

THE VOYAGEUR



www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org

March 2010

THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

Winter greetings, fellow snow shovelers. Normally, there would have been some outlier winter trips being organized this time of year (I think the irrepressible Ron Knipping did get out), but our natural resource for entertainment was mostly in a solid phase. This denial of flotation has caused an unnatural anxiety for some of the paddling community. The itch to get on a creek somewhere is becoming more insistent. I, for one, have pathetically been watching the gauges throughout this frosty period hoping for some kind of miracle thaw. And then calling my "homies" to set up speculative, and in the end, phantom trips. Oh well, enough moaning; a few more weeks and the waters will be back in liquid form.

The upcoming year will include a gauge painting project led by Ed Evangelidi and assisted by Jenny Thomas; he will provide details in this newsletter *[see below]*. This is always a worthy project and I hope to join him this year.

In the last newsletter, I was worried about our continued use of the Pimmit Library for our meetings. This has been resolved. Upon further investigation, it turns out we are allowed to stay after hours in the room. This will enable us to have the usual two hours in which to lie about and exaggerate paddling skills.

On Wednesday, March 4th, we had the annual BRV board meeting where we discussed the club's various future functions and financial status (which is good *[see page 7]*), and as a result we will buy a digital projector for our meeting presentations unless some kind member has one lying around unused (let me know). At the moment we use a "borrowed" one. Other topics at the meeting included the summer picnic date which will be in August this year on the weekend of the 21st. Mark Wray, our new VP, will be organizing this event. If, however, someone really prefers a July date for the picnic, you are more than welcome to take on this responsibility and organize it. Mark is busy all July and cannot change his schedule, but does not mind if someone else substitutes for him this year.

Thanks to Mike Martin and Daryl Hall for the club's trip schedule this year. It looks like a good one, with many entertaining trips on tap. Please let Mike know if you want to lead a trip in the gaps in the schedule.

The presentation for the March 24th meeting will be Kent Ford's dvd on canoeing. I think the CCA presented this one at their swap party last year and it got good reviews, I believe.

See you at the meeting.
Rick

River Maintenance Project: *Blue Ridge Voyages, Volume 4* has a reference to 30 local popular streams in the previous three volumes and it states: "Most of the streams have Randy Carter gauges at the put-ins or take-outs." It's a shame that most of these gauges that have lots of study and work behind them have fallen into disuse because of lack of upkeep. While we have more recently moved to relying on internet gauge readings,

(Continued on page 4)

Steve Returns!!!

Middle Creek (of the Monocacy)

January 18, 2010; by Ron Knipling

After weeks of ice and frigid temperatures, it was auspicious when a January thaw and regional rain promised winter small stream paddling possibilities. My announced first choice was Passage Creek, with Cedar Creek as the high water backup. Alas, the rain in the Shenandoah basin disappointed, and those streams didn't rise enough. But northern Maryland got a better shot of precip and that's where the water was flowing.

So we headed toward Middle Creek, a Monocacy trib. Stream selection was provided by none other than master gauge analyst Steve Ettinger, who was getting back into his boat for the first time after four months of major surgery, hospitalization, chemotherapy, and radiation treatment for pancreatic cancer. It was great to have Steve back in an OC-1 saddle, paddling the kind of stream he loves best: a small, technical, hard-to-catch creek. Steve looked great and never missed a stroke *[see photos above]*.

Three other BRVers on the trip included Jim Pruitt and Dick Pierce (K-1s), and Larry Lempert (OC-1). Our trip began at Station Road and ended 4.6 miles downstream at Harney Road, just below a non-runnable dam at a creekside VFW Park. From the Station Road put-in, Middle Creek is Class 1, but moving, for the first 2-3 miles. Along the way, you



pass through scenic farm country, past lovely historic homes, and under both Rt. 15 and Business Rt. 15. The action picks up below Business Rt. 15, beginning with a straight ledge next to a river-left rock formation. From there to the backwater of the VFW Park dam, there are frequent Class 1 to Class 2+ rapids, some requiring precise boat placement and maneuvering. The last mile before the VFW Park dam is the liveliest, with a gradient of 40'/mile and some tight turns and squeezes. Over the 4.6 mile trip there were plenty of obstacles to duck, dodge, or punch over, but we never had to get out of our boats.

There is no USGS gauge on Middle Creek but the downstream Bridgeport gauge on the Monocacy is a good indication. Bridgeport was at 5' (~850cfs) and falling. Overall, we had about +2" on Middle. Some rapids seemed to have more water but others seemed closer to zero.

Our group was in a festive mood as we descended Middle Creek, in part because of the bright sun and relative warmth of the day after weeks of chill. Having Steve back on the river contributed to a joyous feeling that streams were beginning to flow and more creekin' good times were ahead.

Senior Citizens Run Cabin John Creek

January 25, 2010; by Ron Knipling & Alf Cooley

On the warmest day of the winter, Monday, January 25, three senior citizens caught Cabin John Creek after a 1/2" regional rain on soggy soil. Paddlers were Bill Carr (Age 82, K-1), Alf Cooley (72, K-1), and Ron Knipling (62, OC-1). We hereby proclaim this to be the oldest descent ever of Cabin John Creek — three boaters, 216 years!

The day started cool and damp after the all-night rain. We met at the River Road put-in and found the stream running about 1" above minimum. There is no USGS gauge on Cabin John, but four other nearby readings were Sligo Creek at 70 cfs and Four Mile Run at 183, both falling, and Rock Creek at 290 and Accotink 300, both rising.

The question was whether Cabin John would hold its water long enough for a decent run. We offloaded and ran the shuttle, leaving two cars at Cabin John Park on MacArthur Blvd next to the narrow bridge. Back at the put-in, Cabin John was steady at a bare 75 cfs (estimated — the RC gauge further upstream at Bradley Blvd. read minus 1"). There were some downed trees along the way and other obstacles, but nothing menacing. Cabin John Creek is Class 1-3, much like a smaller Rock Creek or Pohick Creek. About two miles into the three-mile run, you go through a busy section with 5-6 closely spaced tight boulder gardens. The gradient in this section is probably 80 feet per mile or more, and Steve Ettinger has estimated the overall gradient of the run to be 37 fpm.

We had enough water to negotiate the rapids without running aground, but in many of them our boats were pinballs bouncing off multiple rocks. There were a couple of minor mishaps but nothing we couldn't laugh about.

Bill Carr was amazing. His boat was a long, downriver kayak, not a creek boat. It looked like something that should be hanging from the wing of an F-16. But he guided the missile-like craft through all the tight turns and boulder gardens with apparent ease.

Meanwhile, the sun started shining and the temperature spiked to near 70°. When we reached the take-out at the C&O Canal, we were all sweating in our drysuits, but exhilarated to have made the run with just enough water on a perfect day. The month following this day would be the snowiest on record, with temps mostly in the 20s and 30s. That makes this old guys' run down Cabin John an especially warm memory.

Secret Revealed: Cabin John Creek Take-Out

(Anonymous)

BTW, if you know the C&O Canal area in the vicinity of Cabin John Creek, you may be wondering where the take-out is, since the stream flows under the canal and directly into the Potomac. There is no easy road access to that part of the canal or river, and you can't park a car on the Clara Barton Parkway. Here's the secret: There is an unmarked dirt service road directly off Clara Barton, just past the end of the bridge where the Cabin John Parkway joins Clara Barton. On the creek, when you come to the canal bridge, you take out before the bridge on river left and drag your boat up the steep rocks to the service road. Then you walk up a pedestrian path and stairway to MacArthur Blvd., cross the high narrow bridge, and reach your take-out vehicle parked in the lot of Cabin John Park, just upstream right of that bridge. (You could just take-out at the park, but you'd have a long, steep carry and you'd miss some stream action.) Driving back from the River Road put-in, you shoot right down the Cabin John Parkway and, just past the bridge over the creek, turn onto the hidden service road, all the while keeping a furtive eye out for the Park Police.

Florida Paddling 2009-2010

by Ed Evangelidi

I've gotten used to the nice semitropical weather in central Florida from mid-December to mid-January for a month of paddling. Usually I get a few days of "northern" weather and many days of mild weather and some occasional hot days. Some freezing days and some mosquito infested hot days with mostly very pleasant weather. This year decided to be different — much different. Basically, there were days of cold weather followed by days of cold weather followed by days of cold weather. Very un-Florida-like.

For years I've been able to stitch together a month long trip in central Florida by paddling with many different groups and clubs. This year I started out with a small Coastal Canoeist group, including Katherine Mull, Bob Kimmel, Bill Gordon and Dave Bernard. After a miserable rainy day in which I hiked near Jacksonville, we made plans to paddle beautiful Juniper Springs and Rock Springs. These are among the most beautiful streams in Florida with water so clear that you can probably count every fish in the streams. The group then shifted gears and decided to paddle streams on the west coast of Florida. Weeki Wachee River was another beautiful super clear water river. We were pleasantly surprised to find that the state bought the put in and lowered the entry fee. Hillsborough River was not quite so pleasant to start. We went up to the highest put in on the state canoe trail and were lucky enough to not have been ticketed and towed as the area is no longer available for paddling, even though park signs further downstream still refer to that section of river. A park employee gave us a private tour of the closed off area nevertheless (but no launching allowed). We put in downstream and paddled what I believe is the southernmost section of whitewater in the continental U.S. Not much of a whitewater section by mountain standards, but it still requires a bit of maneuvering around rocks for

some distance. At optimum low levels it's probably low Class 2. At high water it would wash out. The rest of the river is quite nice too. I would often return to different sections of this long river in the next weeks.

After saying my goodbyes to this group, I headed to a group camp with the Florida Sport Paddling Club and a contingent of the Georgia Wilderness Society. We spent many days on different sections of the nearby beautiful Ocklawaha and Silver Rivers as well as lesser known runs like Haw Creek, Prairie Creek, Waccasassa River, etc. The Waccasassa was the most rugged; having us deal with strainers, mosquitoes, and small rapids. One paddler found a nice alligator skull. One contingent of this group paddled a small creek called the River Styx. By the way, while paddling was our primary focus, we still enjoyed such diversions as nice restaurants, a very expensive bottle of Dom Perignon for the New Year's celebration and some local bear watching.

I then left that group and stayed with a group of mixed North Carolinians and Floridians, led by Bob Benner of guidebook-writing fame. That group too was down in size because of the cold weather. I mostly headed south (near Tampa) to paddle rivers like the Hillsborough and tributaries of the Little Manatee during this continued cold snap.

I then headed east again and caught the Econlockhatchee River before heading home. I would say that despite the lower turnout and greater number of days hiking because of the cold and sleet, it still was a quite enjoyable month. Even though it was often in the 40's during the day and 20's and low 30's at night, we were getting reports of much colder weather up north. So we stayed and paddled; imagine that.

RIVER MAINTENANCE (Continued from page 1)

there is something comforting in arriving at a river and seeing that there is X inches of usable water or that previous users have found that you should look elsewhere for floatable water. For much of the BRV's history we have organized river cleanups (the strainer kind moreso than the trash kind) and gauge painting.

Jenny Thomas thought it was time to resurrect the BRV practice of refreshing gauges and clearing streams. The last official BRV stream clearing project was focused on one local creek. It involved a team of stream

(Continued on page 6)

One Weather Gauge, One Long History

by Ed Evangelidi

Active boaters revere gauges. We hold these truths to be self evident: that gauges are a work of their creators and that boaters enjoy the pursuit of river happiness by following gauge readings. There are river gauges and rain gauges (and other gauges). River gauges (Little Falls, etc.) are more popular with boaters, but rain gauges are easier for boaters or nonboaters to interpret.

How did rain gauges start? According to the Tucker County (WV) Highlands History and Education Project, the birth of rain gauges begins with Thomas Jefferson's keen interest in the world around him. Jefferson kept daily records and quickly recruited other citizen volunteers in surrounding states to do likewise. This effort was then maintained by the Smithsonian Institution who had 150 observers reporting in by 1850 and 500 by the start of the Civil War. After the war, Congress mandated the Department of War to undertake the job of preparing daily forecasts. In 1891 this was passed along to the newly-created US Weather Bureau. There were over 2,000 observers then. The stations continued to grow under the Weather Bureau.

Tucker County had its first weather station in 1899 (in Parsons) and added another in Davis in 1910. Canaan Valley established one in 1912. The following is a quick thumbnail report of how this gauge was maintained from 1912 through the present. A farmer named Samuel Harman was given a rain gauge and recorded the amount of rain and melted snow until he passed away in 1919. His son George then maintained the daily volunteer chore until he left the area in 1930. The Davis recording station also closed in this depression year and Carrie Bennett then began serving in that task at her property just south of the previous gauge. The gauge was renamed "Davis 2" even though it was in Canaan Valley. She took daily readings until 1938. The job went vacant from 1938 to 1944 when George Thompson assumed the position and also began recording daily high and low temperatures at his farm location, further south than the previous gauge locations. George died in 1956 and his son Ben assumed the responsibility (at his nearby property) until he passed away in 1994. The Weather Bureau established another station in 1992 just north of the one operated by the Thompson family and this station is in current use, operated by the Strum family. Jefferson's volunteer observers now number about 12,000 across the U. S.

Rain gauges have changed little since Jefferson's day and it was the only equipment given by the Weather Bureau to the earlier Canaan Valley volunteers. It is basically a galvanized steel can eight inches in diameter and twenty-four inches tall. A funnel, smaller inner tube and calibrating stick complete the gauge. Oh yeah, volunteers working every day of the year, rain or shine, keep the reports coming in. Let's see, yesterday's reading at Canaan Valley (January 16) was 1.12", so let's be careful out there as we therefore know that the Blackwater River is a bit high today. Thanks, Mr. Kenneth Strum.

2010 Webster Wildwater Weekend, April 10-11

The 2010 Webster Wildwater Weekend River Festival will take place April 10-11, 2010 in Webster County, WV. Events include river races and fun floats on area rivers. Camp Caesar (304-226-3888) will again be the site of the after-race party Saturday evening, where paddlers and friends can enjoy live music, race videos and more around a blazing, indoor bonfire. The downriver race features plenty of whitewater action on the class II-III Elk River and is a USA Wildwater Junior Olympics qualifying race. This portion of the Elk River, with almost continuous rapids, is a great run for experienced paddlers, but with plenty of safety boaters on hand, novices will enjoy competing as well. Trophies are awarded in several categories and dozens of prizes are given away. For additional information, call 304-847-2145 or 304-847-7653 (evenings), send us an email at wcda@websterwv.com, or visit our web site: www.websterwv.com/whitewater.html.

2009 Memorial Day Flashback: The Miller Shuttle Max-Out (Or “The Shuttle Gods had Mercy on Us”)

by Rick Koller

I don't recall if we had a newsletter report for the Cheat Canyon last year on Memorial Weekend, but it was indeed memorable. Overall, it was great time on the river, but even more remarkable that day was the Miller Shuttle. Our group was large to start with, I believe about 15 or 16, and it grew along the way as often happens on these holiday river trips. Poor Glen Miller, his daughter and granddaughter became entangled in this “glomming” scenario. Multiple last minute glomers and additional paddle groups called the Millers and made reservations for the shuttle. As a result,

the Millers became confused. Glen is seriously compromised these days. He's forced to haul an oxygen bottle around with him so he can function and this didn't help the situation. Anyway, we got off the river and Glen didn't really have enough vehicles to get us out. Somehow we crammed and stuffed and jammed ourselves and boats into and onto his two trucks and successfully returned to Teters. The pictures (courtesy of Wendy Child) capture the arrival at Teters — notice the many relieved smiles.



RIVER MAINTENANCE (Continued from page 4)

clearers in boats and three chain saws and hand tools. At one point we had all three chain saws attacking one persnickity sycamore tree. The time before that we had a massive outpouring of paddlers who painted gauges and cleaned out streams. We had around five teams who branched out to four states and then we re-grouped for a second wave of work the second day. At one point Ernie Katz said "I don't know where I am, but there is river gauge here that needs work."

What we now need is some preliminary work of discovering which gauges and streams need to be the focus of our later work. If you know of some gauges that you can check as you drive around the countryside, let us know their condition so we can possibly work in those that need painting. If you have locations where we can create a gauge based on objective information, let us know that too in detail. Finally, let us know which streams desperately need to be cleared out for safe passage. The area we typically work are the Potomac and all tributaries, Cheat and all tributaries, Rappahannock and all tributaries, lower Susquehanna tributaries and Baltimore area rivers, Casselman, and maybe a few rivers just beyond these areas. For example, the Lost River put in has been discombobulated by the super highway construction. Anyone know what the true zero reading is at the put in?

Ed Evangelidi has a preliminary list of gauges that we used to work on, but there are many more streams out there that could use our help if you let us (Ed or Jenny) know about them.

**DRY TREASURER'S REPORT
STATEMENTS OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS**

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>Budget 2010</u>
Cash Balance, January 1	\$ 2,310	\$2,097	\$ 1,895	\$ 1,993	\$ 2,174
Receipts					
Memberships	1,245	1,353	1,281	1,124	1,100
Xmas Party	-	255	-	-	-
	<u>1,245</u>	<u>1,608</u>	<u>1,281</u>	<u>1,124</u>	<u>1,100</u>
Disbursements					
Equipment	111	-	-	-	300
Newsletter	751	696	402	421	500
Xmas Party/Picnic	416	721	423	308	500
Bank Charges	21	118	6		
Web Site	129	160	158	115	130
Other	30	115	192	99	130
	<u>1,458</u>	<u>1,810</u>	<u>1,183</u>	<u>943</u>	<u>1,560</u>
Cash Balance, December 31	<u>\$ 2,097</u>	<u>\$1,895</u>	<u>\$ 1,993</u>	<u>\$ 2,174</u>	<u>\$ 1,714</u>
Members	<u>83</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>81</u>	<u>80</u>
Conservation Fund					
Cash Balance, January 1	\$ 20	\$ 342	\$ 174	\$ 154	\$ 473
Receipts:					
Conservation	322	332	480	319	300
Disbursements:					
Conservation	-	(\$00)	(\$00)		(\$00)
Cash Balance, December 31	<u>\$ 342</u>	<u>\$ 174</u>	<u>\$ 154</u>	<u>\$ 473</u>	<u>\$ 373</u>
Flood Relief Fund	<u>\$ 500</u>	<u>\$ 500</u>	<u>\$ 500</u>	<u>\$ 500</u>	<u>\$ 500</u>

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 2010: January 13, March 24, May TBD, August 21 (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.

2010 BRV Officers: Rick Koller, President; Mark Wray, VP; Mike Martin & Daryl Hall, Trip Coordinators; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

2010 Board of Directors: Bill Collier, Ginny DeSeau, Ed Grove, Ron Knipling, 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 BRVers. 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.net), 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 BRVers. 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.net. 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

In this issue...

- Trip reports:
 - Middle Creek (p. 2)
 - Cabin John Creek (p. 3)
 - Florida rivers (p. 4)
- River maintenance planned (p. 1)
- Weather station history (p. 5)
- Memorable Miller shuttle (p. 6)
- Webster Wildwater Wknd. (p. 5)

Deadline for May *Voyageur*:
Friday, May 7th

NEXT MEETING
Wednesday, March 24th

2010 Membership Roster and Trip Schedule inside