

# THE VOYAGEUR



[www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org](http://www.BlueRidgeVoyageurs.org)

Spring 2014

## THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

Club news is a bit sparse this season. The persistent cold weather has many of us hunkered down. In January the board did have a meeting and Clark Childers outlined the club's financial health for us [*see page 7 — Ed.*]. As a consequence we will be purchasing a new digital projector and laptop to run it. We need to update our digital capacity a bit. I will report on the new equipment when we get it.

A few of us got out a few weeks ago during a mini thaw and it was a welcome release of pent up paddle angst.

Spring is right around the corner and not a bit too soon. Hope to see more of you on the rivers.

Rick

## Passage Creek, February 2014 by Rick Koller

Kim Buttleman, Court Ogilvie and I dusted off the frozen bugs and icicles from our boats and headed out to an old favorite paddling target. The day was a blue sky warm respite from the grim months we have all been enduring this year. Passage Creek was flowing with about 350-400 cfs. This is a really enjoyable level for anyone but a novice in my opinion. The water was extremely cold but zesty in spirit and my feet were ice blocks at the end of the day but it was worth it. I hadn't run the creek in 4 years and not in winter for many.

We arrived at the put-in in Fort Valley fairly early around 9:30 and were greeted with crowds of trout fishermen. The trout stocking schedule had coincided with our boating plans. Not to worry though, there was plenty of room on the stream to steer clear of the many rods poking out over the bank. The water was not clear and the guys were mostly not catching anything and soon started thinning out as we progressed downstream. And downstream was a hoot in the rapids, plus there were no strainers anywhere on the stretch we ran.

We all know Passage very well and had a great time reminiscing about our initial adventures; it is a really classic Blue Ridge voyage. I very nearly had a very bad broach above Out of Sight Rapid; my lackadaisical couch potato strokes nearly cost me a swim and/or wrapped boat. The wily geezer experience paid off however and I escaped dry and with intact craft. My companions had no such encounters with mayhem.

We took out at the fish hatchery and packed up in brilliant sunshine. We were dazzled by Court's latest filming device which he was demonstrating as we put on dry clothes. He's planning on putting it into action this coming season. More on that from him. Overall the day was fantastic and I was glad I had not sniveled and put it off. I highly recommend one and all to visit Fort Valley and experience Passage Creek, a whitewater gem.

## Hell, Arrest, Near Death, Whiskey George, Thank You Ma'am by Ed Evangelidi

Boating trips start out in different ways and long trips often go in different directions. This trip started out by my noticing an 8 day trip on the Ochlockonee River in the Florida Panhandle and a week long trip on the Satilla River in southeastern Georgia. While neither river is high on my list of desirable paddling adventures and the two rivers are hundreds of miles apart, it formed the basis of an exploration of new areas for me. With a little bit of additional exploration, I'd have a pleasant 2-3 week adventure in the last half of March — or so I thought.

The Ocklockonee trip was set in stone and fully outfitted. 35 participants (mostly in kayaks) would paddle this trip. I decided to go down a bit early and paddle around a bit before the trip. My drive down started along with some snow flakes around Winchester, Virginia. By the time I left Virginia I had a full state of snow squalls, none of which was predicted. The rest of the driving was uneventful. I decided to explore the huge Apalachicola River area adjacent to the Ocklockonee. The area has 100 miles of river and hundreds of miles of creeks and consists primarily of the Apalachicola National Forest, Tates Hell State Forest and the Apalachicola River Wildlife and Environmental Area. Camping is plentiful in the area with the N.F. costing \$10/site (\$5 seniors) with some areas having showers and some not; S.F. charging \$10/site and WMA having free primitive camping. I recommend the Wright Lake federal C.G. and Butcher Pen

Landing (free) for camping bases.

What to explore? My best map source was a WMA map (found under [www.myFWC.com/recreation](http://www.myFWC.com/recreation) and search under "publications"), and with many streams to choose, I fixated on two: Thank You Ma'am and Whiskey George Creeks. With names like that, how could I lose? Thank You Ma'am has an optional easy bike shuttle and is known for spring and fall wild flowers, but I was a bit early. Whiskey George has clearer tannic water and is a good bit longer exploration, but bring a saw to visit either creek further up into the prettier wilds. By the way, be sure to sample the seafood, shellfish and tupelo honey that the area is known for.

On to the Ocklockonee, about the size of the Rappahannock below Fredericksburg with scenery as nice as the Rap. above Fredericksburg. I meet the group at the take-out and arrive early — big mistake. By the time the shuttle is arranged I look like I have measles as the biting gnats are fierce around the bay. (Meanwhile the Satilla River is too low to paddle.) Anyway, "most" of the 76 miles of river is quite pleasant. Even better if you can swing it is the section upstream around the Fl./Ga. border. The last 12 miles of my paddle is a wide open bay and I would not recommend it. With 25 m.p.h. headwinds and an incoming tide I was a bit concerned, but the group was gung ho. After an hour or so I'm in the middle of the bay with no other boats nearby and making tough progress. At one

point I look left and notice I'm even with a building in the distance — again. Realizing that I'm not going to make my landing way in front of me, I decide to try something risky. I turn broadside to the wind and try for the right shore. This could easily result in a swim but I'm lucky and do not catch an upsetting gust of wind. However, I've been paddling flat out for many hours and losing strength. I get to a point where I'm doubtful I can make it but somehow I manage to make landfall. Too tired to get out of my boat (my arms are trembling), I sit there for a few minutes and then drink some fluids and eat a chocolate bar. Realizing that I do not have the strength to continue paddling forward I size up my location on a private small beach. Noticing that most of the shoreline is less than waist deep I decide to slog forward in the surf dragging my boat. Doing this, I finally arrive at the 9 mi. rest stop and again take a long rest. It turns out that of the 30 boaters, only one was able to paddle the scheduled 12 miles. Some hailed passing motor boats for a rescue. But I was somehow alive and tired.

Meanwhile the Satilla group had changed to another river that I had done a few times as it was now too high to paddle in Georgia. Not to worry as another group I had kept in touch with was in the area and was much closer to my location. Moving on.

So far I've been through a minor blizzard, Hell (Tates Hell is named for a guy who went through hell by

being lost here in the warmer, insect season) and near death in a bay, as well as enjoying Whiskey George and Thank You Ma'am creeks. What next? Well, it turns out that a major rain storm was coming and we had to hunker down for two days. In addition, a dental emergency, two flat tires and a serious facial infection laid our group low. Time to abandon Florida and head upstream. The Apalachicola forms where the Flint & Chattahoochee Rivers come together at the Ga./Fl./Al. state line. I had paddled both tribs. but not their tribs. I was eager to paddle in Alabama for the first time.

We paddled the Omusee, Abbie and Middle Fork of Cowikee Creeks. These creeks are about the size of Rappahannock tributaries but with one difference: the creeks are V shaped and the banks are very steep. This creates nice scenery but tough, steep access. At one point I lost my footing on loose rock and fell onto some rocks, lying prone but still holding on to my boat at a 45 degree angle. Moving on to the South Fork of Cowikee Creek, we were negotiating a strainer when we heard a yell — by a person obviously in a uniform. We were obliged to paddle back up (and again cross an area with thorny bushes — my feet were bloody at this point) and provide our drivers licenses to face arrest for paddling a non navigable

### More from Ed...:

West Virginia Department of Natural Resources [[www.wvdnr.gov](http://www.wvdnr.gov)] has actually gone beyond primarily concerning itself with hunters and fishermen and updated useful info on paddling and hiking in the state. Go to their website and click on fishing, then float trips and you will get basic info (put ins, take outs, mileages) on 25 “float trips,” from the familiar Cacapon, New, Shenandoah and South Branch Potomac, to stuff poorly written up in the WV guidebook, to stuff not in the guidebook. Keep this in mind if you are looking to expand your coverage of WV. The section of the Elk River that goes by the recent chemical spill is covered in the guide. Also check under hunting for some info on lesser known hiking areas.

stream (which we were obviously paddling with enough water to paddle). Turns out the officer's definition of “navigable” limits one to what we would not care to paddle: motor boat type creeks. Seems that the great paddling streams of Alabama that are regularly paddled may be considered non navigable. Turns out that American Whitewater has a state by state rundown of “navigable waters” and we were O.K. on some points but possibly not O.K. on others.

From Hell to near death to a possible criminal record with severe weather, severe car and severe health issues thrown in. How much more fun can one have? But wait — we still had time on our hands and we were at the Georgia border. So we decided to paddle one more small stream in Georgia. Setting a take out car and driving to the put in we kept making U-turns. Seems the former put in was now not there as the former public land access area was now no longer public. With no other put in available we were again forced to take another non boating day and go hiking.

I'll be back in Florida this December to see whether the on-river or off-river adventures are more interesting. But Alabama????

### Website Updates from Mike Martin:

The home page now has a mini gallery of images from and a link to Court. O.'s Whitewater Funhouse video, and oldie but goody. Also, the links page has been updated to remove deadwood and make it a good place to click from to figure out whatever it is you want to know about area boating. It remains a work in progress; suggestions wanted. Calendar page is updated. Thanks to Bob Maxey for his great work filling out the schedule (and of course to those who scheduled trips). I'd like to update the photo galleries, but would like to solicit ideas about the best way to do it in the age of social media. Creating club-wide access to Flickr/Picasa galleries and maybe a Youtube gallery seems to be the way to go; that way folks could upload whatever images and captions they wish.

## Memorial Day 2013 Retrospective by Mike Martin

An intrepid crew showed up at Teeters for Memorial Day weekend last year despite unseasonably low temperatures: frost in the mornings, dry suits instead of bathing suits on the river.



*Jim Pruitt and the gang, running something somewhere*



*Court Caldwell above Audra*



*A friendly assist*



*No splashing!*



*Chow time*



*Kim Buttleman on the Narrows*

## **BRV Supports River Conservation Groups**

**by Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation Chair**

BRV is continuing our tradition of supporting conservation groups that work to protect the rivers we enjoy. At its meeting in January, the Board agreed to donate \$50 each (\$75 to American Whitewater in order to maintain our affiliate club status) to ten deserving organizations, which are described below.

**Alice Ferguson Foundation** organizes the annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup, which cleans up rivers and streams throughout the Potomac watershed. Many BRV members participate in the cleanup. The Foundation also shares the wonder and excitement of the Potomac River with thousands of students, teachers and citizens every year. [www.potomaccleanup.org](http://www.potomaccleanup.org)

**American Whitewater** works to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. American Whitewater is the primary advocate for the protection of whitewater rivers throughout the United States and represents a diverse group of individual whitewater enthusiasts, river conservationists and local paddling clubs. [www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org)

**Cacapon Institute** uses science and education to protect rivers and watersheds from the Cacapon to the Potomac to the Chesapeake Bay. [www.cacaponinstitute.org](http://www.cacaponinstitute.org)

**Friends of the Cheat** restores, preserves, and promotes the outstanding natural qualities of the Cheat River. [www.cheat.org](http://www.cheat.org)

**Friends of the Rappahannock** works to maintain the water quality and scenic beauty of the Rappahannock River and its tributaries. [www.riverfriends.org](http://www.riverfriends.org)

**Friends of the Shenandoah River** is dedicated to the protection and restoration of the aquatic environment of the Shenandoah River. [www.fosr.org](http://www.fosr.org)

**Potomac Conservancy** safeguards the lands and waters of the Potomac River and its tributaries by advocating sound policy and promoting thoughtful land management. [www.potomac.org](http://www.potomac.org)

**Potomac Riverkeeper & Shenandoah Riverkeeper** work to stop pollution and restore clean water in the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers and tributaries through enforcement and community engagement. [www.potomacriverkeeper.org](http://www.potomacriverkeeper.org)

**River Network** is a national watershed protection movement that empowers local communities. River Network includes nearly 2,000 state, regional and local grassroots organizations whose primary mission is to protect rivers and watersheds. [www.rivernetwork.org](http://www.rivernetwork.org)

**West Virginia Rivers Coalition** seeks the conservation and restoration of West Virginia's rivers and streams for the benefit of all who depend upon them: wildlife; West Virginia residents; those who visit for recreation; and those who live downstream. [www.wvrivers.org](http://www.wvrivers.org)

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

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>Budget 2014</u>
Cash Balance, January 1	\$ 2,174	\$2,390	\$ 2,940	\$ 1,925	\$ 2,967
Receipts					
Memberships	1,095	1,420	777	1,881	1,170
Disbursements					
Newsletter	318	232	252	322	350
Xmas Party/Picnic	300	400	1,202	187	500
Web Site	104	104	110	110	110
Other	156	54	128	122	200
Equipment	-	-	-	-	500
Transfer to conservation	-	-	-	-	200
	<u>882</u>	<u>870</u>	<u>1,792</u>	<u>1,039</u>	<u>1,885</u>
Cash Balance, December 31	\$ 2,390	\$ 2,940	\$ 1,925	\$ 2,207	\$ 1,572
Members	<u>82</u>	<u>102</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>105</u>	<u>90</u>
Conservation Fund					
Cash Balance, January 1	\$ 173	\$ 296	\$ 685	\$ (51)	\$ (20)
Receipts:					
Conservation	328	399	254	326	350
Fund Relief	-	-	-	500	-
Transfer	-	-	-	-	200
Disbursements					
Conservation	<u>(600)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(1,000)</u>	<u>(600)</u>	<u>(525)</u>
Cash Balance, December 31	\$ 396	\$ 695	\$ (61)	\$ (26)	\$ (1)

**Wanted:** old kayak. A friend is looking for an inexpensive, entry-level kayak (and paddle) for paddling Class 1-3 streams. He is about 6', 180lbs. Contact Ron Knipling, 703-533-2895, rknipling@aol.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 4 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 dates to be announced via email in January, March, May, September, November. The Moonlight Picnic will be on July 12 and the Holiday Party will be on December 6; details to be provided in the Summer and Winter newsletters, respectively. 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.

**2014 BRV Officers:** Rick Koller, President; Mark Wray, VP; Mike Martin & Daryl Hall, Trip Coordinators; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

**2014 Board of Directors:** Ginny DeSeau, 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](mailto: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](mailto: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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- Ed's Southern trip (p. 2)
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**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, May 7th

**Deadline for Summer *Voyageur*:**  
Friday, June 6th

**2014 Trip Schedule and Membership Roster inside!**