

THE VOYAGEUR



www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org

September 2012

THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

As summer winds down, I look back at an interesting year as far as our club meetings have gone. We have had some unusual and interesting speakers, most notable I think was the presentation by Natalie Warren. She and her friend Ann Raiho paddled by canoe to Hudson's Bay from Minnesota, a very entertaining story accompanied with excellent visual imagery from their trip.

Now for the next installment of unusual meeting events, we will have VP Mark Wray's scout troop describing their adventures on the New River this past summer. It will be another youthful view of our favored pastime, should be a memorable meeting.

The annual Moonlight Picnic was again a great success although at one point there was some anxiety about the whereabouts of the chicken! We were all (except for Mark Wray) safely planted on one of the sand islands in the river swilling various chilled adult beverages and narfing snacks. Therefore, the potential peril was somewhat tempered, but some concern was still voiced when there was no sign of Mark and the chicken. "We never should have left him alone" it was declared, "he has the chicken!" "Yes, Yes, the chicken!" the call was repeated. Finally in the failing light an aluminum form was spotted approaching from upriver and a great sigh of relief swept the crowd. "Thank God the chicken is here at last!" Mark had gotten tangled up in the submarine jungle that now infests the river these days. His electric trolling motor had not the torque to combat these watery tendrils and he had to slog through with only his paddle and stamina. After beaching his canoe, the exhausted vice president was quickly pushed aside by the hungry horde. The all important coolers of beer and chicken were retrieved and a calm settled over the evening. And a fine time was had by all.

Rick

Passage Creek Strainer Cleared by Ron Knipling

If you've driven along Passage Creek during the summer months, you have probably noticed a medium-sized tree down at "The Red Hole," the slanted rock rapids and eddy near the road and just above "Z-Turn." Recently, using my trusty (but rusty) 18" bow saw, I was able to cut out almost all of the branches blocking the creek. The main tree trunk and some branches are still there, so you might want to road-scout that section carefully before your next Passage run.

Unfortunately, my little bow saw was not up to a second strainer-clearing task further downstream. Back in March, Mike Aronoff and I got stacked up against a strainer located in the shallow, high-water channel to the

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Float Your Boat

by Chris Gragtmans

[from Blue Ridge Outdoors, 29 May 2012]

The Appalachians are filled with world-class outdoor adventures. Within striking distance of many of the major cities in the Southeast are ski hills, mountain bike trails, gorgeous road biking opportunities, and perfect hiking and running getaways. One of the assets that truly stands out from the rest, however, is our rivers. We have more whitewater rivers than any other area in the country. So it's not surprising that the largest paddling community in the world has developed in this area. Whether you're looking for scenic flatwater paddles or steep creek descents, the Southern Appalachians are the place to be. Here are a few of our top river picks for a variety of adventure recipes.

WHITEWATER

New River Dries

There are a few rivers in the world that have played very large roles in the development of freestyle kayaking, and the New River Dries is certainly one of them. This section has catalyzed the wave-oriented era of kayaking and kayak design. At flows of 50-60,000 cfs, it is a massive, powerful river, capable of producing some of the largest river waves ever surfed. The highway bridge that crosses above the best of the waves creates an amphitheater setting, and the photos and video of these features have graced industry magazines and video. Years ago, the previously classic Laurel Creek was flooded and turned into an unnavigable rubble pile by a huge storm. That same

rubble flushed into the New riverbed and constricted the flow to create these perfect waves. As one classic died, another sprang to life. Once paddlers are too tired to surf the chaotic waves and dodge floating trees, the rest of the run offers up classic continuous big water that will have any whitewater snob nervous on the lead-in, and grinning on the way out. Fortunately, for less experienced paddlers, the Dries can be paddled with a tiered approach, and has great play from 18,000 cfs on the Thurmond gauge all the way up to 60,000 cfs and above.

Off River

Fayetteville is a rapidly growing hub for climbers, kayakers, mountain bikers, and other adventure sports athletes. One popular paddler's eatery is Gumbo's, which features a relaxed atmosphere fostered by the extremely friendly owner. It is the only Cajun restaurant in West Virginia, and the food is as delicious as it is unique.

Gauley River

How could any "best of" list be complete without the Gauley River? Between its upper and lower sections, this big water West Virginia classic has absolutely everything from world-class playboating to huge lines in heart pounding rapids. Don't miss out on this one during the very popular fall releases.

MULTIDAY ADVENTURE

Chattooga

Made famous by Burt Reynolds in

the 1972 film *Deliverance*, the Chattooga remains a protected river corridor with miles of beautiful, untouched whitewater and wilderness. Because of its sustained high quality rapids and ease of access from the major metropolises of Greenville and Atlanta, it is our top pick for multiday river trips. The Chattooga's headwaters flank Whiteside cliffs in North Carolina, and fall from the mountains to form the border of South Carolina and Georgia before terminating in Lake Tugaloo. The legally boatable stretch of the Chattooga, from Warwoman bridge down, is comprised of four distinct sections, which follow a convenient curve of difficulty from class I, II, III, and IV+. Each of these sections can be tackled in a day individually, but the Chattooga is an excellent river to pack the boats full of a couple days worth of supplies, and enjoy time around the campfire. Camping is allowed anywhere in the Chattooga River corridor as long as campsites are 50 feet from any stream or trail, and ¼ mile from any road. Top sites include Sandy Ford, Woodall Shoals, and a host of others... we've got to leave some for you to discover for yourself! Along the way, check out the views that surround this gorgeous river. For lunch stops and swimming, there are dozens of sandy beaches down its entire length, as well as Bull Sluice, which is an accessible class IV rapid just upstream of the Highway 76 bridge that provides the local sunbathing and swimming hangout. Seven Foot Falls at low water is a fasci-

nating maze of dry and submerged potholes that can be explored, and it's always worth a stop at Long Creek Falls on river left halfway down Section IV. Finally, check out the jump rocks below Shoulderbone Rapid, as well as the rock across the lake from the takeout on Lake Tugaloo.

Off River

With Bull Sluice as a focal point of the river, one convenient destination is the Chattooga Whitewater Outfitters and Humble Pie campus. These are under the same management, and provide a good stop for gear, information about paddling, hiking, camping and fishing options for the area, as well as pizza and beer to tell stories over.

New River

The New River as it flows north through Virginia is another classic multiday trip destination. There are myriad options available, and these sections are convenient for the Blacksburg and Virginia Tech crowds, with a backyard playspot at McCoy's.

STAND-UP PADDLEBOARDING

Potomac River

This river has a heritage as old as paddlesports themselves. The first waterfall ever run in a kayak was dropped by the McEwan brothers in the Great Falls section of the river, and since then it has been a focal point and enabler for the large Washington D.C. paddling scene. The same thing is now occurring in stand up paddleboarding, or SUP. Mather Gorge and the section below it are excellent paddleboarding destinations. These waterways are literally in the back-

yard of the city, but they still exude a wild and remote feeling. Multiple access points and rapid difficulties ranging from class I-IV mean that there is something there for every level of paddleboarder, and the moving water aspect of it means an endless learning curve is available. For advanced SUPers, check out the park and play waves at O-Deck or Rocky Island, and for a more mellow experience, it's possible to put in below the biggest rapids of the gorge at Angler's Inn. The Great Falls section is always an incredible sight to behold.

Off River

For Great Falls and Mather Gorge visitors, Vie de France is a perfect nearby food fix. The smoked turkey cob sandwich is a must try, and your dining experience will be rounded out by the nonstop procession of Lamborghinis and Ferraris driven by wealthy D.C. moguls.

Nantahala River

The Nantahala is a perfect river for paddleboarding. It is possible to demo boards and paddles in a class I controlled environment right outside of the NOC. Once comfortable, the accessible and scenic class II waters of the seven mile Nantahala Gorge are a perfect down-river run, culminating in class III Nantahala Falls for an added challenge.

STEEP CREEK

Toxaway River

It's like California... but bigger. Those words from Green Race champ Tommy Hilleke sound melodramatic, but they are a perfect description of what the Toxaway experience is like for class V paddlers who dare to ven-

ture into her gorges. Like the granite lunar landscapes of the California Sierra Nevada, the Toxaway also has miles upon miles of smooth bedrock that host the largest and most photogenic cascades on the eastern side of the continent. Rapids with names like Space Mountain, Energizer, Feeding Trough, 40-40, Landbridge, and Wintergreen must be navigated to safely take out and hike 3.5 miles uphill to your vehicle at Frozen Creek Road. Paddling the Toxaway truly is like operating on another plane of reality. The first descent occurred in 1978, and took Keith Backlund and crew three days to complete. The river remained the stuff of legends until 2002 and 2003, when modern equipment and paddler skill level sparked its popularity as a day run for the best of the best. It is still one of the most challenging rivers in the country with brutal portages and an unrelenting riverbed that tops out at a gradient of 632 feet per mile. If you have the skills needed, get in touch with locals who know the way, and be sure to notify Gorges State Park of your descent, especially if hiking out after dark is a possibility.

Off River

The nearby town of Brevard is an excellent recap destination after an intense day of altitude loss. If you want to spoil yourself a bit, check out Square Root, an excellent restaurant located down a quiet downtown alley.

Bottom Creek

This Virginia gem is by far the state's most intense steep creek. It is four miles long, and will test any

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Deep Creek Open/U.S. Nationals Event Schedule

Schedule Subject to Change

Date	Time	Event	Meeting Place
Thursday, September 6			
	10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Athlete Check-in	ASCI Classroom
	12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Late Registration	ASCI Classroom
	12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Boat Control	Beside Boat Barn, Lower Pond
	1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Open Practice	ASCI
Friday, September 7			
	9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Athlete Check-in	ASCI Classroom
	9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Late Registration	ASCI Classroom
	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Open Practice	ASCI
	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Boat Control	Beside Boat Barn, Lower Pond
	4:00 p.m.	Bib Pick-up/Competitor's Meeting	Event Tent
	5:00 p.m.	Demonstration Runs	
Saturday, September 8			
	9:45 a.m.	Forerunners	
	10:00 a.m.	Slalom 1st Runs	
	11:30 a.m.	Lunch Break	
	12:30 p.m.	Slalom 2nd Runs	
	5:00 p.m.	Demonstration Runs	
	6:30 p.m.	Dinner	Event Tent
	8:30 p.m.	Live Entertainment	Stage
Sunday, September 9			
	9:00 a.m.	Competitor's Meeting (If needed)	Event Tent
	9:45 a.m.	Forerunners	
	10:00 a.m.	Slalom Finals 1st Runs	
	11:30 a.m.	Lunch Break	
	12:30 p.m.	Slalom Finals 2nd Runs	
	2:30 p.m.	Awards Ceremony	Stage

Classes:

K1, K1W, C1, C1W, C2, C2W, C2Mix

Note: Must have 3 entries to be considered a class.

Course:

Slalom races will be held on the Adventure Sports Center International Course (ASCI).

Race:

Finals will be held for both A&B Flights. "A" flight being the top 10 paddlers + up to 10 U.S. Paddlers after Day 1. "B" flight will be remaining paddlers.

Entry Fees:

Slalom: \$100 per person for first class plus \$25 for each additional class.

USACK membership required for U.S. Entries. If you are not a member or wish to join for this event only, go to: www.member.usack.org

Additional Water Time:

Day passes for water may be purchased through ASCI for \$20 per day, if the course is operating for rafters. Please note - slalom gates will not be available on the competition portion of the course at those times. Call for available times.

For private water time, please contact Suzanne Nicolas at ASCI, 301-387-3250.

Meals:

Dinner and entertainment will be provided Saturday evening.

Registration:

Registration is available online at www.adventuresportscenter.com. Registration forms, waivers, and fees must arrive at the ASCI office by Wednesday, September 5th. We regret that we cannot be responsible for mail that is not delivered by this date; please mail your forms early to ensure delivery or use online registration. On-site registration with an additional \$15 late fee will be accepted Thursday, September 6, from 12-4:00 p.m. and Friday, September 7th, from 9-11 a.m. There will be no race-day registration.

Please mail completed entry form, USACK waiver, and entry fee to the following address:

Deep Creek Open/U.S. Nationals
c/o ASCI
250 Adventure Sports Way
McHenry, MD 21541

For additional information or questions or if you would like to volunteer to help with this race contact Suzanne Nicolas at email: snicolas@deepcreek2014.com

Even more paddling options by Ed Evangelidi

Throughout the last century there was a net loss of small streams as they were paved over for subdivisions. There now is a movement in Maryland and surrounding areas to uncover many of these lost streams to improve the environment. Just when paddlers like Steve Ettinger checked off paddling anything and everything larger than a ditch comes uncovered streams that haven't seen the light of day for decades. Most of these are in urban areas around Baltimore & Washington for obvious reasons — the high cost of buildable land. The classic "paved over" stream is Jones Falls below Round Falls. There is talk of restoring this watershed but it is not likely anytime soon. However, in Baltimore County, sections of Gwynns Run, Stony Run, Glen Spring and an unnamed creek across from the Timonium Fairground are either restored or about to be. Then we'll have to go way back into the archives to see whether these ever had been paddled or are fair game for first descents. Researchers from the University of Maryland are literally uncovering these long lost tributaries.

PASSAGE (Continued from page 1)

left of the island above the Fish Hatchery Dam. It was a pretty dicey situation and took the quick help of a third boater to get us out of it. This strainer is a ~10" tree trunk located just after the entrance to the left channel. You can run this left channel only when Passage is running at about +10" or more. On this day, we had more than a foot of water (~450cfs), and the left passage looked clear from the top. But the tree trunk was just below the surface and it was a stopper! My 18" bow saw was too small to cut it, but I'll try to get back with a bigger bow saw or maybe even get out the big bad chainsaw. For now, assume that this left channel is blocked and dangerous.

Some summers I am able to walk most of Passage to check for other strainers, particularly in the braided area below the Fish Hatchery. I haven't done that this year yet, so exercise the usual caution in that area.

FLOAT (Continued from page 3)
extreme kayaker's abilities on its many rapids, waterfalls, and slides.

CANOE EXPEDITION

James River

The James is Virginia's largest river, and by the time it empties into the Chesapeake Bay, it drains 25 percent of the state's water. Due to its sustained moving water for 12 successive boating sections, and the fact that its currents run the gamut from untouched wilderness paddling to urban after-work fixes, it proudly earns top honors for our Canoe Expedition category. The James originates in the mountainous western part of the state, and initially offers up many miles of pristine, untouched class I floating with excellent scenery and smallmouth bass fishing throughout. One particularly beautiful section runs from Route 43 at Eagle Rock to Route 630 at Springwood. This section is mostly flatwater with small class I ledges, but paddlers are treated to complete privacy, and endless national forest land to camp on. Another option is to paddle to Alpine and camp overnight, make the trip to Natural Bridge on day two, and then finishing out the third day with the popular Balcony Falls section. Balcony Falls is the most popular beginner/intermediate section of the James, with mostly class II and one class III in Balcony Falls. This section features surf waves and countless jump rocks, and is very accessible from I-81 and the Roanoke area. Another very popular section of the James is the class II-IV stretch that runs directly through downtown Richmond. Options abound on this

stretch of river, and it offers a perfect way to clear out the cobwebs after a day in the office.

Off River

One deeply rooted business in the canoe world is Twin River Outfitters in Buchanan, Va. Services run the gamut from tube, kayak, and canoe rental to full service guided overnight trips on a variety of river sections.

French Broad River

The French Broad provides a perfect foundation for a canoe trip as it flows out of the dramatic peaks near Brevard, N.C. This river provides consistent class I for nearly 80 miles in its trip to Asheville, and it is now possible to break the long journey up with a series of new campsites from the Western North Carolina Alliance. Rent a kayak or canoe from Asheville Adventure Rentals, located right next to the river and near a convenient takeout at The Bywater.

WILD RIVER

Linville River

The Linville Gorge embodies "wild" better than any other waterway east of the Mississippi. This river begins its journey on the slopes of Peak Mountain and Sugar Mountain, and winds its way inconspicuously through the high country until Linville Falls. It is there that the river drops off the face of the earth, and does not slow down until 17 miles and 2,000 vertical feet later, when it empties into Lake James. This gorge is referred to as the "Grand Canyon of North Carolina," and draws diehard paddlers, hikers, and climbers from around the region to test their mettle and witness the spectacular

scenery that the river gives up around every corner. Highlights include the Babel Tower, Table Rock, Sitting Bear, and Hawks Bill promontories. The gorge is in fact so rugged that many areas of it were never logged, and are still covered with old growth forest. The Linville has cut its way into the billion-year-old core of the Blue Ridge, and at points sheer walls rise straight out of the river. This is a dream for deep-water solo climbers, and only enhances the expedition feeling of kayaking the river. For paddlers, the same granitic gneiss that has allowed for the dramatic gorge to be carved is also a serious hazard, with many hidden sieves and undercuts. The most popular section from Babel Tower to Conley Cove requires top-notch class V water reading and paddling skills, but as long as the right lines are taken, the whitewater is nothing short of brilliant. This river is also an excellent overnighter, starting at Linville Falls, camping at Babel Tower, and continuing down to the lake the next day.

Off River

Check out the powerful and beautiful Linville Falls. A number of vantage points are available via a hike from the parking area, and watching the entire river drop into that massive chasm is nothing short of mesmerizing.

Obed River

The Obed River is a spectacular National Wild and Scenic River, and it carries limitless potential for paddlers, hikers, and climbers. The beautiful whitewater on the main river and its tributaries is accessible to Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Nashville enthusiasts.

Life on L'Edge by Ron Knipling

Like a lot of longtime open boaters, I have slowly evolved from big boats to smaller ones. My very first solo paddling was in a 17'2" Old Town Tripper! Then a 15'9" Blue Hole OCA, and then for many years a 14' Whitesel Piranha. For the past 10+ years I have mostly paddled two 12' Mohawk models, the Probe 12-2 and the Viper 12. I thought these were close to state-of-the-art, but a few years ago I started seeing much smaller OC-1s on the river. Most were produced by Esquif boats of Canada, and they included several small Esquif models such as the *Zoom*, *Nitro*, *Paradigm*, *Detonator*, and *L'Edge*. I paddled a Zoom for about 30 minutes on the Pejibaye River in Costa Rica. This included 10 minutes going forward, 10 minutes backwards, and 10 minutes spinning. Way too squirrely! I talked to just about everyone I saw in one of these small Esquif boats to get their opinions of them. The 9'2" L'Edge seemed to get the best reviews. The sweetest adjective I heard was "stable!" So last month, on the way to a Lehigh release, I stopped at Lancaster County Marine (a mega boat retailer) and bought one.

If you want to buy a L'Edge, there are two important decisions to make. The first is lay-up. You can buy it in a typical OC-1 lay-up (i.e., with gunnels and airbags filling both ends) or you can buy it decked like a C-1 (but with no skirt). The cockpits and hulls of the two models are the same. The cockpit has a "bulkhead style" foam saddle, knee padding, foam sidewalls, and adjustable foot pegs. The polyethylene hull is moderately rockered, with hard edges and chines. The OC-1 lay-up is heavier because of its wooden gunnels. To me it seemed more natural, though, in part because gear like water bottles and throw bags would be more accessible. It looked better, too, in my opinion. The second decision, far more important, is color: red or lime green. Both are garish and glaring, but only the lime green is actually painful to the eyes. That was the choice.

I've paddled the L'Edge five times now, including runs on the Staircase, Little Falls, and the Lehigh. It's fun and, as promised, amazingly stable for its size. The initial stability is excellent and the secondary stability very good, in my opinion. Even though the L'Edge is 2" shorter than the Zoom, it feels completely different. In my 30 minutes in the Zoom I was frantically trying to re-learn paddling, whereas paddling the L'Edge was completely natural from the start. It boofs well and of course makes quick, snappy turns. No eddy or wave is too small! The L'Edge saddle is the most comfortable and feels the most secure of any boat I have paddled. The constant sight of the bright yellow bags against the lime green hull is like drinking an extra cup of coffee, but without the jitters. Speaking of jitters, I thought I would be intimidated by bigger waves and hydraulics in the L'Edge, but so far it is just more fun. The boat is surprisingly dry.

Its positives outweigh its negatives, but there are a few negatives. The boat is heavy for its size – the spec weight for the OC-1 lay-up is 56 pounds, about the same as my 12' boats. The decked version would have been lighter. I usually have to carry the boat using three points – my two arms and my head up into the saddle. This works pretty well, until I break my neck doing it! The same weight in a smaller area means the L'Edge draws more than larger boats. You can't bail the boat – no place to scoop – but a hand pump might work. An electric pump would add too much weight, in my opinion. It's a little slow for its size, too. It tracks in flat water much like my Mohawks, which is to say not at all. For all of these boats I find it easier and kinder on my joints to just switch hands to keep the boat straight in flat water.

Regardless of these complaints, I'm having fun paddling this boat. Now it's time to go out to some harder rivers to push L'Edge!

Upcoming Trips

Sep 15-16	New River Gorge/Lower Gauley	A	Charlie Duffy	Charlie_duffy@yahoo.com
Oct 28-29	NJ Pine Barrens Car Camper	N	Ed Evangelidi	evedange@localnet.com

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 2012: January 24, March 13, May 8, August 4 (Moonlight Picnic), September 11, November TBD, December 8 (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.

2012 BRV Officers: Rick Koller, President; Mark Wray, VP; Mike Martin & Daryl Hall, Trip Coordinators; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

2012 Board of Directors: 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

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Deadline for November Voyageur:
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