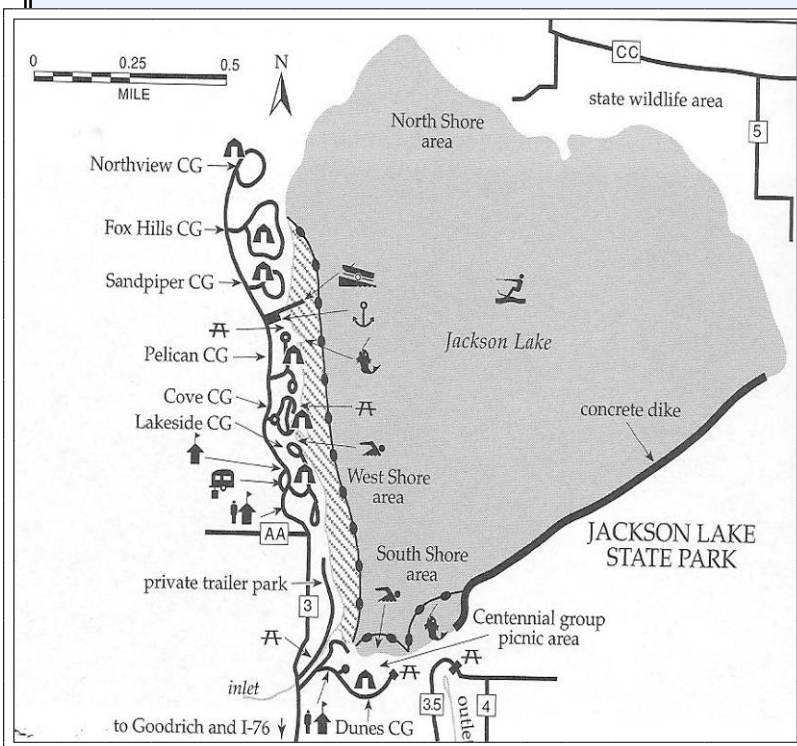
I woke up to a beautiful day with clear skies and the sun shining. As I loaded up my kayak and gear I was looking forward to a great day on the water. My spirits were further lifted as I drove through Greeley and got to stop at Red's Dogs and Donuts and buy some Spudnuts to eat on the drive out. For those who don't know me, my family ran a Spudnut shop in Stillwater, Oklahoma, for 22 years. I worked in the shop and grew up eating those special donuts made with potato-based flour, so that takes me back to my childhood. They taste as good today as they did 22 years ago. [Rekindle your memories or tease your taste buds at: <http://www.reddogsanddonuts.com>]

The drive to Jackson Lake was very pleasant but the further east I traveled the more I noticed the winds picking up. As I got to the lake I could see we had a fairly strong, cold wind blowing out of the west and we had a good set of whitecaps whipping up. I was starting to wonder if we were going to be able to do the paddle. Our launch site was about half-way up the west shore at the marina boat ramp. Anne and Gary arrived shortly after I did and we assessed the situation. Since the wind was out of the west, the west shore looked much calmer so we decided we could paddle north in the protection of the west shore. If we decided it was too strong we could come back. The fact that the forecast was for the winds to die down during the day (before picking up again in the evening) affected Anne's assessment of the situation. Also, not a cloud in the sky was a factor.

As the others arrived we all agreed this was a reasonable plan to follow. Always looking for a silver lining to every cloud I decided this would be a good foul weather practice day.

I thought to myself, "Suppose you are on Glacier Bay with Dave, Lou Ann and Al two days out from the put-in and you wake up to these conditions? You won't have the luxury of deciding to bag it and go home, so you had better get used to dealing with these conditions and make the most of it."

So, with that attitude we all began to get ready. As we were putting on our gear I noticed the wind had

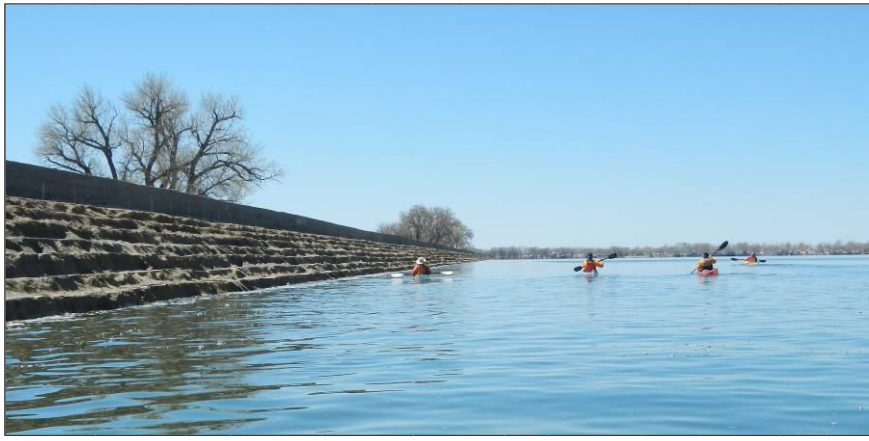


calmed down a bit. By the time we launched the wind had calmed down even more and there weren't as many white-caps. As we paddled north along the west shore the wind died down to a perfect gentle breeze and it turned into a picture-perfect day for paddling.



Glassy smooth water on Lake Jackson

We enjoyed a nice paddle around the lake sighting a number of owls and hawks, and a few jumping carp. We stopped after about an hour for a short break. As we continued around we soon came to the dam and had to make a decision as to which end of the dam we wanted to stop for lunch. The group felt we could paddle the dam in about 30 minutes so we elected to continue. It turned out it was a little over two miles long.



The dam was poured in what looked like three different designs. The first section was a large slope of concrete and we could see where large surface sections had broken out. Those were patched in a variety of ways and a lot of it looked like someone had just poured more dark concrete on the broken areas and spread it around, like chocolate frosting spread on a large cake.

The next section was large concrete steps and looked a little like the beginning of a pyramid. The last section at the end of the dam had a squared off top and a couple of feet below the top was a nice rounded slope down to the water. Years ago I brought my kids here for camping and boating. I remembered sitting on this part of the dam and my youngest son Jake caught his first trout.

Anyway, forty-five minutes later we finally get to the end of the dam and pull onto the swim beach for a nice lunch break. The lake was so full that the swim beach was almost totally under water and it was lined with tumble weeds that had blown across the lake. But we had benches to sit on and a nice outhouse to use. Our final leg of the paddle was along the south end of the west shore and along a small community of houses, trailers and campers. I don't think it is a formal town but it had a real eclectic look to it—you could see a trailer next to a nice cottage or house



next to a camper on blocks. All the homes along the shore had ramps and facilities for enjoying the lake including a swing rope hanging from a tree. That would have been a lot of fun to play on if the water hadn't been so cold. We paddled along the houses waving at people and finally made it back to our put-in. Brian's GPS showed we did a little over eight miles and I think everybody had a good time.

It was good to see some of the members after a long winter's hiatus and it was nice to paddle with Mark and get to know him a little. I want to commend this group for doing a good job of staying together on this paddle. I like to think it was due to outstanding leadership again but Brian hollering at the lead paddlers to slow down probably helped a little also. After the paddle Marsha commented that this was her first paddle of the year and she thoroughly enjoyed it. This might be another keeper to do again next year, perhaps a little later in the year when the water is warmer.

JOHN MARTIN RESERVOIR SCOUTING TRIP

MAY 4-6, 2012

By Jud Hurd



Jud exploring the north shore of John Martin Reservoir



John Martin Reservoir is in southeast Colorado just off Highway 50 between La Junta and Lamar; it is fed by the Arkansas River. Annette Mascia and her friend Bill, Marsha Dougherty and her friend Bob, Dick Dieckman and I got together for a warm weekend of paddling, camping, and visiting.

I drove down Thursday afternoon and arrived at Hasty Campground to a really strong south wind that was gusting to 20 mph. Hasty Campground is next to Lake Hasty which is a small lake just below the John Martin dam. It has great facilities and a lot of shade trees which felt really good during the heat of the day. After setting up my tent I discovered that Annette and Bill had arrived earlier and were already settled in. Annette and I drove down to the lake to find the launch ramp and met a couple of Division of Wildlife employees who told us the water temperature was 69 degrees. That was lot warmer than we had been on so far this year and we decided cold water gear would not be needed. They also mentioned the water was being drawn down and sent to Kansas.

After breakfast Friday morning Annette and I had a quick 7.3 mile exploratory paddle up the north shore. The wind had died down during the night and we had a great day on the water. Our launch was on the east end of the lake close to the dam and as we paddled west the water warmed up quite a bit and the lake got shallow.

We then returned to camp for a bite of lunch, after which she and Bill went off to find petroglyphs in the area. I took a drive into Lamar just to look around. Two bank signs said it was 96 degrees—different than the mid-70s I was used to but I was comfortable in the shade



provided by the trees at the campground. Later on in the afternoon Dick arrived and shared my campsite. We spent the rest of the afternoon just visiting and having dinner. Marsha and Bob didn't come in until after dark, and Dick and I helped them set up their tent.

Saturday morning we awoke to a beautiful day with just a gentle breeze out of the west to keep the air moving. As mentioned, Hasty Campground has a lot of trees which means a lot of birds. Now the birds are really nice throughout the day but not so nice at 4:00 in the morning when they all seem to come alive in song. And of course, your gear may get nailed a few times by dive bombing birds.



Lake Hasty moonrise

photo by Annette Mascia

After breakfast we launched around 10:00 AM, as scheduled. We headed east to cross along the dam, which is 118 feet tall and 2.6 miles long, and then we turned west and paddled along the south shore. There were a lot of people fishing from the bank and boats, mostly fishing for wipers, a cross between white bass and stripers.

John Martin is a large lake at 17,500 acres but it isn't very deep with a maximum depth of only 60 feet. It is like Pueblo Lake since it runs east and west but it doesn't have the nice coves to explore that Pueblo has. The lake map shows just one on the south side about half way down the lake and that was our goal for the day. We stopped just short of that cove for a relaxing lunch under some shade trees which was a relief because the temperatures were in the mid-90s again.

After lunch we continued to the cove only to find that it was dried up and we could not get into it. In fact, the lake ended on the west end at the cove so the 17,500 acres was pretty much cut in half. As we paddled north to get back to the north shore I was poling as much as I was paddling. We had a nice trip back and arrived at our launch site around 3:30. Marsha's GPS showed we did eleven miles and I think most everybody had a good day and was happy to get back to camp for a rest. I know I was.

Since Annette and Bill live in Colorado Springs, Bill had packed up their camp while we were paddling and they headed home instead of spending the night. The rest of us stayed and had a nice visit after dinner. Another front blew in during the night and blew down my tarp. I had to get up about 12:30 AM and put it away; the next morning I found that the wind had snapped one of the tarp poles in half at a joint. After breakfast everybody just packed up and headed home.



Annette in front of the dam

This was a nice trip but it was disappointing that the water was so low. I had been told by the park rangers that Memorial Day to the 4th of July was the best time to paddle. I know we were there a little early so it is possible that the lake might have filled some more with more run off, but that seems doubtful since they were already drawing it down. Also, the weather might have been hotter and the mid-90s is plenty hot for me. I had a great time with the other people but I am not sure I am ready to rush back to this lake.



VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK AND RAINY LAKE... THE OTHER BOUNDARY WATERS

By Marlene Pakish



Julie and I feel very lucky to be able to have some great paddling companions, and for this trip we teamed up with Dick Dieckman, Larry Kline and George Ottenhoff. We were heading to northern Minnesota on September 8, 2011, for a nine day trip on the waterway between Minnesota and Canada. When you tell people that you're paddling in northern Minnesota they automatically say, "Oh, the Boundary Waters." And we reply, "No, Rainy Lake in Voyageurs National Park. The Boundary Waters are southeast of where we are going."

We chose to go in September for a number of reasons. One, the bugs would not be as bad; two, the lake would not be as crowded with locals or tourists; and three, that time fit best with everyone's schedule. It was the perfect way to end the season and we were hoping for mild temperatures except...it is northern Minnesota.

After a couple of pre-trip meetings to chart our course, figure out paddling mileage per day, what islands we would camp at, the importance of paddling together, how to communicate on the water and who's cooking when, we counted down the days until departure. Since our Yellowstone trip, we sound like a broken record, "We have to stay together," which was especially true since Rainy Lake has a plethora of islands and navigating through them can be challenging. Julie and I purchased VHF radios for extra assurance since we knew Larry also carried one. I had a GPS which had software for waterways on it and Larry had his with waypoints charted from his last trip to this area.

I won't bore you with our drive to Rainy Lake unless you really have a curiosity about what it's like driving through Nebraska and Iowa; the key words in this sentence are "bore you"...enough said. We left on Thursday with the plan to meet the boys at Birch Point campground on Friday evening at 5:00, which was a couple miles from our put-in for Saturday morning. We all made it by the designated time and set up our camp for the night. The weather was holding with days in the 80's and evenings still pretty mild. We weren't naïve enough to believe that the weather would stay this nice...it is *northern* Minnesota.

Saturday morning brought another nice day with the kayaks and paddles in the water at 11:00. We paddled 9.1 miles to campsite R-21. We spent one night at this site and then paddled 8.4 miles to campsite R-59, Finlander Island, for Sunday and Monday nights.

When we got to Finlander, the weather was still very warm and Julie and I took a swim to wash the few days of paddling off. It was refreshing, to say the least, and unbeknownst to us, this would be the last wash day for a while—ugh.



Since we were staying at this campsite two nights, the next morning we had time for a day paddle although the wind had picked up. Larry decided to venture out on his own, Dick and George went out for a half-day of exploring and Julie and I did a short stint, hoping to save some energy for the paddle the next day into the wind. A nice feature of this campsite was the fact we could move from one side to the other side of the island rather quickly so we could see the sun setting and the moon rising, all in a couple hundred feet of each other.



While there we were listening to the weather on the VHF radio; the report was calling for temperatures in the 30s with a chance of rain in the days to come. The change in weather started a conversation about our true destination of this trip. Larry had talked about Kettle Falls where the United States is actually north of Canada and where there were great burgers to be had, but we still had many miles to go before coming close to reaching that spot.

With much regret (on my part) we decided that because of the distance we had to paddle, the wind would not be our friend on the way back. On Tuesday we moved campsites so that we were closer to Soldier Point, which meant we would be turning to the west

and hopefully out of the wind. It's the point on the lake where the US and Canada patrol so you don't cross into Canadian water or vice versa. This did not shorten the days of our trip, just the mileage.

We paddled to campsite R-22 across open water with white caps as we crossed Marion Bay. Julie was paddling fast in her new Hurricane *Tracer 165* and I lagged a bit with my heavier and shorter Perception *Carolina 145* (it weighs 65 pounds when empty). We got to camp which had a dock access and brought four of the boats up onto it.

Dick carried his kayak up on shore and tied it securely to a tree. It was pretty windy and much cooler than when we started out.

There was frost on the kayaks when we woke up on Wednesday and luckily it was a hang day because the weather really turned on us...it is northern Minnesota after all. We had everything from a little sun to wind gusts up to 20 miles per hour to a few hail storms passing by. We all brought jackets, hats, and gloves as extra warmth but it was still pretty cold cooking and running to the bathroom.

Wow, it was Thursday already and we made another adjustment to our schedule. We decided to paddle approximately 12 miles to what would be our last campsite instead of paddling to R-20, staying for one night and then paddling onto R-10 the next day for the last two nights. We had a little bit of a head wind and had to cover some open water but all-in-all it wasn't a bad four and a quarter-hour paddle.



I need to explain something here. The thought of paddling 3 miles per hour is reasonable...until you are on a body of water that has as many islands as this and staying together becomes imperative. Then you are constantly looking at your chart or GPS and the pace slows way down so that everyone is in agreement about where the group is heading.

So we were three nights in campsite R-10 with day trips out to Cranberry Bay and Cranberry Creek, which were absolutely beautiful. We had another morning of frost with temperatures in the mid 30s but the sun warmed things up nicely and George, Julie and I paddled to Adler Creek with winds



Cranberry Creek

between 10-20 mph and choppy waters as we crossed Cranberry Bay. There are some beautiful places to explore within all these islands and it was nice not to have too much boat traffic although we did see a number of house boats and fishing boats.

On Sunday we made our way back to the Rainy Lake Visitors Center. Of course the last half mile the winds picked up and the water became very choppy. I was tired and ready to get off the water and Larry was up ahead patting his head to make sure we were all right...of course, Julie and I were bringing up the rear. I didn't respond to him because I felt I would have lost my momentum if I took my hand off my paddle. I just figured if he saw our paddles going in and out of the water, we were fine. Finally, we made it to the boat launch and the rain started.

Once we were all packed up in our respective cars, we headed into town for a nice lunch of comfort food...really, a great way to end the trip.



George Ottenhoff, Marlene Pakish, Dick Dieckman, Julie Reckart, Larry Kline

One more thing, speaking of food: When we planned the meals we decided that we would each take a turn cooking the dinner meal, then the boys would do a group meal, then Julie and I would cook a meal, and for the final night we would have pot luck...which was whatever we had left.



We had some pretty awesome meals: Dick made his Panang chicken curry the first night out. George made spaghetti, which we called, "The Ten Pot Meal" because he used every pan available to make this fab dinner, and why not? He wasn't doing dishes. Julie made a chili but started with an appetizer of crackers and cheese, with Dick's brownies and my chocolate chip cookies to finish the meal.



Dick and George,
glad to have jackets and wool hats

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THIS AREA

VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK: 218,00 acres of island and water with over 200 designated campsites, all accessible only by water.

RAINY LAKE: 929 miles of shoreline with another 635 miles around 1,600 islands.

Photos by Marlene Pakish, Julie Reckart and Larry Kline

EDITOR'S NOTE: The next article is a wonderful account that Stan White wrote about a trip he and his teenage son, Tristan, took paddling in the Pacific Northwest last summer. He sent it to me shortly after they got back, but I had been unclear about the deadline for that end-of-summer *Mountain Paddler* and I decided to put it in the next issue. It is a fabulous story of a fabulous trip, but it is sad reading, especially for those of us who knew Tristan, because he died unexpectedly early last winter.



STAN AND TRISTAN EXPLORING THE SAN JUANS

by Stan White

As you can imagine, my eight-day sea kayak camping trip with my son Tristan started before it started and I'm not sure where to start so I'll skip all those details and head right to Orcas Island's north shore launch site [A], where we loaded up the boats and headed down its entire west coast toward our first night's camp on the west side of Jones Island [B].

Wildlife immediately competes for attention in a place crowded with jellyfish, birds and plants. With the max ebb and quick flowing river sounds from the current, I kept close tabs on the kid, much like the mothers of those sleepy-eyed seal pups as we paddled in and out of eddies in the fresh air. We found ourselves in between a raccoon and her kits working the early evening shift, barking to let us know who's the boss before bats marked the end of the day.

At Neck Point [C] we crossed the San Juan Channel after observing a bald eagle dining on a seal pup on Yellow Island. We took time to pause, noting the adult seals' expressions, heads out of water looking on in their own observation. The emotions of life are as abundant as life itself. We continued toward Turn Island [D] by way of Friday Harbor [west of D], a walk to the grocery and safety from the potential late afternoon small craft warnings. Having Turn Island all to ourselves and the trail around its perimeter was great. A shorter two hours of paddling the five nautical miles to Griffin Bay [E] on San Juan Island offered time to explore the area farther south around Cattle Pass but we both were happy to set camp and have extra time to relax and stroll.

The fourth day was another good one. We had options of camping at Indian Cove, Odlin Park or Spencer Spit. Healthy winds convinced me to head south and cross San Juan Channel closer to Cattle Pass [F] which was nice



because of the expansive open water views which are rare in the protected San Juan I lands. Paddling up the west shore of Lopez I land with south-southwest winds and a fair fetch delivered surf city conditions with long rides. Sometimes conditions gave me a bit of a scare but by now I could tell Tristan and his *NDK Explorer* would be just starting to have fun in those situations. Miles of surfing.

Rejuvenation at Odlin Park [G], and onward for a night at the Cascadia Marine Trail camp site at Spencer Spit.

The next day, destined for another CMT camp at James Island [I], we opted for the indirect route south and through Lopez Pass [H]. After setting up camp, hiking and paddling around the island, friendly neighbors invited us for dinner.

Paddling with views of the Olympics, there was a stop at Lieber Haven [east of J] and we were pretty fortunate to get a camp site at Obstruction Pass State Park [J] on Saturday night.

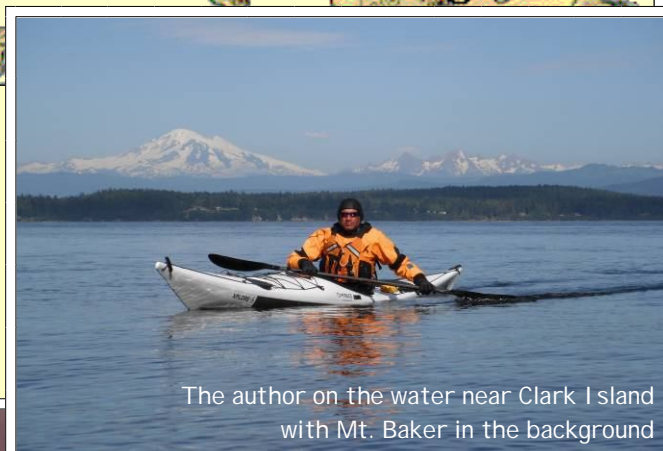
Then, a destination we didn't originally plan, Clark I land [L], was next and a great one it was. Clark, with its awesome views of Mt. Baker was a good time. [The picture Tristan took of his dad on the water near Clark I land with Mt. Baker in the background is on the next page.]



Tristan's exuberant self-portrait taken on James Island



The journey up the east coast of Orcas Island around Lawrence Point [K] meant our trip was going to circumnavigate Orcas Island which I didn't originally plan but it was a natural. We practiced lots of rolling, static braces, standing on the boats and other wild and crazy things on a perfect day, and paddled around the Clark Island [L] in the middle of it with a picturesque sunset at the end.



The author on the water near Clark Island with Mt. Baker in the background

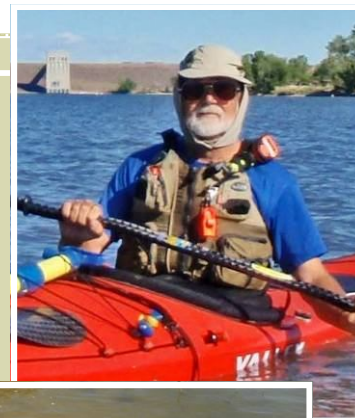


Sad reality was looming, though. We started the trip with some flexibility thinking if things were just right we could begin our journey with a trip to Sucia Island but weather didn't cooperate and then we had Sucia [M] on the back of our mind for the conclusion of our trip.

But the forecast again called for prudence. We are novices, potentially intermediates, meaning we paddled to the north shore of Orcas, with more surfing for the finish of a wonderful eight-day trip and the desire to do another as soon as we possibly can.

BOAT MODIFICATIONS: FOR SAFETY, CONTROL, COMFORT, AND CONVENIENCE

By Brian Hunter



Here's how I have modified my Valley *Aquanaut HV* to suit my personal needs and preferences. These changes came from several years of paddling and suggestions made by our instructors and other Club members.

RE-ENGINEERED THE CARRY TOGGLES and ADDED A BOW PAINTER, Figures 1-8:

Of concern in sea kayaks is the danger, when holding the boat in moving water, that a finger might get caught in the carry toggle loop. If the boat rolled this could injure the wrist, and wrench the kayak free leaving the swimmer without a boat. Valley Kayaks put a plastic tube over the line, next to the toggle handle to prevent this [Figure 1]. But my experience was that the tube or barrel, which was not a part of the carry toggle, pinched my finger causing a blood blister and the loop could still twist and cause problems.



Figure 1: The original stern toggle configuration with an arrow pointing to the problematic barrel



Figure 2: The plastic barrel below the toggle caused blood blisters

My first solution was simply to remove the barrel and retie the original line without that loop. This would allow free rotation of the toggle while eliminating any possibility of a finger catching in a loop.



Figure 3: Retying the toggle was an improvement



Figure 4: There is no barrel to pinch and the kayak is free to move as nature dictates without snapping a wrist

I was also adding a stem and stern painter line to the boat and it struck me that I could tie a bowline knot leaving a long tag end to hold the toggle handle. For painter and perimeter lines I prefer 3/16" New England Sta-Set line (part # 2111-06-00600). This kernmantle line is made in the USA and rated at 1300 pounds break strength. It is marine grade polyester which doesn't soak up water like nylon does and is more resistant to UV damage than nylon. If you cut the break strength in half to 650 pounds to allow strength loss to knots, it should still handle up to about 10 Gs of load from a 65 pound kayak.



Figure 5: Painter and carry toggle with bowline knot



Figure 6: 15 foot bow painter



Figure 7: You can reach the end of the sinnet chain from the cockpit

The painters are about 15 feet long; they get in the way and are an entanglement hazard. A sinnet knot will shorten the painters reducing both problems. The sinnet knot, also known as a chain knot, can easily reduce a 15' line to 6-7 feet to reach the cockpit; its other advantage is that it is quick and easy to untie the sinnet with a sharp yank on the working end.

Start the sinnet knot near the middle so that it ends near the cockpit where you can reach it to untie it.

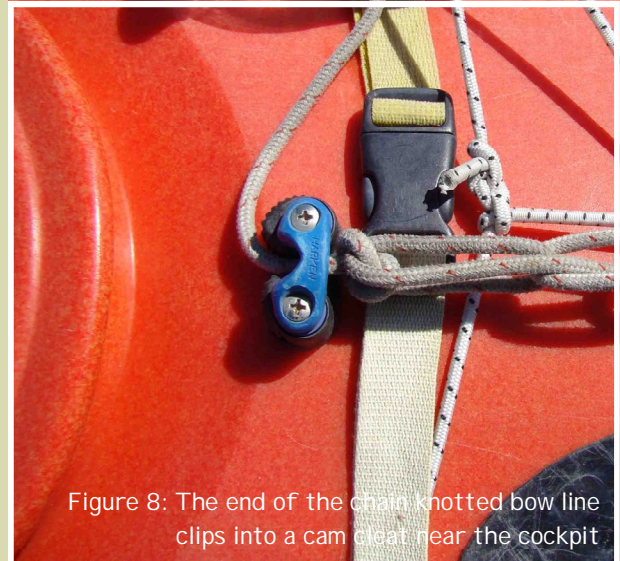


Figure 8: The end of the chain knotted bow line clips into a cam cleat near the cockpit

ADDED A SECURITY BOLT, Figure 9:

I added a stainless steel U-bolt just on the inside edge of the front bulkhead flange to run a cable lock through and around the carrier rack cross bar. This might keep honest people honest and provides one extra way to tie the kayak to the vehicle.

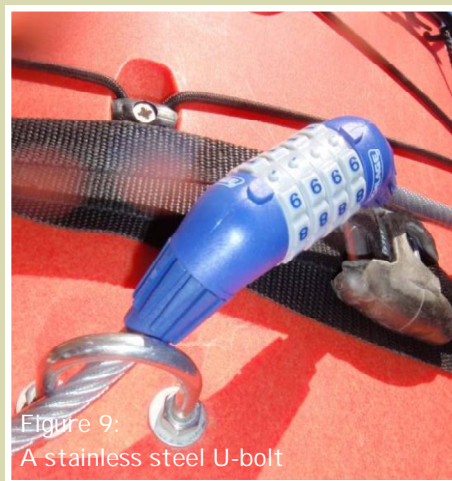


Figure 9: A stainless steel U-bolt

ADDED HATCH COVER SECURITY, Figure 10:

Valley hatch covers do not come with a tie-down lanyard. I added lanyards with clips for extra security and easy removal of the covers.

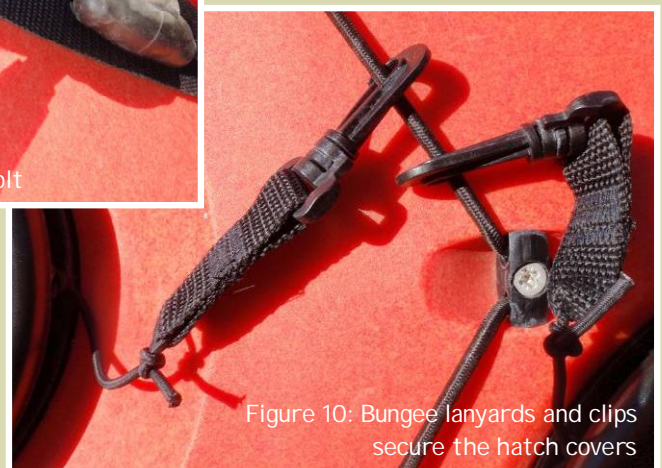


Figure 10: Bungee lanyards and clips secure the hatch covers

REDESIGNED THE BOW AND STERN BUNGEEES, Figures 11 and 12:

The original Valley bungees on the bow and stern were a simple V shape. I replaced the V bungee with a triangle shape to provide additional stowage options.

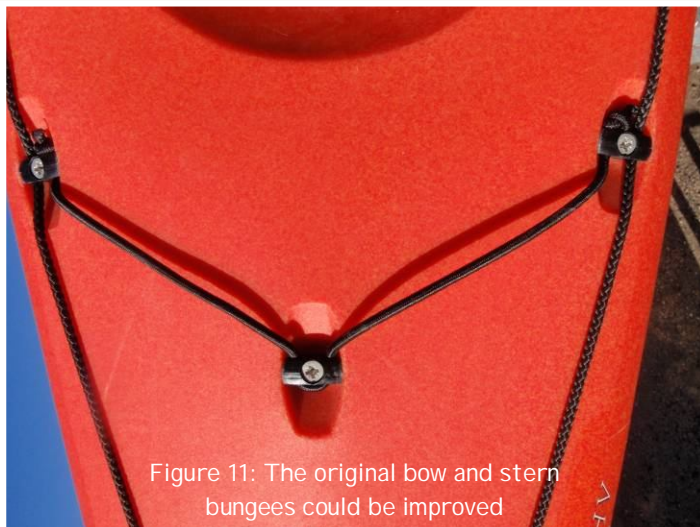


Figure 11: The original bow and stern bungees could be improved

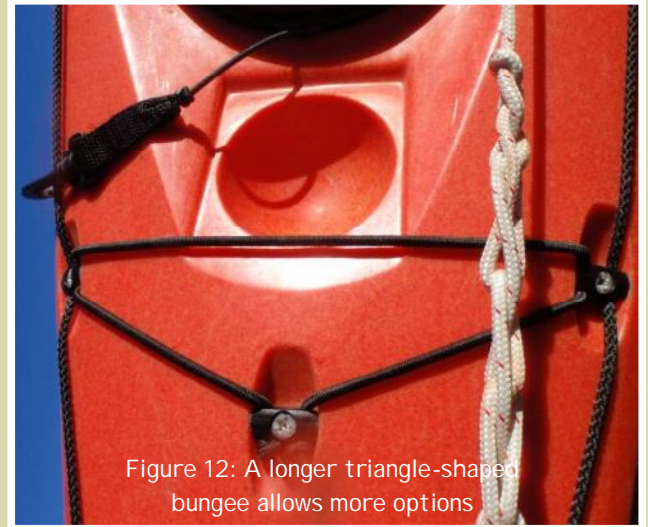


Figure 12: A longer triangle-shaped bungee allows more options

MORE BUNGEE CHANGES TO ENHANCE STOWAGE, Figures 13 and 14:

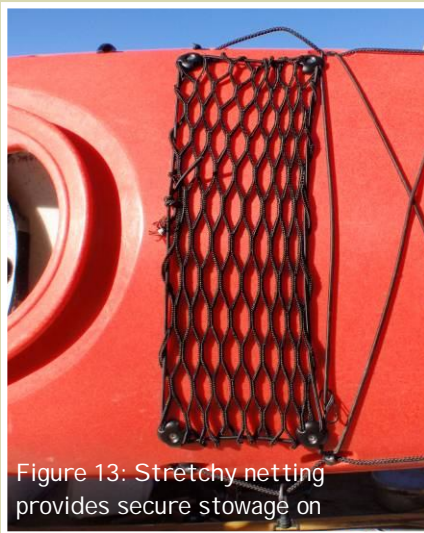


Figure 13: Stretchy netting provides secure stowage on

Prijon kayaks employ stretchy netting in addition to bungees to stow items on the decks. I find this to be optimum for secure stowage.

I removed some of my Valley's original bungee and installed a net near the front of the cockpit to have the best of both worlds.

The rear deck got a small net that would not hamper a reentry.



Figure 14: Rear deck net

REPLACED THE THIGH BRACES, Figures 15 and 16 on the next page:

The original Valley thigh braces (no photo of those braces) were very simple and very slick. They were not up to this kayak's ability to perform. I replaced them with P&H white water thigh braces which are about two inches lower and provide a more secure grip for better control. I also foamed out the inside of the cockpit to prevent the nut for the skeg adjuster from poking my leg. Overall, these modifications make the kayak much more comfortable and secure to put on edge.

REPLACED THE THIGH BRACES, CONTINUED, Figures 15 and 16:



Figure 15: More aggressive thigh braces can improve kayak handling



Figure 16: Top view of one of the new P&H thigh braces

RECONFIGURED THE BACK BAND, Figures 17-19:

The original back band was horrible! It provided no support whatsoever, even when fully tightened. I changed the original straps on the top, sides and bottom to reconfigure the factory back band to provide full support and still allow a full rear deck layback. I added a net behind the back band to keep items stored behind the seat in place in a wet exit.



Figure 17: The original back band was reworked to provide much needed lower back support



Figure 18: The original straps were moved and re-secured to change the position of the back band

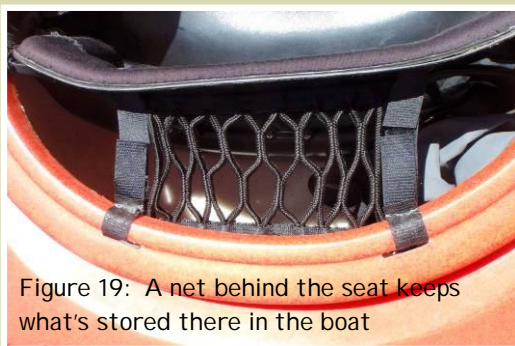


Figure 19: A net behind the seat keeps what's stored there in the boat

ADDED CAM CLEATS FOR SAFETY AND CONVENIENCE, Figure 20:

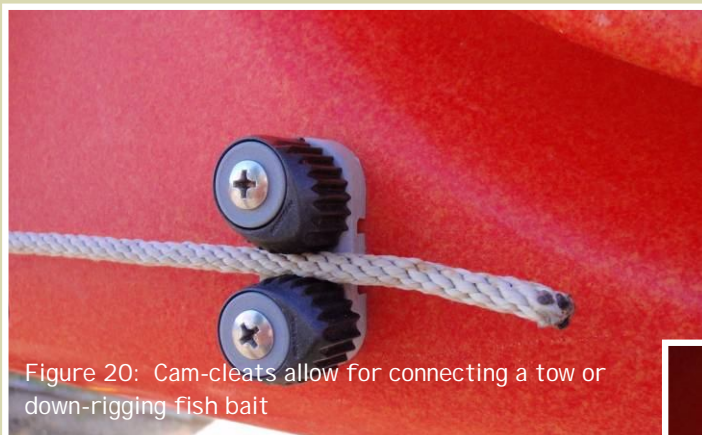


Figure 20: Cam-cleats allow for connecting a tow or down-rigging fish bait

I added a cam cleat to the port and starboard decks just behind the cockpit primarily for a quick connect and disconnect when towing another kayak. I can also use the cam cleat to hold a down rigger line for deep fishing.

They were placed in the optimum location to add a thumb hold for exiting the kayak.

DEVELOPED A TOOL TO ENSURE THE HATCHES ARE THOROUGHLY SEALED, Figure 21:

I use a modified plastic tent stake to push the hatch cover seal into the groove. This saves the aggravation caused by trying to get the covers to seal properly. I stow the stake in the day hatch when not in use as this cover is much easier to seal.



Figure 21: A modified tent stake makes sealing the hatch covers a snap

ADDED A FULL PERIMETER LINE, Figure 22:

The original Valley line did not go from the bow to the stern; there was a gap along the cockpit; I found that I preferred a full perimeter line.

I strung a new line from bow to stern on both sides. In several cases where I have assisted a paddler reentering their kayak I found that this line along my cockpit was handy for the swimmer to grasp when hauling themselves up on the kayak deck as I held their boat steady.



Figure 22: A glove shows how the perimeter line along the cockpit might be used

INSTALLED STOWAGE BUNGEEES UNDER THE FRONT DECK, Figure 23:

I added bungee cords so my bilge pump and paddle float are stowed under the deck. In this location they are handy when needed and out of the way the rest of the time.



Figure 23: Bilge pump and paddle float storage

THE FINAL ADDITIONS, JUST FOR FUN, Figure 24 and 25:



Figure 24: Bow ducky lookout keeps the way clear



Figure 25: Stern ducky lookout keeps evil spirits from sneaking up behind

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO PRODUCE A BROCHURE?

RMSCK hopes to develop one to place in stores selling kayak gear and to hand out at boat demonstration events. Please contact Sue Hughes if you could help with this project.



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