

# THE VOYAGEUR



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

Summer 2016

## THE PRESIDENT'S PUT-IN

The next meeting for the membership will be the annual moonlight picnic on July 16. Stay tuned for updates from Mark Wray.

Rick

## San Juan River, Utah, 23-29 May by Kerry Fico

*[Jenny Thomas was the permit holder for this trip, but was unfortunately unable to go at the last minute. A big thank you to Jenny for all the pre-trip coordination as well as loaning us a couple needed pieces of gear and river maps, and we look forward to joining you and Kim on a future Western trip. — Ed.]*

On the morning of May 20<sup>th</sup>, I rolled out of bed and joined my family in the loaded car to begin our journey out West to the San Juan River. It would be 3 long days across the country to reach our destination. We made pretty good time, stopping briefly in Memphis, meeting up with good friends Wes and Ryan Mills to tour the Gibson Guitar Factory and have lunch, then continued on our way. We parted ways with the Mills' in New Mexico, when they headed to Durango to pick up the raft and accessories for the week.

After picking up our week's supply of food from Walmart on the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, we headed to Mexican Hat, Utah, where the put-in is located. It was brutally hot at the Mexican Hat boat launch, and there was hardly any shade to protect us from the blazing sun while we loaded our boats. We met up with the final members of our group, Glen Johnston and Jo Cox, at the put-in as well. While the shuttle-

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## 2016 BRV MOONLIGHT PICNIC

**LOCATION:** The usual **Violette's Lock/Virginia Canal Loop**, off River Road, north of Potomac, MD.

**DATE:** **Saturday, July 16th, 2016**

**TIME:** Meet at Violette's Lock parking lot at **5:00 PM**. Canoe/kayak departure at approximately 5:30 PM; return to Violette's Lock approximately 10:30 PM (or whenever you like).

**BRING:** Food (see below), blanket/chairs as desired, water, bug repellent, flashlight(s).

**FOOD:** Bring a dish to feed at least eight people, as follows:

**A-G:** salads, uncooked veggies, fruit dish

**H-N:** desserts, snacks

**O-Z:** pasta, casserole, cooked veggies, rice, etc.

Be sure to bring serving utensils for your dish, if needed. BRV will provide chicken, drinks (soda, wine and beer — approximately two per person).

**COST:** **\$10** for adults, **\$5** for children 2-12 years old, **free** for those under 2.

**RSVP:** Mark Wray will be sending an email reminder the week before. Please respond to the email or give Mark a call at 703-222-4842 by **Thursday, July 14th**.

**CAMPING:** It is permissible to camp at the picnic site, so if you would like to do so, bring your gear.

**PARKING:** Parking at Violette's Lock is unrestricted (except that you will need to get a permit for overnight parking), but there is little police surveillance. This has not been a high theft location in the past, but please do not leave valuables in your vehicles!

## Rappahannock Camper March 24-25, 2016 by Ron Knipling

Each year I like to do 2-3 canoe campers, usually two-day trips with one night on the river. Smokehole Canyon (from the low-water bridge to Petersburg) is my favorite, but there are many possibilities. I had never previously paddled the 24-mile Rappahannock camper from Kellys Ford to Motts Landing above Fredericksburg, perhaps because I thought it would be flat and slow. I finally did it on March 24-25, convincing friend Will Greene to join me. This camper was also announced as a Thursday Group option, but no other paddlers joined us.

We had sufficient water for the run with Remington at 4.2' (~700cfs) and Fredericksburg at 3.1' (~1,400cfs). The river current was steady and there was no scraping at this level. More water would have been welcomed to speed the current, however. The 24 miles included 7-8 rapids qualifying as Class 2 or 2+, some requiring strenuous river-wide maneuvering, not easy with a boat full of gear. There might have been 25-30 Class 1 rapids also, but most of the trip was flat with steady current. It never got tedious until the last few miles above Motts Landing where the wide river was slow.

Very helpful was a Rappahannock River Water Trail Overview Map obtained from The Friends of the Rappahannock (\$8 on their website). The map covers the 33 miles from Kellys Ford to Fredericksburg and shows rapids, potential campsites, roads, and river access points. It also covers 19 miles of the Rapidan.

Roughly 75% of the river bank along the 24 miles is protected by conservation easements held by the City of Fredericksburg. Only 9-10 houses are visible from the river, and most of these are on hilltops away from the water. There are wooded hills along much of the river, and some of these had interesting rock formations. Most striking was a formation and rapid called Snake Castle on river left seven miles below Kellys Ford.

Our trip was uneventful except for late afternoon of the first day when wind gusts reached 30-40 mph. We had our hands full keeping our boats on track and heading forward in the wind. In addition to other wildlife



we saw four eagles, one patiently sitting on a nest ~40' above us.

A lot of history is evident going down the river. There are various remains of old mills, canal locks, and bypass channels. On river right at the Rap-Rap confluence there is a long high rock wall of a bypass canal. Behind our river left campsite were two lines of Civil War trench earthworks, apparently built by Union forces as they faced South across the river.

*Ron Knipling runs Lower Landslide, Smokehole Canyon*

### Note to the Blue Ridge Voyageurs:

It was just about 10 years ago when I was loading my canoe about to start a trip down Antietam Creek that I slipped on some loose pebbles on a flat limestone face and took a bad tumble breaking my femur just below the ball, leading to a half hip operation at Sibley the next day. That metal piece has been no trouble to me, and a total left knee replacement a year ago has also been a great success. John Lentz who drove me to the hospital is no longer with us as is Steve Ettinger. I enjoyed many great trips with both. For a number of years Macaluso organized the Thursday paddling group and we had great trips. One time on Passage Creek I tried to pull the founder of Clyde's off a stump and almost drowned him when the water went over his face. Fortunately help came quick and we pulled him all the way off. The purpose of this note is to thank everyone at BRV for all the great times I had with the group. My knees make it difficult to do white water, but I bought a 10 foot Hornbeck canoe-yak that weighs 15 lbs. and my wife and I use it on the lakes around Rockville. It is open, but you sit like a kayak and use a kayak paddle. I get my exercise now biking and am on my 9<sup>th</sup> trip to Cumberland on the towpath doing 10 mile stretches at a time. One of my great memories is a camping trip with Ron Knipling on the South Branch. In the middle of the night answering a call he stepped into a cow muffin and spread the perfume around his tent. Best wishes to all in the club.

— Bob Youker, bobyouker@att.net

*[I was on that Antietam trip when Bob broke his hip (March 11, 2006 according to my river database). I knew he had started doing a lot of biking, and I'm glad he has been able to keep it up. Best wishes to you as well, Bob — the BRV is a better club because of folks like you. — Ed.]*

### From the Editor:

I've been the editor of *The Voyager* for over 20 years, and I am ready to pass the reins on to someone else (who does not need to commit for a 20-year term!). The job entails a few hours of dedicated work once per quarter; probably less time with more modernized web-based editing/publishing software. I am looking to depart by the end of the year, so I will continue for the next two issues of the newsletter. Please consider volunteering for this important club position. I can address any questions or concerns you may have.

I am also interested in transitioning the job of membership maintenance. With membership now well under 100, this has become

much more manageable. And with the possibility of on-line renewals, this job could really become streamlined. Please think about it.

— Frank Fico, fico1@netzero.net



*Wrapped canoe seen on North River VA below Stokesville (photo by Ron Knipling)*



The group at the Mexican Hat put-in, ready to launch.



Kerry and Jamie at Horn Point, halfway up the Honaker Trail.

*SAN JUAN (Continued from page 1)*

runners, Jamie, Frank, Ryan, and Glen went to drop our vehicles at the take out, Bridget, Jo, Wes, and I began loading up our raft and duckies. We finally launched our boats at around 5:00 PM, getting a late start, but with a short ride ahead.

Our first camp, 32 Mile, was only about 5 miles from Mexican Hat. It seemed to take no time at all, and before I had even had time to acclimate to the feeling of the raft, we arrived at camp. We had the benefit of unpacking our gear after the sun was lowering, so it wasn't as brutally hot as some of our other camps. As we unpacked the groover, however, we made a troubling realization. Blue groover goo was oozing out of the opening, which looked to be sealed properly but apparently wasn't. For the rest of our trip, the groover stayed wrapped in a large garbage bag just in case anything other than blue goo made its way out. The next morning, more tragedy struck. As we were packing up our gear, a huge gust of wind blew through

camp and carried my sister's and my tent straight into the 10mph rushing river. Oops, guess we took the stakes out too early. There was a period of panic from all four members of the family as we watched the tent, now decently far away from camp, start to sink into the opaque water. Thankfully, my dad acted quickly, jumping into a ducky and chasing down the lost tent. After finally packing up camp and launching, the group found him just downstream, painstakingly lining the ducky with tent up the shoreline after having chased the tent downstream for over a mile. Miraculously, the tent was still intact so Jamie and I were not forced to sleep outside for the remainder of the trip.

Our goal for night two was to snag a prime campsite near the Honaker Trail.

These camps are highly competitive, and we passed several groups hoping to camp there as well, but luckily we arrived first, going 12.5 miles for the day. Early the next morning, before the sun hit our camp, we began the hike up to the rim. Frank continued another couple miles on to Gooseneck State Park so he could check into Facebook and post a selfie in front of the goosenecks. *[See photo below. No need for a selfie as there were a bunch of tourists there. — Ed.]* (I had to lend him my phone for this task as he had left his turned on and drained the battery... nice going!)





*Kerry and Frank make a plunge pool jump, John's Canyon. Ryan prepares to row through Ross Rapid (day 4).*

Back at camp that night, Jamie, Frank, Ryan, and I played a game of bocce with dad's new travel set. Despite his reign as the bocce champion from two years ago, Frank seemed to have lost his knack for the game, because I took home the win that night and Ryan came in a close second. If you ask him about this, he'll probably give some excuse, blaming the lightweight balls in the travel set, and claiming that if it were a real bocce set, he would have won by far. But hey, a real bocce champion could handle any type of ball consistency.

Night number four was spent at the Lower John's Canyon campsite, traveling 14.5 miles. That day on the river had been pretty cloudy and windy, so no one was really in the mood for a swim, but several of us made the climb up to the John's Canyon terrace which contained a nice deep pool of water, perfect for swimming. Unfortunately, this scramble took a toll on one of Ryan's Keens, and he had to borrow his dad's shoe to make the final descent to the pool. Ryan, Frank, and I took turns jumping off

the rocks into the water. We ventured to the edge of the terrace to overlook the final plunge pool which was connected to the river at this level, where we saw another group with kids running around naked in the water and climbing on a rock near the pool. We decided to officially name that rock Naked Child Rock. On the climb back down to camp, Ryan's other Keen succumbed to the hot conditions, and broke, leaving him with two borrowed shoes – one from Wes and the other from Frank – with which to climb down the vertical

wall. In fact, almost everyone experienced a Keen casualty, as the soles began separating left and right. Luckily, gorilla glue was a pretty solid solution to that problem. I'm pretty proud of my Keens, though. They didn't give in to peer pressure.

On day five, we were scheduled to go through Class 3 Government Rapid, the biggest rapid on the river, and the second of two named rapids. As we stopped to scout the rapid, another Keen mishap occurred. The banks of the river were



*Jo in Government Rapid, day 5.*



Glen watches the sand waves come and go, Steer Gulch.

SAN JUAN (Continued from page 5)

surrounded by deep mud, and as Glen stepped out of his boat, his foot sank into the mud, taking his Keen with it and carrying it down the river. Despite Wes's best efforts, he was not able to rescue it, leaving Glen with one less shoe. We then got a good look at Government, and since the water was so high, we really just had to be careful of big waves. One wave was particularly nasty, as it was crashing diagonally. Unfortunately, Jo was unable to avoid it, and it knocked her out of her ducky. She skillfully held onto both her paddle and her ducky and was able to get back in relatively easily with all her gear. After this 7.5 mile day, we arrived at Slickhorn B, another camp with a (not so) secret swimming pool. As the older group members waited for the previous group to pack up and leave our camp, Ryan, Jamie, and I began the ½ mile hike up Slickhorn Canyon to the pool. This pool was a lovely shade of green and featured a bird's nest filled with hungry, tweeting baby birds. After the rest of our group arrived and we all took a nice swim (which doubled as a bath [without soap or sham-

poo, which are strictly prohibited in the side canyon pools – Ed.]), we returned to camp to drink our cocktails and settle in for the night.

By day six, the river had seemed to slow down considerably, with the predicted increase in water level not materializing.\*

Jamie and I gave Ryan a break from rowing the raft and took turns successfully guiding the raft through completely flat water. Pretty tricky stuff, am I right? We stopped for lunch at Oljeto Wash, then hiked a ways up the nice slot canyon there. With the current still moving pretty fast, we still made great time covering the 11 miles to our last camp, Steer Gulch, which luckily was not completely flooded out, although we had a good-sized pond next to our kitchen area, which allowed us the pleasure of listening to the ostentatious calls of

the frogs all night long. That night, we took our chairs to the small area of the camp where we had a nice view of the river and watched as sand waves popped up randomly. We oohed and ahed as we counted 8 consecutive breaking sand waves rise and fall before the river was quiet for the night, then we enjoyed our final night of stargazing.

Our last day on the river was calm, hot, and breezeless. We slowly made our way the final 6 miles to the take out as the canyon walls sank lower and lower. We took one last group photo after our gear was all stuffed into our respective cars, and parted ways, looking forward to the cold drinks, hearty food, and cleansing showers that awaited us.

\* [The flow at the USGS gauge at Bluff ranged from 3500 to 7000 cfs during our trip; the 5000 cfs release from the Navajo Reservoir that was supposed to last 30 days only lasted two before being ramped down.—Ed.]



## **BRV Supports River Conservation Organizations** by Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation Chair

BRV is continuing its tradition of supporting a combination of local and national conservation organizations that work to protect the rivers we enjoy. The Board agreed to donate an average of \$50 each to the ten deserving groups described below.

***Alice Ferguson Foundation** organizes the annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup, which cleans up rivers and streams throughout our region. It also offers educational programs for students, teachers, and members of the community. [fergusonfoundation.org](http://fergusonfoundation.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 watershed. [www.cheat.org](http://www.cheat.org)*

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

***Friends of the Shenandoah River** is a volunteer, non-profit, scientific organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of the Shenandoah River and its tributaries. [fosr.org](http://fosr.org)*

***Potomac Conservancy** safeguards the lands and waters of the Potomac River and its tributaries, and connects people to this national treasure. [www.potomac.org](http://www.potomac.org)*

***Potomac Riverkeeper Network** works to protect the public's right to clean water and stops pollution to promote safe drinking water, protect healthy river habitats, and enhance public use and enjoyment. [www.potomacriverkeepernetwork.org](http://www.potomacriverkeepernetwork.org)*

***West Virginia Rivers Coalition's** mission is to conserve and restore West Virginia's exceptional rivers and streams. It is also the West Virginia state affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation. [www.wvrivers.org](http://www.wvrivers.org)*

***American Whitewater** works to conserve and restore America's whitewater resources and enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. [www.americanwhitewater.org](http://www.americanwhitewater.org)*

***American Rivers** combines national advocacy and field work to protect wild rivers, restore damaged rivers, and conserve clean water for people and nature. [www.americanrivers.org](http://www.americanrivers.org)*

Check out their websites and consider giving them your support!

## 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 scheduled in the following months: January, March, May, September and November. 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. In addition to the regular meetings in 2016, there is a club Moonlight Picnic on July 16th and a Holiday Party in December TBD.

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

**2016 BRV Officers:** Rick Koller, President; Mark Wray, VP; Bob Maxey, Trip Coordinator; Clark Childers, Treasurer; Frank Fico, Newsletter Editor; Kathleen Sengstock, Conservation.

**2016 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 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, though via electronic mail is preferred; send to [fico1@netzero.net](mailto:fico1@netzero.net). 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 — 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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**Deadline for Autumn *Voyageur*:**  
Friday, September 2nd

***Don't miss the annual BRV Moonlight Picnic on July 16th! See page 1 for details.***