



THE EDDY LINE

Inside this Issue:

- *Smoky Mountain Weekend trip—page 2*
- *Chattooga River Clean-up—page 7*
- *Trip and Class Schedule—page 8*

Talking Rock Creek Trip Report By John Roberts

Four of us paddled Talking Rock Creek, at about a 1.7' level. What an extremely fun trip it was! For my liking, that was about the cutoff low level for a Royalex canoe. It wasn't quite boney or scrapy, but any lower, and it would be.

Rambling aside alert: That is the reason I am on a serious hunt for a thick plastic SOT kayak, after I sell my SUP to fund it - so that I have a "beater boat", which is something I won't care about beating up on rocks, and can also handle long flatwater stretches after whitewater. I was cringing every time I heard my beloved and nearly pristine Odyssey 14 contact a rock yesterday. That was my first time on whitewater on that boat, I fell in love with the way it handles, and I intend to keep it until I can no longer paddle (or until I wrap it around a rock).

VOLUME 56 NO. 3

APRIL 2021

Wildlife report: We saw what appeared to be an osprey, but may have been some sort of eagle. Brown upper side, white underside, and a 4'-5' wingspan. It kept taking flight before we got near it, then flew downstream a few hundred yards, landed in a tree again, and kept repeating the process for quite a while. We saw other interesting birds, a pretty large otter, and had an interesting interaction with a humongous beaver. There was a large hole in the river bank, which appeared to be its den (likely with babies inside), where it made a huge splash, swam across the creek underwater, then came back up again with a huge splash (but never a tail slap). It seemed that it was trying to distract us and draw us away from its babies, still in their den. At one pit stop, I noticed what appeared to be tons of deer tracks in the mud/sand. A little later, someone noticed and pointed out that they appeared to be wild hog tracks. Tons of dogs at the many houses along the creek barked at us, but the dog that I call "four-mile dog" (from the recent Youtube video from a previous trip) didn't follow us for four miles downriver yesterday.

Strainer alert: About an hour downstream of the Hwy 136 put-in, we came to two strainers. The first was passable around
(continued, page 2)

(Talking Rock Creek, continued from page 1)

one side (river-left, IIRC), but the second one just downstream of that blocked the entire creek. It was possible to "limbo" under it on river-right, but a paddler's head or PFD would make contact with the tree trunk, and possibly snag it, so that is not recommended. It is possible to get through it on river-left, by easing up to it, scooting one's hiney up onto the trunk, sliding the boat over it, then sliding back into the boat. There is some current there, but it is slow, and it is only calf-deep at this point, and at this level (1.7'). No good way to get around this strainer on the shore, so it must be negotiated while on the water. At a 2' level or higher, it might be possible to float over the trunk on river-left, but tree limbs, a little farther left and downstream, would also have to be negotiated.

One of the reasons I wanted to do this trip in one day was to scout it for a later GCA overnight trip, as I wanted to locate and confirm campsite options. There were a few places that would be possible, but from what we saw yesterday, I have changed my mind about doing that. All of the sites would definitely be on private property, and at some of them, there were houses across the creek from them. The best site looked like someone had recently been clearing out brush, logs, etc. I don't want to risk being visited during the evening or night and told to vacate the campsite. Plus, camping isn't camping, if there isn't a campfire, and I would feel bad about leaving a campfire spot behind on someone's private property, even if we had been able to stay there over-

night. Even if all combustion was extinguished, that is still "litter", if there wasn't a campfire there previously.

I really want to do this trip again, as it is only an hour away from me, and an extremely fun trip, with lots of beautiful scenery, and enough mild whitewater to really keep you on your toes. The flatwater stretch at the end is somewhat of a pain in the butt after a long paddle, but it isn't long enough to be grueling or painful. I may organize a one-day GCA trip when it gets a little warmer, so that we don't have to dress for a chilly start, then have to start pulling off layers as it warms up during the day, like we did during this trip.—
EL

Smoky Mountain Weekend By Roger Nott

For this year's annual Smoky Mountains trip we had high water conditions and lots of heavy rain, though we avoided getting rained on while paddling, except for very light rain in the last few minutes of our Saturday Oconaluftee Trip. Most of the Raven Fork downstream of Straight Fork and the last mile of our usual run of the Oconaluftee is within the lands of the Eastern Band of Cherokees, who were opening their trout season and holding a major fishing tournament this weekend on Saturday and Sunday. At the request of their Natural Resources Director, I agreed for us not to paddle within their reservation those days. Consequently I moved
(Continued, page 3)

The Eddy Line

(Smoky Mountain Weekend, continued from page 2)

our Raven Fork trip to Friday, when all the streams within the reservation were closed to fishing, and ended our Saturday Oconaluftee trip a little before the bridge within the National Park just north of the Reservation Boundary. We met each day at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Visitors Center in Cherokee, NC.

RAVEN FORK: On Friday, though it had rained 2.3 inches overnight, we enjoyed cloudless skies and temperatures in the low seventies. The Oconaluftee River gauge at Birdtown, about 8 miles downstream of our intended take-out, had shot up to almost 6000 cfs overnight but was falling fast and at 2790 when we met at 1 p.m. and was at 2320 cfs an hour and forty-five minutes after we took out. These gauge readings include the combined upstream flows of the Oconaluftee, Raven Fork, and Soco Creek, as well as several side streams. We judged the actual flow in Raven Fork during our 8-mile trip from the Straight Fork confluence to the second bridge on Big Cove Road upstream of the Oconaluftee confluence to be about 800 to 900 cfs.

I was our lone open boater all three days. Though we had about 9 registrants on Friday, several were deterred by the earlier high water, so that I was joined only by kayakers Brad Keene, Jeff Lankford and Will Powell. On our way to the put-in we scouted Crack-in-the-Rock and at a couple of other spots along Big Cove Road. We found Raven Fork flowing swiftly and turbulently with little letup. Though virtually all the instream rocks

were generously covered by the raging waters, I nevertheless had to run an almost continuous, circuitous slalom course and paddle hard to avoid features which could have quickly swamped my Buffalo Canoe.

Will described our action as “Solid Class II-III boogie water all the way with a few tricky spots, but nothing terrible. Super super fun and a great level!” I heartily agree, though for me due to the high water conditions there were quite a few class III-IV ‘tricky spots which could have swamped my open boat,’ such as the 300 yards before and through Crack-in-the-Rock, which we all ran far right by the bank. Nevertheless, we all had strong, exhilarating runs and dry hair days. We were too busy to take pictures, though Brad took this one of Crack-in-the-Rock Saturday evening. When we ran on Friday most of the rocks in this imposing rapid were covered.



OCONALUFTEE: On Saturday Brad and I were met at 11 a.m. by 10 eager boaters, though two decided to forego the day's trip after we had scouted five or six potential trouble spots on our way to the put-in. Our paddlers were kayakers Lisa Haskell, Brad Keene, Gretchen Mallins, *(continued, page 4)*

The Eddy Line

(Smoky Mountain Weekend, continued from page 3)

Brannon McKay, Jorge Mestre, Steve Pack, Qu Wang and Mark Wilson; Kate Wilkerson in a C-1; and I in my Buffalo open canoe. Two others, Brad Chapman, just getting back into paddling after a twenty-odd year hiatus, and our President, Carol Reiser, helped with our shuttle. Carol followed us down the river along Hwy. 441 and provided invaluable shore safety support when needed. She also went ahead and alerted us to dangerous spots, mostly places where we had found dangerous strainers and planned to take special precautions. They would be needed. The water level, 1960 at Birdtown an hour and a half after our takeout, was somewhat high but still quite manageable.

We had scouted the class II-III rapid just above the Smokemont Bridge for some time, and a few of us considered putting-in downstream of the bridge to avoid a menacing sweeper crossing most of the current just above the bridge. Nevertheless this sporty drop and contact with the sweeper felled about four of our kayakers, who were running a little too close together, and we had a couple of swimmers in what was to be the first of several rescue and boat recovery episodes, in which our group performed well.

Dead falls and log-jams are always a concern on the Oconaluftee, partly due to its many islands, the sites of most of the problem areas. At one island, where we had scouted on the way to the put-in and made a detailed safety plan, we had planned to limbo under the second river wide tree. But when we got there the heavy rain just before our put-

VOLUME 56, NO. 3

in had raised the river and inch or two, making padding under the second tree more difficult. A few of the kayakers barely made it, but others had to roll, swim or portage. Though we had a few other capsizes and swims due to challenging rapids and inconvenient downed wood, our trip on the high-water conditions was great fun and went pretty well. Mark took some good photos of the fun, here showing Kate, Brannon and Steve dodging wood along a narrow island channel:



As we paddled downstream the flow was greatly augmented by numerous side streams such as Mingus Creek, and the waters of the Raven Fork doubled in flow before we reached an island and, thereafter, an imposing class III just before the Blue Ridge Parkway bridge.

We all ran this rapid well and most of us pulled into a large eddy to the right of the bridge, where a few landed and exited their boats while Jorge prepared to surf the upstream holes. However our last kayaker got too close to the bridge before initiating her ferry toward the right bank, paddling a very short playboat. This bridge greatly narrows the river and highly accelerates its flow,
(continued, page 5)

The Eddy Line

(Smoky Mountain Weekend, continued from page 4)

which was creating high haystacks almost to its span on the left, but also on the right a deceptively strong current from the large ponded eddy. And the bridge's right side was completely blocked by downed tree trunks. This playboater misjudged the difficulty of the ferry and the speed and power of the current, broached against the blockage, and immediately was sucked under it and disappeared from our view.

Jorge and several others later remarked that this accident was the scariest thing they had ever seen on the river. We had had no idea what underwater snags might snare a boat and boater, and rescue in the strong current could be perilous. However, the boater immediately wet-exited and, to our great relief, soon popped up unhurt downstream of the bridge. The boat, however, took a concerted effort to unpin from beneath the blockage. Mark photographed (left to right) Steve,



Brannon and Brad in their successful recovery efforts, which also in-

involved Kate, Jorge and several others.

NANTAHALA BYPASS: The heavy rains continued much of Saturday night and Sunday morning. Brad and I met at the Visitors Center at 9 a.m. Several intended participants had contacted me to cancel due to the poor weather, but we had to wait for a few other registrants to appear. We had plans to meet

one registrant, Kevin McInturff, and a few others to run the South Fork of the Mills River near Brevard, but when we were sure no one else was coming, we were too late to join them and decided to head back towards North Georgia where it was still raining and perhaps run Dicks Creek or the Upper Chestatee near Dahlonega when the rains ended.

On our way south we stopped at the NOC store. The Nantahala was running at 1160 cfs, so we decided to take a side trip along the Upper Nantahala and Cascades. We continued upstream past Whiteoak Creek, the source of most of the high water in the Upper, to explore the river upstream between there and the dam. Until a few years ago, when Duke Power began regular releases through the dam into what it calls the "Nantahala Bypass," this stretch of river was massively choked with trees and other vegetation and consequently not runnable. However, we now we found it open and filled with enough water to make a run possible. We drove upstream along the river on the streamside Old River and Nantahala Dam dirt roads and found the river passable, though too low to run upstream of Junaluska Road, where a great deal of water joined the flow from Dicks Creek just upstream of the bridge and Appletree Branch a short distance below it. After we scouted the river a couple of times, we decided to paddle from Junaluska Road bridge for a few miles. When we put in a staff gauge at this bridge read 1.7. It read 1.6 when we returned less than two hours later. 1.8 to 2.0 would be a better minimum for most paddlers. At 1.7 we

(continued, page 6)

(Smoky Mountain Weekend, continued from page 5)

scraped a fair amount but never got hung up and did not have to portage anything.

The technical, extremely low flow run was quite a change after two days of high water runs, but it gave us, when we were not dodging rocks, a chance to relax and enjoy the pristine scenery and the mild, now rainless and brightening day. We paddled nothing that exceeded class I-II, though small rapids were frequent and would probably resemble the Lower Nantahala with enough water. Here a photo of Brad running one nice set of drops:



Brad was tempted to run a 25+ foot series of drops and falls at our take-out, about 2.3 miles downstream of the Junaluska Road bridge, but left that for another day. We did not run the last mile of the Bypass below this falls, where we noted that there was more gradient and several big drops before Whiteoak Creek enters from river right and the Cascades begin. But we had a good time and safe trips on the water and home to Gainesville and Valdosta.

Thanks to everyone who made this weekend fun and safe. Next year we will schedule it a

week or two earlier so as to be sure to be able to run Raven Fork on the weekend.—EL



GCA welcomes paddlers from all races, genders, and sexual orientations. We will continue to strive to promote diversity among the paddling community and work to create a safe space for all to enjoy our paddling adventures.

Chattooga River Cleanup By Roger Nott

The 26th Annual Chattooga River Cleanup, is Saturday, June 26, 2021. We will meet at 9:45 a.m. Saturday, June 26, 2021, at the US Forest Service Chattooga River parking lot at the northeast corner of the US Hwy. 76 Chattooga River bridge. We will first clean the access area there and at Thrift's Ferry Landing on foot. We will then clean by boat the 3 miles of GCA's adopted section of the Chattooga, from Thrift's Ferry down to the Hwy. 76. If we have enough volunteers we could also clean other sections of this beautiful Wild and Scenic River along the Georgia and South Carolina state line between Hwy. 28 and Lake Tugaloo. Volunteers who will not be boating may help by cleaning at the access areas in the morning. The afternoon will be spent on the water, and volunteers must provide their own river craft and equipment, though they may call ahead to reserve possible spaces in rafts or canoes provided by others.



This river section contains class II and easy class III whitewater and one class IV rapid, Bull Sluice, which can easily be portaged. Prior whitewater experience is

necessary if you plan to boat the river.

There will be an optional additional two-mile class III recreational paddle from Hwy. 76 to Woodall Shoals following the clean-up and liquid refreshments and dinner together nearby that evening. Paddlers in kayaks, open and decked Canadian canoes, or rafts are all very welcome.

Prior registration is requested, but unexpected arrivals will also be welcome. Call, text or email trip coordinator Roger Nott, 678-316-4935, rogernott@att.net.—EL

KEEP YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS CURRENT

Each month numerous "copies" of the pdf version of *The Eddy Line* bounce back due to bad or outdated email addresses. If an email to you bounces back, you will be deleted from the recipient list until we get an updated email address.

TRIP AND CLINIC SCHEDULE

- May 1st - Intro to River Running
- May 8th - Toccoa River - Party Rock Section (Class I-II)
- May 16th - Slalom for Skill Building with ERA
- May 21st - 23rd - Spring Extravaganza 2021 - Smoky Mountain Meadows
- May 21st - GCA Spring Extravaganza Wildcard Paddle (Class II-?)
- May 22nd & 23rd Toccoa Overnighter / Riverside Camping (Class I-II+)
- May 22nd - Tuckasegee - Dillsboro to Barkers Creek (Class II-III)
- May 22nd - GCA Spring Extravaganza Saturday Wildcard (Class II-II+/III)
- May 22nd - Middle Ocoee (Class III)
- May 23rd - Middle Ocoee (Class III)
- May 23rd - Nantahala - Power Plant to Wesser / Class II+(III)
- May 29th & 30th - Hiwassee - Powerhouse to Reliance (Class II)
- May 31—Directional Rolling with ERA

Please see the GCA Calendar for details, updates, and to sign up at www.gapaddle.com. For any questions or class suggestions, e-mail eddylineeditor@gmail.com.

To Volunteer To Coordinate Trips email Cruisemaster Terri Abbott: abbott.terri@gmail.com.

As usual, we need trip coordinators for all types of trips, from flatwater to Class 5 white-water. Our excellent trip schedule depends on the efforts of volunteers, so get involved and sign up to coordinate a trip on your favorite river today! The GCA needs YOU!

KEY TO GCA SKILL LEVELS

Flat Water - no current will be encountered; safe for new paddlers.

Beginner - mild current, occasional Class 1 riffles; new paddlers can learn basic river techniques.

Trained Beginner - moving water with Class 1-2 rapids; basic strokes and bracing skills needed.

Intermediate - rapids up to Class 3; eddying and ferrying skills needed; kayakers need solid roll.

Advanced - rapids up to Class 4; excellent boat control and self-rescue skills required.

Address: 141 Railroad St
 Canton, Ga 30114
 Phone: (470) 292-6706
 Website: www.nomadicflowoutfitters.com
 Email: info@nomadicflowoutfitters.com
 Hours
 Monday-Wednesday: Closed
 Thursday: 11am-7pm
 Friday: 11am-7pm
 Saturday: 10am-7pm
 Sunday: 12pm-7pm



Nomadic Flow Outfitters is Atlanta's premier paddlesports retailer conveniently located just north of Atlanta in Canton, Ga along the beautiful river banks of the Etowah River. We offer a full service retail shop carrying all the best brands in the industry, rental/demo programs, paddling schools and guided trips. Our friendly and knowledgeable team is dedicated to serving our amazing paddling community and making paddling adventures more easily accessible for all. So whether you're looking for those relaxing float trips, fishing your local spot or chasing after the rush of whitewater our team at NFO is here to help you!

Keeping In Touch

To contact the GCA, write Georgia Canoeing Association, Inc., P.O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187.

Groupmail: GCA maintains a group email list to help members share information of general interest. To sign up, send an e-mail to gcalist-subscribe@groups.io.

Website: Information about GCA, forms (including membership application and GCA waiver form), a link to the GCA Store and links to *Eddy Line* advertisers are all at <http://www.gapaddle.com>.

Facebook: Visit the GCA Facebook page for photos, video, trip reports, or to join an upcoming impromptu trip.

ALL ABOUT THE EDDY LINE

The Eddy Line, the official GCA newsletter, is available in pdf format. To subscribe, contact Vincent Payne at 678-343-5292 or vincent.payne9354@gmail.com, or mail your request to P.O. Box 611, Winston, GA 30187.

Submissions/Advertising: All submissions and advertising should be sent to *The Eddy Line*, at: EddyLineEditor@gmail.com.



The Eddy Line, © 2021, is published monthly as the official newsletter of the Georgia Canoeing Association, Inc., publication address: 9354 Grapevine Drive, Winston, GA 30187.



GEORGIA CANOEING ASSOCIATION, INC.

Post Office Box 611
Winston, Georgia 30187

[WE'RE ON THE WEB:]
www.gapaddle.com

The purpose of the GCA is to have fun and promote safety while paddling.

GCA is a member-operated paddling club with over 500 family and corporate memberships comprising more than 1500 Individuals. Canoeists and Kayakers of all ages and paddling abilities are equally welcome. Some of our mutual interests include whitewater river running, creeking and playboating, river and lake touring, sea kayaking, paddle camp outs and competition and racing activities. We espouse conservation, environmental and river access issues as well as boating safety and skills development. Group paddling, training and social activities of all kinds are conducted throughout the year thanks to the volunteer efforts of our many members and friends. Membership is NOT limited to Georgia residents.