

# The Bow and Stern

In partnership with the American Canoe Association

## Newsletter of the Vermont Paddlers Club



March 2015  
Volume XLII

*"Go With the Flow . . ."*

# Who's Who in the Vermont Paddlers Club

## Officers

**President**  
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**802-658-6657**  
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**National Weather Service**  
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**<http://www.weather.gov/btv/>**

## Directors

**Activities Director**  
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**Webmaster**  
**Tony Shaw**  
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**boatful@comcast.net**

# Website 2.0



It has been 11 years since the VPC moved its web hosting to the trendy but economical Arizona-based monolith, GoDaddy.com. Through the years the tech support folks at GoDaddy have been friendly and terrific. More importantly, 525 trips/events, 16,400 message board posts, 82 pool sessions, and 400,000+ page views later, vtpaddlers.net has without question proven itself to be a focal point and a workhorse connecting our VPC “family”.

Sadly, though, page time-outs and lack-luster web performance had become the frustrating server norm through much of 2014-2015. As our website denizen’s impatience grew, the tech support people at GoDaddy started letting on that they had installed newer/faster shared hosting servers dedicated to supporting low-budget websites like ours.

Thus, it only made sense to migrate the VPC website, at no additional cost, taking advantage of that improved speed and reliability.

The new VPC website on the new servers went live January 15th with little fanfare, but it has been getting good reviews from VPC

members and others. Our new “virtual Vermont paddling home”, as Ken Emery described it, was built from the ground up with filters, breadcrumbs, and dropdown navigation to make content easier to locate, new colors/styles/graphics, social media (Facebook/Twitter) integration, and a brand new VPC logo. Under the hood, techies and non-techies alike will appreciate a strongly object-oriented design paradigm that – when fully implemented – will standardize and simplify the task of website up-keep for those involved in it. We even have – for the first time – the ability to accept member dues (renewals) online, using a PayPal / credit card interface.

As always, please use the VPC message board(s) to connect with other paddlers in the area and get out on the water in the safety of a group. Secondly, if you see a page on the site and you “Like” it (or you post a comment at the bottom of the page), that will expand the club’s Facebook exposure and reach. Finally, keep an eye on the new website through 2015 as additional content and features go live like Geo, Paddle Pix, the Rivers Almanac, What’s Up, Doc?, and a members-only blogging platform.

-Tony Shaw

# Trip Schedule 2015

DayOfMonth	DayOfWeek	pickClass	trip	organizer	email
March 21-28	Sat	int-adv WW	<b>West Virginia Trip</b>	Brock Richardson	<a href="mailto:brockdrichardson@gmail.com">brockdrichardson@gmail.com</a>
March 22	Sun	adv WW	Northfield Creeks	Ryan McCall	<a href="mailto:ryanmtnman@gmail.com">ryanmtnman@gmail.com</a>
March 29	Sun	adv WW	New Haven Ledges	Mike Mainer	<a href="mailto:mainer.michael@gmail.com">mainer.michael@gmail.com</a>
April 1	WED	nov-int WW	Lower Huntington River	Mike Mainer	<a href="mailto:mainer.michael@gmail.com">mainer.michael@gmail.com</a>
April 5	Sun	adv WW	North Branch Winooski	Ryan McCall	<a href="mailto:ryanmtnman@gmail.com">ryanmtnman@gmail.com</a>
April 8	WED	adv WW	North Branch Lamoille	Noah Pollock	<a href="mailto:Noah.pollock@gmail.com">Noah.pollock@gmail.com</a>
April 10-13	Fri	int-adv WW	<i>Whitewater Weekend</i>	Ryan McCall	<a href="mailto:ryanmtnman@gmail.com">ryanmtnman@gmail.com</a>
April 11	Sat	nov-int WW	Upper White	Tony Shaw	<a href="mailto:boatful@comcast.net">boatful@comcast.net</a>
April 12	Sun	nov-int WW	<i>All Girls Afternoon</i>	Catharine Hull	<a href="mailto:Chull.rn@gmail.com">Chull.rn@gmail.com</a>
April 12	Sun	adv WW	North Branch Lamoille	Paul Carlile	<a href="mailto:pcarlile29@gmail.com">pcarlile29@gmail.com</a>
April 13	Mon	int WW	Black River (Cavendish, VT)	Tony Shaw	<a href="mailto:boatful@comcast.net">boatful@comcast.net</a>
April 13	Mon	adv WW	Leader's Choice Creeking (Class 4-5)	Mike Mainer	<a href="mailto:mainer.michael@gmail.com">mainer.michael@gmail.com</a>
April 15	WED	int-adv WW	Lower Mad / Lower New Haven	Jamie Dolan	<a href="mailto:jdolan_05443@yahoo.com">jdolan_05443@yahoo.com</a>
April 18	Sat	nov-int WW	Lewis Creek	Tony Shaw	<a href="mailto:boatful@comcast.net">boatful@comcast.net</a>
April 19	Sun	adv WW	Joe's Brook	Jamie Dolan	<a href="mailto:jdolan_05443@yahoo.com">jdolan_05443@yahoo.com</a>
April 22	WED	int WW	Lower Mad River	Ben Schott	<a href="mailto:benjaminjamesschott@gmail.com">benjaminjamesschott@gmail.com</a>
April 25	Sat	int-adv WW	Lower New Haven	Paul Carlile	<a href="mailto:pcarlile29@gmail.com">pcarlile29@gmail.com</a>
April 26	Sun	adv WW	Patterson Brook	Ryan McCall	<a href="mailto:ryanmtnman@gmail.com">ryanmtnman@gmail.com</a>
April 26	Sun	nov-int WW	<i>All Girls Afternoon</i>	Catharine Hull	<a href="mailto:Chull.rn@gmail.com">Chull.rn@gmail.com</a>
April 29	WED	int WW	Lower Mad River	Ben Schott	<a href="mailto:benjaminjamesschott@gmail.com">benjaminjamesschott@gmail.com</a>
May 2-3	Sat	int-adv WW	<i>Maine Weekend - Dead R. / Kennebec R.</i>	Ben Schott	<a href="mailto:benjaminjamesschott@gmail.com">benjaminjamesschott@gmail.com</a>
May 3	Sun	int WW	Huntington River - BRUNCH/BBQ	Jim Poulin	<a href="mailto:jim.poulin@yahoo.com">jim.poulin@yahoo.com</a>
May 6	WED	nov-int WW	Lower Lamoille	Chris Weed	<a href="mailto:chace.rapid@gmail.com">chace.rapid@gmail.com</a>
May 9	Sat	nov-int WW	Browns River	Paul Carlile	<a href="mailto:pcarlile29@gmail.com">pcarlile29@gmail.com</a>
May 10	Sun	adv WW	Missisquoi	Mike Mainer	<a href="mailto:mainer.michael@gmail.com">mainer.michael@gmail.com</a>
May 13	WED	int WW	<i>Leader's Choice</i>	Jim Poulin	<a href="mailto:jim.poulin@yahoo.com">jim.poulin@yahoo.com</a>
May 16-17	Sat	adv WW	<i>Moose River (NY) Weekend</i>	Mike Mainer	<a href="mailto:mainer.michael@gmail.com">mainer.michael@gmail.com</a>
May 17	Sun	adv WW	Playboating at Chambly, QC (Richelieu)	Clay Murphy	<a href="mailto:clay.c.murphy@gmail.com">clay.c.murphy@gmail.com</a>
May 20	WED	int WW	Lower Mad River	Win Turner	<a href="mailto:win@metcbtplus.com">win@metcbtplus.com</a>
May 23-25	Sat	adv WW	<i>Ausable Chasm / Eastern Adirondacks</i>	Scott Gilbert	<a href="mailto:scottvtgilbert@gmail.com">scottvtgilbert@gmail.com</a>
May 27	WED	nov-int WW	Lower Lamoille	Paul Carlile	<a href="mailto:pcarlile29@gmail.com">pcarlile29@gmail.com</a>
May 31	Sun	int-adv WW	EB Pemi or Swift River (New Hampshire)	Noah Pollock	<a href="mailto:Noah.pollock@gmail.com">Noah.pollock@gmail.com</a>
June 3	WED	int WW	Lower Mad River	Win Turner	<a href="mailto:win@metcbtplus.com">win@metcbtplus.com</a>
June 6	Sat	nov WW	<b>Onion River Race</b>	<b>Noah Pollock</b>	<a href="mailto:Noah.pollock@gmail.com">Noah.pollock@gmail.com</a>
June 6-7	Sat	int-adv WW	<i>Forks, ME Weekend — DAM RELEASES</i>	Ben Schott	<a href="mailto:benjaminjamesschott@gmail.com">benjaminjamesschott@gmail.com</a>
June 10	WED	nov-int WW	Browns River	John Atherton	<a href="mailto:johniatherton@comcast.net">johniatherton@comcast.net</a>
June 17	WED	nov-int WW	Otter Creek	Chris Weed	<a href="mailto:chace.rapid@gmail.com">chace.rapid@gmail.com</a>
June 20	Sat	adv WW	Saranac River, Silver Lake Rd - Redford	Chris Weed	<a href="mailto:chace.rapid@gmail.com">chace.rapid@gmail.com</a>
July 3-5	Fri	adv WW	<i>Quebec WW Weekend</i>	Mike Mainer	<a href="mailto:mainer.michael@gmail.com">mainer.michael@gmail.com</a>
July 11	Sat	nov-int WW	<b>Deerfield RiverFest</b>	TBD	
July 11-12	Sat	nov-int WW	<b>Class II Clinic</b>	<b>Paul Carlile</b>	<a href="mailto:pcarlile29@gmail.com">pcarlile29@gmail.com</a>
July 18-19	Sat	int-adv WW	<b>Wedding Celebration and Paddling</b>	Catharine Hull	<a href="mailto:Chull.rn@gmail.com">Chull.rn@gmail.com</a>

# Treasurer's Report

2014 Report

## TREASURER'S REPORT – 2014 Final

INCOME AND EXPENSES	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Initial Balance</b>	<b>\$2,321</b>	<b>\$3,037</b>	<b>\$2,995</b>	<b>\$3,164</b>	<b>\$2,652</b>
Dues	\$1,230	\$970	\$931	\$818	\$634
Subscriptions & Events Spons	-\$200	-\$250	-\$1,150	-\$650	-\$140
Scholarships	-\$100				\$0
Website	-\$360	-\$208	-\$90	-\$42	-\$142
Interest & Bank Fees	-\$35	\$10	\$13	\$5	-\$13
Meetings & Mailings	-\$99	-\$710	-\$500	-\$771	-\$293
Rolling Sessions	\$41	-\$112	\$85	-\$126	-\$317
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-\$401
Rescue Clinic	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Novice Clinic	\$540	\$586	\$995	\$680	\$363
Class 2 Clinic	-\$48			\$5	\$13
Creeking Clinic					\$35
T-Shirts	-\$220				\$0
Banner/Canopy				-\$107	\$0
Net ACA Cost	-\$85	-\$120	-\$205	-\$325	-\$213
Whitewater Fund	\$52				\$0
Reel Paddling Filmfest		-\$207	\$92		\$0
<b>Net Income/Expenditure</b>	<b>\$716</b>	<b>-\$43</b>	<b>\$171</b>	<b>-\$513</b>	<b>-\$473</b>
<b>Final Balance</b>	<b>\$3,037</b>	<b>\$2,995</b>	<b>\$3,166</b>	<b>\$2,652</b>	<b>\$2,180</b>

## TREASURER'S REPORT – 2014 Final

INCOME AND EXPENSES	2013	2014
<b>Initial Balance</b>	<b>\$2,180</b>	<b>\$2,524</b>
Dues	\$861	\$814
Subscriptions & Events Sponsorship	-\$525	-\$395
Scholarships		-\$100
Website		-\$153
Interest & Bank Fees		\$11
Meetings & Mailings	-\$361	-\$124
Rolling Sessions	-\$81	-\$260
Equipment	-\$40	\$0
Novice Clinic	\$407	\$644
Class 2 Clinic	\$103	\$225
Net ACA Cost	-\$20	-\$235
<b>Net Income/Expenditure</b>	<b>\$344</b>	<b>\$427</b>
<b>Final Balance</b>	<b>\$2,524</b>	<b>\$2,950</b>

# Trip Reports

## Sheldon Springs/Missisquoi

**Release** Saturday Nov 2, 2013

Character: advanced WW

Water Level: high

Organizer: Ryan McCall and Bob Nasdor

Participants: (K1): John Atherton, Tom Rogers, Ben Schott, Catharine Hull, Connor Laird,

Mike Mainer, Noah Pollock, Tom Neilson, Becca Austin, Clay Murphy, Andy Locky, Ryan McCall



*Catharine Hull on the Wonder Falls, Lower Big Sandy River, West Virginia (Tony Shaw)*

The Missisquoi... Who would have thunk it! Well, our fore fathers did. A long time ago in a galaxy far far away, there were these guys that were the predecessors to the Vermont Paddlers Club. They were in Grumman Canoes and fiber glass kayaks, wearing real seal skin and wool for dry gear and they had names like Seamus and Tuktuk and Rich Larson and Eric Bishop.....I digress!

This section was looked at by boaters back in the 80s and they had the forethought to get the power company to agree to giving the boating community 6 recreational releases a year. The thing is the agreement sat dormant until this past Saturday. Fast forward 30 some odd years and AW is working with the VPC to secure recreational rivers all around the state. The Missisquoi was low hanging fruit, or so we thought, until we tried to get a bunch of weekends on the calendar. The interesting thing is the impoundment behind the dam is fairly small and won't provide a very long release, so the releases are dependent upon substantial natural flow in the river, something we just didn't have much of on weekends in 2013.

Enel Green, the power company that runs the facility, has been working with us to get these releases dialed in. So much so, that they were willing to forgo some power generation to get us water in the bypass for our study runs.

Fast forward to this past Saturday. Ring Ring Ring, I get the call from Bob Nasdor..."Just say'n, do you want a release at Sheldon Springs tomorrow?". My response is Uh yea, but it will be less than ideal with such short notice. Well, we scrambled and got the word out and we ended up with a dozen boaters, one coming down from Montreal even to get a go at this relatively new stretch of whitewater in VT.

Lets start with this - the run is AMAZING. Slightly short, but very lapable, and super high quality. Everyone that was on the river that day was impressed with what I'd call Vermont's big water run. The river bed is sort of a messy jumble of boulders from couch size to house size, and not overly friendly. However it drops a substantial amount of elevation from the put in to the take out making for a very continuous mile of river where one rapid pours into the next. The bed geomorphology helped to make the rapids less green and more turbulent and active.

At the flow we saw on Saturday (4200cfs), it was a solid class IV river and even the sneaks along the left shore were something that you needed to pay attention to. In the meat of the flow, the waves and holes were significant and would crash and swamp you in a hurry if you were snoozing



*Walking out of the Tygart River, West Virginia, at the takeout.*

Our group had 3 swims over the course of 4 laps (two of those swims came in the first lap). The river is busy with places that are sieved out and there is just enough wood on the river that you really need to pay attention to where you are. This river is big enough too that a rescue in the event of a pin would be very hard to perform. Swims are long and abusive...not recommended.

Enel Green was a great host, they came up to chat with the boaters, gave us a pager to contact them if we needed more water or wanted it turned down some. They were excited for us to get in this initial release and seemed genuinely excited to get us a few more in 2013.

I know that everyone that was on the water Saturday will be back for the next release. Its not everyday you get to paddle big water in Vermont.

- Ryan

## **West Virginia General Overview**

Friday-Friday Mar 14-21, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: John Atherton Jim Poulin Jim Fecteau Justin Wirth Jordan Vickers Jamie Dolan Ben Schott Brock Richardson Catharine Hull Dan Dolan Danny Siger Mike Mainer Noah Pollock

Silas Pohlman

Open Canoe: Tony Shaw

Raft: Dan Sherbrook Pac Raft

Organizer: Brock Richardson

Difficulty: int-adv WW

Level: medium

Author: Brock Richardson

This is a general over view of our trip to WV this march. I encourage participants to write up reports of specific rivers paddled.

We had 18 paddlers on this trip and for the most part it wen't very well. We stayed at Alpine Lake Resort for the week the Chalet we rented (A2 Wilson) worked out perfect. It was inexpensive and given the weather a whole lot better then camping.

People took turns cooking and all meals received rave reviews.

Rivers paddled were: The Lower Yough, Little Sandy, Big Sandy, Cheat Canyon, Middle fork, Tygart, upper Yough, North Branch of the Potomac

The first day we all ran the Lower Yough. We got a late start but hey it's only a 2-3 warm up run. We found a different story. At the high level we ran it it was a big water hard 3 with maybe a 4 minus thrown in. After a fun run and many swims(mostly mine) we finished up around 6 By the time we ran shuttle and got back to the lodge it was close to 8. A pattern to repeat many times this trip.

The next day the easy group took a break on the Little Sandy a beautiful class 3 run slowly building in difficulty to a final class 4- drop it was a low level and an easy paddle. We got home early

Not so for the Studs Mike M, BenS, Danny S and Jordan V Decided to run the Cheat Canyon and the Lower Big Sandy. After an epic 2 runs they returned exhausted after 9pm

The next day the easy group ran the Middle Fork and Tygart. I ran shuttle as I was feeling under the weather. The water was absolutely beautiful at the put in. The Deepest shade of blue I had seen. I was sad to not be running it. The Run took until nearly dark with participants tired but glad they had done it.

The hot shots Jordan Danny and Mike ran the Uppper Yough

The next day everyone ran the Lower Big



*Jordan Vickers running Big Splat, Lower Big Sandy River.*

Sandy with the exception of John A and Myself. We elected to run the easier Cheat Narrows. This was the only river I ran in WV that I would call a disappointment. A few Short rapids with not very hard features and not too pretty scenery.

Not so for the Lower Sandy group. I have never seen such big smiles from a paddling group as when they entered the lodge. Everyone but Dan Sherbrook in his pac raft ran 17 foot wonder falls and the 4 studs ran Big Splat a notorious class V that most walk. I think it was the best day in Silas's young paddling career.

Next on our list was the Cheat Canyon. Everyone ran it and it was really fun. Big water but not too hard. I snuck the biggest rapid with a beautiful waterfall dropping into it. I looked back and was surprised to see that quite a few people had joined me. The ones that ran it for the most part did well.

We had our one accident on the run. Justin Ruptured an eardrum when a rock hit him in the head. It was starting to bleed when he got to the take out so he and the Dans headed to Morgantown ER. Both Dans agreed the ER was a slice of WV not to be missed. Justin was a big hit with the nurses there which I'm sure helped ease the pain somewhat. Justin is doing well and should regain

his hearing in that ear. We are all hoping for the best.

My last run of the trip was the highlight for me. The North Branch of the Potomac. This was a great 3-4 non stop 13 miles of whitewater. Drop after drop after drop with lots of Non stop boulder gardens with ledges thrown in for fun. Danny Siger gave me some paddling help and it really transformed my paddling. It was the first time I have felt comfortable on something this hard. I

actually felt liked I belonged there. It was kind of self serving on his part though as he had been rescuing me and my boat non stop over the past few days. I was still able to manage a swim or two after his help but ran the biggest rapid Maytag clean and well which pleased me to no end. This is a great remote run and I highly recommend it. Once again we got off late this time to biting wind snow flurries and general miserable conditions.

One last run to the Upper Yough of which I wanted no part and our trip was Done. I can't thank everyone enough. I have never felt so safe and had so much fun on a trip. I recommend WV to all.

Brock

## **Big water in VT: April Fools or a New Big Thing?**

Saturday Apr 5, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Tom N, Clay M, Mike M

Organizer: Mike M

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: medium

Author: Mike M

It's been a slow start to the season here in

Vermont. There's a good snowpack for sure, but the ice has stuck around in the riverbeds and levels have been pretty low. The skiing has generally been pretty good though, but after a night of freezing rain I was pretty sure Saturday morning that I wanted to go boating. Problem was that the ice status on the Mad was unknown, the New Haven was probably still iced in, and everything else was definitely still frozen.

Except for Sheldon Springs on the Mississiquoi. It certainly seemed likely that this normally dewatered, low-elevation reach, which was currently running at around 3000 cfs would be pretty clear of ice and be at a nice level. And we knew from releases last fall that if there was water and not too much ice, it would offer a fun time. Tom and Clay were on board so we headed 40 minutes north and were happy to see the riverbed nicely full and generally clear of ice.

The level felt a little bit higher than the first (higher) release last fall - not significantly but just enough to make the features noticeably larger. There was plenty of water going over the dam (a bit less than last fall), but the left sluice gate was wide open, which the dam operators said was good for about 1000-1200 cfs. The level behind the dam was fluctuating around 202.9 to 203.1 while we were there (there is a staff gauge on the river left dam abutment; Scott, the friendly dam operator said he has a rating curve somewhere). If the level last fall was 3000, then I'd guess we had 3300-3500 or so.

Like we saw last fall, the run had a nice big-water aura to it, but because the riverbed has lots of jumbled boulders the water is more active, with many boily and unstable features. This level does a nice job of covering the many pinning features that are exposed at lower water.

The run starts out with a meaty ledge with several clean options between meaty pourovers. Then comes a complex assortment of channels and rocky islands. On all three laps we ran the left-side boulder garden sneak of the second rapid, running the twisty entrance on the right but then cutting to the left side to avoid several large holes. The right side is a great, exciting and generally straightforward line but given the cold temps and very cold water we wanted to play it safe and not get worked in holes while chunks of ice assailed

us. Plus, the lines down the left are fun, classic boulder garden slalom courses. The added water also appeared to open up some lines in the center which looked cool, and meaty.

The next couple rapids are a bit more straightforward - a wavetrain with two offset holes requiring a very classic big-water S-move, then a rapid that should be called "Screaming Right Turn", which pushes into an un-named stretch that has a couple hidden holes out in the middle that successful boaters must identify and avoid (there are many ways to do this), and finally a bit of runout with a few decent surf features. Then there is the powerhouse on the right, where you take out, load your boats on the car and drive back up to do it again.

And so we were entertained for three laps, and could have done more except that we brought only one car and thus had to walk the 1-mile shuttle each run, so it was getting late by the time we finished and had also started snowing.

This is a fun section of river that seems to run pretty frequently and is really convenient. It's hard to believe it has been sitting there all this time and is just starting to become popular.

## **Season Opener on Stoney**

Thursday Apr 10, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Ryan M. Henry S.

C1: Alden B.

Organizer: Ryan

Difficulty: int-adv WW

Level: low boatable

Author: Ryan

It's always nice to open the season on something other than the Lower Mad. Nothing wrong with the Mad - but by mid May it gets a little long in the tooth. So having the opportunity to poke down a rarely run Micro in the Dog River drainage was a treat.

Stony is an ideal intro to Creeking/getting wet again after a long winter of skiing...run.

The Dog was at about 800 and dropping - I had never run Stony that low, in fact I had never even looked at Stony when the Dog was below 1200, but we were all game and decided to get out there

and give it a go.

It was surprisingly boatable. The run is approximately 7 miles long and is a full on gem with a bunch of different drops and distinct rapids that really break the run into three sections. The upper is very tight and is more or less a mini gorge, The middle has some boulder type rapids and the bottom is predominantly a ledge style creek.

We all had a great run and were chasing daylight to the take out - The last drop called Junior's House is a total blast and was slightly constricted due to some residual ice and snow still along the banks. We all ran different lines but they all went - Alden smoothing it out and mine with way too much of a boof....

I am willing it will be draining the Northfield Mountains for at least another week - go get after it folks. There are three specific pieces of wood to be wary of..... So be on your toes.

Cheers...

## **2014 New Haven Ledges Race**

Saturday Apr 12, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: 42 Racers

Organizer: Ryan, Will & Nick

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: medium

Author: Ryan

In it's 6th year the New Haven Ledges Race has come into it's own. Folks around New England know about it, Boaters from north of the boarder come down to race it. Sponsors want to be involved and overall it is a really great fun event.

This year may have been the best one we have had yet. We initially had scheduled it for the first Saturday in April only to have to bump it back a weekend to let the ice break loose from the river. Our timing was as good as it gets. The river had come up high the week before and cleared the ice and we had nice high flows the day before the race and then it came back down to a reasonable flow that met the needs of racers of all abilities.

We had 42 racers in all. 6 of them raced in both the Long boat and Creek Boat categories. A large percentage of the field of racers were from Quebec. VT brought the usual strong contingency of local boaters, but ultimately it was a racer from

the past that showed up this year to turn the heat on and win the overall Creek Boat and Long Boat categories. Tino Specht topped past winners, Gilbert, Pritchard and Brown taking home the Lion's share of the prizes. The best part of this was that it seemed as though no one really cared about the prizes, because the prize was that everyone was out on a sunny 70 degree April day at the Ledges running laps and there just happened to be a ramp and finishline for folks to collect their times.

The New Haven Race - laid back grass roots VT event. Pure fun - the way boating in Vermont should be.

Not to forget - our volunteers were huge this year, Brock drove shuttle, John - brought the ramp and directed traffic, Chris was a multipurpose guy all over the place, Paul assisted with the finish Danica kept time and crunched numbers for us, Andrew took photos and worked safety, Alex did the same, Will was the race day logistics man - safety, time keeping and really making sure our gears were turning as the should. Nick put in a ton of pre-race time helping to secure sponsorship and pre race logistics. So a huge thanks to all that helped out in some way or another.

Also - Thanks to our sponsors. Many companies provided prizes and most importantly the Vermont Paddlers Club for their continued support financially and with Volunteers.

The New Haven Ledges Race - Just another excuse to spend a day on one of the best stretches of Whitewater in the Northeast!

## **Upper Mad (Improv)**

Sunday Apr 13, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Paul Carlile, Jamie Dolan, James Fecteau, Will Parini, Brian Wilcock

Open Canoe: Eric Bishop, Tony Shaw

Organizer: Tony Shaw

Difficulty: intermediate WW

Level: high

Author: Tony Shaw

im•pro•vise

verb \ 'im-prə-, vīz \

: to create and perform spontaneously or without preparation

: to make or create (something) by using whatever is available



*New Haven Race winner Tino Specht.*

: a skill honed by VPC trip organizers when Mother Nature throws a curve ball

Despite this year's unhurried spring thaw the scheduled Black River in Perkinsville, VT - a river that is fluid/optimal around 800-900 cfs - went from 2x optimal Friday to almost 3x optimal Saturday, so we scrambled to find an alternative for the Sunday intermediate level trip. Plan B was the Moose River in Victory, VT (scuttled due to high water and a 2 hour drive). Plan C was Bingo Brook (scuttled because the road remains impassable this early in April). It wasn't until Sunday morning, in the wake of a fast-moving rainstorm overnight that left an inch or so of rain across Addison and Washington Counties, that the Upper Mad River bubbled up to the top of the list. And there the 7 of us met...and frolicked.

The rain stopped and the sun shone. But the shot of rain and warming trend turned the normally well-mannered class II Upper Mad into a bit of a beast. There were 2 swims within moments of our Main St. (Warren, VT) put-in, 2 swims at the Butternut Rd. constriction where we opted to take-out, and 3 (I believe) swims along the way as well. Seeing 1275 cfs on the online Moretown USGS gauge as I left home I knew there would be enough water, but by the time I got back home it was reading over 2400 cfs - and still climbing. All the

little side-streams were churning, and when we got off the Mad, James and Jamie headed together up Rt. 17 toward Mad River Glen for high-water "dessert" on Mill Brook. I gather that too went "swimmingly".

## **The Vermont Bob Sled Run...**

Monday Apr 14, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Ryan M Hugh P Adam P

Open Canoe: Andrew B

C1: Alden B

Organizer: Ryan

Difficulty: int-adv WW

Level: high

Author: Ryan

75 Degrees, Lots of water everywhere. What do you do. Of course - go to the NBW drainage and hope you can find it at a really fun fluffy level. The emails, phone and texts were insane by lunch time so it was evident everyone else had the same idea.

I raced out of work and headed home to grab my gear and get up route 12 to see what The Last Drop looked like. It was absolutely DISGUSTING to look at and gave me the willies just watching the water folding over on it's self at the lip and the hole at the bottom looked like it could eat Tokyo! None of us wanted anything to do with that today. So we decided to head back toward Montpelier and grab my standard pre-work run at a really MEATY level. We looked at Martin's and the lines were stomping. So we drove up and checked out one of it's tribs, Patterson to see it was stomping as well. But seemed to be a little less angry. So we set shuttle and loaded up our gear and headed up to the put in to get in a quick run so we didn't get skunked on a day when there is so much water around to be had.

At the put in a solid crew of the UVM crowd pulled up and they hopped in behind us. Mainer, Rogan, Tom, Clay and Noah thought our idea of running Patterson was a pretty good one too..... A lot of boaters on a tiny little creek that was dishing up some fantastic flow.

I lead off down and around the bend to the first reasonable eddy. The Bob Sled Run was doing a good job of serving up some fun lines. Once your reflexes caught up to the speed at which you were moving, it became apparent that this was going to be a ton of fun! Eddies were abundant and nothing was overly retentive.

About a 1/3 into the run I rounded an abrupt right hand turn and heard a sickening noise from the hull of my kayak....something akin to a nail being drug across plate glass. 30 seconds later I was sitting about 4 inches lower in the river and having a hard time maneuvering my boat. I grabbed the nearest eddy and hopped out to see that my boat was filled to the brim with water - I also had an unobscured view of the river through the bottom of my kayak. I had put a nasty jagged 18" long crack in the bottom of my boat. BUMMER. I was done for the day. However the rest of the crew finished off their run and the UVM boys and Hugh headed on down to the bottom of Martin's to the Take out at Shady Rill.

The VT Bob Sled Run is a treat to find with that much water in it! As bummed as I was about my boat - the company was good and the beers were pretty splendid too at the take out. Unbelievable that the UVM crew were sporting something other than Mountain Brew. Well done Clay!

As for the tired old Mystic - back to the barn and I've got a new challenge for my plastic welding skills..... UGH!

### **NBW in the Spring...kind of**

Wednesday Apr 16, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Tom N. Mike, Noah P. Justin W. Ryan M.

Organizer: Ryan

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: low boatable

Author: Ryan

Huh.... Feast or Famine was the story for the third week of April. Monday & Tuesday nothing was even reasonable to boat. Wednesday we got snow and the bottom dropped out of the entire spring snow melt flow.

Having desk jobs meant a good bunch of us would have to hopefully wish that the flow would

hold out enough to get on something quality after work hours. Luckily we had a couple of willing participants and the NBW held out enough to let her favorite customer, some regulars and two newbies passage.

We made tentative plans to meet at 4:00 at the take out. Yea that was closer to 5:30 once everyone showed up. We were on river by 5:45 and headed down the upper warm up drops of the NBW. Man it was COLD! Cold enough that after Broken Falls we were all ice coated.

By the time we got to the Fineline, I think the group was in to a rhythm and we were moving right along. Down through Manky Mank - no one liked it at the level it was currently at. Around the bend to Big Bouncy and we were all out of our boats to see what the left line looked like - good to go. 4 of us styled the entry crux and line. Down through the tube and over Flat Falls. I think all of us except Justin stalled and plunked over the lip...no really bad pitons but NEEDED MORE WATER. Around the bend over sliding board and set up for Double Drop. MAN IS THAT AN AWESOME DROP!!!! It was good and fluffy...Didn't someone once say it was like a pillow fight??? Anyways - off to Cave Falls. Three of us ran the Slide and Tom and Mike threw a boofs off of the lip. That was it - The Final Drop was closed out on River Left and not enough water was flowing over river right to get you out over the lip and ledge.

Justin and Tom were newbies to the River. It was good to finally get Justin on the NBW as he has been itching to run it for at least 3 years. A huge bonus is that Justin lives closer to the river than I do so he can be a good source to for beta on the run now too. It is always fun showing folks down this run for the first time, even at lowish levels. They light up with each drop. Pretty dang cool!

If you haven't run the NBW - do yourself a favor and get your boof tuned up and give it a go one of these days.

### **Upper North Branch Lamoille**

Thursday Apr 17, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Paul Carlile, Jamie Dolan

C1: Alden Bird

Organizer: Paul Carlile

Difficulty: int-adv WW

Level: low boatable

Author: Alden Bird

Two days before, the river had flooded. But by this evening the white rime on the riverbank moss was a foot above the water. Saplings coated with ice bent toward the river like white ornaments. The woods were covered in snow.

In the first mile, I remembered the beauty of this stretch; by the second, the subtlety of the canoe paddle; by the third, the rapids above Belvidere that cannot be seen down.

We put on late, the rapids came and came, and a long day melted away with the focus. It had been some time since any of us had paddled this stretch and we all enjoyed it and said we would be back.

I drove home through the mountains after we made plans to paddle the next day on a different river.

### **A weekend of Green Goodness with a splash of Gihon**

Saturday-Sunday Apr 26-27, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Ryan Mainer Clay Jordan Jamie D Will P  
Will S Cully Scott G Paul D Jamie S Adam P

Open Canoe: Andrew B

Organizer: Ryan

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: low boatable

Author: The Fish Counter

What do you do on a rainy cold April Day when nothing else is boatable or skiable. You hope that there is a release on the Green River in Wolcott. Just so happens our spring snowmelt runoff had drained and there wasn't flowing but... We had a Green River Release scheduled for both days on April 26 and 27.

When I showed up at 9am the bottom gauge was reading 1'2", not nearly enough water to boat. Shortly thereafter Andrew Blease rolled into the parking area and let me know he dropped his boat at the top and there was plenty of water up there too boat the run. Guess the H2O was feeling lazy like



*Eric Bishop on the North Branch Lamoille (Tony Shaw)*

the rest of us on this cold dank morning and was taking it's time getting down the river. Shortly after a hand full of other boaters showed up to get suited up and get on the river. Jamie, Will P, Andrew and Cully joined me and Jordan, Mainer and Clay were on the river shortly right behind us. We more or less ran the river as a medium sized group and had a blast. Moonshine the first drop is changing with each flow...more water is being funneled through the sneak and making it much more manky and the main drop is getting more dry. That said Cully fired it up and made it look easy. Down and around double squeeze and we were into the rest of the top drops ending in plugger. Everyone ran them fine albeit one swim out the bottom of the hole in plugger. The flat water section was a nice place to regroup and chat it up some. One log jam in there requires a portage (the only one of the trip). Below the flats is Young Buck, it has changed some as well in the entrance, looking like it may actually be easier to run the top of it cleanly. This doesn't change the consequences of a mess up in the mini gorge though. Cully again made it look easy. ON down through Cookie Duster and we were at Humble Pie.... On this first run, those that ran it cleanly and then we headed down through Do Si Do and the lower rapid before Lumber Yard. Upon arrival of Lumber Yard we found.....lumber in the line which we quickly made short work of and

opened up the rapid. Again those that ran it ran it cleanly. That left us with Runway and the Piton. Most folks ran each of those rapids cleanly from a number of different angles and approaches. With Saturday Run 1 over - we hit up the snack shack for some calories and warmth before heading out for run two. This second lap we were down to just myself, Mainer, Clay and Jordan. With two unplanned fish counting exercises and multiple sessions on the waterfall at Humble Pie, we still styled the run in an hour and 15 minutes. Both runs saw the stick gauge reading a solid 2'6" splashing up to 2'7". This would be considered a low minimum flow. Post beers were had at Lost Nation Brewery....Great beer - better company and we all got to meet Andrew's wife...

Sunday was to be more of the same on the Green and the sun was trying to pop out some too. The guys were busting my chops about the

#### *On the Green River.*



sunshine, because it seems every Green Release we get I managed to get Morrisville Water and Light to give them to us on Raw damp nasty weekends. So Round 2 we got a later start to let things warm up some... With that brought in some new boaters for the second day, Adam P, Scott G, Jamie S Will S and Paul D joined Mainer, Clay Jordan and myself for a mid day run and there was a group of 6 Quebequois that put on ahead of us. Everyone had a great run - again there was some unplanned

fish counting and multiple runs on Humble Pie. I think Jordan hiked back up 7 times to get after it. The level seemed to have dropped out some and was more like a splashy 2'6" on the stick gauge, less fluid than the day before

Once we wrapped up the snack shack got a hefty dose of business from the crew of hungry kayakers and then we were off to the Gihon, which was at a great medium-low level. We had two newbies on the Gihon, which was fantastic. It's always fun to send them off the first drop with nothing more than directions. Everyone had a great time on the Gihon and again there was some un planned fish counting. Four guys in the crew fired up Mustang with varying levels of success and for the most part the run went without incident and we ran the rarely run rapid in town at the Studio center. When we pulled out the sun was shining and the temps had climbed into the high 40s. It was a appropriate end to a really fun weekend of Creeking in the Green

Mountain State!

Thank You Morrisville Water and Light for giving us a weekend full of flow.

The Fish Counter....

### **White River - Stockbridge to Bethel**

Saturday Apr 26, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Craig (CJ) Carline, Chris Frost, David Hathaway, Chuck Malerich, James Travers, Chris Weed

Open Canoe: Tony Shaw

C1: Ryan Zajac

Organizer: Tony Shaw

Difficulty: nov-int WW

Level: medium low

Author: Tony Shaw

Even with the inhospitable weather forecast more than 10 boaters expressed interest in the novice/intermediate "Upper White" trip - and 8 of us showed up at noon at the put-in, just as the temperature broke the 40 degree mark and the rain showers tapered off.

Some ducked and some carried around the river-wide strainer 100 yard downstream from the

Tweed River put-in off VT 100. We dispensed with our first (and only) swim early in the run. Scattered here and there dead trees still litter the banks, principally on river left, where tropical storm Irene caused whole hillsides to collapse into the river, and one of those trees caught Chris F. unawares and knocked his helmet cam into the drink. Thankfully, he discovered, it floats!

The Upper White is certainly siltier since Irene, and still looks battle-torn in many places, but it remains nevertheless an attractive river - even on a see-your-breath dreary kind of day. Friday's showers afforded medium-low conditions with plenty of small pour-overs and holes to boost your surfing confidence. CJ set a leisurely pace as the "lead", and we stopped a couple of times briefly to snack, stretch, and/or water the lawn. Most of the solid class II rapids in the middle (a.k.a. "Gaysville") section we took in single file fashion, but in every rapid there were always multiple lines if you wanted to spice it up. In Gaysville we floated by (and spoke briefly with) a newly self-baptized dripping wet teen-age participant in the latest Facebook "Polar Plunge Dare" challenge that apparently is going viral - and IMO none too smart at this time of year.

Craig's wife Sarah met us at the take-out with a Wolaver's Stout 12 pack as the sun made it's first appearance all day, a purrrfect ending for a chilly April outing on the Upper White. River time: 4 hours. Distance: 6.8 miles. High: 46 degrees.

### **Lower Mad River**

Wednesday Apr 30, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Brock R Chris W Jamie D Jim P Paul C John A

Organizer: John Atherton

Difficulty: intermediate WW

Level: low boatable

Author: John Atherton

It was a cold rainy evening but the old( age that is) faithful's showed up and ran probably the least exciting trip I have ever been on. No swims and no rolls. Even Horseshoe did not have it's way with anyone. Though we did not have much excitement it was great fun being with friends and fellow

paddlers. At the take out nobody hung around for the traditional brew. People did talk about getting home in front of a fire and relaxing with one. This is the end of the April spring paddling season but we have the rest of the year to play and paddle with old friends and new friends to make. I am very enthused about paddling and what VPC is doing in the State with Resent release on the Green and up coming on Sheldon falls this weekend. Keep it up Ryan and Bob(Aw rep) Thanks

### **Browns River Friday Evening**

Friday May 2, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Beth N., Chris F., John A., Chris W., Brock R., Ken E.

Organizer: Ken Emery

Difficulty: nov-int WW

Level: low boatable

Author: K Emery

There were 6 paddlers for the first paddle of the Browns River this season. The level was low-fluid (about -6" on the footing) and a good level for 2 first-timers (a 3rd was planning to come but got hung up at work). We messed about a little in the current at the small ledge by the bridge and our first swim got the group under way. Both first-run paddlers portaged the dam feature, which appeared less retentive this year. The swirl in the left-of-center hole had been replaced by a curling haystack. The slanting ledge and green tongue on river left remained the only apparent line there. In the S-rapid that followed a line center-left, skirting the waves and flow that pushed into the 'magnetic' central rock, was the preferred route. While eddy scouting there Chris Weed found a submerged log river right of the sentinel rock that he thought could come into play if someone got off flow to river right. Everyone stayed on line through the rapid but on the exit a second swim happened when a rock stuck it's foot out and trip up one paddler. At the river-wide drop, everyone stayed upright following a line left of the central boulder. There was a log blocking the direct route at the slide-drop feature that followed. While some of the experienced paddlers had some extra lateral moves before finally exiting, the inexperienced paddlers had

better luck there. Beth (in John's Solo) slid right down through the cross current mid-way and dropped off the second ledge clean and Chris Frost followed (in his Biscuit 55 playboat). Another rock tripping swim incident happened exiting the feature and then came the long, sometimes bony, 1.5 mile class I-II boulder garden to the last (islands) feature where no one elected to run the river right chute. 3 route options there were clean of wood.

We didn't get underway until closer to 5:30 so it was dusk when we finished up. In spite of relatively fluid conditions, some plastic was donated in the usual area. There was only one swimmer (who practiced a few times) but in spite of that he did very well considering he was river running in a playboat and had only paddled the Upper White and Middle Mad previously. Beth hadn't paddled (since the Deerfield Class II clinic) and she did great peeling and eddying out from the first wave train at the put in. It was a fun evening and of course our entertainment director, Brock kept the smiles refreshed.

### **Behind the Curve...**

Saturday May 3, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Ryan m, Mike M, Paul D

Organizer: Ryan

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: low boatable

Author: Ryan

Yes...that would be referring to me. I have been behind the curve for about 3 years now for the New Haven Ledges. Infact so far behind the curve that this past Saturday was the first run I've had on the Ledges since Irene has had it's way with the run.

That said - it was a beautiful day and it was either a low water run there or back to the Mad. I need me some Ledges and figured it would be fun to check it out with an old pro/local (Mainer) and Paul Dawson. Paul and I set shuttle and looked at a couple of rapids and by the time we had gotten down Mike had snuck up to the put in and got a speed run down through.

We had two relatively uneventful runs and mostly ran cleanly through. the low water messed

with Mike's beater boat some more and Paul pinned in the entry to Playpen, but mostly it was a benign afternoon on the river and we had it all to ourselves. Oh yea - and I seem to have forgotten how to roll in the pool below Toaster - DOH!

I really need to spend more time on that run. I sure spend enough time in April looking at it and sending folks down it at the New Haven Race... Time to change the paradigm and get out there more myself!

I'll be back more often and more fluid levels.

ALSO - at low levels be careful in the run out of Oh By The Way. There is a nasty piece of wood in there that if you went deep could be a hazard.

### **Jay Brook on the Fly...**

Sunday May 4, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Ryan M, Clay M, Mike M

Organizer: Mike M.

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: low boatable

Author: Ryan

Whoa!

There have been nebulous reports that there was some high quality whitewater in them there hills of the North Country. Since we were already almost at the Canadian boarder for the Missisquoi release and everything north of Rt 15 got pummeled with copious amounts of rain Saturday night we thought....what the heck, lets check it out - its only another 30 minutes to the east and we are all the way up here! So Mike Clay and myself headed east toward Montgomery with visions of beautiful sculpted schist and giant boulder gardens. Our beta of the run came from a few folks that had run it years ago and some obscure photos that Dave Packie took while getting in a solo low water summer run. The photos made it look magical and fun with one terrifying (probably unrunable) waterfall.

So to the put in we went up off of Amidon Road (those of you that ski Jay....think The Belfry). It looked low passable and there was a painted gauge on the bridge abutment that was splashing at 3 when we started and was at a solid 3 when we ended. Again level was low fluid boatable. The

first section was shallow cobble/boulder garden stuff. Relatively low gradient but busy enough to be ok. Once Wade Brook came in on the left (Wade drains Hazen Notch on the north side), the flow picked up as did the gradient. The boulders got bigger and the horizon lines did as well. We noticed that the river bed was showing some more signs of bedrock grade control rapids too! Fun high quality stuff that required your attention but didn't elevate to PUCKER FACTOR on the pucker factor meter. We were able to boat around or thru a few of the wood snags, but one was a jumblely mess and we hopped out. Mike and Clay river right and I was on river left. Just below this stick pile the river woke up and showed it's true colors - we were dubbing it QUAD Drop. there were four distinct drops in this rapid that required a little bit of all your creeking skills - a right handed boof into a pool with a quick eddy out, then a jet ferry into a slot that you needed to drive up and into, then another eddy before you caught a tongue on to a flake to clear a seam and then a brace left down a small slide to pick your poison of going left and into another seam/hole thing that jammed you into an undercut boulder (undercut - this is a common theme on this river) or you went right and paddled under a massive boulder - almost like going into a cave. Mike and clay went left I took the opportunity to paddle through and under the cave at the bottom. At higher levels it would be terrifying on river right and maybe even terminal. Below this we could see mist blasting up....had to be the big unrunable. We were caution not to get sucked into the lead in and hopped our way down to it with a couple of other quality rapids. You portage the big one on river right and then carry down to one of the better drops in VT. IT is a double drop of two 10 footers back to back. We all looked at it long and hard but decided that it was late in the day and weren't feeling all that studly at the moment (gotta get back there to give it a go though). Below this there were several cool bedrock drops to the take out - but the middle section above the big falls was top notch and worth the drive up there!

Like I said it is a long haul up there but if you are up in the area and the water is up - you really need to check out this beauty of a brook...I know Mike Clay and I will be back in there....

## **Missisquoi Release Minimum Study**

Sunday May 4, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Ryan M, Mike M. Clay M, Nick G, Daphnee T, Will S, Taylor K

Organizer: Ryan McCall

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: medium

Author: Ryan

We had 7 boaters and a pro photographer show up. I got munched in one hole on my first run and then had a very clean run on my second run. The guys I was with did a speed lap so I could grab some lunch and then we all headed out of there for some steep creeking. The north country got slaughtered Saturday night in to Sunday and the rivers were on the rise (even the Missisquoi was rapidly rising while we were on it....the amount of Cow Poo in the water was astonishing.

I think we have established a base flow for a fun and SAFE run - 1000cfs in the channel. Much lower would be very dangerous from what we could tell after looking at this channel carefully before any water was released and the lines that you would need to boat at a low level. That said - at 1000 it is a fun and quality run, but at the higher levels 2000 and higher the run really is a special and unique run to VT and maybe anywhere in New England other than some of the bigger stuff in Maine. We should talk about how to work in all of the different flow levels and it seems pretty easy for Scott to manipulate that right at the dam or even remotely for that matter...

Scott and Ralph were super accommodating and Scott stuck around and made sure we were all set. Also we learned a little about how much CFS is spilling over the flash boards and through the flapper gate. Their flash boards are set at (I believe) 222 so we were trying to get the level stabilized at 222.7 (487 cfs) and 1/2 of a flapper at 440cfs and then they have a small turbine in the dam that spills 70 cfs. Our first run we started at ~1000 cfs and it felt pretty good but was coming up at close to 50 cfs every 15 minutes.

Here are shots from the Day - <http://www.kayakingphotos.com/>

AND A HUGE THANKS TO THE GUYS AT ENEL!!!! Things are shaping up nicely

### **Ridley after work...**

Tuesday May 6, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Mike M, Clay M, Scott G, Ryan M

Organizer: Mainer

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: medium low

Author: Ryan

If anyone looks back at the Message Board for May 6, you can see it was silly busy and a Mainer was the instigator. We all wanted to get on the river though and boat. All the flow was north of the I-89 corridor, but Mike had a hunch that Ridley would be running with his correlation to Ranch Brook in Stowe. He was right!

We all arrived at the take out by 5:15 and suited up. Those guys had all been down this river multiple times pre and post Irene. I had only seen pictures and driven up Camel's Hump Road a few times to hike or ski up there. Never really seen any water in the river bed. There was today and I could feel my sphincter starting to tighten...never mind my stomach up in my throat! The guys (Mike, Clay and Scott) were pretty cavalier about the run and were joking around at the put in. Scot, Clay and I put in a little up river from Mike and worked our way down into the first succession of drops. Very quickly I found that this was the type of boating I luv. Tight steep and shallow, My trusty Huka was built for this stuff and I'm an ELF (cracking myself up right now). Anyways, once on the river the guys did a good job of giving me beta on the rapids and drops without over doing it. We all were running clean lines and working our way down to Bathtub. I eyed it and carried down to the bottom and set safety and took video. Mike styled it, Scott hopped in and did the same and then Clay smoothed the lines out after seeing the other guys.... All three of them cleaned the Bathtub and made me second guess my decision to walk it. Maybe next time.

From the Tub we worked down to Backyard and Video. Mike and Scott ran Backyard and then took out above the crux. It was pretty messy and may have had wood??? We all put into the gorge and ran it. OH MY GOODNESS. What an amazing piece of whitewater! That is one unreal stretch of

beautiful river! After the gorge was a couple more rapids and then out.

Now that is how you end a Monday. I can now tolerate work with that run in my back pocket on a Monday Evening!

For the record - Boating with these three guys is a pleasure... They are talented and gracious with lesser boaters on the river. If you haven't had the pleasure to boat with Scott Clay or Mike... Do so, you'll be a better boater for it.

### **You Call it the Mill, I'll Call it the Clarendon.....**

Saturday May 10, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Jamie D, Chad C, Ryan M

Open Canoe: Tony S

Organizer: Ryan

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: low boatable

Author: Ryan

Crazy Friday night Rain Storm and our options were pretty good everywhere. Although it was far and few between to get anyone out on the water. The dedicated few were chirping it up on the Message Board early Saturday Morning... Too many decisions/choices...so went with a gut feeling and rallied the group down to Rutland and the Mill River while a few others headed back to the New Haven for laps.

Jamie, Tony and Chad - were game for a lowish level in the Clarendon Gorges on a gorgeous May Saturday. The level at the put in looked like it would be a relatively forgiving run and that meant the lower gorge would be more fun and scenic than hairball. The first gorge is read and run and there are some great options for alternative lines when there is more water in the gorge.... At lower levels you really needed to stay on line to run each drop cleanly with out bouncing about. For the most part all participants had good runs through the drops in the upper gorge. The flatwater/cobble starts right up after you are out of the gorge and it is a lesson in boat control so not to get hung up as you make your way toward Mill Drop.

Mill drop is a fantastic rapid with a couple of holes

to punch and some cross currents to navigate to get to your chosen sluice to run. The left route clean and less pushy, the right route full of piss and vinegar. I ran the right line and inadvertently pulled my first ear-dippin' boof. Sketchy! Chad, Jamie and Tony ran the right side and made the drop look smooth and fun! Yes the home owners in the Mill were out on their deck screaming and hollering at us to "GO" because they didn't want us in their RIVER below their house. The fact is they

*Ryan McCall in the Clarendon Gorge (Jamie Dolan)*



don't have any right to tell us what to do as long as we are not on their property (either river bank) and to be honest, they really aren't all that bothersome due to the noise of the rapid. Just don't antagonize them and it is a relatively small nuisance in the middle of the run. Again - don't engage and stay off of their property.

As we moved down river through the rest of the cobble/flat water we came to one strainer that we

needed to portage and then around the bend was the entrance to the Devils Gorge (lower Clarendon Gorge). We portaged Grundle Puncher, which got it's second ever descent this spring. Back in 2007 "Young Max" ran it for the first descent and came out rather unscathed, Brenton did a repeat this past Easter Sunday. It looks like an easy drop, the consequences of missing your line are harrowing though - can you say POTHOLE! The portage is a royal PIA and chucking and hucking are the desired line off of the cliff wall. Once back in our

boats, we worked our way down the lower gorge rapids and had a blast wrapping up our run in the swimming hole at Lower Clarendon Gorge State Park.

We all loaded gear and parted ways. Tony and I headed to the Ledges to see what the rest of the VT boaters were up to.....

### **Joe's Brook**

Saturday May 17, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Jamie Dolan

K2: Justin Worth

Inflatable: Dan Sherwood

Organizer: Jamie

Difficulty: int-adv WW

Level: medium low

Author: Jamie

After a good soaking it seemed like things should be popping. And they were. Reports of 1 3/4" of rain in St Jay made me hope Joe's would go. Justin and Dan responded and off we went. The rivers going over were all different levels. Beaver Meadow was getting up there, the Mill

Brook off of App Gap was low, the Mad was getting big, and the Winooski looked big.

The dam gauge was at 5.1 which is okay but... the turbines weren't cranking. The first half of the trip was a bit scratchy. Which was okay as there are some strainers and wood to be avoided. From the covered bridge on we had a very fluid run. Both Justin and Dan were on it for the first time. None of us ran the covered bridge though it definitely looked doable. When we got to the big slide we



*In Clarendon Gorge (Jamie Dolan)*

all ran right to center. There is a huge broken tree in the middle of the left side. Probably avoidable but why bother. Somewhere along the slide Dan realized he made a good choice in getting a full face helmet. It proved useful. And with that the fun kept on coming, We took a look at the waterfall. Justin boofed nicely and I took the left line. Everything after that was read and run, Or maybe just run . There were some ugly lines but if you don't want to get out you take what you get. The gorge was very easy at this level. It left us time to enjoy our surroundings.

We finished in sunshine with smiles. As usual Joe's did not disappoint.

### **Saranac in May (episode 1)**

Sunday May 18, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Chris Weed, Paul Carlile, Noah Pollock

Organizer: Chris Weed

Difficulty: int-adv WW

Level: medium

Author: Chris Weed

I began recruiting for this trip early in the previous week, even before it became clear we

would get rain, but wasn't having much luck. At mid-week the Saranac's Plattsburgh gauge was at about 3.4 feet. This is normally considered way too low to be worth running, but Noah Pollock posted a reply to mine on the message board saying "don't cancel this trip". Why? Because, he said, 3.4 feet is actually surprisingly fluid, and provides numerous surfing opportunities in this 6+ mile run. I redoubled my efforts to find participants with an email to several people, but as of Saturday--the scheduled day--still wasn't having much luck. With the widespread and substantial rain on Friday several options were available, some of which involved significantly less driving for many of the usual suspects. So, I decided to reschedule the trip to Sunday.

On Saturday morning Paul Carlile posted to say he was in for Sunday. Noah had indicated by email that he was available after 1:00 PM on Sunday, and was already in New York and near the Saranac, working for NFCT. There were glimmers of interest from a few other people, but in the end it was just me, Paul, and Noah. This made it a reunion of sorts; along with Tony Shaw (as leader) we had done the run on April 17, 2011 at 6.5 feet. Aside from Tony that was a first run for all of us, at a higher level than Tony had previously experienced. I had done it 3 times since, in 2011 and twice in 2013.

Paul and I carpooled from Burlington, stopped

briefly at the Milton Park & Ride (I-89 Exit 17) at 11:10 AM to see if we had any last minute joiners, and then headed up to the Grand Isle Ferry and across to New York. The route is pretty straightforward--Route 2 and 314 to the ferry, 314 in New York to I-87, a short hop south on I-87 to Route 374 West, and then onto Route 3 to Redford.

We arrived in Redford at the Maplefields convenience store and gas station before 12:30 PM. Since we weren't expecting Noah until 1:30 or later, we took time to do some scouting. It was immediately evident that the river had plenty of water. Less than a quarter mile upstream of the store is a bridge where Ore Bed Road comes off of Route 3 and crosses the river. A beefy class 3 rapid starts maybe 300 yards upstream of the bridge, and ends with a short but powerful wave train under the bridge, which offers a large turnout for leaving vehicles. We tentatively decided to take out there. A swiftwater rescue team from the town of Saranac was running a drill when we arrived. (They left shortly afterwards.) I checked the water temperature; it was 65 degrees F. The air temperature was about 60; no dry suits would be required.

After scouting the rapid, we drove around for the next half hour or so trying to find cell phone service for Paul's Verizon phone. A mile and half east of the store he got a connection and was able to send a text message and leave a voice mail message for Noah. After that we returned to the store, waited, and ate some lunch while wondering if Noah got our messages.

Right on schedule, Noah drove into the parking lot at 1:30, just as we were discussing how long to stay there before heading up the road. We agreed that Ore Bed Road was the preferred takeout, drove there and left a vehicle, and headed up to the put-in trailhead on Casey Road. The usual fumbling and head-scratching ensued as we tried to locate the trail, at precisely 0.9 miles up Casey Road--no lie, folks. The lone New York DEC sign is closely bracketed by private property postings on both sides; you need to really look for it.

We put on at about 2:35 PM after gearing up and doing the 200 yard hike down the trail. Some broken clouds had moved in, but the weather was close to ideal. On the river it was again clear that the level was very comparable to what I had experienced before. (Noah said it seemed maybe

8 inches higher than the previous Wednesday.) We decided that the gauge readings were simply misleading, presumably because the gauge is so far downstream (nearly 20 miles).

We arrived at Tefft Pond Falls about 45 minutes later, took the portage, and headed down to the next big rapid, dubbed the "Staircase" by Noah. This is a steep succession of ledges. The entry is divided into four channels by mid-stream islands, with the flow quickly merging downstream. Noah led the way into the big middle channel, which I had not run before. (I had used two small channels to its left.) Noah's line was on a tongue just to river left of the biggest island. It leads into a series of large waves and ledge holes, which all proved negotiable for us at that level. There are large eddies on river left at the bottom of this rapid--very useful if somebody swims. The river is non-stop class 3 for the next 3+ miles at a medium high level, so gear recovery can be a serious challenge.

From that point on is non-stop fun, with lots of waves and holes and occasional mid-river eddies for the next few miles. Near the end of this section is another big but short ledge drop, split around a rocky island. Another mile or so gets one to the first takeout, by the bridge where the North Branch of the Saranac comes in (at Route 3 and Silver Lake Road). As planned, we continued on, through 1.5+ miles of quick water to the final rapid, known as the Separator. It starts with a set of staggered ledges, which at high levels probably produce frighteningly wide and powerful ledge holes. These can be threaded to reach the final wave train, but the leader (moi) took a shortcut through one of the holes. It worked, but perhaps shouldn't be emulated at 6 feet and above.

So, that was the run--a thoroughly enjoyable way to spend a beautiful afternoon in the middle of May. We were left wondering about what to make of the Plattsburgh gauge readings in the future. It was suggested that a bridge gauge ought to be improvised as an alternative.

POSTSCRIPT: There was an interesting development today (May 22) before I began writing this trip report. I checked the Plattsburgh gauge, and was astonished to see it showing a level above 5.2 feet. Indeed, all the levels over the past several days had been revised, adding roughly 1.5 feet to the levels we had been seeing

on the gauge last week and on Sunday morning. According to the revised data the river had been above 6 feet for a several hours late on Saturday. The upshot is that Noah's reconsideration of levels below 4.5 feet probably needs to be retracted; the USGS threw us a curve ball. The level we experienced on Sunday looked and felt like it was over 5 feet, and the data now indicates it was at 5.6 feet (as of 2:30 PM) and dropping slowly. I had a vague feeling even then that something was fishy, partly because the Hudson's North Creek gauge had gained nearly 4 feet going into the weekend, and was well over 8 feet on Saturday.

### **Browns River, Float in the Sun**

Sunday May 25, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Ken Emery, Rich Reynolds, Mark Cook, Chris Weed

Organizer: Chris Weed

Difficulty: novice WW

Level: medium low

Author: Chris Weed

I had a Browns River trip on the schedule, and one early interested participant, so I started watching the Lamoille's flow as the best available correlation. It got a small boost late on Saturday, and I got two more expressions of interest, so the trip was a go.

It promised to be marginally runnable, but turned out to be better than that, although certainly not exciting. We elected to use the alternate bridge takeout on McNall Road, eases the climb up from the river while adding nearly a mile to the run. It finishes with some easy class II water, after an extended flat stretch. The weather was stunning all afternoon, with a temperature close to 80 F. The water was refreshingly cool in contrast.

One of us (MC) was new to the run, having done the White River numerous times with a few runs on smaller rivers (Black, Huntington). In marked contrast to the White, much of this section of the Browns River is away from the road and surrounded by woods. The feeling of quiet isolation is one of its best features.

Two of us chose to walk the initial drop at the

broken dam, but it presented no problems for those of us who ran it, despite being forced to traverse the hole on river left. Everything else went without difficulty, and the right side of the final island drop was surprisingly smooth. (Two of us ran it, and two of us took the class II bypass on river left of the island.)

All in all it was a very pleasant way to spend a gorgeous Sunday on Memorial Day weekend. On the Browns, one doesn't often get this combination late in the spring paddling season, with all the trees fully leafed out.

NOTE: The local gauge is not painted on. It consists of a low flat bridge footing across the river from the put-in parking area. Poking above Sunday's water level is a rectangular cavity in the vertical face of the footing, a few inches below the top. If part of the cavity is visible the level is low, albeit runnable. If the river is at the top of the footing it's at a good padded level that adds interest to the main features.

On the wall above the footing is the opening of a pipe embedded in the concrete. This marks the highest level most people will want to run, and is not for novices. Above that be especially careful, and scout the drops. You'll probably want to walk at least one. Also, the river will be lapping into the trees and strainers may be in play that wouldn't normally be a concern.

### **Ausable Chasm**

Sunday Jun 1, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Scott Gilbert, Mike Mainer, Justin Crannell, Caleb Clark, Paul Dawson

K2: Jordan Vickers, Kristen Vickers

Organizer: Scott Gilbert

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: medium

Author: Jordan Vickers

Sunny, warm temps and medium flows made for a perfect day to be on the Chasm. We put on around 11:30 spending time paddling up to Rainbow Falls to check out the view. Moving downstream we made quick work of horseshoe, second rapid and the diagonal slide all with clean

lines. Everyone grabbed an eddie above Elephants most scouted from river left. As we approached the Diagonal Slide the Chasm Company employees were on us. They did nothing more than observe and seemed friendly enough but they were clearly there to make sure we did nothing more than move downstream. They seemed to have no problem with scouting and setting safety at river level. Scott set safety below the long rapid walking up a bit which seemed fine with them as well. Everyone ran Elephant's on the far river right. Scott ran first followed by Mainer, Paul, Justin, Kristen and I in the duo then Caleb. When the Duo dropped off the right side of Elephants Kristen disappeared. She resurfaced and we finished out the long rapid which was quite pushy at this level. The river left side (sneak) of Elephants seemed rather manky although with some effort you can portage river left. We swirled in the eddy on river right waiting for Caleb as a random solo boater in a yellow habitat came down, did not say a word and paddled away. Caleb finished up the rapid and we made our way down to Mike's Hole. The line was start river left, move right around a rock at the entrance then make your way back left to finish boofing the hole toward river left. Again Scott Gilbert (possibly most runs of the Chasm ever) ran first and the rest of the group followed. Everyone made it through and we were done with the major whitewater. There was some rebar on river left below Mike's Hole by 100ft or so but is easily avoidable in your boat. We enjoyed the narrow vertical walls of the chasm, playing around in some of the remaining rapids and having an extended surf session at the waves below. Motivation seemed high for a second lap but as usual the scrape out taking 30 minutes changed thoughts and we ended up at the takeout satisfied with our one lap. Some made their way to find a milkshake at Stewarts (and possibly some cheap adult beverages) while Kristen and I made our way north to Clare and Carls Michigan dogs in Plattsburgh to cap off the day. Since the destruction of Irene the Chasm Company has put in some ropes courses and climbing apparatus's over some parts of the Chasm around the Long Rapid and Mikes Hole. They did not seem to give us much trouble as long as we were scouting and made some effort to move downstream. The run at this level had a medium feel with most rapids being class IV and right side elephants class IV+. Caleb

had his personal first decent and I believe Kristen and myself had the first decent in a K2. This runs is high quality both in scenery and rapids, the paddle out is somewhat long so get their early if you plan on doing multiple laps. Warm weather creeking is a pretty nice appeal in the Northeast.

## **The River I Still Can't Spell Correctly**

Sunday Jun 15, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Danny, Andy, Hank, Andrew, Mike

Organizer: Paddlers in the 1980's

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: medium

Author: Mike M

It might not be worth preparing a trip report for every random local run I do, but since this river is a product of release negotiations (and will again in the next decade or so, I hope), it's worth putting this in the record.

First, let's start with a factoid: The name "Missisquoi" is derived from the Algonquin word "Masiskoik", which means "Big Rocks". This is something of a misnomer since most of the Missisquoi is clayey and very flat, and the few places there might have once been large rocks have generally been flooded by hydroelectric projects, the Sheldon Springs Rapids being the notable exception.

The first two weeks of June ended up being fairly good in Vermont, especially that weekend when Friday and Saturday offered considerable local goodness. But by Sunday morning things were dropping and the choices boiled down to bone-zone New Haven Ledges laps, the Lower Mad at a somewhat scrappy level, or.... juicy class IV! I chose the latter and arranged for folks to meet me up at Sheldon Springs and for the power company to give us some water.

It was a ton of fun... more fun than I should be allowed to have at least. It seemed tricky to get the level behind the dam stabilized, but it came out to be around 202.8 plus the flap gate all the way open, so probably 1800 cfs or so. For some reason it came up to about 203.0 for our next few laps, probably about 2000, felt similar to the higher

releases we've seen in the past, perhaps a smidge lower since things seemed a little meatier. The left side sneak looked barely runnable at 1800. Either way it was just great. To quote former Jedi paddler and my spiritual advisor Dave "just like a pillow fight with 15 virgins". We did four laps, and could have done more except I was getting sunburned and it was Patrick's birthday so we headed to St. Albans for lunch.

While this run is short and not incredibly scenic, it has some really fun full-volume paddling and a pretty long season with the releases thrown in. As Danny said "I'm not supposed to run a river like this in Vermont, especially not when it's sunny out."

## **The Running of the Bull**

Saturday Jun 28, 2014

Participants:

Kayak: Scott, Hank, Jordan, Clay, Culley, Mike

Organizer: the Bull

Difficulty: advanced WW

Level: medium

Author: Mike M

As with the typical trip report, I should probably describe some run where we drove the quick, easy shuttle, put on the river, ran difficult rapids quickly with no carnage, and got off well before dark.

This is not one of those trip reports. The river was not "stouted", all the lines were not "sick", and in a few cases, drops were not "stomped". But easy boating does not usually make for the best days on the water, and is not the most memorable.

Our drive up to Quebec City may have set the tone for the weekend. We got lost not once, but twice, first after missing Autoroute 30 south of Montreal, and then trying to find a gas station in Quebec City (we spent a solid 20 minutes trying to find a gas station from the highway, only to find it was located on an inaccessible, roadless island in the middle of the St. Lawrence). All was forgotten north of the city as we drove into the incredible Parc de La Jacques-Cartier, 30 minutes north of the city. Clay, Scott and myself had been here before, but I thought of Hank and Jordan in the other car, driving next to the quiet, dark Jacques-Cartier River, below mountains that swept from the maple forest around us upwards into thick

spruce and granite so steeply that their outlines could be seen against the milky way above us. We finally got to the takeout around 1 AM on Saturday morning, having not seen another car or person on the entire 33-km drive into the parc. Sometimes I think it's best to arrive at an unfamiliar river late in the night when the surroundings are not clear, and the few glimpses you have gotten of the landscape are still vague enough to haunt your dreams, as they did mine.

We woke at 6:30 that morning, cooked breakfast and got gear sorted (the goal being to get all 6 boaters and boats on one car so as to drive the 90-minute shuttle only twice that day). Culley, newly relocated to VT from CA and always keen to get on something new and good arrived around 7:30 and by 8:00 we were headed toward the put-in, another 90 minutes north. Even if you never want to run the Taureau, at least know the shuttle... after driving for quite some time north on the interstate (which unlike in the U.S., is devoid of exits, fast-food joints, gas stations, or signs of permanent human habitation), you take left and drive 30 minutes more on a bumpy logging road off into the black spruce. We arrive at the put in about 10:00, found the water even with the famed gauge rock (0", perfect medium), and were on the water, heading downstream around 10:30.

One of the remarkable things about the Taureau (other than that it is 15 miles long, 10 of is class IV or V, is incredibly remote and runs most of the summer) is the way it slowly ramps up, first with some flatwater, then some class II-III, and finally some long, twisting class IV. Imagine running the Dryway, and at the end learning that you have just finished the paddle in.

Double Drop is the first named rapid, and is followed by the large Triple Drop, some tight boulder gardens and a steep portage. All of this in the first half mile of real river, which is intimidating, but then the run settles into a very long stretch of mostly class IV, which is boat scoutable and fun. Despite one nuisance swim at Triple Drop (which, knowing the swimming party, I was sure was a random event), we got into a great rhythm moving downstream, which is what this section is all about. One of the funny things about the Taureau is the farther you get into the harder stuff, the more relaxing it is.

This section is broken by two larger drops,

Second Triple Drop and then Four Bastards. Second Triple Drop is where, as a certain VT boater and Taureau Double-in-a-Day hero would say, "Things Got Real".

I knew Hank was no stranger to blown shoulders, and with Culley's and Jordan's assistance and some extremely painful maneuvering he was able to get it back in. I paddled across to river left to see if the trail near Double and Triple Drop extended this far downstream. I found a steep, brushy slope capped by mossy cliffs and it was clear no one was hiking out from here. The right bank was a mystery but was also tall, and led off into the huge Laurentian Wilderness (editors note: Taureau paddlers should be aware of logging roads on river right, a few miles from the river, and which could potentially offer difficult, though not impossible egress as far downstream as the Launier confluence. These roads are also very remote, and may or may not offer a clear way back to Route 175). We figured we'd be heading downstream.

We were relieved when Hank was able to paddle the long class III rapid just below basically one-armed. Below here, the first person to the bottom of a rapid would hike back up, check things out, and if it looked particularly difficult would paddle Hank's boat down, while Hank walked. Meanwhile, a few more folks would head downstream to run the next rapid, and repeat the cycle. This generally was efficient, if not a bit tiring, and was made more difficult as we dropped deeper into the valley where occasionally cliffs at river level required advanced planning several rapids upstream.

The Launier adds a few hundred CFS, and below this the river straightens out but keeps dropping. On my previous run I found this section to be sievy, so hung back somewhat unwilling to probe or boat-scout. I had wondered if this section was perhaps similar to what western paddling felt like, and sure enough Culley took the lead here scouting and probing many rapids, and more often than not it was Scott or Clay heading back upstream to make a second run in an unfamiliar boat, or Hank simply diving into something knowing well it was going to hurt. We finally made it to the sieve rapid around 3 in the afternoon. We worked strategy along the portage, passing boats of the most difficult parts, and I was surprised at how quickly we were back on the water and heading

towards Cohasset, about 2/3 of the way through the run and the start of the hardest mile-and-change of the run. We stopped there for a quick snack and water, and were heading downstream again around 4, with the shadows growing long. At this point I had no doubt that we would make it out, and would do so before dark. Assuming nothing else went wrong.

The largest rapids in here are Hump and Pump, Log Jam, The Bull, Ledge Drop and Broken Bow, with some class IV thrown in there, thought the nature of this section is primarily class V. Scott ran the long and rowdy Log Jam twice, something I was not interested in doing, doubly so in an unfamiliar boat. Hank resorted to some tricky routefinding through the walled-out Bull, ferrying between a big pourover and the looming horizing line below, climbing over some boulders and then running the boof sneak at the bottom.

Below Broken Bow you get back into a long section of class III and IV - the first indication that the run is easing up even though one of the largest rapids, Coming Home Mohammad, is still downstream. Hank ran a lot of this. As with before, we got into a rhythm of boat scouting and quick progress though it took longer for that last class V rapid to arrive than I recalled. I was pleased that Coming Home Mohammad looked more reasonable than I remembered, but due consideration of the remoteness and the many steep, involved class IV rapids downstream considered everyone to carry. More of the same below - steep boulder gardens, some walking/coping/boat-scouting, and finally the last class IV rapid at the Island. Floating into the continuous class III below I was relieved.

The run out is class III, dropping back to shallow class II and finally flatwater interspersed with class II and III rapids. Not long below the Island, you turn a corner and the canyon opens up with incredible views of valley walls rising 2000' right out of the river - all spruce and grey granite, with golden sunlight still shining on the highest points. Even Hank with the blown shoulder and Culley of The West broke into grins here. I thought of how big a sacrifice such views were worth (but what of seeing a friend in pain???). Here the Malin and Nord-Est branches come in out of HUGE canyons themselves, proving that there is still much left to explore in the area.

We arrived at the takeout around 8:45 after 10 hours on the water. Everyone was pretty exhausted. We drank a few beers, told stories and loaded boats (as we do after every run - Taureau or Lower Mad), and then drove back to the put-in, finally getting some sleep not long after midnight.

I really have to give the group credit - we were thrown a tough one for sure, and I think handled it really well. Culley and Scott showed just how competent they are in class V, and Jordan and Clay showed that they can paddle with their brains and not just their brawn. But I really have to say Hank was the one who shined that day. Imagine blowing your shoulder out, then doing multiple Dryway runs, followed by a few runs on Otter Creek... and then throw in some hours here and there scrambling around on moss-covered boulders in Smuggler's Notch... and you don't complain a bit. Achievement in our sport is measured not just in lines cleaned and boofs boofed, but in beatings taken, portages made, ibuprofen consumed and physical pain simply ignored.

On Sunday we did two laps on the wonderful class III-IV Tewkesbury section far downstream. It was at a medium-low level of 45 cms. The weather was warm and sunny and there were dozens of other boaters enjoying the beautiful day. Patrick the friendly C1er from Montreal joined us, and he is keen to do some NY and VT boating. I really have to recommend this run to many VT boaters. It's just fun... the Dryway of Quebec.

So that was our weekend, and I hope that was a different trip report and perhaps a note of caution about the Taureau. It's a great run. But as we found sometimes the Bull lays down and takes a nap, and sometimes he charges. In the words of one fellow Taureau explorer "Be well, Be wise, Beware, Because".

Here's to many more trips in Quebec. Vive le Taureau.

## **A Winter Kayaking Adventure**

### **By Ben Schott**

The winter time is one of watching more and more kayaking videos and waiting for rivers to get released from their winter hibernation. We were in Northern Maine and decided, no matter what, we would find a way to kayak. The day was Sunday, January 18th and Catharine and I had met friends at my family's camp in Moxie Gore, Maine for a weekend of winter shenanigans and adventure.

The day started like many other winter days: cold. We had trouble convincing the others to come paddle with us even with the promise of extra drysuits that they could borrow from us. However, they did agree to help arrange the shuttle for us, which was probably more important anyways.

In the summer time the shuttle is very easy: you just drive up to the dam known as Harris Station, check in at the gatehouse and get ready at their staging area and walk down the \$500,000 stairs that were put in after 9/11 to "prevent terrorists from blowing up the dam" in this remote region of northern Maine. After about 4 miles of fun class III/IV whitewater, you can do a mostly benign float trip another 8 miles into The Forks or hike up the stairs at the aptly named Carry Brook(all 117 of them!) to get out of the gorge. There are parking and loading/unloading areas to easily load up for another run. It is best to have someone volunteer to be a "shuttle bunny", but catching rides here in the summer is quite easy anyways and you can even meet and make new friends. Worst case scenario, you hike the 5 miles of dirt road back to the damn. That being said, after over 25 years of paddling here, I have never had to do that in the summer because of the graciousness of fellow paddlers or locals giving me a ride.

The winter time is another story. The roads are plowed to the dam, but the gates are shut. The road is plowed about a 1/10 of a mile into Carry Brook, but no more. The only traffic is snowmobiles and they usually do not head into the takeout or have room for a wet paddler to get on their ride that costs at least 5 times more than my car. To get around all this takes a lot of planning and good old stubbornness. We figured out that we could get dropped off as close to the dam as the gates would allow us and have the driver head back to camp so any worker would not get suspicious about a vehicle there this time of year. The next step was to make sure that the vehicle would meet us as far into the plowed Carry Brook

road as possible to get us back to camp. To fill the gap of the ~2 miles between the river and the truck we decided against walking through a couple feet of deep snow. Instead, we decided to enlist the help of a few more friends that could snowmobile from camp to the takeout to help get us back to the truck. We could not get all the way back from Carry Brook to the camp because the snowmobile trail followed the road a ways and the normally soft dirt road was a frozen minefield for dragging a kayak over and we did not want to kill our kayaks that day.

With the shuttle hopefully taken care of, we gathered our gear and put most of it on in the warmth of camp to reduce the amount of time we had to hang around at the gate. The start went off without a hitch and we finished preparing ourselves quickly and started to walk onto Indian Pond to get around the first gate between us and the river. This was easy as the fence only went to the water's edge and we dragged our boats and followed an animal path into the woods. Once inside the normal staging area we decided to go around any further fences as well for legal reasons and so we did not have to huck boats over barbed wire either. When we got to the clearing where the power lines heading towards Skowhegan there was a little hill and a short flat area before another fence. It looked steep, but I did not want my kayak slamming into me as I made my way down. What the hell, I thought and quickly hopped into my kayak and decided that snow yakking and possibility of hitting the fence would be better than slogging through more snow dragging my boat. Turns out it was a blast, but I could not convince Catharine it was a good idea. We continued along the fence following more animal trails before the trail promptly disappeared and we were left staring down the Kennebec Gorge wall. We carefully made our way down with our boats tethered to us and grabbing any tree that would slow us down and give us good footing. This lasted about 20 minutes until we got within 15 yards of the river.

The last section was all ice with no good staging area to get into our boats at river level. The seal launch option was not good from where we stood either and so we looped around and came down where two of the ice flows came together and had some snow frozen to it for traction. We came to a small patch of snow behind a very small tree and decided that this was the best place available to get ready. As the spot was only big enough for ½ a kayak, Catharine held my boat as I got ready with gear that was already stiff from the winter cold. Eventually I was ready and Catharine let my



*At the put in (Ben Schott)*

slide the rest of the way down the ice flow and I bounced and slid faster and faster until I got off the last shelf and I was safely in the river with a face full of freezing water... Catharine followed suit and did the same. We rejoiced that we were finally boating and no longer climbing down.

The Kennebec River itself is an untapped resource of paddling in the winter. Since it is dam controlled, the water fluctuates enough that the river cannot freeze over and only small ice shelves begin to gather at some of the calmest eddies. The flow that day was around 3200cfs, which is not a normal boating flow, but the dam operators usually do not have kayakers on their mind in the middle of January. Besides, it was nice to have a different flow for some variety on a river we have paddled so much. When we got around the first

bend in the river, we felt a sense of excitement that we truly had the river to ourselves. There were no rafting companies, no hikers, no other kayakers and only the exciting roar of rapids ahead. The snow had covered the slopes and trees with a nice clean blanket of smooth white fluff, it looked like great skiing if it weren't for the river below!

The river itself is a playground at this level and there are great surf holes and waves to catch on the fly and some more that have eddy access like at the second named rapid called rock garden. Soul surfing was the name of the game at this temperature, but a few spins and loops were also in order, quickly followed by severe ice cream

level. It was comprised of a main hole just right of center that had most of the river funneling into it. The hole was not steady and would build and then the foam pile would come crashing down hard and fill what was a void only seconds earlier. It looked fun so I went head on into and timed it just right for it to crash on me and surf me around for awhile. Some "intentional" sweet surf tricks later, I managed to get out hootin' and hollerin', grinning ear to ear, until the cold water registered through my skull cap. I watched as Catharine snuck further right of the hole and had to deal with a strong lateral coming off the right wall that was almost as impressive as the hole itself. She got stalled out



*At the Kennebec (Ben Schott)*

headaches. Since it had taken so long to get into the gorge, we did want to spend as much time as possible kayaking, but we were on a clock to meet our friends at the takeout. The first rapid is called Taster and it gives you a small taste of things to come, in our case, cold faces with big smiles. There were waves and holes to surf the whole way down. It reminded me of a 5500cfs Dead River release in that sense. After the rock garden we got to Big Mama, which is fun at every

a little, but with her determination, she powered through with an equally large grin, minus the cold brain. A few more fun rapids like whitewasher and lower alleyway filled our attention with surfs on good holes, flirting with less inviting ones and riding the crashing waves.

Once the river calmed down in the Cathedral Eddy, which is named for the large cliff walls on either side of the river at this point, we were able to rest, look around and we finally caught our

breathe. We marveled that even here, with the almost nonexistent current, there still were not much in the way of ice shelves. It was here, many years earlier that I had been pushed under an ice shelf and clawed my way out with an ice axe after a season where the river had not fluctuated much over the winter and the temperature was extremely cold for a long duration. That moment had changed how I looked at rivers nonchalantly to something that must be respected no matter what the conditions.

After a few minutes of the calm and beautiful gorge, we became restless for more action and headed downstream to Z-turn and then Magic Falls. Magic Falls used to be a stronger hole that would flip loaded rafts quite regularly, but all that changed after a few high water events shifted the rocks slightly and the power company readjusted the flow slightly higher. At this level, however, the hole becomes quite large and fairly retentive as well. Since time was becoming an issue, we opted to run just right of the main part of the hole on what is called the Highway and then drop in if it looked good to go. As we were approaching, we saw that the left side of the hole was quite retentive indeed and the right looked meaty, but would flush you if anything went wrong. We went for it and got slammed around a bit and flushed. Catharine hit it even harder than I, but came rushing past my micro eddy with that big smile again.

There were a few more moderate rapids that we breezed through before Carry Brook and when we came around the last corner, we were hoping to see our friends on the hill that overlooks the river, but no one was there. When we pulled up the banks, we had to pull our boats up over the largest ice shelves we'd seen on the whole trip and decided to celebrate with a little known micro brew called Mountain Brew and begin to think about how to tackle the snow covered stairs. Finally, we got the motivation to take our boats up the steep stairs by post holing through the deep snow step by step dragging them behind us. While we were hiking up to the top of the stairs we wondered how the timing of everything had worked out. We were relieved to see that our friends had arrived with a snowmobile with straps for our kayaks.

There was one snowmobile, 2 kayaks with gear and four people. We decided that there should be two on the snowmobile for more traction and

that we should ride in our kayaks with our gear. I was skeptical at first that this 1992 Artic Cat Jag would be able to haul all of us, but to my surprise and relief we started moving forward up the snow covered road. On the big hills we had to paddle as if we were in water to ease the strain of pulling us up the hills and on the flats and downhills we got a lot of speed and all I could wish for was some goggles as the snow and ice was pelting my face the entire way back. Squinting I could see the corners coming and when to lean this way or that way or to start paddling myself. I was a bit sad when we saw the truck after going over a giant snowbank marking the end of the plowed road. We wanted to get pulled more, but the road was preventing that. We also noticed that the oil line to the snowmobile had broken and we were fast running out of oil. We quickly unhooked the straps and sent the snowmobile zooming back to camp before the engine could seize up. The boats got loaded into the truck and we made our way back to camp. Normally, we snowmobile back in the last ¼ mile of the camp road, but that option was not available, so we simply walked and really enjoyed the hot chocolate and food when we got there. All in all the normally simple section took a little over four hours to complete, not bad.



**Ryan McCall in Clarendon Gorge (Jamie Dolan)**