



THE EDDY LINE

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Toccoa River Overnighter Trip Report By John Roberts

Cyndy Falgout, Diane Windham and Laura Mitchell joined me on a Toccoa river trip, paddling from Deep Hole to Sandy Bottoms, and camping beside the river along the way. Cyndy was in her Fluid SOT kayak, Diane was in her Liquid Logic Stinger XP kayak, Laura was in her Silverbirch OC-1, and I was in my trusty and beloved Mohawk Odyssey 14 canoe that I have named Ol' Yeller. The group known as Kayak Georgia, with 20-30 people, was also paddling the river that day, so Deep Hole was quite crowded. Fortunately, our group had arrived before them, so we were able to secure our parking spaces, as we ran shuttle. Cyndy and Diane had camped at Deep Hole on Friday night, Laura car-camped along the way there on her trip from Aiken, SC, and I drove up there, that morning, from Acworth.

The river level was around 500 cfs, and we could not have asked for better weather. The temperature was in the mid/high 70's with a partly cloudy sky during the day, and around 60 at night. Early into the trip, we passed a mother goose, with about a dozen tiny goslings, also traveling down the river. Someone spotted what appeared to be an otter, sliding down the bank into the river. At one rapid in a curve in the river, a limb from a deadfall "reached out" to snag Diane and caused her to capsize. The river was narrow and shallow there, so it was easy to help get Diane and her boat to shore.

I had planned for us to camp at or near the suspension bridge. We would have preferred our campsite been near the middle of the run, but terrain and real estate ownership determined the location, as we wanted to camp on USFS property. Being such a nice weekend, I envisioned the campsites near the bridge being full. That belief was reinforced when I saw how many cars were parked at the trailhead to the suspension bridge on Hwy 60. Because of that, I decided that we would stop at the Rock Creek confluence, which is about 1/4 mile upstream of the bridge, to see if it was suitable,

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and look for a trail heading downstream toward the bridge. I thought that if there was such a trail, one or two of us could jog down the trail to see how crowded it was at the bridge, then return. There was no such trail. I didn't want to abandon a lovely campsite only to find that there wasn't a good spot downstream, so we decided to stay there. For reference, the Rock Creek confluence campsite is simply fabulous. It is huge, with enough room for a couple dozen tents, copious dead/down firewood and at least two good campfire spots. There is also a trail beside Rock Creek, and a 4WD road that makes for some easy light hiking from there. A bonus was that nobody else was camping there. A few fishermen and hikers walked in while we were there, and left before it got dark. It appears that the 4WD road coming into this site must be gated at the other end, as no vehicles came in while we were there. Perhaps the gate is open during hunting seasons, as there were some tire tracks in it.

We each set up our individual camp spots, while easily spacing them out comfortably, and prepared wood for the campfire. Having arrived at the campsite in about two hours, we had a very long afternoon to just hang out and relax. I went on a few short hikes, while the others chatted, read books, or napped. We all got to watch a pair of fishermen catch quite a few trout just in front of our campsite. Tree frogs gave us quite a concert, and Diane, our resident naturalist, was able to identify the breed of the frogs (and

occasional toads) by their calls. Later, she also noticed large batches of frog (or toad) eggs floating in a mud puddle in the dirt road coming into the campsite.

Sunday morning, we awakened, made our breakfasts, and began breaking down camp. Cyndy had a long drive home, so we were on the water again by about 9:00. In a few minutes, we arrived at the bridge, and got out to scout Margaret Drifts rapid, which begins under the bridge. It is a very long rapid that requires a fair amount of maneuvering to negotiate the 2 or 3 significant drops/holes. While studying it to determine our routes, we watched a couple of tandem canoes run it. With our routes planned, Laura ran lead, followed by Cyndy and Diane, and I ran it last. At the final drop on river left, I ran through the meat of the hole, my bow completely submerging and letting about 10 gallons of water into my boat

Soon thereafter, we came to what looked like a suitable campsite, on river right, 100-200 yards below the end of Margaret Drifts. The bank was fairly steep there, and it looked like enough space to accommodate a small group, which happened to still be there after camping the previous night.

Trying to allow Cyndy enough driving time, we paddled steadily, for the most part, with the goal of getting off of the water by early afternoon. We accomplished that, bid our farewells, and all went home.

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Overall, I think everything went very well, and I think we all had a great weekend, on a beautiful river. Icing on the cake for me was that I brought a Pyranha Ripper kayak home with me, purchased from Diane's son, and transported from Asheville to the Toccoa, courtesy of Cyndy, who graciously offered to pick it up along her way to the Toccoa. I am very grateful to Cyndy for that.

It was a weekend that I will never forget, and I hope the other participants enjoyed it as much as I did.—EL

The Forward Stroke -
More Than Meets the Eye
By Allen Hedden

After writing an article encouraging others to write articles for the newsletter, I decided to follow my own advice and put together a few articles for The Eddy Line. This month I'm going back to something very basic, yet something with some intricacies that a lot of paddlers may not be aware of: The Forward Stroke. Hopefully I will be able to think of other topics for other Eddy Line issues yet to come.

Disclaimer: I am first and foremost a canoeist, but have spent a fair amount of time in a kayak (hope my canoeist buddies can forgive my mentioning this dark period in my background). As a certified instructor, I taught ca-

noeing for the GCA and as a private instructor for many years. The ideas and techniques mentioned in this article however are not exclusive to canoe paddling. Both single-blade and double-blade boaters should be able to learn a bit from much of this advice.

The main purpose of a forward stroke is to propel the boat through the water in a forward direction. Pretty basic, but there are both good and better ways of accomplishing this. I'll start with the basic components of the stroke: the catch, the propulsion and the recovery.

The catch is placing the paddle in the water at the beginning of the stroke. The stroke should start as far forward as you can reach without drastically changing the attitude of the boat. Since most of the power of a forward stroke comes from the strong torso muscles, rotating your shoulders and torso away from the side the paddle is on to place your lower hand forward will wind up these torso muscles and give you a head start on putting some power into your stroke. Hint: If your arms are extremely tired at the end of a day of paddling, you are probably arm-stroking rather than using your torso.

Make sure you place the paddle in the water in a location that will allow the propulsion phase of the stroke to go in a straight line parallel to the center line of the boat, i.e. not right up against the hull of the boat. For a pure forward stroke, place the blade perpendicular to the keel line. Keep the paddle shaft as near vertical as possible. If your paddle shaft is not kept vertical, your stroke
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will turn into a forward sweep stroke, which is meant to turn the boat toward the side opposite the paddle. Another hint: To get the paddle vertical, your top hand should start out extended out over the water, not in front of your face.

The catch should blend smoothly into the propulsion phase of the stroke. Begin the propulsion phase by releasing the energy contained in the wound up torso muscles by rotating your shoulders and torso in the direction of the side the paddle is on, and thrusting the hips forward. Think of it as placing the paddle in the water and pulling the boat forward toward the point where you planted the blade. Keep the line of the stroke parallel to the keel line of the boat, not following the line of the outer hull or gunwale. Failure to do this will once again turn your forward stroke into a forward sweep stroke, tending to turn the boat away from the paddling side.

A good way to visualize the path of the forward stroke would be to imagine that there is an open slot right down the middle of your boat from bow toward stern. You could then use this slot to place your forward stroke in the water right in the center of the hull so that it has zero tendency to turn the boat. Then in your mind, move this paddle path outboard toward the side of the boat the paddle should be on, staying as close to the boat as possible. That stroke line will produce a minimum amount of turning of the hull.

One tendency many paddlers have is to con-

tinue the propulsion phase of the forward stroke too far to the stern before blending into the recovery phase. So what's so bad about that? Well, in the beginning of your forward stroke, the paddle is angled forward a bit and the power phase is tending to have a bit of a lifting component, ever so slightly lifting your boat higher in the water so there is less water for your boat to displace as the boat moves forward. As you reach the point in your stroke where your paddle blade passes your hip, the paddle then assumes an angle toward the stern and the blade begins to pull the boat lower into the water, giving you more water to displace as your boat moves through it. A good rule of thumb (or hip) is to start blending into your recovery phase as the paddle shaft reaches your hip. This simple change will give you a good bit more efficiency in your stroke.

For the recovery phase of your forward stroke, slice the paddle blade out of the water while lowering the end of the paddle that is away from the blade, feather the blade to a flat angle so it can be moved forward to reach for your next catch while not encountering any wind resistance, either from actual wind or from your paddle's movement through the air. As you move the paddle forward toward where your next plant will be, remember to be rotating the shoulders and torso away from the side the stroke is on to wind up the spring again. This completes the cycle to go into another forward stroke, or to begin any other stroke in your repertoire.

All of this put together properly should give

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you a smooth, straight forward stroke with a bare minimum of hull turning and porpoising of the hull in the water. Smoothness is the key. Of course, even with the best forward stroke, there may be some turning of the hull away from the paddle stroke side. If you're in a kayak, this can easily be compensated for in your next forward stroke on the opposite side. But if you're constrained to a single blade paddle, there need to be options for making minor corrections in your direction.

We usually employ one or two different means of accomplishing these corrections. Which ones you use may be determined by your skill level and / or what kind of water you are on. The simplest method is by just switching sides after a certain number of forward strokes to change the direction the hull is skewing (kayakers can ignore this). The trick is to do this **BEFORE** the boat veers far enough to send it into an uncontrolled turn that throws you off course and wastes a lot of time and energy getting straightened back out. This method works quite well for flat water, but is strongly discouraged for white water.

In switching sides on white water, you make yourself vulnerable in more ways than one. When switching sides, you will unavoidably be taking one hand and then the other off the paddle, plus having both arms and a paddle higher up than normal, affecting your center of gravity and making you a bit less stable. Since things can happen very quickly on white water, you can

very easily get undone by some surprise the river throws at you while you are not poised to do a brace or a quick turning stroke, and you can end up being pushed into a place you don't want to be, or worse, become inverted in the water, which means either a swim or a roll, neither of which you really want to have to do.

Another way of avoiding the skewing of the hull while doing a series of forward strokes is to paddle tandem (again, kayakers may ignore this). Whether on flat water or white water, tandem paddlers can achieve staying in a straight line merely by varying the power each paddler puts into his / her stroke, thereby eliminating the tendency for the boat to turn when you don't want it to. This takes a bit of skill and experience as a team to accomplish.

The most complicated method of avoiding the unintentional turning of the boat when executing a series of forward strokes is incorporating some correction techniques into the strokes, making them combination forward and correction strokes. The most common of these are the L stroke, the J stroke and the C stroke.

The L stroke and the J stroke are very similar, the main difference being that on an L stroke you throw in a little outboard kick at the end of the power phase and before the recovery phase by rotating the shaft so your blade is acting like a rudder and pushing outward with the back face of the blade while the thumb of your grip hand is pointing up.

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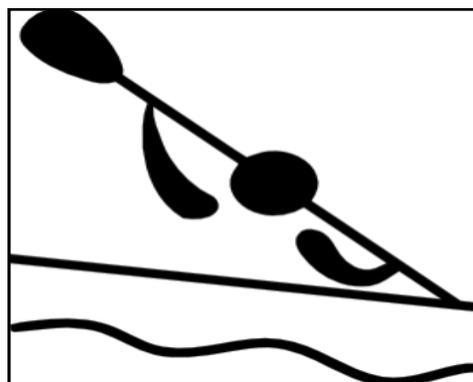
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You can do this bracing the shaft against your bottom hand or against the gunwale. You do pretty much the same with a J stroke except that it flows a bit better than the L and is thus more efficient. Instead of the thumb pointing up, you rotate the grip so the thumb points down as you push away from the hull with the power face of the paddle, and there is no bracing against the gunwale.

The C stroke uses a combination of prevention and correction. On the plant, place the blade in the water a bit farther outboard from the hull, and with a slight open angle of the blade. The stroke begins very much like a bow draw. Then execute the power phase in a slightly curved direction, going from the plant and moving inboard (prevention), then continuing parallel to the keel line and then into your J stroke (correction). When all put together, the path of the paddle through the water describes a C. You will be pulling the bow of your boat slightly toward your paddle before giving a good forward stroke, then pushing the stern of your boat away from the paddle, all of which helps negate the tendency of the forward stroke to turn the boat away from the paddle side.

I hope I haven't totally confused everyone with this attempt at communicating a little about learning or improving your forward stroke. The key to learning good paddling technique is practice. The adage about "practice makes perfect" should be modified to "perfect practice makes perfect". No matter how much you practice less than perfect technique, you will not improve your pad-

dling, and additionally you will ultimately need to un-learn the less than perfect stuff and replace it with practiced perfection. I can personally attest to having paddled many years with no formal instruction and having to re-learn almost everything I thought I knew about paddling. Don't let that happen to you. If you have had no formal training, sign up for some. GCA has a robust training program, and there are many other places to get the proper training as well. So get it from GCA or get it from somewhere else, but please get it!! You won't be sorry.—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

July Paddle Trips

July 3rd & 4th - Hiwassee - Powerhouse to Reliance - Class II

July 17th - Nanty Paddle - Class II+ (III)

July 18th - Middle Ocoee - Class III

July 24th - Pirates Paddle Too! – Tuckaseegee Class II-III

July 25th - Nantahala – (Ocoee Lite Progression Series: Trip I)

July 31st - Chattooga IV

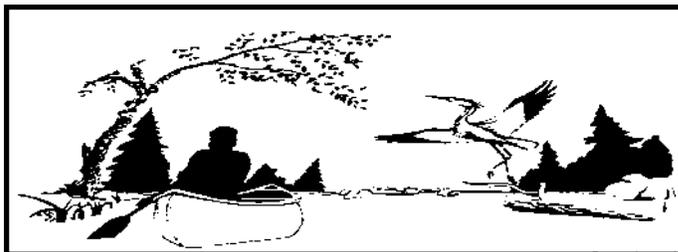
July 31st - Flatwater paddle: Bull Sluice (Morgan Falls) Lake

July Training

July 24th - Upper Hooch: Intro to River Running

July 31st & August 1st - I Broke My Paddle – Now What?

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 I 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.

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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.



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GEORGIA CANOEING ASSOCIATION, INC.

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[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.