



Houston Canoe Club *Water Line*



www.houstoncanoecub.org :: Volume 2009 :: August

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The Waterline is the monthly newsletter of the Houston Canoe Club, Inc. The Waterline is made possible by your dues and critically depends on member contributions. Please submit items to HCC's Newsletter Editor, Linda Gorski at LindaGorski@cs.com.

The Waterline is prepared by an on-line newsletter editor written by Fraser Baker, HCC's Webmaster.

Next Meeting Announcement

When: August 12, 2009 @ 7:00 PM
Where: Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet, Houston, Texas
Directions: First driveway, North side of Bissonnet, just West of Hillcroft.
Speaker: Steve Beach
Speaker Bio:

Steve Beach grew up "Up North" where at a young age he was thrown a paddle and told to "paddle across the lake". I survived that lake crossing. From that time most of what I picked up on paddling was from watching others and it wasn't until late in life I finally figured out that the different paddle strokes really did have names. He has dipped a paddle in many different states and a number of lakes in Ontario, Canada. One of these days he would really like to learn the correct strokes. Over the last two years he has migrated to kayaking and since that time "Old Yellar" (his kit canoe) has been hanging in storage. He has lived on Spring Creek for almost 30-years and has canoed and kayaked Spring Creek, Cypress Creek and the San Jacinto River many numerous times at all water levels.

Description:

Houston Canoe Club member Steve Beach will discuss the history (fact and lore) of Spring Creek based on his almost 30 years of knowledge and experience of canoeing the creeks, rivers, bayous and lakes of the Houston area at the August monthly meeting.

Did you know:

1. There were at least two major Akokisa Indian villages located on Spring Creek.
2. There was once a Confederate munitions factory on the banks of Spring Creek.
3. AJ Foyt, of racing car fame, used his old racing tires to line Spring Creek for erosion control.
4. The main logging road to log the Spring Creek watershed spanned Spring Creek. The main trestle that was once over the creek is now a water hazard.
5. One of the top 10 "4-wheel mud parks" in the United States is on Spring Creek.
6. The Spring Creek Greenway project hike/bike bridge over Cypress Creek is in the engineering phase. Once completed a 7.5 mile (one way) trail will connect the newly opened Pundt park with Jesse Jones Park.
7. There are bald eagles, wild cows, feral pigs, deer, coyotes, bobcats and a host of other wildlife along the creek.
8. Spring Creek is one of only two unchanneled/undammed waterways in Harris County.

Come and listen to many more tidbits of history/lore of Spring Creek - truly a gem for Houston area paddlers.



Steve Beach on the Pecos River

Be sure to set this date aside on your calendar, then come out to support our speaker and club.

Last Meeting Minutes

Date: July 8, 2009

Recorder: John Ohrt

Minutes: Commodore Bill Grimes called the meeting to order

Bill then presented a power point on the ACA, Paddle America Clubs, and ACA sanctioned trips

Officers were introduced and new members and guests were greeted.

Fraser Baker gave a safety talk on strainers.

Linda Gorski and Louis Aulbach presented a program on river stewardship and the Big Bend Ranch State Park. They had lots of interesting information and beautiful pictures of this remote and little visited park. Linda also demonstrated the proper use of the new "potty bags" which can be used on river trips instead of the traditional groover. Also discussed were the new regulations for Big Bend and the Devils River.

Fleet Captain Donna Grimes gave the trip report. Past trips included the Texas Water Safari, Oyster Creek, Pelican Island, the North Carolina Week of Rivers, and Oak Bayou. Upcoming trips were Lake Raven, Greens Bayou, Armand's Bayou, lessons on the San Marcos, the Sabine over Labor Day, the Pecos in October, and the Ocoee drawdown in late September.

Business Meeting: Recorder John Ohrt read the minutes of the June general meeting and they were approved by the members.

Bill Grimes presented Paul Woodcock for Boatswain, Linda Gorski for Newsletter Editor and Harmon Everett for Purser. Other nominations were called for, but none were made. A motion was made and seconded to accept all three nominees by acclamation. This motion passed unanimously and all three were elected.

Harmon then gave a purser's report. Announcements were made regarding the upcoming newsletter and the web page and the meeting was adjourned. About a dozen members went to Jax Grill for a late supper.

Please contact HCC's recorder, John Ohrt, if there are any omissions or corrections.

New Members

Member Name: There were no new members this month.
Membership Type: individual
Member's Family:

The HCC cordially welcomes new members to our club. New members are the life blood of the HCC, so be sure to provide opportunities for all our new members to paddle by coordinating more trips.

Market Place

Items For Sale

Item: Wenonah Solo Plus

Description: I have a Wenonah Solo Plus for sale. This boat has the Kevlar Ultralight layup and is sand colored. The boat has scratches and normal wear and tear but both the hull and the wood trim are in sound condition.

The link to the [Wenonah web page for this boat is here.](#)

Current retail price on these boats new is \$2399.
My price for this one is \$800.

I have pictures available to email.

Asking Price: \$800

Contact Name: Bob Naeger

Contact Phone: 281-435-5595

Contact Email: rnaeger2006@yahoo.com

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Items Wanted

Please contact the Newsletter Editor to post any items that you may have for sale or desperately need.

One Man's Trash...

by
John Rich

On a recent paddling trip on the Brazos River, our small group stopped to rest on a nondescript gravel bar. These gravel bars are known to contain fossils - you can usually find some pieces of petrified wood, and, if you're really lucky, dinosaur bones. I found a nice assortment of palm-sized petrified wood, and along with that, a pottery fragment that contained part of a maker's mark on it. I tucked the piece into my pocket and decided to research it at home and see what I could find out about it. And that is the beginning of a very interesting story.

Here is the particular find which this story is about. The fragment is about 2½ inches tall, 1¾ inches wide, and five-sixteenths inches thick. It's flat and unremarkable except for that mark on it. About one-third of the left side of the maker's mark is missing. *(Click on the thumbnail photos to view a full-screen version in a separate window)* What do you suppose we can find out about this pottery fragment from this maker's mark?

After poring over the internet for quite a while, here's what I've discovered.

The "Baker & Co." on the scroll at the bottom of the mark refers to Baker & Co., of Fenwick, England. The company was owned by William Baker, and it mass produced pottery goods for the commoner class, for export to the United States, Africa and India. They were in business from 1839 to 1932.



Pottery fragment

Here is what the complete company trademark looked like (right). You can see that a horse is missing from the left side of the shield in my piece.

Given those company business dates, my fragment could be anything from very old, to not so old. But there's another important piece of information: Mr. Baker added "Ltd" to his company name and mark in 1893. And my piece contains no such addendum on it.

Therefore, my pottery shard probably comes from an item that was manufactured between 1839 and 1893. And that dates it to the true pioneer days of early Texas history, after the Texians had won their independence from Mexico in 1836, been accepted into the United States in 1845, and fighting Indians up to about 1880.



Full company logo

This piece was found a few miles south of where the Brazos River flows under Highway 59 in Sugarland. So where might it have come from? The Brazos River is rich in early Texas history. Brazoria County has pioneer history from being part of the Mexican land grants given to "the original 300" settlers by Stephen Austin. The

area was once populated with cotton and rice plantations. And further upstream is San Felipe, the original Texas settlement of Anglo Americans. Even further upstream is Washington on the Brazos, where Texas delegates met to sign the Texas Declaration of Independence from Mexico, and which also served as an early capital of Texas. Steamboats used to travel the Brazos River, taking goods upstream, and hauling cotton back downstream. This pottery fragment has had up to 160 years to tumble downstream to the gravel bar where I found it. There is no telling from whence it originated.

So this lonely pottery fragment was made in England in the 1800's, shipped to the United States by boat, whereupon it traveled across America probably by train and wagon, to end up in the home of a Texas pioneer right here in the Houston area. And at some point the pottery was broken and discarded, to be washed into the Brazos river.

What might this piece of pottery have come from? I'm unable to make any educated guess about that. The pottery produced by the Baker Co. was too varied, and my fragment too small, for me to identify anything as a possible match. It could have been something as simple as an old-fashioned whiskey jug. Maybe one of General Sam Houston's whiskey jugs!



Baker Co. whiskey jug

But wait! There's more to this story on the British side, where the pottery was manufactured. William Baker was an architect who bought an existing pottery factory in 1765 in Fenton, England, for his son. The son was also named William - William Baker II. That pottery factory was run as a partnership with another man. William II had a son, whom he also named William - William Baker III. He too was involved in the pottery business: grandfather, father and son, all named William Baker.

In 1839 the other partner in the pottery died, and William Baker III re-named the company in his name alone, leading to the company logo seen on my pottery fragment. So this pottery factory had already been in business for 74 years, dating from the time of the American Revolution, when it finally took on the name "Baker & Co."

The Baker family was quite successful in business, and also quite philanthropic with their wealth. The Baker's were known as "the family who built Fenton", because of the many acts of charity they did for their home town. The Bakers built houses in Fenton, built the town church, and even built a new town hall, all with their own money, as gifts to the town.

More fascinating information about the Baker family, can be found at this web site, along with photos of their pottery factory, homes, church and town hall:

http://www.thepotteries.org/location/districts/lower_lane.htm

So now this piece of pottery has taken me half-way around the world to England, and back in time 244 years. But wait, I'm not done yet!

What about that company logo, consisting of



a shield flanked by a horse on the left, and a unicorn on the right? This is taken from the Royal Coat of Arms of England, which is very similar, except that the Royal emblem has a lion on the left. A more detailed image of that is attached. This image allows you to see the tiny figures inside the quadrants of the shield, which are mostly lions. Lots and lots of lions. The bottom left symbol, which is just a blob on my fragment, could be Casper the Ghost for all you can tell. But on this Royal emblem, it reveals itself to be a harp made to look like a topless angel in flight. She's much more beautiful than Casper. Many potteries adopted this form of emblem for their company, and then simply added their own name to the scroll at the bottom.



Royal Coat of Arms

The phrase on the bottom of the Royal Coat of Arms is "*Dieu et mon droit*", which refers to the divine right of the King to rule, and was first adopted as the royal motto by King Henry V in the 15th century.

There is one final piece of information to this story: the motto written around the edge of the shield of the Baker & Co. logo, and likewise on the Royal Coat of Arms. On my fragment, the beginning is partially missing, but searching with the remainder of the phrase, reveals that it says; "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*". This phrase comes from Old French, and means; "*Shame be to him who thinks evil of it*". This statement originated when King Edward III was dancing with the Countess of Salisbury in the year 1348. Her garter slipped down to her ankle, causing those around her to snicker at her public embarrassment. In an act of chivalry, Edward picked up the garter and placed it around his own leg, saying; "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*". That ended the snickers, and preserved the Countess's dignity.

From that experience, King Edward created the Most Noble Order of the Garter, which was the first, and remains the most prestigious, British order of chivalry. The exclusive club included the King and 25 knights, and was an attempt to resurrect the legendary Knights of the Round Table of King Arthur. The knights of the order wore a garter as part of their uniform.

"*Honi soit qui mal y pense*" is also the motto of this Order of the Garter, and appears on their own emblem, featuring a knight on horseback slaying a dragon, under an arc of a lacy garter belt.

Apparently the Baker family believed in the principles of honor and chivalry which this phrase represents, and kept it on their own company logo.

Now we finally come to the end of this story. It's a story which has taken me from a pottery fragment on the banks of the Brazos River in Texas, in 2009, through the days of Texas pioneers in the late 1800's, to England and a philanthropic family of pottery makers from the 1700's, all the way back to the year 1348 in England, with a chivalrous knight coming to



Order of the Garter

the aid of a damsel in distress. It's been a fascinating journey of 661 years! And it all originated from a simple piece of trash.

"One Man's Trash... is Another Man's Treasure"

The End



The author, John Rich

Backwater Backwash

by
Cecilia Gill

Welcome to "*Backwater Backwash*", a random and incomprehensible collection of thoughts, observances and experiences in no particular order, so that it makes absolutely no sense at all.

Fustuss, I have to apologize for having gone on hiatus for so long. I have been writing, just not "BB" or trip reports. I sat down to write what I thought would be about a 10 page story in Feb. It is well over 1600 pages now. I still have a lot of work to do on it. It is no longer a novel, but a series. Anyway... I hope you enjoy the return of "*Backwater Backwash*"!

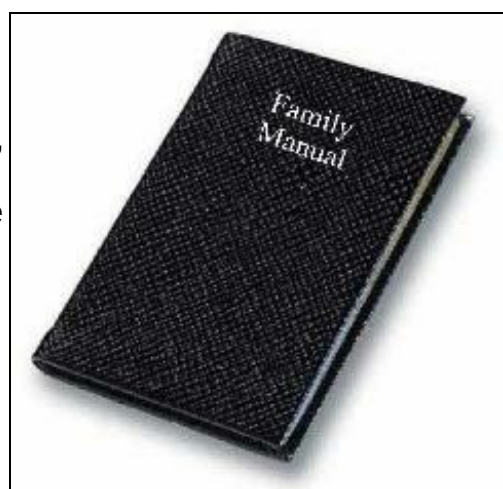
This issue may or may not actually talk about paddling or camping at all... perhaps... We shall see.

Ever have one of those dreams where you show up to some important function and you are stark ravin' nekkid? Well, I haven't really had too many like that, possibly because I really could not care less. However I HAVE had many dreams of going on a paddling trip and forgetting our PFD's, or our paddles, or some other vital piece of equipment. Once, I forgot our boats! They were horrible, horrible nightmares! I would wake up in a cold sweat, looking around the room, hoping it didn't really happen.

I tend to make lists almost compulsively, or outright compulsively, because I am so fearful of forgetting something. And then, I forget the list...

My family doesn't seem to understand the importance of the lists or our schedules. I have a big black book I call our family MANUAL. It clearly says on the front, "If its not in the manual, not gonna happen. Do not anger the manual!" (apologies to "The X's") Unfortunately, since I ke and all my internet and computer grief, the manual has not had the back up system and constant updating of its best friend the computer, so everything around here has gone to someplace unsavory.

Regrettably, this spills over into other aspects of our lives, such as any trips, day or otherwise, that we want to do. Disorganization is the bane of our existence at this time. Nothing is scheduled, nothing gets carried out the way it should be, and everything seems to be just piling up all around me like some kind of hideous blob monster... It Came From Beneath the Sink! "Born of tons of forgotten dirty dishes and piles of unwashed laundry, it emerged with a ravenous hunger for utter chaos!" Sounds like a horror movie.



The point of all this, I suppose, is how important organization is. But not JUST being organized, being prepared. But not JUST being organized and prepared, but having everything else and everyone else around you work properly so that you don't end up with a backlog of chores so overwhelming that you wake up, have some coffee, look around, sit down, slump, sigh, and then go back to bed.

Unfortunately, I admit, this is what I have ended up doing since about a month after Ike. I was going full tilt on many projects, as much as possible, considering I could not access the internet, right after Ike, but as I was shoveling myself out of the deep hole with my spoon, I started noticing that what I needed was a C-Cat 10 Earth Mover (that is a giant bull dozer with wheels about 10 feet tall). Kind of discouraging...



Since I don't have a C-Cat 10 and all I DO have are primitive hand tools, and the pile is not getting any smaller, I have to bite my lip and, to quote Dory in Finding Nemo, "Just keep swimming, Just keep swimming..." And, like the Nike commercials say, "Just do it!"

Hopefully, if I just do it and just keep swimming, I will get things back on track around here. Hopefully, I will never really show up to a river trip missing important equipment... like my boat...

The End



The author, Cecilia Gill

A Paddler's Rocky Mountain Wedding

Canmore, Alberta, Canada July 4, 2009

by

Linda Gorski

Former HCC member Kevin Casement and his beautiful bride Alana Mikkelsen were married in an outdoor ceremony at the Canmore Nordic Center, Alberta, Canada on July 4 with the Rocky Mountains as a backdrop. The Nordic Center was built as a venue for the 1988 Olympic nordic events and was a fitting place for an outdoorsman like Kevin to tie the knot. Kevin is a mountaineer, backpacker, and avid and excellent paddler. He frequently tandemed with Dana Enos on Texas rivers while living and working here in Houston. Kevin was also chairman of the Houston Canoe Club's Southwestern Canoe Rendezvous. Congratulations to Kevin and Alana. Hopefully they'll get back to Houston to paddle with us one of these days.

(Click on the thumbnail photo to view a full-screen version in a separate window)



**Mr. and Mrs. Kevin
Casement**

Photo by Linda Gorski

Boat Builder's Corner

by
Skip Johnson

Normally this is a good time to forget about building and go paddling, but it's been dry enough here in the Houston area that many favorite places are just about dried up. Kinda hard to generate much enthusiasm for building either if your workspace is opened to the weather. So it must be a good time to talk about building...

Going 3D is an aha moment in building a stripper. Up until now it's all been a bunch of pieces. Start by fastening the midsection or master frame to the strongback. This one frame can face either way on either side of the mark. The frames going forward need to be back of the station mark and the stations going aft need to be forward of the mark. This insures the stations are right on the mark at the edge and no beveling of the frames are required. What works best for me is to line up the centerline of the frame on the centerline and mark of the strongback and fasten in place with 1- #6 x 1 ½" drywall type screw at the centerline. Then square up the frame and fix in place with another screw or a couple of brads or staples. Working from the center out in both directions should go quickly and then you'll have your first good idea of the shape of the boat.



Squaring up

All photos by Skip Johnson

(Click on the thumbnail photos to view full-screen versions in a separate window)

Next order of business is to glue in the bow and stern profiles making sure they are well lined up on the centerline of the strongback and frame. At the same time fit in a piece of scrap pegboard between the midsection frame and +1 to lock them together and perpendicular to the strongback. I used to notch out all the frames and glue in a stringer down the keel line but usually now just rubber band a strip down the keel line at each frame to keep all the frames perpendicular until the hull is stripped up to the turn of the bilge. Then the strip rubber banded to frames along the keel line can be removed. One last fiddling job is to drill a 1/16" hole through the side of the frames at the sheer line. This is for the #4 or #6 finish nail that locates the first sheer strip.

Before putting the nails in place it is time to make sure the boat will come off the form. Run clear packing tape around all the forms and the bow and stern profiles. Add an extra layer at the bow and stern profiles just to be on the safe side. Then tap the finish nails into the predrilled holes at the sheer line leaving a ½" or more exposed.

Just about time to strip. I'll keep this series on wood strippers and then talk about foam strippers later there's very little difference in the building and there's been no difference up until now. One other thing that remains the same is rubber bands. Go to your local office supply store and get a ¼ pound bag each of number 16 and 32 rubber bands. The rubber bands from your local grocery or drug store will bitterly disappoint you being probably weak, brittle and totally unsuitable for boat building. Another thing you will need is three or four packs of ¼" dowel pins.

Wood, the gold standard species is Western Red Cedar; it's relatively lightweight, stable, easy to work, good looking, hard to argue with. There's a number of other species that are suitable, but most are a bit heavier, Cypress and Redwood come to mind. A recent development (at least to me) is the availability of Paulownia, a plantation grown, quick growing species that is lighter weight than Cedar, is stable and easy to work.

You can rip your own stock or buy already cut bead and cove strips, your choice. If ripping your own, please practice safe respiratory protection. A little paper mask may be worse than nothing get a good well fitting respirator. Cedar is a pretty powerful allergen. I haven't cut my own strips in several years but still wear a good respirator and take an antihistamine before any serious sanding or other similar work, particularly with cedar. One last decision needs to be made if you are doing your own; bead and cove or leave the edges square? I've built four wood strippers now with bead and cove strips that were already bead and coved. Before that I'd done a dozen or so 'cut your own' square edge strippers. If I did rip the strips again myself, I'd probably leave the edges square.

One final note, the pictures are from a couple of different boats. One a 12' solo for my use and the other a 14' solo for a friend. There's some detail differences between them including the glued in keel strip on the 14 foot boat's form and in subsequent articles there's a difference in species. The 12' personal boat is stripped in Ceiba (a lesser known Central American wood) and the 14' boat is stripped in Mahogany, beautiful but a little heavier.

The End



Almost ready to strip.



Bow



Stern



The author, Skip Johnson

Upcoming River Trips

HCC Trips:

- Date:** Saturday, August 01, 2009
Title: Armond Bayou touring
Inclusive Dates: 8/1 Saturday
Description: John will lead a trip on Armand Bayou in Clear Lake. Call him for more details
Skill Level: **Novice:** Confidently execute basic strokes plus ability to manage high wind and high waves typically experienced on Lake Charlotte or Sheldon reservoir, can maneuver the boat on moving water plus familiarity with eddy turns, ferrying and surfing in Class 2 rapids typically found on the San Marcos and Guadalupe Rivers. Able to read the river and identify the eddy line.
Contact: Contact John Ohrt by phone 713 877 1504, or by email jcohortjr@aol.com.
###
- Date:** Friday, August 07, 2009
Title: Moonlight Paddle on Armand Bayou
Inclusive Dates: 8/7
Description: Looks like a Moonlight Paddle on Armand Bayou on August 7 is good for most people who were interested in going on the 8th, so we will meet on Friday, August 7 at the Bay Area Park for a moonlight paddle. It should be a couple of miles up and a couple of miles back.
Skill Level: **Beginner:** Familiarity with basic strokes and can make the boat go straight on flat water typically experienced on Armand Bayou, can maneuver the boat on slowly moving water, is aware of basic river safety and can confidently avoid hazards and strainers frequently experienced on Texas' Colorado River or the Buffalo Bayou at a modest flow rate.
Contact: Contact Harmon Everett by phone 810- 241-7969, or by email harmoneverett@hotmail.com.
###
- Date:** Saturday, August 08, 2009
Title: HCC Group Lessons with Olympic Outdoor Center
Inclusive Dates: August 8
Description: Ever wanted to try kayaking? Or just want to improve your skills in YOUR boat? We have an opportunity to do this as an HCC group by joinig Ben Kvanli and his staff for a day's instuction, use of his gear, and lunch. Price is \$130 but if we get 12, the price goes to \$95 for a full day of learning from the best.
Skill Level: **Blank:** Select this level if this portion is not to appear in the listing.
Contact: Contact Donna Grimes by phone 713 728 1645, or by email donna.grimes@mindspring.com.
###
- Date:** Saturday, August 22, 2009
Title: Rockport, TX - Salt Creek and

Inclusive Dates: 8/22

Description: We will be paddling Salt Creek and inlets around St Charles Bay. Many species of Birds along with a gator or two might be seen. The Bay is for the most part, protected from the Gulf, but if the wind picks up too much we will stay inside the creek channel or paddle one of the other area inlets. Salt Creek is an area that is right next to the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Salt Creek is located just East of Rockport Texas. We are planning on camping out at the Goose Island State Park (HWY35), just west of Rockport on the east side of Copano Bay. Contact: Philip & Tisha Matticks ptmatticks@att.net / 713-8265705 / 281-578-8881

Skill Level: **Beginner:** Familiarity with basic strokes and can make the boat go straight on flat water typically experienced on Armand Bayou, can maneuver the boat on slowly moving water, is aware of basic river safety and can confidently avoid hazards and strainers frequently experienced on Texas' Colorado River or the Buffalo Bayou at a modest flow rate.

Contact: Contact Philip & Tisha Matticks by phone 281-578-8881, or by email ptmatticks@att.com.

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Other Club Trips:

Brazos River

June 9th

by

John Rich

On Tuesday, June 9th, four Houston Canoe Club members led by Paul Woodcock met in Sugarland with the goal of exploring Bullhead Slough. Other participants in this trip were Ken Anderson, Dana Enos and John Rich.

The dictionary defines a “slough” as: *“a place of deep mud or mire; an inlet on a river; or a creek in a marsh or tide flat.”* In this case, Bullhead Slough is a man-made drainage ditch that runs from the area of the Sugarland Airport, straight south, under Hwy 90, under Hwy 59, and into the Brazos River.

(Click on the thumbnail photos to view the full-screen version in a separate window)



General area map



Park map

We met up at the new Sugarland Memorial Park along the Brazos River at Highway 59. This park was built in 2007, but it doesn't show up yet in online maps.



Park entrance

To get to the park, you head south on Hwy 59, take the University Blvd. exit, go south on University until the road takes a 90-degree left turn, and the park entrance is on the right.

The park web site is here (this is a clickable link):

Sugarland Memorial Park



Put-in site

The river access is a steep cove. To get to it from the entrance, you drive three-quarters of the way around the traffic circle counter-clockwise, and drive parallel with the jogging trail. There's a gravel path heading off to the right towards the river, with a gate across it. Drive around the closed gate through the grass to get to the cove. A police officer pulled up to investigate while we were untying our boats, but he didn't have a problem with us being there, and even granted us permission to leave our vehicles there instead

of driving them back to the parking lot several hundred yards away. He said he would let other units know about our trucks so we wouldn't get any tickets. Very cooperative, thank you.

Getting the boats to the water is only mildly difficult, as you're going downhill and have gravity on your side. But you do have to negotiate a steep bank, watch for ankle-breaking cracks in the ground, and wade through head-high weeds. Coming back out later, on the other hand, dragging the boats back uphill was a major effort. It helps to have two people per boat to negotiate this on the way out.



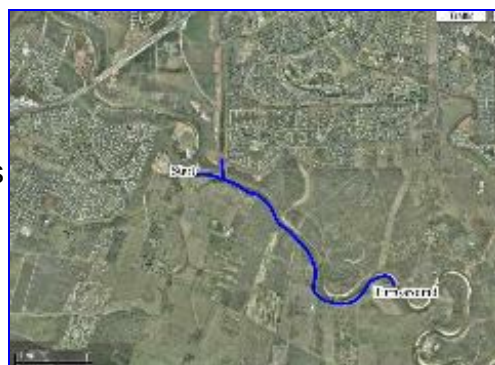
Dana heads for the water



Muddy feet

And like any access point I've ever known on the Brazos, it's muddy along the shoreline: it's the kind of mud that puts stains on white T-shirts that never come out, no matter how many times you wash them. Brazos veterans know to keep a set of "river clothes" aside just for the Brazos, so you don't ruin a new set of nice clothes every time. Just do it once, and re-use them. Some people go through complex gymnastic moves to try and avoid touching the mud - but I just consider getting muddy inevitable, and barge right in.

And with that, we're on the Brazos River. As you can see from this map, just around the corner downstream from the starting point is where Bullhead Slough branches off to the north. That was our target. The blue line traces our path for the day, but you'll notice that the line only goes a short distance up Bullhead Slough. That was where "Murphy's Law" struck, as Paul likes to say.



Paddle route



Pulled ashore

Here the boats are pulled up on the muddy shore of Bullhead Slough, just north of the confluence with the Brazos, which can be seen in the background. We pulled up to this bank because the water got too shallow to continue upstream. Why was it too shallow?...

...Because there is a huge spillway located there which had reduced the water flow to just a trickle on the bottom side. This is one of the



fanciest spillways I've seen in the Houston area. Paul and John hopped out of their boats for a short hike up the bank to examine this structure more closely, and to see what was on the other side.



Spillway



Spillway dominoes

The view from the top side of the spillway, looking down towards the Brazos.



View from the top



Beyond the spillway

And finally, this is what Bullhead Slough looks like above the spillway. It's a straight-as-an-arrow ditch, running alongside nice neighborhoods, and quite wide for a drainage ditch. It looks passable in a canoe, but the portage from below where our boats were parked would be brutal, and there are other access points above the spillway that would be easy, like that bridge in the distance. So we decided to defer to Mr. Murphy, abandon the Bullhead Slough plan for the day, and save it for another time.

Paul becomes probably the first person in history to run Bullhead Slough Rapids!



Paul runs rapids



Brazos River

We paddled back down to the Brazos, and "Plan B" was to head downstream for a couple of hours, and then turn around and paddle back. A "couple of hours" turned out to be a distance of about four miles. The scenery here was typical of the Brazos, with tree-lined banks, and mud, of course. There is no development along the banks once you leave the Hwy 59 area. Just woods and pastures.

There is always that strange feeling you get trying to figure out where you want to turn around on a meandering river. You always have the urge to see what's around the next corner. And when you do that, then you want to go to the next one. Heck, you could go all day like that. I joked that if we kept doing that, sooner or later the next bend would be Cancun. So it's always with some regret that you finally have to call it quits at some point, to turn around and go back, leaving that "next corner" unexplored.

We stopped at several gravel bars to rest along the way. Although we were going downstream and benefiting from the push of a small amount of current, we were also paddling into a headwind, which seemed to cancel-out that benefit.



Petrified bone



Petrified wood

On the gravel bars, it was easy to find small pieces of petrified wood in various colors, and even some petrified bone. I also found a pottery fragment containing the maker's mark, the research of which has lead to such an interesting story, that I have made that a separate article in this newsletter. See the

story titled *"One Man's Trash"*.

A few miles downriver there is a very fancy pipeline crossing the Brazos, built with steel cables like a suspension bridge. There are also horizontal guy wires, which splay out on both ends, presumably to dampen swaying in strong winds. And along both sides of the suspended pipeline are narrow little catwalks for maintenance workers. I'd hate to be the maintenance guy that has to walk across that like a circus high-wire performer.



Pipeline crossing

We paddled downstream for about four miles, and finally turned around to head back. At first we presumed that going back upstream would be slower, since we would be fighting the current. However, that headwind that we experienced going

downstream, had picked up speed, and it was now actually strong enough that if you sat and did nothing, the now-tailwind alone was strong enough to push us back upstream against the current. If only we had sails! We also played the river currents looking for the channels where the water was slowest. So we got lucky and paddling back wasn't as difficult as anticipated. Mr. Murphy must have been napping.

At one point, a bald eagle was spotted flying overhead, with the distinctive white tail and white head.



Paul & Dana

Back at the take-out point where we started, great effort was expended getting through the mud and back up the hill to the trucks.

Fortunately, Paul had a watermelon on ice waiting for us, and it was a delicious treat for the end of the trip.

Group photo: Dana, Ken, Paul & John.

Note that I look like a pig that's been wallowing in mud, compared to the others. Dana had changed into a clean shirt and had water to wash his feet off - that's good planning for a Brazos trip. Mostly I got so muddy because I made a short side trip that turned into a quagmire. You see, in the put-in cove, there is a noisy barge which is pumping water through a pipeline that is routed across an island in the middle of the river. I theorized

that this barge might be pumping up the river bottom, which is full of fossils, and that wherever that pipeline ended up, there might be a treasure trove of prehistoric artifacts spewing out the other end. So I paddled across the cove to the island, and hopped out of my canoe with images of ancient fossil creatures dancing in my head like Christmas sugarplums. I immediately plunged down to my thighs in mud, and the sugarplums went "*poof*". I couldn't get my feet out without losing my shoes, so then I had to lay on my belly and stick my arms down in my former leg holes before the mud closed in, and pull my shoes back out. Next, I had to squirm back to my boat on my arms and knees to maximize my surface area to keep from sinking into the mud again. Oh well, so much for that plan - Bah Humbug! That's my muddy story. It turns out, the pipeline continues all the way across to the opposite riverbank, where it seems to be serving as an industrial water supply for something like a gravel pit.



Group photo

As I headed to the park buildings to look for a garden hose with which to wash off, the rest of the gang drove off to scout a convenient access point for a future Bullhead Slough trip.

The End



The author, John Rich

Oyster Creek

June 13th

by

Natalie Wiest

Paul Woodcock facilitated an HCC trip on Saturday, June 13, 2009, commencing from Oyster Creek Park, just off highway 6 in Sugarland. If I've got my numbers straight, there were 15 paddlers in 13 boats; Paul and Mary, Ellen and I in the only open canoes, and everyone else in recreational kayaks of many stripes and combinations. It was a wonderful trip for all, perhaps a little short on the water level but lovely nonetheless, and a stretch I'd never paddled.



Paul & Mary, and Tisha

All photos by Natalie Wiest

(Click on the thumbnail photos to view the full-screen versions in a separate window)



The group sets out under a canopy of shade

A three mile hike/jog path crisscrosses the creek at several locations – I lost count of the number of bridges we paddled under, or dragged over. One of the most notable features of the stream is how well shaded it is – for most of the 2 miles or so we paddled upstream, trees actually touched overhead and for a day with temperatures well into upper 80s, the shade was certainly welcome.

Although the flood control district has a gauge on the stream, I have been unsuccessful at finding out who really owns it, and if it kicks in only in high water events. There were no readings available online for this date. If one could determine what the actual water level was that day, adding 6" to it would be a good margin for a very pleasant paddling experience.

There were several spots where we had to push and pull and drag boats through too-shallow water. Paul got the complete upper body workout (and legs too!) dragging many of us through those spots.





A portage point



Paul tugs Colleen through a thin-water passage

There was at least one mandatory portage. We turned around a point that Trisha scouted as the farthest-upstream boat. She all but stepped on a 3' alligator sunning itself on the bank/muck and we all decided that would be a great point to head the other direction.

A lot of the greenery was provided by ash trees, whose leaves look very similar to poison ivy, so I was constantly watching to see what was what. No rashes for me afterward, so surely it must have been mostly trees. Elderberries were blooming in profusion, and some small waterlilies too.



Phil & Tisha chillin' on the water

For a more complete set of photos, I have also posted to Webshots at:
<http://outdoors.webshots.com/slideshow/573276603kwnUvF>

The End



The author, Natalie Wiest

Lake Powell, Arizona

by
Sandra Leinweber

(Introduction by John Rich)

HCC member Chuck Leinweber and his wife Sandra, from Harper, Texas, took their canoes on a trip to Lake Powell last year, and have written about the experience on their website "*Duckworks Magazine*".

Lake Powell is a reservoir on the Colorado River, straddling the border between Utah and Arizona, and from their photos, it looks like beautiful water and scenery.

Last month's newsletter featured one of Chuck's stories, from the "Great Unknown" of the Rio Grande River, in southwest Texas. The Lake Powell story this month comes from Chuck's wife, Sandra. Click the link below to see the story and photos:

["Lake Powell Rocks"](#)

The Kokopelli Club has invited the Houston Canoe Club this year to join them on their annual paddle on Lake Powell. Sandra's story serves as a good review of what one can expect for this upcoming trip. Fleet Captain Donna Grimes is advertising this trip for the Houston Canoe Club. The scheduled dates are Sept. 27th through Oct. 3rd.



Chuck & Sandra Leinweber



Sandra on Lake Powell

(Click the thumbnail photos to see a full-screen version in a separate window)

The End

Pelican Island

June 21st

by

Natalie Wiest

Sunday morning June 21st (and Father's Day at that), five intrepid Houston Canoe Club kayakers met at the shell beach of Texas A&M University at Galveston campus to do a circumnavigation: paddling 10.6 miles of 360 degree circle to see what there was to see.

(Click on the thumbnail photos to view the full-screen versions in a separate window)



The shell beach at TAMUG campus

All photos by Natalie Wiest

We had a nice high tide going for us, and several days of wind pushing the Gulf of Mexico waters inland on the southerly breezes. This trip has a little of everything that makes up Galveston Bay – the Bay waters itself, commercial shipping, birds, dolphins, fishing, and on this day, sparkling blue water. Meteorological stats record an air temperature between 83 and 89 degrees (at Pier 21); water temperature of 93 degrees (Pier 21); and a slightly falling high tide from about 6 a.m. to predicted low at approximately 10 p.m.

Ken Anderson in his spiffy brand new sea kayak, Kelly Motter, Joe Coker, Coleen Connelly and I were on the water by 9:15; and off by 3. The pace was steady but fairly relaxed and we took two breaks to stretch our legs. We all agreed this was the coolest place to be and none of us felt heat-stressed. I enjoyed being IN the water at our break spots. All of us paddled sea kayaks – of both sit-on-top, and sit-in varieties and they were definitely the right craft for wind, waves, chop, and the open waterways.

From the shell beach we paddled west, then north from the 51st Street causeway. That put the refineries of Texas City on the horizon, and the Pelican Island Cut of the Intracoastal Waterway as our northern limit. We got out of our boats at the cut



Kelly and pelicans on their renewed beach

and noticed the recent rejuvenation of the earthen dikes there to form catchment basins for the dredge spoil sure to come: Ike did major rearrangement not only of land features, but water features too and a lot of dredging will be ongoing to get waterways usable for deeper draft vessels. As you can see from the photos (and a more complete album [can be seen here](#)) the sky and the water were blue, and just enough of occasional overcast to make it quite pleasant on the water. I've missed another pelican nesting season, and the north end of the island that can be covered

with nests was practically bare; in fact the birds seem to have migrated to the southern side of the cut for their beach duty at least this time of year.

There was no vehicle traffic on the Texas City dike, thanks to rearrangement of the roadway by Hurricane Ike. The Houston Ship Channel was certainly active along the east side of Pelican Island and the congestion at the mouth of the Galveston Channel provided plenty of chop and bounce for all of us. All five of us came armed

with cameras, an occasional dicey challenge for me in my tippy boat with a non-waterproof camera. I'm hoping my co-paddlers may be sharing more of their photos, we certainly seemed to be well-chronicled. We can report the old concrete ship is still visible just off of the HSC near Seawolf Park.



Joe photographing the concrete boat wreck at Sea Wolf Park

The Galveston channel too had lots of activity. The docks for Shell Oil Company and G&H Shipping on Pelican Island looked none the worse for the lke experience. That area has always been the scariest for me with those



Our own private beach overlooking the Galveston Channel and Seawolf Park in the background

big boats coming in and out of their harbor, and active dredging going on close by. We had a second rest stop just around the corner from Seawolf Park and could watch activity all around us.

We had dolphins come by twice while we were in the Galveston channel. Ken may have some photographic evidence – I've never had much luck with the dolphins and was plenty busy staying upright and watching for boat traffic so I didn't try.

Coleen has specially requested a close-up viewing of the tall ship Elissa, so we crossed the channel to see her resplendent in new paint and outfitting at her dock. We had requests for some Eskimo roll demonstrations from the tour boat operator but decided we'd be a lot better off not departing from the upright position.



Coleen admires the Elissa from closeup



HCC route. Map of Pelican Island. Galveston Island causeway is lower left in the map; the Intracoastal Waterway cut through Pelican Island. Houston Ship Channel is to the right (east), with "Bolivar" showing the approximate location of the Bolivar Roads area where boats lie anchored awaiting transit of the HSC. Note the ferry route too. Our paddle



path is indicated in red.

HCC route

We returned to the shell beach by 3 p.m. and agreed we'll have to do it again. This is the most pleasant trip around the island I can remember – and I've never had a bad one. We'll do this again some day and next time, y'all ought to come join us!

The End



The author, Natalie Wiest

Big Bend Ranch State Park

June 2009
by
Linda Gorski and Louis Aulbach

This is the first of a two part report on a recent trip that we took to Big Bend Ranch State Park in west Texas. As many of you know, there are two distinct parts to BBRSP – the interior of the park and the sections of the park that run along the Rio Grande and include Colorado Canyon. This report will highlight the interior of the park. Next month we will highlight the river portions and how the storms of fall 2008 changed the landscape and river accesses.

The bumper sticker for Big Bend Ranch State Park reads “The Other Side of Nowhere” and that about sums it up. It’s one of those places you really have to want to go to. We took a trip to this state park in June and found it to be one of the most unique and remote outdoor experiences Texas has to offer.

Your adventure has already begun... on a 27 mile gravel road... just to get to the park headquarters. Although the brochure for the park indicates that this main road is appropriate for 2 wheel drive vehicles, there’s no way I would attempt it in a low slung “city” sedan. We were driving a 2WD high clearance Ford Explorer and had no trouble on this road. At least on the way in. More about that later.



(Click on the thumbnail photos to view the full-screen versions in a separate window)

Head east on 170 out of Presidio or west from Lajitas until you come to a brown sign that says “Big Bend Ranch State Park” and Casa Piedra Road.

Photo by Linda Gorski

A low riding car will have difficulty on this road as it is wash boarded in several places, and



Crossing Alamito Creek after a small rainstorm.

Photo by Linda Gorski

there are a couple of low water crossings, including Alamito Creek shown here, to negotiate. Note: We managed about 15 miles per hour over the 27 mile road just to get to the park headquarters. So plan on approximately 1 ½ - two hours to make the trip.

This is a remote camping experience. There are no services at the park whatsoever. No fuel, no groceries. Bring in everything you need, especially water, at least 5 gallons per person. There is a water spigot at Saucedo Ranch Headquarters for drinking water, but

most of the campsites are a good distance away and you won’t want to be driving to the headquarters every time you need water. Bring empty containers to fill.

You must pack out all trash. There are no trash facilities or dumpsters anywhere in the park. Unless you are staying at the headquarters (there is an air conditioned bunkhouse with a men’s section and a woman’s section) or at South Leyva where

there is a composting toilet, you must pack out all human waste using an RV style flushable system or disposable waste bags. The headquarters does sell the Restop 2 disposable waste bags (<http://www.whennaturecalls.com>).

There is virtually no cell service in the park at all. Occasionally, Alltel customers can get service at a location behind the headquarters building. We were using AT&T and had no service until we got within about ¼ mile of the main highway out of the park.

Despite the fact that there is no cell service in the park, you can get wireless internet at the bunkhouse at the park headquarters, and it works really well. There are plenty of electrical outlets to use in the bunkhouse and comfortable chairs to sit on. There is even wi-fi service on the porch of the bunkhouse where you can sit in these wonderful rustic rocking chairs to check your email. Campers as well as visitors staying in the bunkhouse are allowed to use these wireless facilities.

As we said before, there is no fuel in the park whatsoever. The nearest gas or diesel is in Presidio or Terlingua. **FILL UP BEFORE YOU HEAD INTO THE PARK.** You can use up a full tank in a hurry just driving from place to place in this vast park.



Louis Aulbach checks his email messages on the porch of the Saucedo Bunkhouse.

Photo by Linda Gorski



Linda Gorski hiking on the road to the Pila Montoya Campsites. It is definitely 4WD, high clearance and requires off road tires.

Photo by Louis Aulbach

The main road inside the park (from FM 170 to the headquarters at Saucedo and then another 7 miles to a point where the public access ends and the road deteriorates) is advertised as 2wd high clearance. But we would add that off-road or all terrain tires are an absolute necessity. Once you get off the main road, you will need 4 wheel drive high clearance and off road tires in most places. The roads are VERY rough with lots of ruts and there is evidence of vehicles scraping the rocks in many places.

According to the ranger we talked to, when people call to make reservations they are asked what kind of vehicle they drive. Needless to say, RVs and motor homes are discouraged or "they leave here with a lot more rattles than they came."



**Note the scraping on the rocks
where vehicles have bottomed out.**

Photo by Linda Gorski



**Permits are required to use several
of the roads in BBRSP.**

Photo by Linda Gorski

We stayed at the South Leyva Campsite, about a mile from the park headquarters at Saucedo. You get to the campsites via a one lane jeep track. There are actually ten campsites with large picnic tables and bamboo and cedar arbors. It was over 90 degrees when we were there in June and that shade made all the difference for a pleasant stay. South Leyva also has a composting toilet so you don't have to pack out your waste.

Note that our tents are placed fairly close together as one of the requirements is that you only use the pads designated for tents. The pads are approximately 8 ft. x 8 ft. Supposedly, there is parking for two to three vehicles in most sites, but we had site number 7 and one car pretty much filled the parking space.



**The tent pads are fairly small. Two
small tents will fit into the tent pad
at our campsite at South Leyva.**

Photo by Linda Gorski

There are several campsites located along the 27 mile road into the park headquarters. You can actually get your camping permit at either Barton Warnock Center in Terlingua or at Fort Leaton State Park, just east of Presidio, before you go into the park, thus eliminating the need to go all the way to Saucedo before you set up camp - if you choose to stay at a campsite on the way in. The BBRSP website

(http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/big_bend_ranch/) shows where these campsites are located.

Some of the campsites we explored are:

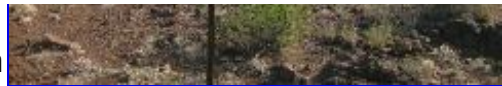
Los Ojitos – One mile west of Saucedo. Very remote, not too far off the main road, on a hard, high clearance road. Parking for three cars, good and spacious tent pads. Currently no arbor or shelter, but good picnic table. Several excellent hiking trails from this site.

Papalotito Colorado – plenty of parking, good tent site, parking for three cars, pads for four tents, Recommend 2WD high clearance to get into the site.

Rancho Viejo – Decent road in, no shelter, a “rough site” with plenty of tent space and parking, lots of shrubs and trees – thus it might



be a haven for flies and mosquitoes and other insects. The windmill and water tank are certain to attract the wildlife of the desert. In addition, there is historic debris all over the place. This is the site of what is thought to be the first ranch in the area. The rock corral nearby was built about 1930 by John Humphris. The parking area for a trailhead adjoins the campsite, so there might be some traffic from other visitors.



Papalotito Colorado campsite.

Photo by Linda Gorski

Vista de Bofecillos – high up a rough road. Definitely not a sedan road. Must have high clearance. No shelter. Top of mesa. Lots of parking. Lots of tent spots, but exposed.

For these “front country” campsites, you can easily explore parts of the park. Parking areas adjacent to trailheads provide access to day hikes that whet your appetite for explorations to more remote areas of the ranch.



As with many of the campsites in the BBRSP, Vista de Bofecillos is very remote.

Photo by Linda Gorski

Las Cuevas Amarillas area is located about 11 miles west of Saucedo Ranch. There are many small caves in the light colored rock formation that give the name to the area which means “the yellow caves.” The rock shelters show signs of human habitation dating back about 4,000 years.

The Ojito Adentro Trail is located about 8.5 miles west of Saucedo Ranch and it leads to a canyon which gives the place its name “the little spring within.” A desert woodland comprised of cottonwood, willow, hackberry and mesquite trees is supported by a waterfall and a spring. Various non-desert species live in this unique habitat in the desert. At times, the trail may be closed due to occupation by threatened or endangered species, so check with the rangers beforehand.



The Yellow Caves - Las Cuevas Amarillas.

Photo by Linda Gorski

Life-giving water is often found in tinajas located

in sheltered canyons of the desert. The Cinco Tinajas Trail, located about 1.3 miles west of Saucedo Ranch, leads down into a peaceful canyon where five small pools of water are water sources for the desert wildlife.

From the Pila Montoya Parking area, the old Marfa to Terlingua Road drops into Fresno Canyon and provides enchanting view of the Solitario, the foremost geologic feature of the park. Fresno Peak, the highest point of the Solitario at 5,124 feet, is clearly visible along the tilted ridges along the concentric circles of the eroded dome. The Fresno Canyon drainage has provided access to the Rio Grande for 5,000 years. A graded road built in the late 19th century follows a path that native Americans have used for centuries.

Although the park does not offer many conveniences, the staff goes out of its way to make visitors feel comfortable. According to the ranger, high season is November through January and spring break. He said that during spring break of

2009 the park's campsites were nearly full.

The conveniences that the park does offer include restrooms at the park headquarters and limited shower facilities that are free and are open 24 hours. There is an ice machine at the headquarters, and it is paid for by donation. When we were there, the ice machine was out of service, but the kitchen staff at the bunkhouse generously provided us with ice. Once again, the roads from the campsites are rough and long so driving to the headquarters every time you need water or a shower is a challenge. Come prepared. The shower we use when we're primitive camping uses about ½ gallon of water each per shower – and that includes shampooing and rinsing hair.

A note of caution. As we said earlier, we were driving a Ford Explorer which, unfortunately, did not have off road or all terrain tires. On the way out of the park, and within ¼ mile of the main road (FM 170), we had a flat. Not just a flat – a totally ruined tire. The Fix-a-flat that the park recommends you carry with you at all times just flowed right out the hole. Evidently, we hit a sharp rock after the road had just been graded and it not only put a hole in the tire, but broke the steel belt as well. Fortunately, we had a good spare. We changed the tire, but had to drive into Presidio to search for a spare. We still had a long way to go to get back to Houston. Don't expect to find a good selection of tires in Presidio. In the end, we purchased a used and patched tire that was close to the right size and would suffice in an emergency. If you find yourself with a flat tire out in the BBRSP we recommend Tom's Texaco, if you need tire service. Norberto E. Ocala, one of the owners, was extremely helpful. The cost to take off wheel, put the spare back on the rim, and put the used tire on the spare rim was \$30. Not only that, we met a very helpful Border Patrol agent as we were changing the tire who recommended Tom's and also gave us the phone numbers of the Border Patrol dispatch in that area, in case we should we have more problems on the road. Those numbers are 432-229-3330 and 432-729-5225.

Despite the remoteness of the area, the long slow tough drive into the park and the difficulty getting to some of the campsites, a visit to Big Bend Ranch State Park is well worth a visit. It offers some amazing hiking trails and spectacular vistas. We can't wait to go back.

All in all, the Big Bend Ranch State Park offers a wide variety of camping, hiking and paddling experiences. And if you have any questions about our trip you can email Linda at lindagorski@cs.com or Louis at lfa@hal-pc.org

The End



The authors; Linda Gorski & Louis Aulbach

