



THE EDDY LINE

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My First Trip into Little River Canyon

by Fred Couch

In the late 1970s - early 1980s, I was doing some kayaking (with no roll knowledge) and canoeing. I really wanted to try out Little River Canyon, but not risk my life. Two of my friends, Ted and Helen Sparks, agreed to lead me down it so I could see the thing. It was low, so low I wouldn't consider such today. Ted and Helen tubed it ahead of me, then would climb up onto a rock pointing out which way I should go around that rock.

Except for a few too-small pools where I had a squirrely time of negotiating the tightness, it was an eventless trip. However, it did make me realize what undercut situations were lurking there for the benign.

So, my second "first" trip there was in higher water, a week after taking a class three course on the Hiawassee with the Birmingham Canoe Club - which made me think I was now "a hot shot" ready to take on this challenge. My course instructor Bruce and several better paddlers went along.

When we got to Bottleneck, I took the cheat route to get into the upper eddy pool, then decided instead to portage, as did most everyone else. Only Bruce decided to attempt it - and we set up multiple ropes spread out down the edges. When he ran the rapid, it flipped him in a 1,000th of a second, and we watched him disappear into the clear depths like a butterbean sinking into a glass tube until he just was out of sight.

We waited until we thought no one could ever survive that long under water looking for him. We even threw a few ropes, hoping if he was under there he would grab one. About that time we heard a whoop and holler - he had been pulled submerged underwater downstream for over 200 feet. That gave me a lot of respect for that rapid. Over 100 times I have paddled in Little River Canyon, and tried Bottleneck three times, got two swims, and one successful canoe run - the rest I walked around.

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Don't push your luck, be sure of your abilities, and be prepared for calamity. I have done a few class VI rapids in my time and run one that I knew before I tried it that it had already drowned thirty people. Four of us ran it that day, all successfully, but it scared me enough to not do such again.

I am always going to portage when I am not 100% positive and only run something when I have awesome bank support. I suggest you do the same. I also suggest you take a swiftwater rescue course, CPR course and practice/share what you learn from that.

I later became a volunteer canoe and kayak beginner course instructor for 25 years, 6 of those years for a nearby college, and taught rescue to two rescue squads and some park rangers on an 18 degree November day. - EL

Ohoopsee River

By Aine Hansen

The setup was nearly impossible to resist: I was told that two Georgia river experts and book authors (Joe Cook and Suzanne Welander) had both named the same favorite river. Never mind that they probably both have multiple favorites, and they may have been offhand remarks; my curiosity was piqued. Investigation of the Ohoopsee River highlighted white-sand beaches and nearby dunes from the Pleistocene (ice age) era, with tea-like “blackwater” that flows burgundy red in places, and I knew I had to go. The river was as unique and beautiful as I had hoped. It's an easy Class I paddle with white sand beaches that occasionally dot the shores, and crystal-clear water shaded like sweet tea that does indeed look red when shallow.



The USGS gauge near Reidsville marks 11' as flood stage for this river, and 10' as action required. We were told that above 8' there wouldn't be many sand bars, and one local outfitter prefers to rent only when it's 6' or lower. The river did flood just 3 weeks before our trip, and again exceeded 10' a mere 10 days beforehand, but then a week of rain-free weather made for a smooth and steady decline, so we lucked out with two days of paddling at 6.5' and 5.8' on April 22 and 23, 2023. Sand bars were plentiful, though 2' more of water would have certainly covered the majority of them. I understand the river can become too low to paddle in the summer, though I would guesstimate the river could probably have fallen 1' without becoming unnavigable. I later learned the Swainsboro gauge is upstream, so it's worth keeping an eye on that one as well (flood stage 18', action 16'), even though we used the Reidsville gauge because our paddling range started midway between the two gauges and ended much closer to Reidsville.

We paddled 24 miles across two days and the river was generally free of obstruction, although we did have to navigate deadfall 2-3 times with just one portage (the easiest of my life—the tree rested on a white sand

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beach, so we beached our boats, walked across the sand and put in again as easily as if we had merely stopped for lunch). No guarantees that future portages will all be similarly easy, but the current was generally mild so most competent boaters can probably handle most likely portages.

In some places the white sand was pristine; in others it was covered with leaf litter and occasional plants. Sometimes it was packed firm and in others it was loose and fluffy. I found the grains surprisingly coarse in places, but still comfortable to walk on barefoot. Camping is possible on some dunes, but research beforehand is recommended; many of the riverside dunes appeared to be private property, and sometimes homes aren't initially visible from the water. There are occasional camp-able islands mid-river.



I've paddled blackwater rivers numerous times before, but never any like this. Although the water was dark when deep, when a white sandbar was less than 2' under the surface, it highlighted the unique coloring produced (like tea) from the tannins absorbed from the trees. It reads almost like a riddle: "What happens when you add white sand to a blackwater river?" Apparently the answer is "it turns red." Who knew?

Quick research reveals that the sand was created ages ago by flooding glacial melt from retreating glacial fields, and sculpted partially by wind. Further away from the river, the white sand forms dunes that are often crescent shaped and referred to by experts as "eolian dunes." People interested in exploring those may enjoy a visit to the nearby Ohoopee Dunes Wildlife Management Area (32.604285, -82.425052), with an interpretive hiking trail near the Little Ohoopee River. Most of the trails are relatively flat, but there are places you can see the gently curving dunes (especially if you head west from the parking lot, toward the river), and the unique environment leads to different flora than you'll see elsewhere, with even the familiar plants growing a bit differently, often shorter.

LOGISTICS

Most local sites have the same sign printed with standard put-in and take-out locations... and we used almost none of those. Here are some notes on various options we used or checked out, running from north to south.

Heron Lane (32.360970, -82.267307) – locals told us this is the best place to put in near Griffin Ferry Bridge. It's riverside public property with room to park 5-10 cars. While driving up, two of our vehicles used their four-wheel drive on the loose sand; another made it through with two-wheel drive, and later in the day the final person in our crew with 2-wheel drive opted out of driving it. This road would likely be submerged at 8' but was clear and dry at 6.5'. It was indeed a much, much easier place to put in than Griffin Ferry Bridge. I found this top section to be one of the most beautiful of the run, with trees and occasional Spanish moss overhanging the wide river most of the way. Signs of human civilization were limited, with just an occasional
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house nestled back among the trees. By road this adds 1.75 miles to the route; by water our GPS calculated that it adds 3 miles to the route.

Griffin Ferry Bridge (32.348197, -82.247909) – listed as river access “B” on many popular maps, this wouldn’t be most people’s first choice. It’s a busy 55 mph road, though there’s room to park on the shoulders.

Access near three of the four bridge corners was blocked by thick weeds, heavy mud, and intermittent water before reaching the main river flow. The northwest corner was the only viable one for putting in. You’d have to lower boats down the side of the road through knee-high weeds (but not thick brambles) then carry boats 1/4 mile and over a small hill to the water. This was our backup plan before we drove down a couple of adjacent dirt roads and talked to locals, who directed us up to Heron Lane. This section is about 7 miles and again has limited signs of human civilization, with just an occasional house nestled among the trees.



Coleman Bridge on route 152 (32.285144, -82.227386) – listed as river access “C” on many popular maps, this is an excellent place to access the river. There’s an off ramp near the bridge and a paved parking lot, plus an extended sandy beach enjoyed by many locals, and super easy access. This section is also about 7 miles and much of it is quite pretty, but as you travel down the river, signs of human habitation become more common, including homes and restaurants with docks and retaining walls (some of which were intact, and some of which showed unrepaired flood damage with tires and cinder blocks).

Jarriel’s Bridge on route 127 (32.219897, -82.207397 on the west side, or 32.220024, -82.206094 on the east side) – listed as river access “D” on many maps, this spot is a popular hangout for locals. There’s room for a handful of cars to park on each side of the river, and wide, sandy beaches. You can paddle across but not drive across (driving requires a 17 minute loop). By this point we had hit 16 miles from our put-in, so most of us called it a day. The inimitable Roger Nott continued down to the Ohoopee River Campground, another 6 or so miles by river. He reported 3 downed trees, a couple of which were doable in a canoe but may have required a kayaker to portage. He reported that the 6 miles after Jarriel’s Bridge were roughly comparable to the 7 miles before it.

Ohoopee River Campground (32.155840, -82.187122) – not open to the general public, but a perfect place to put in or take out if you’re camping here, like we were. (Side note: it’s a large campground with hot showers. Electricity and water are available on many sites. Some sites have trees for hammocks, but not all. A large stage hosts twice-monthly karaoke events, so it may be a bit crowded in the summer, but during our spring visit was a perfect place to listen for birds in the morning and evenings.) As you paddle down the river from here, it’s mostly undeveloped but homes become more common as you approach the bridge. We did spot one large, camp-able island in this section (visible on Google Maps) at our 5.8’ water level.

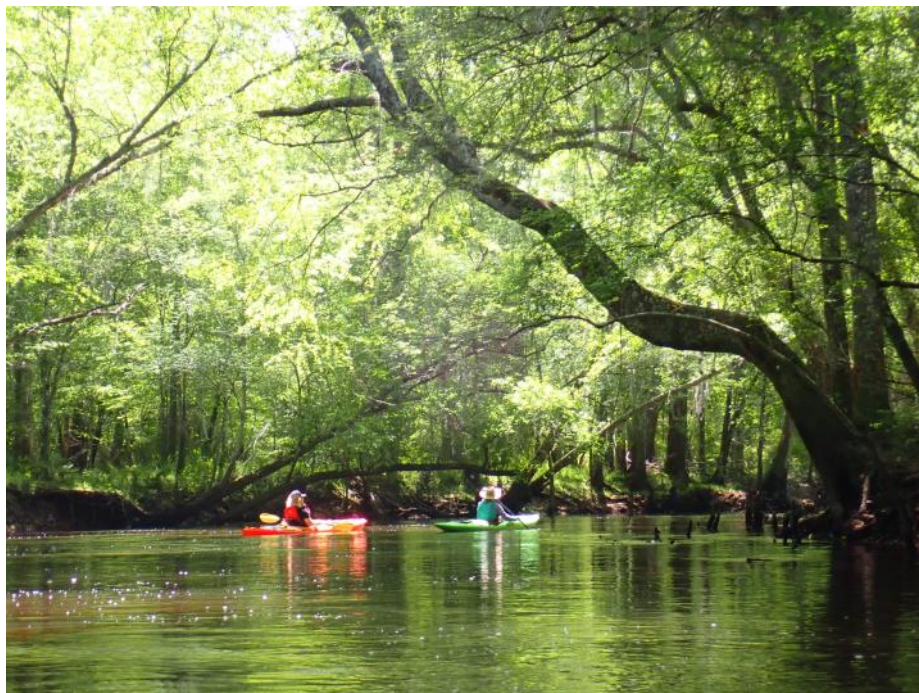
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280 Bridge (32.117064, -82.188614) – listed as “E” on many popular maps, this doesn’t have a put-in or take-out that’s worth mentioning. The segment below this is pretty, but has occasional houses.

Toler Road Boat Ramp (32.103866, -82.186227) – This is shown on some popular maps, but not usually assigned a letter. The parking lot here holds about 10 cars and there’s a ramp big enough for motorized boats. It doesn’t have much sand, so locals use it mostly for boating and fishing, but it’s an excellent place to put in or take out.

Overall, it was a gorgeous and unique river, well worth visiting, and absolutely something to have on a bucket list to visit at least once. - *EL*



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.

Colorado's Arkansas River

By David Bernard

The Arkansas River begins its journey to the Mississippi in Colorado's tallest mountains. Its' first hundred miles includes some of the USA's best whitewater. More commercial rafting is done on the Arkansas headwaters than any other river, due to the many sections ranging from class 2 to class 4, the superb public access built and managed by the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Authority, the release of water that maintains a good water level until mid-August, and the outstanding scenery and other amenities in this fabulous area.

My first time canoeing Arkansas whitewater was in 2010. Somehow I made it through Number 6 & 7 before the river let up (some) in the Fractions. In 2019 and 2022 we enjoyed great river trips on the easier but still continuous "Bighorn Canyon." We stayed at a "bunkhouse" cabin at Bighorn Campground on the river at Coaldale, along a class 2 section that includes a few threes. Thirty miles downstream is the class 4 Royal Gorge near Canon City, after which the river flattens out as it leaves the Rocky Mountains. Sixty miles upstream is the class 4 "Numbers" section, which leads into the class 3 "Fractions," with the takeout at the town of Buena Vista. Downstream from Buena Vista there is class 2-3 water leading into Brown's Canyon, a mostly class 3 run with one definite class 4, Zoom Flume. After Brown's the Arkansas mellows out as it goes through Salida, like Buena Vista, a mountain town thriving on outdoor recreation. At "Salida East" the river gets more gradient going through the class 2-3 Bighorn Sheep Canyon. Then "Parkdale" is the put-in for Royal Gorge.

Colorado has 58 fourteeners, mountains taller than 14,000'. Fourteen of those are in the Sawatch Range, river right above Salida. 8 more fourteeners are in the Sangre de Cristo Range, on the right side of the Arkansas watershed downstream from Salida. Much of this mountain land is in the national forest and there are lots of trails, as well as a few spots to drive above treeline for the view.

We like staying at Bighorn Campground, 16373 Highway 50 West, Coaldale, CO 81222, 719-942-4266. It is right on the river with a great place to launch and take out, the views of the Sangres are incredible, and hosts Aaron and Brenda Cromer are awesome. But there are motels, campgrounds, dispersed camping, AirBnB's, all up and down the river.—EL

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.

TRIP AND EVENT SCHEDULE

- February 4: Peachtree City roll practice at Kedron Aquatic Center
- February 5: Roll practice at Cherokee County Aquatic Center
- February 10-11: Wilderness First Aid certification course
- February 12: Roll practice at Cherokee County Aquatic Center
- February 18: Peachtree City roll practice at Kedron Aquatic Center
- February 19: Roll practice at Cherokee County Aquatic Center
- February 26: Roll practice at Cherokee County Aquatic Center
- March 4: Roll practice at Cherokee County Aquatic Center
- March 9-10: Wilderness First Aid certification course
- March 11: Roll practice at Cherokee County Aquatic Center
- March 18: Roll practice at Cherokee County Aquatic Center
- March 25: Roll practice at Cherokee County Aquatic Center

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.

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.

Thank you to our sponsors/partners



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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.

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.



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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.