



Houston Canoe Club

Waterline



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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:** November 11, 2009 @ 7:00 PM
Where: Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet, Houston, Texas
Directions: First driveway, North side of Bissonnet, just West of Hillcroft.
Speaker: Regina Lindsey
Speaker Bio: Regina Lindsey is the executive director of Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition and Manager of the Greens Bayou Project.
Description: Regina Lindsey, executive director of the Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition, will present a program on Greens Bayou and what her committee is trying to accomplish.

According to the Handbook of Texas, Greens Bayou rises near the intersection of Jones and Mills roads, eight miles north of Jersey Village in northwestern Harris County (at 29°58' N, 95°35' W), and runs southeast for forty-two miles to its mouth on Buffalo Bayou, just north of Pasadena (at 29°45' N, 95°10' W).

The Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition's mission is to develop, in coordination with Houston area infrastructure providers and other community and stakeholder groups, the Greens Bayou Corridor as an essential, attractive and well-planned multi-use waterway, linear park and trail system, utility corridor, and high-capacity cross-county transit/highway link to foster economic development, minimize flooding, preserve desirable green-space, and provide needed transportation and utility services to improve the viability of Greens Bayou Corridor employment centers, commercial businesses, industries, the Houston Intercontinental Airport, the Port of Houston, and residential communities along the corridor.

Organized in 2006, the [Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition](#) (GBCC) is a 501(c)(3) dedicated to promoting infrastructure improvements along Greens Bayou that foster economic growth, improve quality of life and preserve green space. Regina Lindsey serves as the primary advocate for the GBCC's mission, leading efforts to secure the funding and partnerships needed to implement projects.



Regina Lindsey

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

Last Meeting Minutes

Date: October 14, 2009

Recorder: John Ohrt

Minutes: Vice Commodore Ken McDowell called the meeting to order.

The Safety Minute was a discussion by Ken on the importance of throw ropes, and proper rescue technique using a vector pull.

One new member was welcomed.

Paul Woodcock presented the program on "Art of the Shuttle" He discussed complexities and problems of shuttles, and showed various ways to get them done.

Ann Derby gave the Fleet Captain's trip report. Past trips included the BWCA/Quetico, San Marcos Jr. Texas Water Safari, Spring Creek, Hidalgo Falls, Old River, and the Huntsville State Park campout. Upcoming trips included Matagorda Bay, Boquillas Canyon, Upper Neches, Corpus Christi Paddlefest, San Antonio River at Goliad, and the Colorado River.

John Ohrt read the minutes of the September General Meeting, and they were approved as read.

Ken announced that all current officers had agreed to serve for another year, so no nominating committee is necessary. He called for nominations from the floor. None were made.

As the Purser is on the Pecos there was no financial report.

Paul gave a short report on membership.

It was announced that the Corps of Engineers wants our help in establishing a canoe trail in the Lake Charlotte area.

The meeting was adjourned.

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

New Members

Member Name: There is no new-member listing 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: There are no Marketplace items this month.
Description:
Asking Price: \$
Contact Name:
Contact Phone:
Contact Email:

###

Items Wanted

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

Boat Builder's Corner

by
Skip Johnson

Fiber glassing, for a lot of first time builders, this is the step that invokes a touch of dread. All of the wood working up to this point is old hat stuff not much different than home projects, cabinetry work or other (usually) guy stuff. And it is true there are tales of projects that got pretty mangled at this stage. But those tales were primarily from long ago, in the dark age of strippers, when polyester resin was king and epoxies were beyond temperamental. It's relatively easy to do the deal with little hassle with today's epoxies and fiberglass, it starts with selecting materials and then using them correctly.

Fiberglass: for a boat the size of EasyB we are talking about 4 or 6 ounce cloth. Six ounce is the way to go unless you are shooting for a superlight boat which also means fairly fragile. Save the 4 ounce for later stuff, decks, paddle blades and the like, let's stay with 6 ounce for now. Fiberglass comes in two flavors, e-glass and s-glass. E-glass is the standard stuff and it is good, the e stands for electrical grade, e-glass is a very good electrical insulator. S-glass is a slightly different formulation for structural application (aerospace) it has slightly finer fibers, somewhat tougher and stiffer, and more expensive. I'm a little partial to using s-glass but either will work fine. I've had good results ordering from www.sweetcomposites.com they carry both varieties and specialize in supplying canoe/kayak builders. Whoever you order materials from specify that it is shipped rolled; material that's been folded is close to unusable.

Epoxy: there are a lot of products out there now, from the premium big three, (West, System Three and MAS) to a multitude of less expensive versions, virtually all of the 2:1 mix variety. I've used a multitude of them over the years and they are all good products and similar in results and handling, except for a couple of aerospace versions which are more toxic and should be avoided. If I had to choose one system to use from now on it would probably be the MAS if I could afford it or the product from www.jgreer.com if I couldn't. But there is really very little difference between brands. The one criterion I'm adamant about following is the product must be a 2:1 mix, resin to hardener. There are some 1:1 mix products available but they are typically thicker with slightly poorer physical properties. I had some bad experiences with some early versions of the 5:1 mixes, fortunately on smaller model projects, and now have an unreasoning bias against same.

Tools: a fun trip down memory lane; I went back and pulled up a picture of all the stuff to build a stripper, except the wood parts for a long distance project www.duckworksmagazine.com/03/r/articles/stripper/index.htm I've included the picture and commentary below followed by addenda as to what's changed in the last 10 years.

All the stuff (almost) to build a stripper

Background

Old 48 quart ice chest as a tool chest. 62" long piece 4" sch40 PVC pipe contains 6 oz s-glass, plans, full size frame patterns and poster board. Plastic sack contains polyester dress lining fabric (peel ply) and roll of nylon twine. The pipe is cut up on site later to make clamps.



Back row

1 ½ gal epoxy kit, associated 'mustard' pumps for resin and hardener, 2 quarts Titebond2, stack of 9 oz plastic cups for mixing epoxy. 2-1# bags of #16 rubber bands.

All it takes.

Photo by Skip Johnson

Through the middle

Wood rasp, dovetail saw, tape measure, utility knife & spare blades, holesaw cutter (1 ½"), jiffy mixer, scissors, saber saw, 6" D/A air sander, roll of 60 & 80 grit sanding disk, package of plastic squeegees, box of screws and nails, clear packing tape, box of 2" chip brushes, granddaughters glue stick, flux brushes.

Foreground

Sabre saw blades, #2 pencils, mixing sticks, hand cream, 24" flexible steel rule, dust mask, drill, drill bits.

This was truly all there was... except the wood strips, already cut and machined, wood dust from the plant, and the material for box beam and forms. The only additional tools were the belt sander and belts I borrowed and Mrs. Loskots clothes iron for the iron-ons. The form material was cut up on a panel saw by others. We borrowed some 1 ½" nails to use to cleat rubber bands to forms since this was quicker (and slightly more hazardous) than trying to fabricate a lot of little wood pegs. The nails were returned.

There wasn't anything that I really missed, except the other battery for drill, and/or the charger. We used every last drop of the epoxy, primarily because I kicked over the hardener and lost quite a bit halfway through building. We also used up all the titebond.

Not that much has changed in 10 years, today I would insist on using disposable nitrile gloves instead of hand cream. For glassing work you will need the gloves, scissors, plastic squeegees, chip brushes, mixing sticks, Epoxy, pumps and mixing cups.

Sacrosanct Rules

The following few items need to be followed almost religiously.

1. The mixing ratio will not be deviated from. If it is a 2:1 mix it is always a 2:1 mix more or less hardener does not speed up or slow down the curing process. More or less hardener will create either an extremely brittle or soft final product. Always follow the ratio. There is a little slack built in to a 2:1 system less so in a product with higher ratios of resin to hardener. Most will use the 'mustard' style pumps (I do), if so, it's important to 'burp' the pumps to get air out of the system when dispensing resin and hardener.
2. Mix thoroughly, you cannot mix too much but you can mix too little. Three minutes is a good rule of thumb for mixing small (recommended) batches of 6 fluid ounces or so manually with a tongue depressor style mixing stick. Scrape the side of the container often to ensure no resin or hardener is left unmixed.

3. Be temperature aware. If it's too cold (less than 50-60 degrees Fahrenheit) mixing and applying epoxy is a pain. If it gets much above 80-90 degrees you will have to work really, really fast to stay ahead of the epoxy flash curing. The ideal setup is to apply the epoxy while it is fairly warm with the temperature cooling off afterward; this helps the epoxy soak down into the wood as everything contracts as it slightly cools. Conversely if you apply the epoxy in the cool of the morning you are almost guaranteed to have some bubbles pop up as the wood expands as it warms. Some epoxy systems have a choice of hardeners for different temperatures (slow, medium, fast) stay away from the fast, especially for glassing a full hull.

General Rules

Important but less so than the above.

1. Keep the stuff off of you, particularly the hardener. Some hardeners are very strong skin sensitizers/allergens, particularly the higher ratio systems and the aerospace products. Use gloves and common sense.
2. A helper is handy here. You can be a virtual hermit up to this point, or have a regular cadre of helpers, kibitzers or partygoers if you prefer, but for this one thing there should be a least two perhaps three of you with assigned tasks. It is hard to get the fabric laid out over the hull with just one person and having someone dedicated to mixing certainly makes things go smoother. A short dedication to my wife Susie is in order here; she has mixed gallons of epoxy for me over the years.
3. Be organized this one time. Have every laid out at hand. Halfway through glassing is not the time to be looking for some more mixing cups.

OK it's time to get started, let me apologize for lack of pictures of the actual process. I've got plenty of just before with glass laid on the hull and after with epoxy applied. In between it's hard to stop the flow of work to take pictures. The somewhat grainy pictures (Day7a-Day7g) are stills from a time-lapse video done when building the Bionic Log

www.youtube.com/watch?v=brld8jPK6oA
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zc7nP462qs0



Day7a



Day7b





Day7c



Day7e



Day7g



Day7d



Day7f

Depending on your workspace situation it might not be a bad idea to tape down some builders paper under the boat to catch the inevitable drips and globs of epoxy.

For a first time project it's probably a good idea to give the hull a seal coat of epoxy. This adds a step and a day to the process but it's a little easier to wet out the cloth and there's less chance of the wood soaking up enough

epoxy to create a dry spot. Brush on a coat of epoxy trying to get an even coat but don't try to fill all the grain. Once the epoxy has cured it's time to start. With a helper roll out the cloth over the boat and cut to length with a couple of inches overlap at each end. Lift up the cloth being careful not to snag the cloth on anything and gently lay the cloth down keeping it centered over the hull. Trim the excess around the perimeter leaving at least an inch of overlap. Be gentle with the trimmed excess keeping it off the floor since you will use some of this cloth for the inside ends, bulkheads etc.

Make sure you've got all your stuff at hand and put on your gloves. It might not be a bad idea to put on two pair of nitrile gloves, you can strip the outer pair off when they start getting sticky.

Rock and roll. Make sure everything is at hand and mix the first batch of epoxy, 6 fluid ounces is a good amount to start with, 4 ounces resin, 2 ounces hardener, in a disposable 9 ounce plastic cup. Once the first batch is thoroughly mixed, start at the center of the boat, working toward the ends and down to the sheer. A lot of people start by pouring a thick bead of epoxy along the bottom and then spreading it with a squeegee, I originally learned to spread with a 2" chip brush and that's what I do, saving the squeegee work for later. Always work towards the ends and the sheer, any brush or squeegee strokes back to the center of the boat will pucker the cloth. As you spread the epoxy it will take a minute or two for it to soak into the glass fiber and become transparent. Don't worry over any one spot as you spread, just concentrate on spreading a fairly full coat of epoxy into the cloth. The idea is to have just enough epoxy applied to saturate the cloth which should be flat against the surface below. You should be able to see the texture of the cloth at this point, if the surface looks glossy and level, there's too much epoxy there. A little squeegee work (from the center out) will spread the excess to areas that need a little more and press the cloth down at the same time. A fairly gentle pressure on the squeegee is in order, just enough to move the epoxy along to a drier spot. Too

much pressure will drag too much epoxy away and leave the cloth starved.

That first 6 ounces of epoxy didn't go that far and it's time for the mixer to mix up another batch as you are finishing spreading the first batch. I like to set the used disposable cups off to the side in a line so as to be able to later check that the epoxy has properly cured. There's a good reason to do a multitude of little batches. Curing epoxy is an exothermic chemical reaction; it generates heat as it cures. The larger the mass of epoxy, the more heat generated. The longer that mass stays together the hotter it gets, which makes the reaction go on even faster, which makes it hotter, which makes it react faster... until all of a sudden the cup in your hand is a little warm, followed shortly by being too hot to hold, followed by melting plastic cup time. Stay with small batches for now, if a cup ever starts to get warm in your hand set it back out of the way and mix a new batch. That same epoxy that would get warm in just a few more minutes in the cup will take several hours to start to cure once spread out in the cloth, that thin layer just doesn't have the concentrated mass to start a chain reaction.

If you have two spreaders, it's OK to mix larger batches and share the mixes, the idea is to just not have any mass of epoxy sitting in one place for any length of time.

As you get to the ends it's time to decide what to do at the bow and stern. I usually cut a slit in the cloth along the centerline and overlap the cloth on the ends with about an inch and a half overlap. Another approach is to let the cloth just run out on each side and trim it back when the resin hardens. You will be adding an extra layer of cloth over the ends in any case. That's pretty much it for this stage, there's a nice window of opportunity where the excess cloth can be trimmed from the gunnel with a sharp utility knife while the epoxy is still a little plastic but firm. Too soon and the glass fibers will separate and it's hard to cut. The next day the epoxy is hard and it's difficult to cut.

The boat needs to set for a day or two to let the epoxy harden and then it's on to finishing the inside. This is the one time when some diligence is required. With the wood sealed on just one side there's a risk of some differential movement as the wood shrinks and swells with changes in temperature and humidity. The inside doesn't need to be done in the next few days but a month might be stretching it. But still we will have to wait a month before we get into finishing the inside.



Almost half-way



Three-quarters way

To be continued...

Porch Sittin' at Stillwell Store in the Big Bend

October 2009

by

Linda Gorski

In late October 2009 a group of paddlers from the Houston Canoe Club headed to the Big Bend to paddle Boquillas Canyon. We expected the river to be running around 270 cfs. According to our outfitter friends in Terlingua, optimal flow for paddling Boquillas is 400 cfs. When we got to the put-in at Rio Grande Village the day before we were to head downriver, the Rio Grande was running high, wide, fast and muddy - around 2000 cfs. Water was being released from the reservoirs in Mexico ahead of rains that would fall from Hurricane Rick... and the river levels were predicted to go even higher.

Call it wimping out if you will, but I decided that my paddling skills and the boat I'd brought just were not up to running the river at that level. So while the other 11 paddlers put their boats in the water to backpaddle for five days, I headed to the Stillwell Store to camp until they got off the river.

My heroes! The Boquillas 11.

Back row: Kathleen and Terry Burgess from Comstock, Donna Grimes, Robert Killian, Ken Anderson, Louis Aulbach and Dana Enos.

Kneeling: Chuck and Sandra Leinweber from Harper, Robert Langley and Skip Johnson.



Photo by Chuck Leinweber



Old Stillwell Store sign.

Photo by Linda Gorski

Now most of you avid paddlers would scoff at my suggestion that I probably had more fun at Stillwells than my friends had paddling Boquillas. Those of you who have actually spent some time at Stillwells might agree with me.

[The Stillwell Store](#) is located about 46 miles south of Marathon on Highway 2627, the road to La Linda and the takeout for the Boquillas run. Stillwells did our shuttle and all the vehicles were safely parked at the lot across from the store.

Most Texans know that Stillwell Ranch was the home of Hallie Stillwell, a Texas legend. Members of her family still run the Stillwell Store and the terrific museum dedicated to Hallie Stillwell both of which are located at this wide spot in the road which is a gathering place for local residents, campers, RVers from all over the world, lawmen, ranchers and local characters.



Hallie's Hall of Fame Museum

Photo by Linda Gorski



Flintknapper Kinley Cohan who also ranches across the way from the Stillwell Ranch. Note the beautiful arrowhead he just finished knapping on his knee.

Photo by Linda Gorski

Every evening I was there a rotating group of folks arrived around 5 p.m. to spend a few hours sitting on the porch of the Stillwell Store and visiting. On a typical night you might meet a local deputy sheriff for Brewster County and his wife, a rancher from across the way who is also one of the best flintknappers in the state of Texas, the mayor of Leonard, Texas (like me, a guest), the biologist/ranger from Black Gap Wildlife Management Center, and a paddler from Austin who had just soloed Boquillas.



Brad Carlson, a solo paddler from Austin who just came off the Boquillas run with Nan Patton, Hallie Stillwell's granddaughter. Nan is one of the family members who still run the place.

Photo by Linda Gorski



Willie from the Big Brushy Ranch down the road from Stillwells visits with Bill Voss, mayor of Leonard, Texas and his wife Martha.

Photo by Linda Gorski

In this remote part of the world, sharing a beer on the porch at the end of the day with friends and neighbors is sometimes the only human interaction you have all day.

In addition to some of the best camaraderie anywhere, Stillwell Store offers essential groceries, RV and tent camping, gas (no diesel), showers, toilets and a gift shop. During Spring Break and at other times of the year there is live music and other programs. The hiking in that area is just spectacular and Stillwells offers rock hunting and collecting for a small fee. And -- this you will not believe -- the

store even has wireless internet!!!! You can sit on the porch with your laptop or netbook and keep in touch with the world.

If you're looking for a place to camp in the Big Bend especially after running Boquillas Canyon, try Stillwells. I promise you won't be disappointed.



Linda Gorski hiking on the Stillwell Ranch. Note the Stillwell Store complex in the background.

Photo by Louis Aulbach

The End

Upcoming River Trips

HCC Trips:

- Date:** Friday, October 30, 2009
Title: Paddling the Wild Neches River
Inclusive Dates: 10/30-11/1
Description: A true wilderness experience in deep East Texas. We'll once again paddle this 30 mile stretch through the remote rocky forested hills of the Angelina National Forest and along the Upland Island Wilderness, Texas' largest designated wilderness area.
- Skill Level:** Three days paddling, two nights on the river.
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 Ken McDowell by phone 713-432-1896, or by email komcdowell@earthlink.net.
###
- Date:** Friday, November 06, 2009
Title: Paddlefest near Corpus Christi
Inclusive Dates: 11/6-8
Description: Corpus Christi Paddlefest at Port Aransas
- Mark your Calendars and join us for 3 days of kayak fun (Friday Nov 6 thru Sunday Nov 8, 2009)
- Corpus Christi Paddlefest this year will include:
1. Guided kayak tours of 1-Shamrock Cove birding refuge, 2-Historic Lydia Ann Lighthouse, 3-Circumnavigation of Harbor Island to see lots of dolphins, 4-paddle along the Padre Island canal homes, or 5-Corpus Christi Bay around the city and the Lexington Aircraft Carrier.
- Skill Level:** This list may truncate the remainder of the information for this trip. To see the full information listing, go to
Blank: Select this level if this portion is not to appear in the listing.
- Contact:** Contact Ken Johnson by phone 361-855-3926, or by email johnsonkw@earthlink.net.
###
- Date:** Saturday, November 07, 2009
Title: Janice and Fraser's Tenth Anniversary Trip on the San Antonio River at Goliad, Saturday November 7, 2009.
Inclusive Dates: Nov. 7
Description: The 6.5 mile paddle is on the San Antonio River near Goliad. It is a pleasant paddle on a slowly moving river,

with a large number of participants from several canoe clubs. The putin is where hwy 59 crosses the San Antonio River just SouthWest of Goliad, some 154 miles (3.5 hours) from Houston.

We generally meet at the McDonalds in Rosenberg for breakfast at 7:30, then proceed as a group to Goliad arriving at the putin by 10:30.

Alert! Lunch after the paddle on Saturday will be provided to all registered paddlers. However, to receive lunch, you must register by November 4. To Register, email KCcanoe@aol.com. More information is at

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 Fraser Baker by phone 713-202-2503, or by email flbaker@sbcglobal.net.

###

Date: Saturday, November 21, 2009

Title: Fall Paddle on the Colorado River and Dutch Oven Cooking

Inclusive Dates: Two Days 11/21-22

Description: Paddle the Colorado River near La Grange. Pack for cool weather and food . Can join in for a BIG MEAL Saturday Night Dutch Oven Cooking, with desert. Hey No Smoke Signals, maybe a peace pipe around the campfire.!! I'm from a Civilized Nation. There were Five of them. Can you name them?? (Ha Ha!!) Call for details and RSVP. Wado.!!!

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 Mary Ellen Zaborowski by phone 832 215 4551, or by email maryzabo@sbcglobal.net.

###

Other Club Trips:

Paddling the Old River

September 20, 2009

by

Dave Kitson

The Old River area is a truly beautiful area to paddle. Located east of Houston just this side of the Trinity River it is well wooded with minimal evidence of human presence and more than its share of interesting natural flora and fauna.

The put-in is easy to find - just take CR 565 north from I 10 to CR 1409 and take a right, then proceed about a ½ mile down the road to the bridge and pull off to the right. The put-in is flat and not too muddy so getting in and out of the boat is no problem.



An early start for paddlers on the Old River.



The put-in at Old River.

Photos by Natalie Wiest and John Bayduss

For this trip there were 12 paddlers in 10 boats including Honey Leveen, Melinda Taylor, Natalie Wiest and her daughter Ellen, Mike Pollard, Bill Cooke, Paul Woodcock and his granddaughter Angie, Coleen Connelly, Rea Inglis and last but not least John Bayduss

who, along with Natalie, provided the pictures you see. Everyone was either early or on time so we set off less than ½ hour after the meeting time.

The advertised trip was downstream on Old River to the Cut Off, then up the Cut Off to a man-made stream where there is a spot that is not too difficult to get in and out of the boats. We could eat lunch there and head back making a trip of about 8 miles and 3 to 4 hours; this, however, would change.

We had a beautiful day, partly cloud with little wind and no current so the downstream leg on Old River was all smooth, calm water with hardly a sound. Even the insects were quiet so it was about as peaceful as it gets. The calm water brought out the jumping fish which was the only thing breaking the serenity. There were still, in late summer, blooming flowers such as White Hibiscus, Trumpet Vine and Pickerel Weed. There was also the usual cast of avian characters consisting mostly of Snowy Egrets.



A beautiful day for paddling

We took the left to the Cut Off and proceeded upstream. This stream is not as wide as Old River but is equally well wooded and natural. There are a few fallen trees but none extends all the way across the water so it is an easy paddle. On one of the fallen trees there was a huge wasp nest, maybe 8" in diameter completely covered in wasps which no one disturbed.

Most of the folks got out at the lunch spot to eat and stretch their legs. Unfortunately while we were eating our lunches the mosquitoes were eating theirs. I have paddled the Charlotte, Trinity, Old River area several times in the past 6 weeks and have found the mosquitoes on land to be pretty bad lately, fortunately, they do not seem to venture more than a few feet from shore so there is little problem on the water. It could be my imagination but the high mosquito population seems to have increased the dragonfly population which is not a bad tradeoff.



Little Stream to Lost Lake

This was a strong group of paddlers having reached the lunch spot in only about an hour and 15 minutes so I polled the group to see if they wanted to extend the trip. It was unanimous to continue so we set out east again. We made it to a small stream that extends south and we think connects to Lost Lake. Most of the group paddled down this stream for a ways, likely about half way to Lost Lake. It is not too wide and has many fallen trees; however, it is navigable for that distance and on Google Earth looks to widen

as it goes south. This little stream had trees forming a canopy overhead which created some welcome shade. At this point it was time to head back, leaving the remainder of the "Stream to Lost Lake" for another time.

The trip ended up being 10.5 miles and about 5 hours so I think everyone got their money's worth. This is a trip that anyone could make since it is easy to find, pretty hard to get lost, does not seem to have many alligators and is easy to paddle. It is also possible to go upstream on Old River for about 3.5 miles before running out of water and turning back.

I would like to thank all the paddlers for making it a great trip and especially Natalie Wiest and John Bayduss for providing the photos.



A colorful array of boats on the Old River

The End

Bolivar Peninsula via the Intracoastal Waterway

October 25th

by

Natalie Wiest

Sunday October 25th dawned clear and cool, a perfect day to try out a route I hadn't done before: the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) from the Bolivar ferry landing, to Stingaree Cove and restaurant. Dave Kitson and Coleen Connelly were game to give it a try even after several trips with me in recent history went a little over-long. I'd measured this one on my map-making tool as being about 12 miles and alas, after this experience, I too am beginning to doubt its veracity, but read on.

Our planned meeting time was 9 a.m. at the ferry landing on Bolivar; Coleen was running a little late, so Dave and I decided to go ahead and run the shuttle, and we were underway by 10:30. There's a nice little sand beach just to the north of where the ferry lands that is just fine for launching boats. In the photo you see Dave and Coleen and between them the metal landing that slopes up to the ferry when it's at the dock.



Dave and Coleen at the beach where we launched – in the background is the ramp to the ferry landing

Photo by Natalie Wiest



Natalie and Coleen paddling down the ICW

Photo by Dave Kitson

There was a fair amount of wind, so we decided the ICW was a better route than out around the northern fringe of the peninsula which was longer and less protected.

The ICW was indeed heavily traveled by barges, including several large docking areas; and well populated by shrimp boats as well. It was an interesting mixture of heavy commercial with the boats, some very nice homes (like survivors!), fish camps, and open spaces with saltwater marshes and lots of birds.



Dave and Coleen approaching a fleet of shrimp boats at the dock

Photo by Natalie Wiest



Brown pelican near the put-in

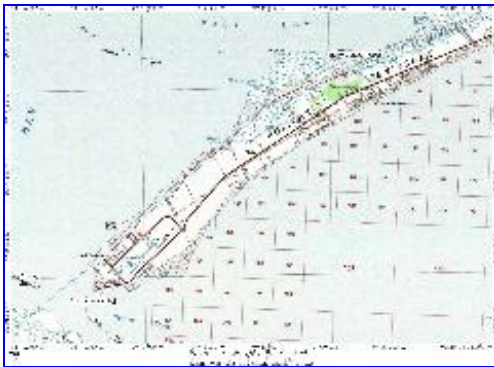
Photo by Dave Kitson

We were greeted almost immediately by a small flock of white pelicans, and roseate spoonbills that crisscrossed our path almost the entire way. Dave got a nice photo of a brown pelican at the ferry landing; and then one of a huge flock of laughing gulls that had popped over the top of a barge to land in the water very close to Coleen and me, and took flight again as Dave put his camera into action. Please note that his lens has somewhat foreshortened the distance – I'm not quite as close to that barge as it appears.



Natalie with barge and laughing gulls

Photo by Dave Kitson



It appears that the mileage gauge on this isn't quite right – or at least the trip indicator (red dashed line), whose measurement was given as 12 miles. It's most likely a lot closer to 15 miles – just ask our screaming bodies about pushing those last several miles!

Map by Natalie Wiest

The wind was of the southeasterly persuasion, and the tide falling. In retrospect, it seems that it might have been an easier trip had we paddled in the opposite direction; or maybe it's the distance in general that had us well worn out by the end of the trip. Dave and Coleen measured it as more like 14 miles and approaching 15. It took us until 5 p.m. to reach our destination. The long paddle and shuttles paid off with a great seafood dinner at Stingaree afterward.

This is a real nice paddle, although a bit longish. There are some other access points along the way that would shorten the paddle, so do take advantage of that if you get a chance. Next on my list: Stingaree to Rollover Pass. So many places to paddle, so little

The End

Picketts Bayou to the Trinity River

October 18th

by

Natalie Wiest

Finally I've made it – Picketts Bayou to its connection with the Trinity River. I'm not sure I'd have found it by myself this time, so it's a good thing that Dave Kitson and several others had scouted it a few weeks before and found a good workable route. But made it I did, along with Ellen and Dave, on Sunday, October 18th.

We put in at the new Picketts Bayou boat ramp, just yards from the access ramp that goes to Champion Lake. This is on the west side of the Trinity River, heading north from I-10 on highway 565, to 1409, to 417 east.

This is a lovely wide and deep bayou. Its first mile or two it would be hard to get lost but THEN it heads off into the woods. If you look at the map, you'll see where it makes a big dogleg turn, then heads south again. At the point where it appears to T into the next stream, make a right turn and then left, and you're now on the Cutoff and shortly heading north again. About the point there appears to be a four point intersection there is a low water retaining dam – completely invisible this day and water level (USGS gage 0867000 at Liberty= 19 feet; 15,000cfs). The current at the spot was so strong I couldn't paddle upstream against it, so I jumped out and was able to wade the boat upstream and beyond the swift current. Dave tells me when he ran it before, the dam was close enough to the surface that one would have been required to lift the boat over it.



**Dave Kitson inspecting a
homemade barricade/dam on a side
channel**

All photos by Natalie Wiest



At this level, we were immediately paddling against the current when we made the turn onto the Cutoff. It made for a nice quick trip back home after we'd paddled across the Trinity River and a quick leg-stretching break. The mosquitoes were ferocious in the woods so we didn't linger long. This is a 5 mile one way trip, or 10 miles for the round-trip.



Dave paddling along a wide open part of the passageway

It has forested banks the entire length – from the wide open upper bayou, to quite narrow with trees touching overhead closer to the Trinity connection. It's a great trip for any time of year. When we'd paddled it once before earlier in the year, it was much lower with a barely passable sandbar at the lower end of the large open lake section. Both times I thought I got a glimpse of a bald eagle, known to hang out in the area, but never close enough to verify that's what I'd seen. The unusual bird sighting of this trip were the anhingas, and quite a few raucous belted kingfishers too.



Dave in a much narrower passage



Picketts Bayou map showing the route

The End

Spring Creek - an Urban Oasis

September and October 2009

by

Lydia Cruzen and Ken McDowell

Spring Creek is an urban oasis. The forests along the creek look nearly the same as they looked over 200 years ago when Akokisa Indians roamed the land, hunting and gathering their food as they traveled this gorgeous spring-fed waterway.

Preserving our urban forests improves every aspect of Houstonians quality of life. The Spring Creek watershed currently contains tens of thousands of acres of bottomland hardwood forest, providing home to wildlife, creating recreation opportunities, reducing flooding, and improving air quality. There is a project underway called the Spring Creek Greenway which will connect and protect up to 12,000 acres of forest, on both sides of the creek, in order to preserve, protect, restore, and educate the public about an ecological gem - a biologically diverse ecosystem that provides important habitat for many wildlife species, and aims to create an ecotourism mecca and a peaceful respite from busy urban lives for those from Houston or even nationwide. For more information about this project see www.springcreekgreenway.org/the_project.htm

Several of our Houston Canoe Club members have paddled Spring Creek recently. Patti Carothers from Southwest Paddlesports led a trip on September 17 that included HCC members Rea Inglis, Lydia Cruzen, Calvin Doody, Rika Muhl, and Ken McDowell. The trip was a 6 mile paddle along the Spring Creek Greenway. The group put in at Hwy. 59, crossing over the W. Fork of the San Jacinto and paddled up to Jesse Jones park and back and then some.



The group at the put in for Spring Creek

Photo by Lydia Cruzen



Ken McDowell towing the champagne and shrimp barge for lunch on Spring Creek.

Photo by Lydia Cruzen



Trip leader Patti Carothers -- and she didn't fall in once!!



Photo by Lydia Cruzen

On October 24 Ken McDowell solo paddled the creek again and filed this report.

"A perfect day to paddle this Harris County treasure. Three days before, James Graham at Southwest Paddlesports informed me that they were back in the shuttle business after (finally) replacing their stolen 15 passenger van. That's another story. The timely mid-week rains

tempted me to plan a weekend trip on short notice. Several folks signed up at first, but then canceled at the last minute. One other was a no-show – bummer. Anyway, the shuttle was all set, weather perfect and stream flow ideal for the 14 mile paddle from the put-in near the Hardy toll road to the take-out at Hwy 59.

I had the stream all to myself. Myself and the birds anyway. I saw a bald eagle, an osprey, several hawks, and the usual crowd of blue herons and white egrets. A pair of kingfishers circled my boat for 5 minutes raising quite a ruckus until a hawk dive-bombed them! Way cool! I made the trip in 4 hours...that's 3½ miles per hour if you do the math.

The recent rains are tempting me to organize a return trip so watch this space!"

The End



**Cardinal Flower and goldenrod on
Spring Creek**

Photo by Lydia Cruzen

Boquillas Canyon

Rio Grande River October 20 - 24, 2009

by

Louis Aulbach

On Tuesday, October 20, eleven HCC boaters set out from the landing at Rio Grande Village for a leisurely trip through the 33 miles of Boquillas Canyon. We had reserved the group site at RGV and throughout the day on Monday, the trip participants arrived and set up camp. An unexpected release of water in Mexico in anticipation of heavy rains from Hurricane Rick over Baja California had sent the river level from about 300 cfs on the previous Friday to over 1800 cfs on Monday.

Everyone made a visit to the landing to take a look at the water for themselves. At this level, about 6.5 feet, the Rio Grande was once again the large river of previous decades (before the drought years of the 1990's and 2000's). It was also moving swiftly, much like the Brazos River or the Colorado River when they have water. Big and silty.

The crew on this trip included Louis Aulbach, Dana Enos, Ken Anderson and Robert Killian who had paddled the canyon before. New to this stretch of river were Donna Grimes, Robert Langley, Skip Johnson, Chuck and Sandra Leinweber, and Terry and Kathleen Burgess.

After returning from Stillwell's Store where we left our vehicles and picked up our shuttle drivers, our group of solo boaters slipped into the current. We were off quickly and, floating at a rate of 4.5 mph, we passed by the village of Boquillas in only a short time. The entrance to the canyon came up shortly, and within hours, we had come to our camp site deep within the canyon walls. There was only a small riffle rapid near the entrance to the canyon and a riffle at the sandbar where we camped that first night. Otherwise, it was a smooth ride.

In our first trip through Boquillas Canyon since the great flood of 2008, we found that much had changed. Large sandbars were scraped away. In particular, two sandbars with candelilla wax operations were gone, along with the large steel vats that are used to boil the wax plants. Only one wax factory remained in the canyon at Chupadero Canyon.



Chuck Leinweber takes a photo of the wax factory vat at Chupadero

Photo by Louis Aulbach



Campsite below Rabbit Ears

Photo by Louis Aulbach

A light shower in bands sent off by Hurricane Rick hit us right at dinner time, but in a few minutes, the rain stopped and cool dry air blew through the camp. In the morning, we set off again for an easy paddle. Along the way

we checked as many side canyons as it was possible to explore without too much effort or mud. Finally, we stopped for the day about 2:30 pm since we had made the mileage for the day. We had planned to camp at the beautiful site with a large tree about two miles below Rabbit Ears Canyon, but the flood had completely

scoured the sandbar and removed the tree and the gentle terraced beach.

As we moved on down to the next campsite option, we encountered another surprise. At Arroyo Venado, we came upon a standing wave rapid that has been listed in the river guides for years, but which we had never seen in our previous trips through the canyon. The eddies left and right were intensely strong, and the wave train terminated in a huge boulder. Three of our boats swamped or turned over. Fortunately, all were able to recover safely and were back underway in only a few minutes. Nevertheless, it is a reminder that the river can become challenging at the most unexpected times. Always wear your life vest on the river, and know your self-rescue techniques, especially in high water.

We camped that second night at a nice grassy sandbar about 200 yards below Rabbit Ears Canyon. There was a side canyon at this place which was narrow and tight, but it had the most unusual array of crystal rocks.

This site was so inviting that we decided to make this our layover day site. The following day was cool and sunny. Each of us did a little hiking in the canyon and on the slopes of the walls before lunch. After lunch, some of us sat around telling great tales of adventure while others engaged in the tournament of cards under the shade of tobacco plants.

The next morning, we set out early and exited the canyon within an hour. We noted that the gravel bar at Heath Creek had been completely cleared by the flood, just as the ranger at Barton Warnock had told us. This was good since we wanted to stop there and spend a few hours in search of the site of Camp Mercer, a 1914-era Army National Guard camp. A telephone line was run from the main camp at La Noria to Camp Mercer through a canyon in the Dead Horse Mountains and that canyon today is known as Telephone Canyon.

Luck was not with us. We all fanned out over the desert and searched for a sign of the ruins, but to no avail. We did locate a couple of prehistoric camp sites, several old cans and other debris, but there was no sign of the stone walls of the camp house or the corral.

We did stay there for lunch before we put back on the water. After an hour or so we came to a sandbar near the Mexican ranch of Melcher Muzquiz, just below Stillwell Crossing. It was the last good camp spot before the take out. Since it was about 2 pm and the sun was blazing, we set up a tarp for shade. Others in the group continued the card tournament in the shade of a mesquite tree on the upper terrace.

In the morning, we put on the water for our last day. The take out was only 8 miles away, and the current running at 4.5 mph meant we would easily make the take out by noon. We arrived about 11 am and the drivers headed up to Stillwell's in the two vehicles which were shuttled to get the other cars. Since the take out sandbar was exceedingly sandy and we had no 4 wheel drive vehicles, we had to carry our boats and gear to the parking area near the road. A tough chore, but with everyone lending a hand, everyone's gear and boats were loaded up and ready to head home by 1 pm.



Ken Anderson "sand skink snapping".

Photo by Louis Aulbach

Boquillas was just one more great trip with good companions and fine weather.



Eleven HCC members paddled Boquillas Canyon including back row Terry and Kathleen Burgess, Donna Grimes, Robert Killian, Ken Anderson, Louis Aulbach and Dana Enos. Kneeling Chuck and Sandra Leinweber, Robert Langley and Skip Johnson,

Photo by Donna Grimes

The End