



Paddle Report: Evans to Kersey on the South Platte; March, 2009

Worried that the event's popularity might make it a floating zoo, many RMSKC regulars bowed out of this year's 8th Annual So. Platte Multi-Club paddle, but the nine Club members there—Gary Cage, Anne Fiori, Sue Hughes, Brian Hunter, Jud Hurd, Eric Niles, Pam Noe, and Kristy and Rich Webber—had a wonderful time. The scene with 60 or more canoes, sea kayaks, rec boats and sit-on-tops at the put-in near Evans *was* wild but the multitude of people and variety of boats didn't bother anyone. It was Kristy's first time on moving water and she says the crowd in the parking lot actually added to her confidence. She realized, "If all those people, from kids to the elderly and even some dogs, in all those different kinds of boats, dressed in all different levels of 'preparedness' could do this, so can I."

The first challenge was climbing down a steep embankment through thickets of weeds, chunks of concrete and a carpet of goat head stickers. By the time the boats were to the water's edge, some people had completely "spiked" tennis shoes; the rest were scraping off gobs of mud. It was astonishing to see the number of people with big canoes willing to make the unwieldy scramble.

Everyone was eager to get on the water, but river trips require shuttle arrangements. Promptly at ten, Eric Nyre of Canoe Colorado whistled attention, outlined the plans and people took off for Kersey (nine miles downriver) or the south Kuner bridge (14 river-miles away); no one reported any problems finding the take-outs, parking, or scrunching together to ride back in as few vehicles as possible. Those left behind used the time to chat, read, sketch, stretch and munch, or look for a bit of shade as it was an astonishingly warm, sunny spring day.

With all the boats that needed to launch, Kristy thought it might be wise to get out in front so she embarked and headed off on her own.

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Photo by Eric Niles

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Once she realized that she wasn't too adept at waiting for Richard, her husband, she decided that he would eventually find her and she turned her attention downriver. Moving water fulfilled its promise to be a little spooky and a lot of fun all at the same time.

The river did not seem to have much water, and our first-time river paddler assumed that to be a good thing, but coming around a curve she heard a loud noise...a scraping-on-rocks kind of sound. Up ahead she noticed someone had grounded mid-river on the shallows and it was their *boat* being pushed over the gravel making the unnatural noise. Unfortunately, she reports, by the time she had clarity on the source of the commotion she too was sideways to the current and making her own unpleasant screech on the stones. About then Richard caught up, and as he paddled by she asked, "Now what do I do?" As he smilingly drifted down river she heard him say, "I don't know."

One obvious solution was to stand up and move her boat to deeper water, but another was that gorilla-knuckle move on the gravel, along with the scoot-your-bottom-while-in-the-kayak maneuver that Sue perfected as a

newbie the previous year. "Oh, yes, those sandbars! I finally ran out of sandbar busting energy and paid VERY close attention to the bottom," Anne said later. Sue only got caught, twirled around and really stuck a couple of times this trip; they all agreed that reading the river gets easier with practice.

It didn't take Kristy long to get the boat off the strand, and then she was really having fun. The river had her attention and she said it was a hoot working to avoid objects and shallows. She never did get to paddle with her husband, but she was



Kristy's Sandbar?

Photo: Eric Niles



Pam Noe in her Tempest 170 by Wilderness

Photo: Brian Hunter

surrounded by people having a great time, just like she was.

Sue reported the same: the group quickly spread out and she paddled by herself or with Brian Hunter or Jud Hurd for most of the day, practicing her sand bar locating and having a lovely time on the water as it passed through the cottonwood groves. There were only a couple of places where the river was near enough to a road to see or hear traffic, the old cars used as river bank erosion prevention were pretty interesting, and neither the old cars nor the feedlots were nearly as intrusive as expected. The blue skies and sunshine contributed to an outstanding

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Sue Hughes in the USS Orca

Photo: Brian Hunter

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Second portage

Photo: Eric Niles

the rest in smiles. "It feels like the beach," was the consensus.

Most of the RMSKC members choose to get out at Kersey, but other paddlers continued down river. After another scramble with the boats to higher ground and exchanges of help loading and tying down, people headed home, tired and dirty but glad they'd done the paddle. The weather made it a perfect introduction to river paddling and many are looking forward to developing the skills and confidence to take on moving water that's bigger and deeper.

day; the very best weather in the history of the Multi-Club Spring South Platte Paddle.

There were two dams of built up concrete chunks to portage, but they were easy to see ahead of time and the landings were easy at both. As always with group paddles, others were there to lend a hand. It was so warm at the lunch stop that many were trying to find a hint of shade in the weeds; some of the open boat people had coolers and chairs, but sitting on a fallen log under the semi-shade of bare branches still had



Back on the water after lunch on the beach

Photo: Eric Niles

FYI: In the past, this event has been hosted by Rocky Mountain Canoe Club, Poudre Paddlers Club, RMSKC, Canoe Colorado, Colorado Whitewater Association and High Country River Rafters. This year, due to ACA insurance constraints, both RMSKC and RMCC said it was a non-sanctioned event, while the Poudre Paddlers had everyone sign their waivers.

Brian Hunter reports: If you go to: <http://maps.google.com/> and copy the coordinates below, paste them one at a time into the "search maps" window, and click the "search maps" button you will see the launch, dams and take-out we used on this trip. The satellite views work best. The Evans to Kersey coordinates are:

Launch site:	40.37133, -104.68074
First dam:	40.38966, -104.66011
Second site:	40.40092, -104.61958
Kersey take-out:	40.41250, -104.56350

Email Sue Hughes at suehughes@yahoo.com if you'd like a scan of the directions from the put-in to Kersey so you and friends can run this section yourselves...if it ever stops snowing.



Kristy Webber,
Paddle Report Author



Lunch spot, with Rich's teal Folbot in the center

MORE PICTURES FROM THE SO. PLATTE



Pictures on this page by Brian Hunter



Jerry Nyre, Eric Nyre, Pam Noe and Eric Niles at lunch



Jud, in the foreground, helping at the second portage