

THE VOYAGEUR



www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org

January 2009

THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

First I would like to thank everyone for a great Christmas party! Thanks to all of those who volunteered their time cooking various dishes, setting up and cleaning up to help make it a success. Special thanks to Lou Campagna for being the primary party organizer, as well as scheduling and working with area vendors to secure gifts for the raffles. Pies were the first of the desserts to disappear; I vote for more pies next year! Special thanks to Ginny Deseau who also arranged for some of the raffle prizes as well as the double-secret prize award for Kim and Jenny!

I would also like to put out a special thank you to Jenny for her enthusiasm in distributing club trip information to the membership in 2008. Jenny also utilized the mail list to assist with the Christmas party attendance this year. I think this was a great idea! Thanks for your help!

Looking forward to 2009 we will have Frank Fico presenting his Summer '08 Main Salmon trip at the January Meeting [*see trip report below*]. If anyone has a trip or other presentation they would like to present to the group in 2009, please let me know.

As we head into winter, many folks take up activities other than boating. Others look to creeking as smaller runs become available. Remember pool rolling sessions can help keep you from getting rusty if you do not boat in cold weather. There are lots of local options – most are kept up to date on the Monocacy Canoe Club web pages.

I hope everyone had a safe and enjoyable holiday season! I look forward to a wetter 2009!

Jim

Salmon River, Idaho, 14-20 August 2008

by Frank Fico

This past winter was absent the usual dithering over the holiday season about which Western river permits to apply for, and there was no suspense building through February while awaiting the fateful notification of the permit lottery results. Last year's devastating forest fire season in Idaho led to the closing of the "Main" Salmon River to boating just prior to our 14 August permit date, causing us to divert at the last minute to Hell's Canyon of the Snake, courtesy of a fortuitous cancellation by another party. While we certainly enjoyed ourselves in Hell's Canyon, we were still interested in running the Salmon. Gus Anderson, as last year's Salmon permit holder, was given the opportunity to transfer his permit to the same date in 2008 without going through the lottery process, and he did so. As most of you know, Gus was unable to boat this summer due to his bone marrow transplant and subsequent recovery period. However, he advised the Salmon-Challis

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Cedar Creek Conservation Easement

[from a Potomac Conservancy news release]

LEXINGTON, VA – Potomac Conservancy easement donor Caroline Stalnaker, of Mt. Pleasant Farm, was presented a Governor's Environmental Excellence Award for individual land conservation during the April 2 Environment Virginia 2008 conference. Mrs. Stalnaker and her two daughters are committed to preserving the farming tradition on their land. "We are excited about Caroline receiving one of the Governors Environmental Excellence awards and join the state in commending Mrs. Stalnaker for her actions and dedication to protecting farmland and water quality in the Cedar Creek watershed and the Shenandoah Valley," says Kelly Watkinson, Potomac Conservancy's Senior Director of Land Protection. Historic Mount Pleasant Farm, a 106-acre property along Cedar Creek, was permanently protected from future development in 2006, ensuring it will remain available for agriculture for generations to come. Mrs. Stalnaker was concerned about the rapid development around her farm: "It's rather an island, in a sense, because the land is the only property south of Route 81 that hasn't been annexed or developed."

The protection of Mount Pleasant Farm is important for both water quality and historic resources purposes. The farm has three-fourths of a mile of frontage along Cedar Creek, an ecologically diverse stream of particular importance to the northern Shenandoah Valley. The farm has been used to raise sheep and cows as well as hay. The easement was purchased by Potomac Conservancy and Virginia Outdoors Foundation with funding provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. "We are very concerned about the tremendous amount of development surrounding Caroline's farm, specifically Island Farm and Shenandoah Greens, and the effect these developments will have on the water quality and scenic beauty of Cedar Creek," says Kelly Watkinson. Mrs. Stalnaker has been very interested in educating neighbors and the public about the importance of protecting water quality and farmland in the region. She has opened up her property for numerous studies and monitoring of Cedar Creek including a study by Virginia Tech, monitoring in relation to the fish kills, and sampling for an ecological assessment that was conducted by Shenandoah University in 2004.

Mrs. Stalnaker hopes that her decision to permanently protect her farm will spur others to consider conservation options for their own properties. She states, "I was brought up that you have to do what you know is right, even if you are the only one doing it. It is right that this should be a farmforever...however long forever is!"

Scouting Without Getting out of Your Boat

by Ed Evangelidi

So you are on an unfamiliar river and you have to constantly stop and scout ahead. Below is a simple guide for judging rapids ahead when you can see the lead boater scouting the river but you cannot hear his descriptions over the noise of the river.

Class I - scout looks from shoreline to shoreline and paddles away

Class II - scout yawns, then looks casually at the rapid

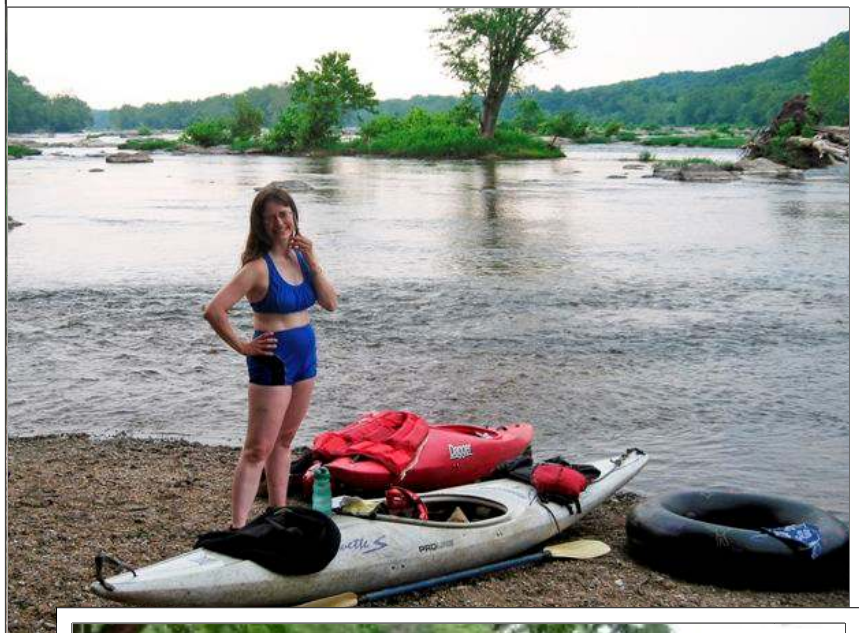
Class III - scout scratches chin and looks at the river somewhat intently

Class IV - some space noted between upper and lower jaw; eyes wide open

Class V - scout does not notice gnats and flies using wide open mouth as landing pad; eyes bulging out

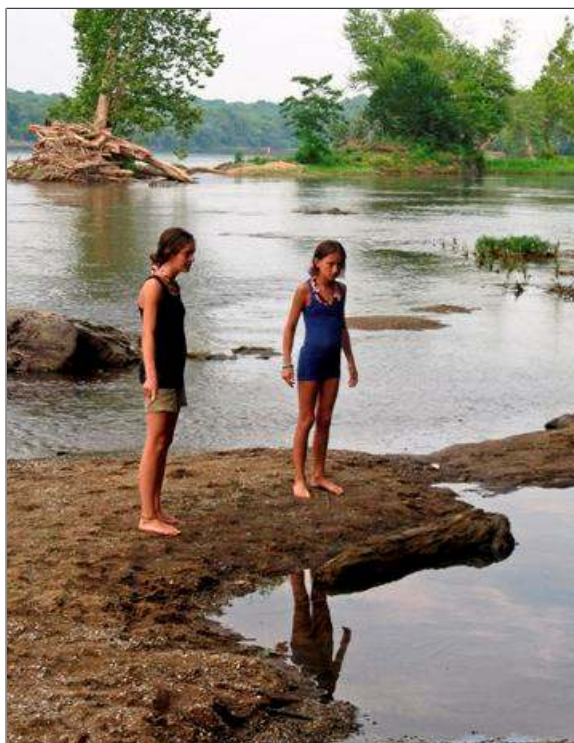
Class VI - scout frozen in Class V position for an extended period of time; does not respond to shouts from other boaters and may be urinating uncontrollably

On a more serious note from Ed — clean water "week" is Feb 24-27, 2009. <http://cleanwaternetnetwork.org/>



**2008 BRV Moonlight Picnic
photos by Barb Brown**

The annual club picnic occurred on July 19th, at the usual place accessed from Violette's Lock. Clockwise from above: Diana Rodum, Michael Hoon and Phoebe Hamill; Kathleen Sengstock; Keith Merkel, Ernie Katz and Ron Knipling; a lone canoer makes a late appearance; Jamie and Kerry Fico.



SALMON (Continued from page 1)

National Forest (the managing agency for the Main and Middle Fork Salmon, Selway and Hell's Canyon of the Snake) of his situation in June, and he was able to transfer his permit to me. Joining Bridget, Jamie, Kerry and me on this trip was Wes and Ryan Mills, Ginny DeSeau and Jenny Thomas.

Re-establishing our tradition of driving out West after a one-year hiatus, the four of us met up on 12 August with Wes, Ryan and Ginny (who had been picked up at the Boise airport) at a Forest Service campground high up in the Salmon watershed, south of Stanley. The next morning, we picked up our rental gear at White Otter in Sunbeam: 14' oar raft for the Fico's, 16' oar raft for the Mills' (who were carrying Ginny and Jenny's gear as well as their own), and an inflatable kayak for Ginny. We packed all the gear in and on our two vehicles and continued on to Challis, where we met Jenny, who had also driven out. She left her car at the Village Motel (where we had reservations for the day we would take off the river), and hopped in with Wes, Ryan and Ginny, further stuffing Wes's 4Runner with her kayak and gear. We stopped in Salmon to load up with provisions and ice for the big coolers we would carry in the rafts, then finally headed for the put-in and small campground at Corn Creek, at the end of the road.

We dropped our gear on the ramp the next morning, rigged the rafts, listened to the river etiquette talk by the ranger, and launched by the crack of noon. We had been tracking the methodical fall of the river level throughout the summer, and were quite satisfied with the posted level of .3 on the ramp gauge, or about 4090 cfs. This was a very nice level for our group of first-timers, and it continued its slow fall throughout our seven days on the river.

Ginny clipped the edge of a large hole in one of the first named rapids (Killum?), and took a brief swim. Otherwise, we had an uneventful run of 11 miles to our first camp, at Eddy Beach. This was a nice sand beach just below the rapid and bar at the mouth of Little Squaw Creek named for Frank Lantz, who lived there from 1925 until his death in 1971. Bridget, Jenny and I explored the bar the next morning, and followed a trail about a mile up to a ridge with a nice overlook, 1000' above the river [*see photo at right*]. On our way back to camp, we peeked in the windows of the cabin, and sampled some of the ap-

ples from the mostly-overgrown orchard.

We headed on down the river following our hike, and had no problem running Devil's Teeth and Little Devil's Teeth rapids. At mile 20, we encountered a distinct horizon line marking Salmon Falls, a formidable obstacle to downstream navigation before it was dynamited in the early 1900s. We pulled out a good quarter mile above the rapid at the last good landing, and found a scouting trail that appeared to head well above the rapid on river right. Rather than spending considerable time and effort to get a close-up view, we decided to trust the advice of our outfitter, who had instructed us to take the middle slot. With Wes leading the way, we found the slot to be clear, and all ran it cleanly (save for a nice combat roll executed by Jenny).

Once past Salmon Falls, we focused our attention on finding Bathtub Hot Springs, the only "soakable" hot springs along the



Main Salmon. After studying our guidebooks, we located the outflow on river left and made the short but steep hike up to the “bathtub,” a natural pool that had been enhanced with concrete to comfortably hold about 6 bathers in waist-deep water, which was kept at an optimum temperature via piped cold water from an adjacent stream [see photo at right]. After a very refreshing soak, we continued down the river another half mile to Barth Hot Springs, a riverside springs with scalding hot water. This has been a popular stop for river runners for many years, as evidenced by the rock inscription we found made by John McKay, dated 1872.

I had reserved Barth Campsite just below the springs for this night, thinking we would want to camp near the hot springs, but the rocky landing looked very unappealing. Since we had already enjoyed our soak, we decided to press on. Less than a mile downstream, we found Sandy Hole Campsite to be a nice beach with an easy landing, and made our second night’s camp there. We had covered just 12.5 miles, but spent a good deal of quality time hiking and soaking.

The next day we got an early start, and covered an uneventful nine miles to Bailey Rapid, where we stopped to scout. Our outfitter had warned us of a hole in this rapid that might be large enough to hold our rafts, so we were anxious to

take a look. We noted the nasty stuff on river left, and all of us had no problem keeping right

when we returned to our boats. After lunching below the rapid, we continued four miles down to our second reserved campsite at Lower Yellowpine Bar, arriving by mid-afternoon. The expansive beach was much too hot to enjoy, so before hauling our gear up to the shade of the many yellow pine trees on the bench above the beach, we decided to hike downstream about a quarter mile to scout Big Mallard (named after an early miner, not the duck), one of the major rapids of the Main Salmon. It took a good half hour to pick our way around the boulders and vegetation along river right and get as close as we could to the rapid, but it was impossible to see if the chute between a large pourover and the left bank was runnable. As luck would have it, just then a commercial raft trip that had launched just prior to us two days before rounded the bend and ran the rapid, hugging the left bank all the way. We had our answer, and could save some time the next day, which would include three of the biggest rapids



on the river.

Day 4 found us running Big Mallard with no warm up, and no warmth either, as the sun had yet to reach the river there. We were emboldened by the demonstration we had been fortunate enough to receive the day before, and had no problems. But it was way too early to relax: two more class 3-4 rapids lay in the next five miles. When we reached Elkhorn Rapid, fate shined on us once again. A jetboat appeared from upstream just as we exited our boats at the head of the rapid, and showed us the line through the top part of the rapid. Elkhorn is unusually long, and we strained to watch the jetboat’s sinuous route as it disappeared around the corner. But once we successfully had run the top of Elkhorn, we had time to react and execute the moves required for the remainder of the rapid. Just over a mile below Elkhorn is Growler, and we were unable to find a good place to get out and scout. I had eddied out

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SALMON (Continued from page 5)
at the head of the rapid, but couldn't see past the first drop. Wes passed me and promptly disappeared from sight. I attempted to follow him, and was briefly held sideways in a large hole near the top of the rapid. Thankfully, it spit us out after only a few seconds. Wes had been able to punch the hole in his larger, heavier raft, and Ginny and Jenny were able to avoid it.

With the three big rapids out of the way early, we were able to relax the rest of the day. We stopped for lunch after about 11 miles, then continued on to Fivemile Bar, private property that contains the homestead of Sylvan Hart, better known as "Buckskin Bill." As we had been told that ice cream was available in the store at Buckskin Bill's place, we were anxious to make a mid-afternoon stop there. Not only did we find ice cream for sale, but the proprietor allowed us to fill up our water jugs from their spigot, sparing us from filtering water the entire trip [see photo at right]. We also took the time to tour the small museum (which included a videotape of Bill being interviewed for a magazine article), Bill's depressingly small original dwelling, and his fortified tower (from which he was prepared to defend his property from the Forest Service).

After departing Fivemile Bar, we had about four miles to go to reach

the South Fork of the Salmon. I had been unsuccessful in trying to reserve Deadman's Hole Campsite, so I was targeting the unreservable camp at South Fork Island. However, when we reached the confluence, we found two rafts beached at that campsite. As it turned out, these were rangers out inspecting the camps, and they were going to move on. But the landing was in fast water, and we had been swept past before getting this information. Luckily, we found a small but satisfactory beach camp at Red Harlan Hole Campsite another two miles downstream, after a long day covering 21.5 miles.

The next day, we had only one named rapid (class 2 Little Growler) in the 16 miles we had planned. Ryan spelled Wes at the oars for much of the day, and Bridget even got up in our rowing chair (a "Thermarester" strapped atop the cooler) for a brief time. I was hoping that no one would be camped at Sheep Creek, as that was the last place that offered a side hike for a layover day, yet was within seven miles of the takeout to allow for a shorter get-away day. The good thing was that there were four unreservable campsites

within a .3 mile stretch at the mouth of Sheep Creek, and I knew we would be able to find at least one of them unoccupied. According to the guidebook, however, none of them featured much shade, which would be an important attribute to have in the middle of the day. We found all four sites unoccupied when we arrived in the late afternoon, and picked Sheep Creek Bar as the best choice for swimming and a bit of afternoon shade. Our string of camping out under the stars ended that evening, as the wind picked up dramatically ahead of an approaching front, and we had to set up the tents for shelter from the windblown sand.

Layover day started out gray and rainy. All of us donned rain jackets after breakfast and started up Sheep Creek into the Gospel Hump Wilderness Area. The trail was not well-maintained, and we had to make several bushwhacking detours to avoid fallen trees. We had also been warned about rattlesnakes frequenting this trail, which made for even slower going as we



tried to focus on the trail through the thick undergrowth. I bore the brunt of this duty at the front of the group. I did encounter one small rattlesnake coiled up neatly in the middle of the trail, warily watching us as we gave it a wide berth (but apparently too comfortable to move out of the way).

After nearly two miles, we came to a fork in the trail. My map showed both forks eventually connecting in a big loop. Those of us without rain pants had become thoroughly soaked pushing through the undergrowth, so the trail branching uphill into the brightening sky looked more appealing than continuing along the lush stream valley. However, we hadn't gone more than a half mile up the trail when folks started straggling, then turning back, due to the steep climb out of the stream valley. Soon I was on my own, heading for a high point marked on the map as Johnson Butte. After climbing for about an hour, I made it to the ridge dividing Sheep Creek and Johnson Creek, and followed it a little ways back towards the river. There was a good view upstream, but the river was mostly out of sight looking back towards our camp and downstream. I made the full loop on my descent, ending up a couple miles further upstream on Sheep Creek, then following it downstream past the original fork in the trail. I arrived back at camp about 7 PM after a hike of about 8-10 miles. The lack of shade had been a non-issue

for the group back at camp, as the sun hadn't really been out fully until well after noon.

Early the next morning, the rain started once again. It spurred us to get packed up and on the river, and we were underway by 9:30. Of the three class 3 rapids in the final seven miles, we successfully ran Dried Meat and Chittam without stopping to scout. We stopped to take a quick look at the Vinegar, and all ran with no problems. Soon thereafter we ran the riverwide ledge at Carey Falls, then the Carey Creek pack bridge and take-out ramp came into view about noon. We hastily de-rigged the rafts and loaded up for our long drive back to the Salmon headwaters. We regained pavement at Riggins, and cleaned our groover in the "Scat machine" at the Chevron station in town, per our permit instructions. We dined at a restaurant in Cascade, then continued along the forks of the Clearwater

until we crossed the divide back into the Salmon watershed. Arrived at White Otter about 9:30 and dumped all our rental gear. We finally rolled into Challis about 11 and our rooms at the Village Inn. The next day, we started making our separate ways back east toward Yellowstone, where all of us except Jenny would meet in a few days to share a rented cabin on the Yellowstone River outside of Gardiner, Montana. Jenny would meet up with Kim Buttleman, and they would start preparing for their Grand Canyon trip in September.

So ended another successful Western river trip, number seven for us. The Salmon turned out to be well worth the year's delay, and we saw very little evidence of last summer's fires. Thanks to Gus for making it possible!

Leaving the take-out: (l-r) Bridget, Frank, Jenny, Wes, Ginny, Ryan, Jamie and Kerry.



About the Blue Ridge Voyageurs (BRV)

The **BRV** is a voluntary association of experienced paddlers from the Washington, DC area. Club benefits include: trips for all skill levels (most at intermediate and advanced levels); BRV website and hotline for information and pick-up trips; *The Voyageur*, published 6 times a year; club roster, published yearly in March; holiday party; conservation projects; moonlight paddles & picnics; big trips to the Smokies, Canada, Europe, and Western rivers.

Meetings: BRV will hold meetings from 7-9 pm on the following dates in 2009: January 28, March TBD, May TBD, July TBD (Moonlight Picnic), September TBD, November TBD, December TBD (Holiday Party). Meetings are followed by beer and pizza at a nearby pub. Location: Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library on Leesburg Pike (Rt. 7) in Falls Church, VA. The library is on the east side of Rt. 7 about 0.6 miles south of I-495. Or, from I-66, take the Rt. 7 West exit and go about 0.6 miles west on Rt. 7. It's on the right.

BRV Website: The BRV website (<http://www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org>) provides information on trips, meetings, and other club events.

2009 BRV Officers: Jim Pruitt, President; Lou Campagna, VP; Jenny Thomas, Trip Coordinator; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

2009 Board of Directors: Gus Anderson, Bill Collier, Ed Grove, Ron Knipling, Rick Koller, Wes Mills

The Voyageur: Newsletter of the Blue Ridge Voyageurs

The Voyageur publishes information on club events, conservation and safety news, the club trip schedule, and other news of interest to BRV'ers. Publishing **trip reports** is a particularly important newsletter function. Trip Coordinators are requested to write up all club trips - particularly trips to unusual or especially interesting rivers. Trip reports and other articles are accepted in any form: via electronic mail (preferred; send to fico1@netzero.com), on disk, typed, handwritten, faxed or over the phone. For trip reports, try to include the following information (if applicable): names of participants, relevant NWS gauge readings of nearby rivers, description of the water level on the river (e.g., minimum, moderate, maximum, or number of inches above or below "zero"), weather conditions, hazards, difficult rapids, info on put-ins or takeouts, distinctive scenery, and overall difficulty in relation to rivers well known to BRV'ers. New information about the river (e.g., new hazards) is particularly important. **Photos** are also published. Send prints to the webmaster or e-mail digital photos to the newsletter editor.

Address changes: contact Frank Fico, 1609 Autumnwood Dr., Reston, VA 20194-1523, (703) 318-7998, fico1@netzero.com. The annual roster will be kept current via updates published in each issue of *The Voyageur*.

Membership applications/renewals: submit to Frank Fico. Must renew by February 15 each year to be listed on club roster and continue receiving *The Voyageur*.



The Voyageur

c/o Frank Fico
1609 Autumnwood Drive
Reston, VA 20194-1523

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Deadline for March *Voyageur*:
Friday, March 6th

NEXT MEETING
Wednesday, January 28th

LAST CHANCE TO RENEW FOR 2009! If your mailing label says 2008, this is your final newsletter unless you renew now.