



Table of Contents

Meeting Announcement

Safety Tips: trip planning

by Rick Brunson

History: Houston Bricks

by Louis Aulbach

Welcome New Members

Backwater Backwash: Pets & Camping

(report from a paddling Mom - Cecilia Gill)

December Holiday Party

Trip Reports

Brazos River

by John Rich

Lake Charlotte

by John Rich

Labor Day on the Sabine

by Paul Woodcock

Labor Day in the Hill Country

by John & Anne Olden

Lake Charlotte

by Paul Woodcock



www.houstoncanoecub.org :: Volume 66 :: October 2007

This month's speaker is ...

Speaker: Benny Martinez, curator of Zaragoza Birthplace State Historic Site, will tell us about the historical importance of the Goliad region and its place in Texas' history. Mr. Martinez is a direct descended of Zaragoza and is an extremely knowledgeable and entertaining speaker on Texas history. Attendees are sure to learn some fascinating details about Texas and have a great time! Mr. Martinez is coming all the way from Goliad just for us, so be sure to come and give him a warm welcome.

This presentation is intended to develop interest in the annual paddle Goliad River Trail (November 3, 2007), which coincides with Janice and Fraser's annual anniversary trip and the Blazing Paddles trip.

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Boy Scouts' "Safety Afloat" guidelines:

Presented to you by Rick Brunson

Float Plan Obtain current maps and information about the waterway to be traveled. Know exactly where the unit will "put in" and "pull out" and what course will be followed. Travel time should be estimated generously. Review the plan with others who have traveled the course recently.

Local Rules Determine which state and local regulations are applicable, and follow them. Get written permission to use or cross private property.

Notification File the float plan with parents or participants and a member of the unit committee. File the float plan with the local council office when traveling on running water. Check in with all those who should be notified when returning.

Weather Check the weather forecast just before setting out, and keep an alert weather eye. Bring all craft ashore when rough weather threatens.

Contingencies Planning must identify possible emergencies and other circumstances that could force a change of plans. Appropriate alternative plans must be developed for each.



The Paving Bricks for Houston Streets

by Louis F. Aulbach

Although the persistent rains of the summer of 2007 might have made us think that the recent awareness of global warming has been validated, rain and its companion, mud, have been the bane of Houstonians from the very beginning.

As early as 1837, when John James Audubon visited the town of Houston, he wrote of his displeasure with the mud in the streets. He was not impressed with the town under construction on the soggy prairie. Later, in the mid-nineteenth century, the local firefighters called Houston the "Mud-Hole" because of the difficulty they had pulling their apparatus through the often muddy streets.

Attempts to solve the problem of muddy streets by paving with shell or wooden planks were largely unsuccessful. In the spring of 1882, Houston Daily Post referred to Houston as "a huddle of houses arranged on unoccupied lines of black mud." But, by the end of 1882, two blocks of Main Street had been paved with limestone squares laid over a gravel base. Fifteen blocks of the adjoining Franklin Avenue and Congress Avenue were paved with gravel.

The city continued to try various materials for street paving in order to improve the situation of the streets, and by 1903, Houston had twenty-six miles of paved streets including nine of brick, six of asphalt, six of gravel, three of bois d'arc blocks and one of macadam. By 1915, Houston had 196 miles of paved roads.

Bricks were a very popular material for paving roads and streets from the late 1890's to the 1920's. During the renovations of Commerce Avenue in 2005, segments of the street were re-paved with bricks salvaged from this earlier period of paving. Two of the more common bricks were manufactured by famous brick companies of the period, the Coffeyville Vitrified Brick and Tile Company and the Thurber Brick and Tile Company.

Coffeyville, Kansas had large deposits of shale in the area and a number of brick plants were in operation there during the late 1890's and early 1900's. The Coffeyville Vitrified Brick and Tile Company is well represented among the paving stones at Houston's important commercial intersection of Commerce Avenue and Main Street.



The other brick company to supply road paving bricks to Houston was the Thurber Brick and Tile Company. In 1897, the owners of the coal company of Thurber, Texas began to manufacture bricks to take advantage of the enormous supplies of shale nearby. The company produced 80,000 bricks per day and specialized in road paving bricks. After the unions negotiated a contract at the brick plant in 1903, Thurber bricks were impressed with a triangle and the letters TBT (Thurber Brick and Tile), and these are the bricks found in the Houston



street.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, brick making was one of the leading industries in Texas, second only to car building and shop construction by the railroads. The use of paving bricks for streets and roads was in its heyday. However, after the First World War and the rise of the oil industry, the use of oil-based artificial asphalt became more popular as a street paving material. The paving brick businesses declined rapidly and companies, such as Thurber Brick and Tile in 1930, closed their kilns.

Of course, now the problem is not mud, but drainage.

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New Members

Welcome to the Houston Canoe Club, Donna!

Donna Daniel
5518 Jessanne Street
Houston, Tx 77081
cell: 713 423-9271
Family membership including two sons: Robert (24) and Clifford (20)
dkdaniel_131@yahoo.com

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Camping with Pets

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.

Today we will explore the prospect of camping and boating with pets. And kids. Oh, boy.....



Before I even met my husband, I used to take PUFF, my green scaly dog, camping and boating with me. Then, a few years ago, she had a bad experience outside which made her afraid to be outside at all for quite a while. Recently, specifically, Labor Day weekend, we decided that it was time for her to get over it and come with us. Besides, every time we'd go off without her and BIRD, our Quaker Parrot, they would pout when we got back. We decided to take them both.

And so we did.....

Bird squawked periodically in his carrier in the car. He has only a carrier, because he isn't in a cage at home. Puff rode with Daddy holding her. She was so happy to be in the car and kept trying to look out the windows at the scenery going by. We stopped for lunch, and she didn't bother with begging, but kept trying to help herself. She couldn't wait for Joe to parcel her out some food. Bird thought he wanted some, too, and squawked until he got some. We had pizza, by the way...



Once on the river, Puff rode on the barge in her new collapsible carrier. Bird was in his carrier, and seemed



to be upset because he couldn't see me (his mommy), so I ended up turning him around so he COULD see me. That seemed to make him happy.

Puff is over her fear of outside, it seems, and enjoyed walking on the warm sand and swimming in the river. She swims like a little alligator. She seemed to go back

to the way she used to be before the incident. Bird, however, was a bit

apprehensive since this was the first time he'd been outside. He did get to play in the water a bit, and was having fun splashing like birds do, until he stepped into deep water (about 3 inches). Then he demonstrated why you don't see too many parrots swimming. Poor Bird... .



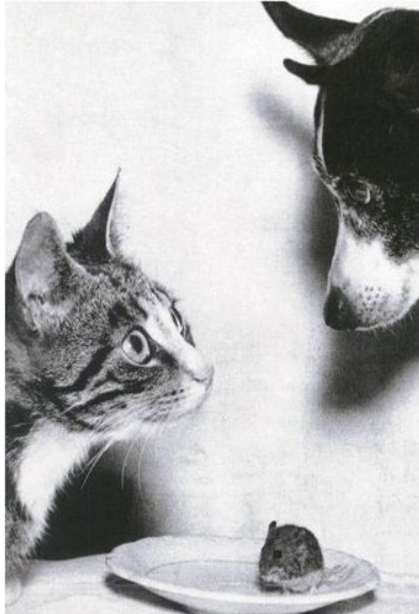
(Joe gives Bird comfort with some TLC)

Anyway, the boys LOVED having our pets with us, and wanted to take them on our next excursion to the beach. They wanted to bring Fluffy, our Tarantula, too, but I told them that she had to stay home to guard the house. I really don't think she would so much enjoy camping out or playing in the river....

At the beach, Puff had a grand ole time again, except that she didn't seem very keen on the salt water. She seemed to like the gentle waves washing up, and swam a little bit, until she tasted the water.... snort snort snort.... Bird wanted to come out and play, too..... until he saw the pelicans and seagulls.

Although he doesn't normally like Joe, he cuddled under his chin in fear of those big giant birds. Poor Bird...

Leaving the beach, we stopped at a restaurant right on the canal and ate on the outside porch area. All of us. Bird was in his carrier, but Puff was on her leash. There was a cat at the restaurant who gets to eat all the



shrimp and fish she wants. Puff likes cats, and also tends to want to eat whatever a cat is eating. The cat, however, wasn't sure what to make of Puff and kept her distance... which was good for Bird. We all had a great time!

Traveling with pets AND kids is really a great experience. Yes, it is more work, and you have to make sure of the safety and well being of the furry, scaly and feathered critters as well as the little two footed critters. You have to make sure you have their food, water, and any medications, as well as something familiar from home, like a toy or something. You even have to make sure you have first aid supplies for them, and know how to

handle any possible accidents or illnesses, just like you do for your kids and yourself. If you plan to take pets with you on most trips, you also have to make sure THEY have a good time, too.

The good news is, since we started including them in our trips, they don't pout when we get home anymore, because they got to go, too. Well, maybe Fluffy might be pouting, but its kind of hard to tell if a spider is pouting....

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December 15, 2007



HCC Holiday Party (in lieu of General Meeting)

HCC will hold its annual Holiday Party on **Saturday December 15th from 6-9pm** at the Upper Kirby District building. The club will provide the main course, water and soft drinks (you are to bring your own hard stuff!). Please bring a vegetable side dish, salad or dessert to share. This is a great time to get together with your paddling buddies to share food, fun and frivolity.

Anne Olden is the chair of the Holiday Party Committee. Please contact her if you would like to help.

Date: Saturday, December 15, 2007

Time: 6-9pm

Location: Upper Kirby District building, 3015 Richmond, corner of Richmond and Eastside (southeast corner at the light), first room on the right at the front door.

Parking: In front or back.

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Brazos River Houston, Texas August 2007

John Rich
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The Brazos River is the longest river entirely within the state of Texas, at 700 miles long, running from far north Texas all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico. On Sunday, August 26, I canoed a 14-mile section of the Brazos with my girlfriend Kay.

First up is a map of the section we paddled, showing the canoe route, and the roads used for the truck shuttle route. The general area is between the cities of Hempstead to the north, and San Felipe. The blue line is the Brazos River, and the thick blue line is the 14-mile section of this trip.



The take-out point was the Farm-to-Market road FM-1458, which runs by the little historic town of San Felipe. We parked the pick-up there, and then headed north. We put-in at the FM-529 bridge crossing. The Brazos serves as the county line between Waller and Austin Counties. Both of these bridge crossings have public parking underneath, and are frequented by fishermen.

The water level (see chart below) has dropped well below the near-flood stage that was reached from the record rainfalls of the previous months. At 23 feet, there is still several miles-per-hour of current so that you get a leisurely float without a lot of paddling, and no scraping bottom anywhere. There were also almost no obstacles in the channel, except for just a couple of logs sticking up out of the water. The danger lies along the shoreline, where severe erosion has collapsed riverbanks, dumping lots of trees into the water.



When I scouted the take-out and put-in locations two weeks earlier for suitability, I came across this muddy scene, below, at FM-529:



This pickup truck was mired down to the frame in deep mud. So, I resolved that I would portage the canoe and gear across that stretch, about 100' to the water. But when we arrived two weeks later, the truck was gone and the mud had hardened, so we got to pull up right next to the riverbank.

Photo: The happy couple and dog at the FM-529 put-in site, about to hit the river. As you can see from the water in the background, it was very muddy water, due to the erosion from recent heavy rainfall.



The put-in and take-out were both muddy, and required lowering and pulling the canoe down and up 15' mud slopes. That part was an absolute mess. After getting into the boat, we immediately did some housekeeping to clean up, using the bailing sponge to clean the boat deck, and dipping our feet over the sides to wash them in the river.

Photo: Kay and the wonder dog, Truman, in the front of the boat. The willow-lined banks are typical for this area. The water was calm, but moving nicely. And Kay already has mud splattered on her shirt from getting down the mud bank into the boat.



Yes, she really wore earrings on the river. Don't ask me why. It's a woman thing that I don't understand. To me, it just seems like a good way to lose jewelry.

After cleanup, we immediately got down to the serious leisure of drifting with the current. Kay sat in the bottom using the thwart and a PFD as a backrest to enjoy the sights, while I stayed seated up high for steering.

The current was moving at just the right speed, maybe 2-3 mph, so that all we had to do was float and enjoy the sights, and dip the paddle occasionally to steer. Sometimes I even let ourselves go sideways just out of sheer laziness,

and because there was no reason not to. There were almost zero hazards to be seen, except along the shorelines where severe erosion from recent flooding has dumped trees down into the river. We covered the 14-miles in 6 hours with hardly any paddling, and that included an hour break for lunch and relaxation on a sandbar.

Just a short distance downstream from FM-529 we discovered a cow which had fallen off the dirt cliff at the edge of the river, and was now trapped at the bottom with no way to get back up (photo below). The cell phone worked, so the sheriff was notified, and asked to pass the word to the rancher of that land. We've been curious ever since if the owner was able to rescue that big critter somehow. That cow needed to go swimming to escape from there...



Birds were scarce, except for several large flocks of egrets and black birds, roosting in trees. We didn't even see any herds of cows from the adjacent pastures, but we could hear amorous bulls braying now and then.

This stretch of water is very rural, with no buildings visible anywhere until you get to San Felipe. The tree-lined shores give the illusion of wilderness, while in fact, there is farmland and pastures just behind the shoreline trees. We didn't see another boat or person for the entire trip. While it was nothing exciting or glamorous, it was nevertheless a very pleasant day on the water.

The most amazing part of the trip was watching geology in action. While eating lunch on a sandbar, I heard a crashing sound, and thought it to be thunder. But scanning the sky found no thunderstorms anywhere on the horizon. I dismissed it as some distant farm noise. Then it happened again, and I saw dirt on the opposite riverbank falling into the water. Aha! The source of the noise was identified. Over the next half-hour, we witnessed about eight mudslides as the riverbank gave way and crashed into the water, some of them big enough to send waves all the way across the river to crash into our sandbar. It reminded us of images of Alaskan glaciers "calving" as huge chunks fall off into the water to create icebergs.

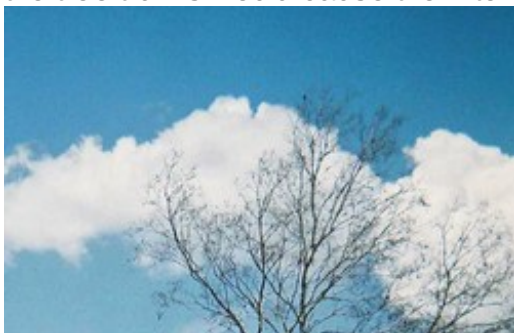
Photo: Kay and Truman play in the water across from the mud cliffs where landslides were occurring:



A second interesting phenomenon was upwellings of water, which would suddenly appear on the surface, sometimes right next to the canoe. It was as if a giant whale was about to breach the surface, as a big circular pillow of water would appear and send tiny waves radiating outwards in all directions. I now understand that these are called “boils”, caused by some obstacle underwater, which deflects water upward.

What was weird is that the boils would appear suddenly and then vanish again. It wasn't a fixed pattern that was there all the time, like a pillow of water flowing over a rock. You would be paddling along in smooth water, and a boil would just pop up out of nowhere, and then a few seconds later, vanish again.

There was yet a third phenomenon, in addition to the landslides and the boils. This one I dubbed “dancing trees”. This involved trees in the water, either upright or leaning over, which had fallen into the river from riverbank erosion caused by the recent flooding (photo below). The force of the water current pushing against the tree trunks would cause them to bend slightly, to the limits of their elasticity.



Then a point was reached where the trunk could bend no further, and the tree trunk would recoil and spring backwards against the current. This set up a continuous rhythmic cycle of flexing back and forth. The branches higher up on the tree would respond with the trunk, and because they were further out, the slight movement of the trunk was greatly exaggerated by the time



it reached the ends of the limbs. Thus, the entire tree would seem to be dancing and waving, all generated by only a few inches of movement down at the waterline. It was fascinating to watch, and the movement seemed almost inexplicable, as if some great beast had a hold of the tree roots underwater, shaking it in its powerful jaws.

A shady lunch of sandwiches and beer, on a wide sand bar on the inside of a bend:



Me, going crazy over a soft shell turtle found lying way up high on the sandbar, away from the water:



I actually thought this little fellow was dead at first. He was a long way from the water, and he wasn't moving. But when I prodded him with my foot, I saw his eyes move. So after examining this unique creature up close, I carried him down to the waterline, and he hurriedly scurried back into the depths, seemingly no worse for the land excursion. The shell, despite the name, was only soft around the edges, and firm in the middle. He had webbed feet, and a cute little pig-like snorkel nose for breathing while floating just under the surface. Yertle the turtle was unaggressive and never tried to bite me.



Found on the sand bar: a cluster of pink feathers. So the question is, what kind of bird did these come from? I can't imagine flamingos on the Brazos. What other kinds of birds have pink feathers and would be seen in this area? How about a roseate spoonbill?

Captain John cools off in the river, with claws into the river gravel, to keep from being swept away with the current:





A flock of egrets, roosting lazily in the trees, takes flight as we drift by:



Now for some photos of riverbank erosion from the heavy rainfall and corresponding high water levels. This first one shows dirt and trees collapsing into the river:



Here is an aerial photo of our lunch sandbar, where the riverbank was falling into the river, showing just how close a nearby road is coming to getting swallowed up:



This one shows irrigation pipes from the San Felipe golf course, dangling in the void, where part of the golf course has disappeared into the river. "Fore!"



And saving the best one for last, here we have a home structure on a concrete slab about to fall into the river. The dirt under the edge of the slab has been washed away, and some of the footings are now suspended in mid-air. It appears to be a cabin built around a double-decker bus.



The FM-1458 take-out bridge appears up ahead, at San Felipe, the site of the first Anglo-American settlement in Texas. You can still find pieces of broken porcelain ware in the area from Texas' first settlers, dating back to the 1820's.



Captain John; head propulsion, photographer, chef and navigator, at the helm of a camera while the boat is adrift:



Truman the wonder dog, in charge of entertainment, poses at the helm:



P.S. An 85-lb. dog shifting from side-to-side in the canoe can cause a disconcerting change in the center of balance! He doesn't tip us over, but it sure makes us worry a bit.



Yawn... All this makes me want to take a nap:

excitement just

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Lake Charlotte Houston, Texas July 2007

by John Rich
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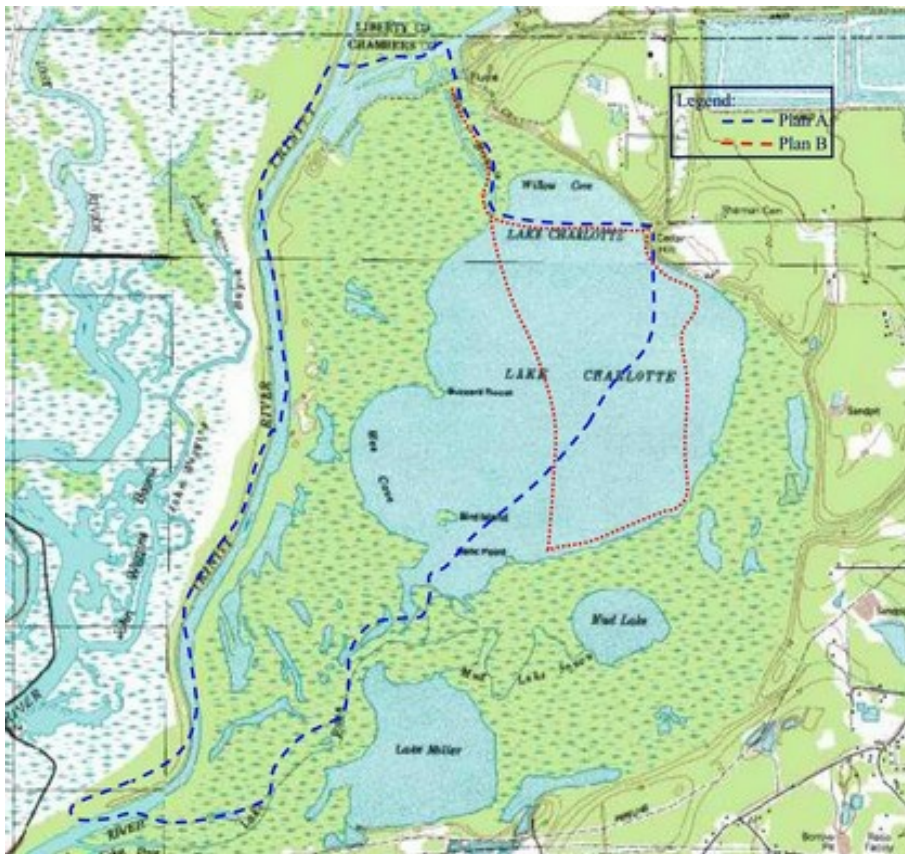
Lake Charlotte is east of Houston, Texas, along Interstate Highway 10, northeast of the Trinity River bridge. The lake is about 1.5 miles in diameter, with several other nearby features worthy of exploration, like Lake Miller and the Trinity River.

History: The early inhabitants of Lake Charlotte were Bidais and Orcoquizas Indians, which lived largely off of the clams in the lake. A Spanish mission and presidio (fort) was established south of there in 1756, to try and keep the French out of the area. And in 1833, Dr. Nicholas Labadie moved there, naming it Lake Charlotte after his mother, and established a plantation. By the early 1900's, two-masted schooners were bringing supplies from Galveston to families in the lake area. In 1910, the Sherman family moved in to Cedar Hill, and lived there until 1969 when they sold the land to the Army Corps of Engineers.

I set forth on Sunday, July 29th, with a plan to paddle in Lake Charlotte, amidst an "iffy" weather forecast for isolated thundershowers. I started from Cedar Hill Park.

For directions to Cedar Hill Park, see my previous report on Lake Charlotte in the April, 2007, Houston Canoe Club Newsletter, here:
http://www.houstoncanoecub.org/waterline/2007/april/lake_charlotte.htm

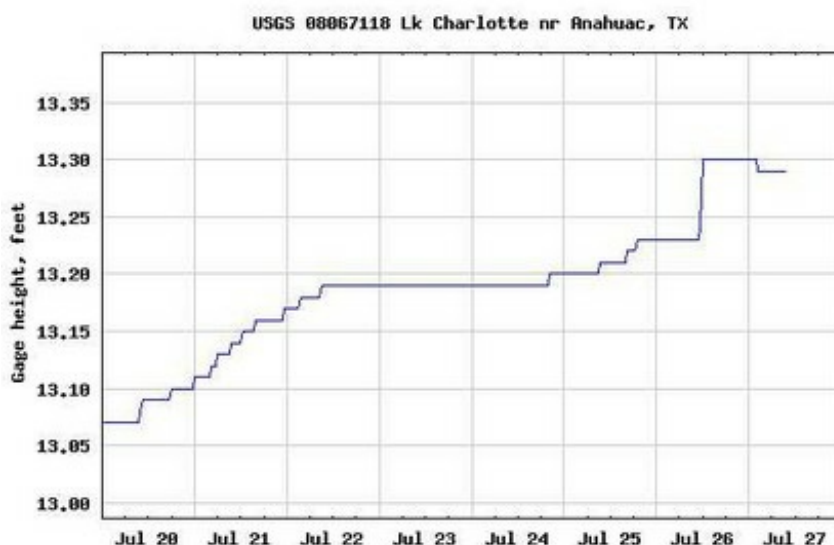
First up for this report, is a map of the area:



The dotted blue line was my intended ambitious “Plan A”, which was to cross Lake Charlotte to the west, paddle north up Mac Bayou, then south on the Trinity River, floating with the current, and finally, back north up Lake Pass and across Lake Charlotte again.

Read on, to find out why “Plan A” didn’t work out. What I actually ended up doing was an impromptu “Plan B”, as represented by the dotted red line.

The water level was extremely high, compared to normal, at over 13 feet, as shown by the water gauge chart, below. On my two previous visits to Lake Charlotte, the water level was at 9 to 10 feet.



The online water gauge info for Lake Charlotte can be found here:
<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?08067118>

I didn’t expect this high water level to be much of a problem, and thought it would provide swift current on the Trinity to give me a casual, effortless drift

downstream to Lake Pass.

I drove through a heavy rainstorm on I-10 on the way east, but popped out the backside into clear skies again, just before arriving at the lake. The put-in location at Cedar Hill Park was right under the edge of the rain cloud, and receiving light mist, so I waited a while and watched the cloud. The cloud was producing rain only, and no lightening. It was also moving northward, out of the lake area, taking the rain with it. So that threat was solved.

The put-in:



The high water level in the lake actually made the put-in more pleasant. You could launch into the water directly from grass, rather than from the usual muddy shoreline.

To get from Cedar Hill Park to Mac Bayou, you just paddle straight west. The opening is not obvious as you approach, because it is hidden from sight around a bend, behind trees. There is a large dead tree (below) that sticks out like a sore thumb on the shoreline, which can be used as a guide to the correct area. This dead tree is visible all the way from the launch point. The opening to Mac Bayou is just around the corner to the left from this dead tree. Or, for fun, you can cut the corner and just paddle right past the dead tree landmark, through the trees, into Mac Bayou.



Unlike Lake Pass, which is obscured almost invisible in the trees, the opening to Mac Bayou is several hundred feet wide, and very obvious. There was some kind of fishing jug line strung across the opening, with bobbing plastic jugs:



The view from inside Mac Bayou looking back out onto Lake Charlotte:



I proceeded north up Mac Bayou, headed for the Trinity River. The scenery inside Mac Bayou:

There was a little bit of current flowing against me here, but I was making steady, if slow, progress. Two fishermen in a small motorboat whizzed past me, making me momentarily envious of their internal combustion engine.

There were numerous large wasp nests, teeming with wasps, in the tree branches hanging over both sides of the channel (photo below). You want to be careful not to disturb these fellars.

At this point, my "Plan A" turned sour. I reached a location about two-thirds of the way up Mac Bayou, where the channel seemed to narrow a bit, funneling the water. There is also a pipeline there about two feet in diameter discharging water into the channel. And in addition, there is a creek off to the right through the trees (per the map) that also spills water into the channel. The combination of these factors increased the current so greatly, that it was like level-1 whitewater rapids. I struggled greatly to make progress upstream, and managed to get just to the bottom end of the worst part. There, I tied off to a tree to rest and survey my problem. There didn't appear to be any path through the trees on either bank around the rapids, and the current was swift all the way across the channel, with no "line" available to be taken to avoid the fast-moving water. The only choice was to face it head-on. So I decided to see what I could do, mustered my resolve, untied from my tree, and charged ahead into the rapids!



I paddled like a madman for about 10 minutes straight, giving it everything I had, and progressed upstream all of... oh, about 10 feet! Nope, this wasn't going to work. Where was that motorboat when I needed him? Since I needed to move

about 100 feet upstream to get to relatively calm water again, I resigned myself to the hopelessness of the situation. I don't like being beaten, but I had no other choice but to give it up.

So, exhausted, I turned the canoe around in the swift current, and just let myself drift back downstream through Mac Bayou, and back out onto Lake Charlotte, which was as calm as a bathtub.

This is where I formulated "Plan B". I've tried once before to get to Mud Lake, by going through Lake Pass to Lake Miller, but could not find the opening, as indicated on maps. A local kayaker, with whom I had spoken on a previous visit, told me that when the water is high, you could paddle right through the cypress trees at the south end of Lake Miller into Mud Lake. So I headed for the southeast corner of Lake Charlotte to check out this possibility. I skirted the shoreline there looking for routes, and found none. The water level was so high, that the bottom branches of the trees were at the water level, creating numerous obstacles.

Also, by this time, another storm cloud was moving into the area, and this one contained a lot of ugly rumbling thunder. It was off to the west, and headed north like the last one, but it seemed to be getting too close for comfort. And with me holding a metal paddle on open water, I didn't like the idea of lightening being that close. So I made a beeline back north to Cedar Hill Park.

This is the Lake Charlotte water gauge (below), which is located in the southeast corner of the lake. It was occupied by several terns, which were perched on the railing. It's amazing to me that with a few gizmos in a box, a battery, a solar panel and an antennae, I can then sit in the comfort of my home and look at the water data from this location on my home computer, as seen in the beginning of this report.



The paddle back to Cedar Hill Park was a slog, as the wind and/or current kept pushing my bow to the right. I had to paddle exclusively on the right to maintain a straight line, which didn't give my "right" muscles any reprieve by allowing me to switch to the left side. I arrived back at Cedar Hill Park, safe and sound from the

thunderstorm, which was still about a mile away, over the Trinity River. But as if on cue from someone above who was watching out for me, as soon as I pulled the canoe up into the grass, the wind kicked up to about 20 mph, and the treetops started swaying in the wind. Off the lake, just in the nick of time!

I didn't see a lot of wildlife this time. No gators, and even the birds were scarce. My wildlife highlight was a cormorant that came flying down Mac Bayou, just above the water, and soared down the entire length of my canoe just a few feet out. He didn't even break his stride when he saw me. He was so low to the water, that sitting in my canoe, I was looking down on his feathery back from above.

I loaded up the canoe and gear, and still had time to kill. Since I didn't get the nature-time I had planned on the water, I decided to hike the trail in the park to get some nature-time in the woods. I grabbed my sandwich, and headed south along the east shoreline, on the trail to the boardwalk/fishing pier. I found the boardwalk, sort of. It was under water, with only the railings sticking up to show where it is!



From there, I followed the meandering trail back through the woods, and was attacked by hordes of bloodthirsty mosquitoes, and man-eating spiders that string their webs between trees. Hint: if you hike this trail, pick up a stick with which to knock down the spider webs before you walk into them face first. Also, don't go shirtless! To beat off the mosquitoes I used my hat, swishing it back and forth, left and right, up and down, and over my back, like a horse's tail, to swat off the hungry horde. The trail was also flooded in many places, and I gave up trying to go around the flooded spots, and just slogged through them with my boat shoes. The trail ends back at the open grassy area of Cedar Hill Park by the restroom and picnic area.

My goals of exploring Mac Bayou and Mud Lake remain unfulfilled. I'll be back again, someday soon, to try again. When the water level recedes!

=== The End ===

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Sabine Labor day trip

By Paul Woodcock

I have been on the Sabine Labor day trip for 13 years and this is the second time I took my grandkids. The last time a few years ago I ended up towing them. They are older now and I told them that they would have to paddle all the way themselves as I can't physically help them any more.



(the putin for the Sabine trip)



(Ken carries his gear to the put in)

I gave them my 15 ft *Intrigue* and a double blade and they took off and I had a hard time keeping up with them. They still need to learn to help more around camp but they can paddle. I paddled with the big thicket voyagers as I did not want to pay the \$10.00 fee the ACA for them. They had to endure my camp cooking.



(grandkids enjoy catching minnows)

The first night I picked out the campsite as we arrived to the sandbar first. I know the dam release will cause the water to rise. So I placed the tents and the traditional tarp city up the sand bar at what I thought would be a safe elevation. We were sitting under the tarp when someone said to look over toward the east. Black clouds and a wind started us scouring around putting up cook gear and heading toward our tents. The rains hit hard.



(Tent and camping gear set high away from river's edge)

In the middle of the night my grandkids came to my tent saying that their tent was leaking so I had them get their gear and join me. Some time later someone knocked on my tent saying that the water was almost to my tent. I got out and discovered that water was ankle deep in the kid's tent and the kitchen area was under water. We started moving things. We had tied most of the boats to the tarp to secure it so we drug them to higher ground. When I moved the kid's tent I broke one of the fiberglass poles. The next morning we discovered that Mary's boat had floated down river as well as some of my cookware. For the first time in 15 years we had lost a boat on my watch. CC. had her raft and she and Mary went down stream to search for her canoe. As we were finishing packing they returned. They had found it down stream in a strainer.

The next camp was the night for the games. They were delayed because of the rains but when it cleared, they were a great success lead by Mary Z. All the kids and adult alike were grinning with pride over their medals provide by M\$B canoe and Kayak. The Margaritas were also a great success and added an element to the adult participation in the games.



The last day of paddling was easy - just dodging the strainers. There was no headwind as there usually is. As we packed the gear up the sandbar, I discovered that my rehab has a ways to go. I just couldn't carry my gear. Club

members and friends pitched in and carried my stuff to the truck. Mary had hired some to pull the canoes up on their four wheelers. I want to thank all who helped me on the trip. I can paddle the 38 miles but portages are tough.

The grandkids had a great time even though they had muscles so sore that they claimed they couldn't even move the next week I am just hoping they will develop my love of the outdoors.

The Earth is my mother. The Animals are my brother and the canoe lets me get closer to them.

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 the Editor at donna.grimes@mindspring.com



PADDLING THE HILL COUNTRY

By John and Anne Olden

The extraordinary amount of rain this summer has kept rivers at paddler-friendly levels this summer. Over two recent weekends (Aug. 25/26 and Labor Day), we camped and paddled with small groups on three Hill Country rivers - the Frio, Medina and Guadalupe. Only the Frio, at 350 cfs on the Concan gauge, was too low.

We hadn't paddled the Frio in over 15 years, and only remembered how beautifully clear it is. We had forgotten the features of this river that require more water for an enjoyable run (see Donna Grimes' July story about the Frio). First, we made the mistake of putting in at Garner State Park and going to Hwy 127, which is eleven miles. There are a number of low water crossings, at least two sections with flutes, and a couple of waterfalls. At 350 cfs, the low water crossings and at least one of the waterfalls had to be portaged. Putting in about half way down this 11 miles section would have been better. However the farther down we went, the thicker the tubers became. While they weren't rowdy, it was sometimes crowded. So cooler weather, higher water, and a shorter trip would be our suggestions. Nevertheless, the river is still pretty. We drove to Garner St. Park from Medina on FM 337. The green rolling hills between Medina and Vanderpool are surely one of the most scenic drives in Texas.

The Medina River (at 670 cfs on the Bandera gauge) from the Patterson St. bridge in Medina to Camp Bandina Rd. presented its usual challenges, with trees in swift, narrow chutes, and one low water crossing to portage. A second low water crossing and a dam were runnable. There were also quiet stretches, with a shady tree canopy nearly all the way. The second weekend we did the run from Camp Bandina to Ranger Crossing, the roadside park at Hwy. 16. The Bandera gauge reading was 565 cfs. This section is similar to the upper run, with slow, tree-lined pools and fast chutes. There are no low water crossings, but there is a bridge at Peaceful Valley Rd. which is portaged on the right. The Stewart Falls area was runnable from both the right and the left. In spite of the landowner's concrete, the river is cutting a new channel to the left of the falls.



(Debbie Snow braces as she goes over Stewart Falls on the Medina)



(Janice almost disappears as she and Fraser go over the falls)

The Guadalupe at 760 cfs on the Comfort gauge from the dam at Center Point to Herman Sons Camp Rd. is 8.6 miles. Usually we take out at four miles at Homilius Rd. (old Roane Rd.) or Lane Valley (six miles). Since it was Sept. 2 and we weren't in a hurry, we decided to go a little farther than usual. There are no rapids of note in this additional two miles. However, Herman Sons might be a good putin for the run to Comfort and takeouts below it at various crossings. During our trip we surprised a handsome butterscotch-colored fox on a bluff above the river, and it trotted off, bushy white-tipped tail waving.

On Sept. 3 the Guadalupe run from Hwy. 281 to Rebecca Creek, at 1600 cfs on the Spring Branch gauge, was fun with plenty of water, although there are still long flat places. At one point we heard – but couldn't see – what we thought was a waterfall. Paddling closer, we found water pouring into an opening at the base of the hillside. There was limestone on either side of the opening, and we could see the river dropping several feet. It was probably the first time we've seen so much water going over Mueller and Rust Falls, so we scouted them.



(Rheda Boardman runs through the middle of Mueller Falls)

It was easy to run Mueller down the middle and Rust either to right or left of the center horseshoe.



(Christy enjoys the rush at Rust Falls)

The river was rushing over the bridge at Rebecca Creek, so it's important to pay attention and get to river right or left well upstream of the bridge.

Over Labor Day the group camped at Pioneer RV Resort in Bandera. There are no trees for tent campers so we set up a tarp. The bathrooms are very nice. Belatedly, we learned that this holiday weekend is also the annual Cowboy Festival in Bandera, which calls itself the Cowboy Capital of Texas. The RV park is just a block from the main street, so on Saturday morning we walked up the hill to stroll through the arts and crafts booths in front of the courthouse before finding a place along Hwy. 16 to watch the parade. There were pre-parade performers, including some twirling lassos and Pistol Packin' Paula demonstrating her gunslinging skills. Leading the parade were longhorns and many folks on horseback. Fortunately there's a back way out of the RV park, so we skirted the main street festivities to reach the Medina that Saturday.

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Lake Charlotte Paddle with Friends

By Paul Woodcock

Thursday Aug 30 Dana called and asked if I would like to paddle Lake Charlotte the next day. I agreed. We did not post this trip on the web sight for two reasons. First it was a weekday trip posted at the last minute and we did not think anyone could go with so little notice, and the other was that his friend was not yet a club member and we did not want to have to collect the \$10.00 fee.

We arrived at Cedar Hill Park at 7:00 AM hoping to finish the paddle before the heat built up and his friend had to work that afternoon. The gate was locked and a truck drove by and the driver said his son would open the gate shortly. He arrived on a four wheeler explaining that the park usually opened at 7:30. We thanked him and started our trip. We paddled to Mack Bayou. The island had built up larger than it was the last time I had been here. Dana had his GPS and the reading was off by about 50 feet. A gator swam in front of my boat. He seemed a little shorter than my boat but they always seem larger when you are close to them. We paddled to the Trinity River. I like this route that Dana chose because it keeps you paddling in the shade, a pleasing thing in the Aug. heat. As we progressed up the cut, Dana said that according to his GPS Miller lake was a short distance on our left. As the water was high we cut through the brush and trees. It wasn't difficult getting through to the lake and we came out about 100 feet from the channel. We decided to Paddle to Mud Lake and after searching for the channel through the cypress trees we finally found it. I always have trouble finding it from this direction and a lot of tall weeds and grass obstructed the entrance. As we paddled further into the trees it became more obvious where it was. We paddled up the channel until it took a right hand turn. Dana said that Charlotte Lake was straight ahead and as time was becoming an issue we again cut across country. I had some difficulty following Dana as my canoe is longer and wider than his and I became stuck between the cypress roots. I really like paddling across country here and on Caddo Lake but you need a good compass and lots of stamina to do it. We hit Charlotte Lake and it was smooth as glass no wind at all. When we arrived at shore I had to clear all the brush and trash that had collected in my canoe. Charlotte Lake was one of the first trips I paddled with the Sierra club before I joined HCC. It is always a great place to paddle with all the birds, alligators and turtles, for company.