



The Prairie Dog Companion: Newsletter of the North Texas River Runners

Commodore's Column

by Allen Harrison

I never expected to see these prices, but here we are at some extraordinarily high levels for all transportation fuels. Most of us are not savvy enough or fortunate enough to have hedged our fuel needs for the next twenty or thirty years so we are going to have to hunker down and make our spending on fuel match the funds we have available. We are probably going to have to get used to paying significantly more to get where we need to go. That could mean that we define "need to go" more stringently.

Each club member has their own "need to go" definition. In relation to paddling trips, I don't think that any of us really wants to cut back on those. Those club members who stay in touch with one another will

continue to get together to travel and paddle. The increased cost will be buffered by sharing the travel expense. It could be considered irresponsible to not do so. Any attempt to reduce fuel usage by reducing miles driven is good for all of us.

Back in January your current club officer staff met to talk about the relevancy of the club. One of the topics introduced, discussed and presented to the general membership was a reduction in the number of times the club physically meets each year. My recollection is that most club members preferred to not change from the established monthly pattern, but that was \$1.25 per gallon ago. I would suggest that a reduction in the number of monthly club meetings be reconsidered. Folks may look at the situation differently

today.

I supported a reduction in the number of monthly meetings in January. I continue to support a reduction. My reasoning has supporting points. It is very difficult for our program director to line up 11 strong programs each year. Strong programs are a primary reason many of our members attend. The communication methods available to all of us in today's world reduce the need to meet face to face. Activities, trips and meetings can all be planned and executed on line without the need to travel to central locations. We most likely all do that daily in our jobs. (I remember when I first started in business that I had to travel from plant to plant by mule powered wagon. Then, it took days of travel to communicate the same information that I

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Tip of the Month

by Lorraine McPhee

Holes on the river are a paddler's best friend (think playing at Rockport all day) or the impetus of humility (think accidental beat down at Double Suck). One thing seems for sure:

if you want to be more comfortable in holes you've got to spend more time in them. Something you can practice without a hole: Put your boat on edge and lean all the way forward until your head touches the deck. With-

out using your paddle slowly sit up. Where does it feel like you have the most control of the edge? Where can you hold the boat on edge without it wobbling? It's probably half-way between all the

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July Meeting Program!

Larry Lewis will be presenting some of his favorite rafting trips.

Commodore's Column (Con't)

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can pass on today with a single keystroke. Probably, if the cost of oats, hay and mule maintenance had not surpassed the cost of petroleum, I would still be traveling from plant to plant in a mule powered wagon.)

In addition, a number of us have to travel relatively long distances to attend club meetings. Cost in time is one thing, but now we have to consider the economic cost. We don't want our club members leaving the club as a cost control measure.

Anyhow, a change as proposed above is a club decision, not my decision or a decision to be made by the officer staff. My thinking could be all wet. Frequent meetings may be far more important to the health of the club than I consider them to be. A general discussion of the subject could be commenced at the July meeting. Maybe you want to be there. Maybe you want to send me your opinion. I can be contacted at the email address listed in the newsletter. In the meantime, while you are at the service station filling your tank, don't forget to Pump with a Purpose. See you on the 15th.

Twilight Paddles on Lake Ray Hubbard

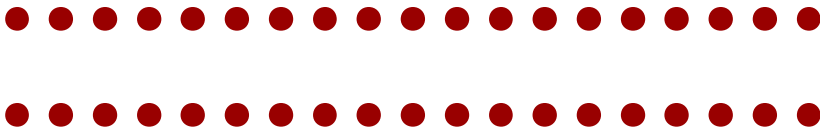
WHO: Rockwall & Rowlett Parks and Recreation Department with Kayak Instruction, Inc.

WHEN: from 7 – 10pm
7/24/2008 HWY 66 Boat Ramp with Rockwall Parks and Recreation
8/14/2008 HWY 66 Boat Ramp with Rockwall Parks and Recreation
8/28/2008 Paddle Point Park with Rowlett Parks and Recreation
9/18/2008 Paddle Point Park with Rowlett Parks and Recreation

WHERE: Lake Ray Hubbard ~ Paddle Point Park is across from Lakeside Park off of Miller Road or Highway 66 Boat Ramp.

DETAILS: Kayaking adventure on Lake Ray Hubbard. Come dip your paddle and enjoy the sunset and early evening with other paddlers, you do not have to be a resident of Rowlett or Rockwall to participate. Paddlers of every age and skill level are welcome, bring your own equipment or rentals will be available.

For more information contact Rowlett Parks & Recreation 972-412-6170, Rockwall Parks and Recreation 972-772-6468, Dave Holl 214-629-4794 or visit www.KayakInstruct.com



Tip of the Month (con't)

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way forward and sitting up straight. This is also the position you should be in when in a hole, reports pros at NOC. It's also a position conducive to shoulder safety. One more thing you can do: practice swimming out of mild holes. These things will give you confidence. Practice a lot. Have fun and SYOR!



River Legacy Canoe Launch

Submitted by Lorraine McPhee

(taken from an article appearing in the Star-Telegram June 8th, 2008)

River Legacy Park in Arlington will open a canoe launch July 1st giving access to a once-inaccessible part of the Trinity River. Boaters will be able to safely launch their canoes and kayaks from under the pedestrian bridge near Collins Street entrance and paddle for five miles. Construction exceeded \$35,000 and includes walkways, a launch site, parking lot and a restroom/changing room. There is no charge. River Legacy hopes to open two more new launches soon on the east and west sides of Arlington, which will open up a total of nine miles of paddling.



A Bedlam of Birds; A Surplus of Surf

By Ronnie Ash

Thanks to the persuasive abilities of Jean Muncrief and Laurie Patterson, and Laurie's extraordinary organizational skills, a fortunate group of NTRR paddlers set a course for the coast in April for a taste of salt water seasoned with sand. We rendezvoused at the Wal-Mart in Burleson to assemble the train and leave excess cars parked under the "Unauthorized Vehicles Will Be Towed" sign in the Wal-Mart parking lot. (I had previously spoken with the assistant store manager and been assured that our cars would not be towed away – nonetheless, it's hard not to worry!)

Our destination was Mustang Island State Park, 13 miles down the coast from Port Aransas. The trip south was long but surprisingly pleasant. After leaving the interstate at Waco, the countryside along Hwy 77 was invigoratingly green, with wooded and rolling terrain, and wildflowers popping out all over the place. Going through Cameron we were amazed by a remarkably ornate gingerbread house.

We stopped for lunch in Lexington at

Linda's Kitchen – Mark that on your map! The fare was simple but superb (Try the onion rings!), and our charming and ectomorphic waitress was most entertaining. She was asking for names to identify our orders, but when she reached me she just bestowed the name of Wally upon me. (Well, if I can't be The Beaver, then Wally will do...) By the time we left, half the people in the restaurant were calling me Wally. Small town America still has considerable character!

Of course it's always cool to climb up out of the Colorado River valley south of La Grange, and, in Schulenberg, I was delighted to discover (and John K. was keen to point out) a model airplane museum with an intriguing quarter scale biplane perched on a pole out front. That certainly merits a return trip and further investigation.

Our progress was energetically impeded by a brutal and viciously gusting headwind. Poor Mike's little four cylinder Ford Ranger with a tiny two canoe trailer in tow was stretching its head bolts straining against that adversary.

Crossing the Corpus Christi Ship Channel on the ferry to Port "A" is like passing

through the wardrobe and coming out in Narnia – You know that you've left the mainland behind and "the game is afoot!" (How's that for a confusion of allusions?)

After we reached the State Park, that same soulless wind continued to plague us. Setting up tents required teamwork to keep the pesky things from taking off across the dunes before they could be staked down. Laurie's magnificent shishebab dinner took hours to cook, as the wind blew out our fires and whisked the heat away. We rigged a windscreen tarp and practically had to hammer tent stakes through the toes of our tennis shoes to keep from blowing away ourselves.

Overnight, an arriving cold front brought torrential rain and an actual increase in that already alarming wind. It laid tent poles askew and had the whole campground flapping and banging like a tornado in Sheet Metal City.

The campground was primarily populated by giant RV's, and Friday morning at least half a dozen RV campers were kind enough to drop by and express their amazement over the fact that we tenters had survived to see the sunrise. It was endearing!

A shift in the wind direc-

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Bedlam (Con't.)

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tion meant that we had to rearrange our wind-screen tarp before Mike and Ina could manufacture a genuine "coast to coast" breakfast, with pancake mix from Washington State and honest to god maple syrup from Vermont. (Not to mention grapefruit wedges, scrambled eggs, and ham - I may have to trade in my sea kayak for a freight canoe if I continue to dine in such an opulent manner!)

Weather and wind inhibited our speedy progress, but we finally got organized and underway for Lighthouse Trails Park about noon. On the water we formed a colorful congregation, with Jean in a bright yellow Heritage kayak, "Commodore" Allen Harrison and Laurie in blue and red Dagger sea kayaks, John Kuhlenschmidt aboard his orange Wilderness systems sit-on-top, Ina Klune in a blue Dagger recreational touring kayak, your humble reporter in his ancient white and blue Aquaterra Chinook, and Mike Burns in a golden Wenonah Kevlar canoe girded for sea service with a brilliant yellow spray deck.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife website for the Lighthouse Lakes Canoe Trails states that canoes are not recommended due to the frequently high winds. Mike would prove the misguided bureaucrat that wrote that wrong!

Our objective for the day was to reach the Lydia Ann Lighthouse. That quest took us on a pleasantly roundabout chase through the black mangrove maze, wherein the shortest route to anywhere is rarely the obvious one. Enroute we passed over a number of shallow oyster beds, with razor edged shells that are prone to slice curly plastic shavings off the bottom of one's boat. We were entertained by multitudes of jumping mullets and scolded by a number of herons and egrets whose fishing we disturbed. At one point a cry from Allen called our attention to a Whooping Crane passing overhead. (At first I thought it was a B-52 with a civilian paint job - doggone those things are big!)

That evening Laurie's grand plan called for

us to go out to dinner, so we went to a restaurant called "Shells" in Port Aransas. Allen and Jean had been there before on the recommendation of someone they met at the birdwatching center. Forget about truck drivers, if the birdwatchers dine there you know it's good! One look at the prices in the menu had me choking, but Laurie eliminated my anxiety when she said that she, Allen, and Jean were treating me to dinner in return for having led them to the Lighthouse. Stone the crows! Picture 6 thick scallops, stacked in pairs with a slice of Spanish chorizo sandwiched in between each pair and surmounted by a dollop of stimulating serrano mint sauce. Accompany that with a little pile of mashed potatoes and a medley of fresh vegetables (which included strips of jicama) and you'll understand why I'm about to short out my keyboard drooling over the memory. Cor Blimey!

Saturday morning we arose early and breakfasted briskly in a proper TCJC canoe class manner. Our mission for the day was Shamrock Island, a bird sanctuary in Corpus Christi Bay. No landing or going ashore is permitted on the island, but thanks to a series of interconnected interior lakes, several of which open to the sea, one can explore the island thoroughly from the comfort of one's cockpit.

Leaving camp we made for the secret launch point at Wilson's Cut, revealed to me by a local fisherman after I complimented his homebuilt fishing skiff last year. When we arrived we discovered that a whole crowd of paddlers was in on the secret, and we could hardly find a place to park. The first leg of our journey took us over clear and shallow waters heavily infested with kayak fisherman. We stopped at a little unnamed island for a brief break before the crossing to

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Bedlam (Con't)

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Shamrock.

I had promised the group a dangerous open water crossing to the forbidden isle, but the wind was so light and the sea so calm that it was hard to even pretend we were in any peril.

As we eased through the narrow entrance that opens into Shamrock's interior lakes, it was as if we had paddled into an alternate universe, a bedlam of birds, an environment unlike anything any of us had ever experienced. I would not have thought that so many birds inhabited the entire state of Texas, much less one little island $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile long and a quarter mile wide. There were raucous gulls and Royal Terns by the tens of thousands, colonies of dignified pelicans in giant nests, Reddish Egrets and Great Egrets, Great Blue, Little Blue, and Black Crowned Night Herons... Jean cataloged a list of birds too lengthy to reproduce in a 6 page newsletter. Having previously been to Shamrock only in the fall, I was dumbfounded by the explosion of winged life that comes with the spring.

Surely the most breath taking inhabitants of all were the Roseate Spoonbills, divinely graceful and lovely in their bright pink plumage with

brilliant crimson flashes on their long wings. Beneath that beauty we witnessed a steely determination as they scrappily defended their end of the island against any and all intruders.

National Geographic's finest photographers could hardly hope to produce a better show than we saw that day. I am very disappointed to report, however, that we did see 6 unauthorized interlopers walking around on the island, seemingly unconcerned by the prominent "NO LANDING" signs posted at every approach, and indifferent to the birds' frenzied protests as the humans blundered through their nesting sites.

Dazzled by our visit to Shamrock Island, we paddled uphill, against a freshening breeze, back to our jump off island for lunch. Then we made a foray into Pink Shack Cove, and finally poked our noses into Green shack Cove just so we could say we'd been there.

As we were loading up the boats back at the launch point, we observed a large and noble raptor perched on a nearby telephone pole. Jean excitedly identified this imposing fellow as a Crested Caracara, aka a Mexican Eagle.

Then we went back to camp for a bit of sport in the surf. Laurie had brought along an 8 foot Ocean Kayak "Frenzy" sit-on-top, and of course, John had his 12 foot sit-on-top. So

we all trucked on down to the beach to see if we could scare ourselves. After testing the water (Cold!) and apprehensively gauging the wave heights (Big!), the group conferred and decided that there was only one thing for it – send Ronnie out first!

Aboard Laurie's little Frenzy, going out was a hoot – hard, busy work, but a real blast as the stubby boat leaped, bucked, and staggered into, over, and through the waves. I got out to where the waves were 3-4 feet, but they were so close together that I was afraid to turn around. Finally, a little lull enabled me to spin her about, and I caught a great ride back to the beach, steering with stern draws and prys. In the course of several rides, my stern draw did get overpowered once and the wave slewed me around sideways, but by leaning into the wave and laying a low brace on the wave top I was able to skid along in fine style.

Allen, Laurie, and John all had a go at it and we had quite the time. John invited me to try his 12 footer, and, with all the confidence of the hopelessly uninformed, I determined to go out a little further where the waves were bigger. I discovered that the

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Bedlam (Con't)

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12 footer sliced through the waves easier and carried its momentum farther than the eight footer. Soon I found myself in a zone of 6 foot breaking waves. Unable to turn around in the breakers I paddled out past them and spun her about to face the beach. "Holy Mackerel, I'm a long ways off shore!"

Looking over my shoulder I beheld a mountainous wave that obscured the horizon rolling my way. Too stupid to be scared, I set to paddling. The stern lifted and the boat began to accelerate towards the shore. "Yippie aye oh, here we go!" Well, "we" hadn't gone far before the wave face became suspiciously steep. In appalled fascination, I watched the bow of the boat slide down the wave face and touch the trough. Water began to curl off the point of the bow. The bow plunged deeper into the trough. "Uh oh," I thought, "the next frame in this comic strip won't be pretty..."

Sure enough, the doggone wave pitchpoled me – turned the boat for half a somersault. As it went past the vertical I had no option but to fall out. Deliberately I strove to dive off to starboard so the boat wouldn't land right on top of me. I came to the surface with the paddle in one hand and my hat in the other, stuck in the breaker zone with wave after wave crashing down on my beleaguered bald head. Eventually I got my act together enough to use the paddle to propel myself back to the boat and kick on in to where I was able to stand. It was humbling. How can a person ever hope to achieve arrogance in the face of these frequently recurring lessons in humility? Clearly I have a lot yet to learn about ocean surfing!

That evening those of us who played with electric trains as kids had a grand time quizzing Mike, who works for the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe, about full scale trains. Do you know why they no longer have cabooses? Better invite Mike on your next trip and find out!

Sunday morning we were homeward bound. We had a spot of trouble with a crack in the tongue of Mike's trailer, but a visit to Tractor Supply in La Grange and the innovative application of a heavy duty hinge strap soon had us underway again.

Finding our cars still safe at the Burleson Wal-Mart, we marked the successful completion of the first great NTRR coastal caper. It was a fine affair and a testament to that one enduring truth, "There is nothing, absolutely nothing, half so much doing as simply messing about in boats!"

My New Favorite River

By Lorraine McPhee

Traveling to beautiful Almont, Colorado the week of July 4th was a paddling boon! It gave me my new favorite river: The Taylor. The Taylor River flows through stunning alpine scenery, with clear, cold water flowing over a rocky glacial moraine topography. Steep and somewhat



technical, the river was not difficult to paddle—just super fun! Our run was approximately 71/2 miles, but 19 miles are possible if other sections of the river are included. Fellow Texas paddlers David and Trevor Mooring and I selected the "intermediate" stretch of the river, with the lower section easier than what we ran, and the upper section more difficult. We put in at "Todd's Slot", an easy class IV rapid, and took out at 5

Mile Marker (71/2 miles downstream). It was not difficult to identify where we were on the river, and a small road runs next to most of this run.



Camping is also located next to the river. There were two class III+ sections on this run, plus some fishing weirs to negotiate towards the bottom, but the rest of this river was non-stop fun boogie whitewater. All the holes seemed small and punchable, or dogdgable. I was only flipped once, a hole got me that I should have dodged, (but I couldn't make up

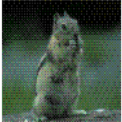
Favorite River(Con't)

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my mind to go left or right, and then it was too late)! The CFS one day was about 900, and 870 the next day. I can't wait to paddle this again. If you get anywhere near the Rocky Mountain State, don't miss the Taylor river!





The North Texas River Runners
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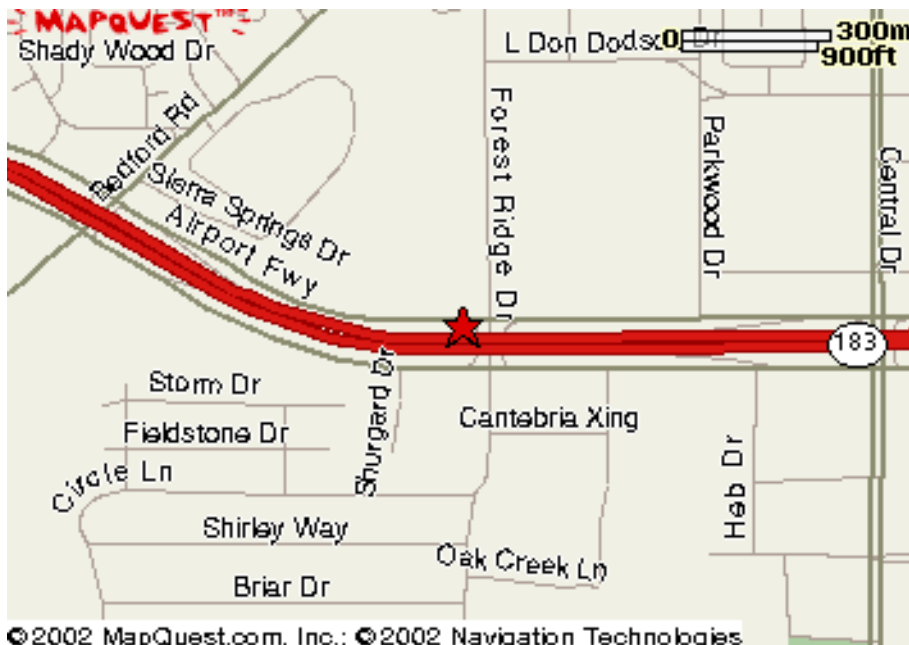


Home of the Prairie Dog Surfing Society
"If we're not in the hole, we're sitting right beside it."



We're on the web!
www.river-runners.org

If you would like to receive the Newsletter by email, please
contact: cdboerner@sbcglobal.net



Club Meeting
will be held at
Spring Creek
Barbecue
7:00—9:00 PM
Next Meeting:
July 15th

Spring Creek Barbecue
1509 Airport Freeway
North-West Corner of Forest & 183
817-545-0184