

The Bow and Stern

In partnership with the American Canoe Association

Newsletter of the Vermont Paddlers Club



“Go With the Flow . . .”

November 2013
Volume XLI

Who's Who in the Vermont Paddlers Club

Officers

President:	Ryan McCall	223-5986
Vice President:	A J Seibel	473-0280
Treasurer:	Hugh Pritchard	522-8403
Secretary:	Paul Carlile	658-6657

Directors

Activities:	Chris Weed	264-3141
Communication:	Alden Bird	301-908-1126
Director At-Large:	John Atherton	985-9970

Appointed/Volunteers

Agent:	Hugh Pritchard	802-522-8403
Education Chair:	Paul Carlile	802-658-6657
Conservation Chair:	Ryan McCall	223-5986
Webmaster:	Tony Shaw	879-1655

Resources

Website:	vtpaddlers.net
National Weather Service:	862-2475

Cover Photo:

Erik Debbink in the Terrill Gorge, Morristown, Vermont (Scott Gilbert)

Letter From the President

Howdy folks,

Last year when I was writing this I was whining about how dry of a summer we had. Amazing what a difference a year can make. I think we had one of the wettest summers on record, and thank goodness for that because our spring in 2013 had one single solitary weekend with spring like flows. Enter Memorial Day and KAPOW, it's boating season revisited in VT. What a month and a half of amazing short sleeved VT boating in June and July. Well as fast as it came it went and we have been traveling for boatable flows. Some of us stayed in New England and took advantage of the scheduled summer and fall releases here in the North East, others made more of a trip of it and headed to the wild corners of Quebec for their H2O fix. There are some fantastic reports from the trips this summer....both near and far. Check'em out!

This year the club has been working on ways increase boating opportunities for boaters in VT. A good bit of that effort has been alongside American Whitewater. Included in this Bow and Stern is a summary of the efforts that we have been collaborating on with AW's Northeast Stewardship Director, Bob Nasdor. If all goes well, in short order VT will increase it's only whitewater release every September at the West, to no fewer than 4 other potential rivers/releases including the Missisquoi at Sheldon Springs, several areas on the Connecticut (Turners, Sumner's and Bellows Falls), getting closer on the Green in Wolcott and we are amping up the efforts on the West River so that we can see more than just the single fall release. Stay tuned for further efforts and progress.

Lastly, this year is an election year for the club. Yup, the last two years have whizzed by. The current board has very active and creative with driving the club during their term. We've improved up the pool sessions with a new one over in Central VT, we've brought a new clinic (Creeking) to the mix and are working on Slalom and Playboating, worked toward more releases on more rivers in our home state, hosted a super successful New Haven Race and our clinics are still going strong year after year.

The VPC has scheduled the Williston Federated



Ryan McCall running Humble Pie on the Green River, Morrisville, Vermont. (Brian Murphy)

Church December 8th, 6-9 pm for a pot luck dinner, a presentation from Nick Gottlieb and his travels boating around South America including the Whitewater Grand Prix , and VPC Elections for your club officers. Think about what you want out of your club and then please, let your board of directors know what that is. You can personally call (272-6209) or email and tell me and I would be happy to relay that to the board as an agenda item and goal we need to work toward. The VPC website contains a list of electedboard positions + typical tasks by position <http://vtpaddlers.net/join/leadership/offices.php>. Check it out and then head on over to the nomination page <http://vtpaddlers.net/join/nominations/index.php?and> pick your officers for the next two years.

Now go out there and do a rain dance so we can get in a few more good runs before 2013 leaves us...

Paddle Hard,

Ryan McCall
Fellow boater....

From American Whitewater

Dear Fellow Boaters:

American Whitewater and Vermont Paddlers Club have been working together over the past year to restore rivers, provide more boating opportunities, and protect and improve access on rivers in Vermont and in nearby areas. In 2012, AW made a commitment to expand its river stewardship in the northeast and created a new staff position to focus our resources on this region and support our members and affiliate clubs. Having taken over the position last year from Alan Panebaker, a painful loss that we both continue to feel, I have been privileged to work with VPC and its members on a variety of projects that are important to the region. On the Missisquoi River in Sheldon Springs, we negotiated with the dam operator to restore releases that have been lost for decades, providing boaters with a new big water boating opportunity. On the Green River in Morrisville, we are participating in the hydropower relicensing process to obtain releases on a scenic and challenging Class IV/V section of the river. On the Connecticut River at Sumner Falls and at Bellows Falls, we are involved in the relicensing of several dams in order to provide boaters with sufficient flows and enhance features that will provide new and improved playboating

opportunities, and next year we will have flow studies to show the boating potential there. And on the West River in Jamaica, we are renewing our efforts to restore lost releases on Vermont's best known paddling resource. I am looking forward to continuing our work together over the next year on these projects, and I welcome your involvement and support.

Best regards,

Bob Nasdor
American Whitewater
Northeast Stewardship Director

TREASURER'S REPORT – Interim 2013

INCOME AND EXPENSES	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Initial Balance	\$2,321	\$3,037	\$2,995	\$3,164	\$2,652	\$2,180
Dues	\$1,230	\$970	\$931	\$818	\$634	\$757
Events						
Sponsorship	-\$200	-\$250	-\$1,150	-\$650	-\$140	-\$300
Scholarships	-\$100				\$0	
Website	-\$360	-\$208	-\$90	-\$42	-\$142	
Interest/Bank Fees	-\$35	\$10	\$13	\$5	-\$13	
Meetings/ Mailings	-\$99	-\$710	-\$500	-\$771	-\$293	-\$186
Rolling Sessions	\$41	-\$112	\$85	-\$126	-\$317	-\$81
Equipment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	-\$401	-\$40
Rescue Clinic	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	
Novice Clinic	\$540	\$586	\$995	\$680	\$363	\$407
Class 2 Clinic	-\$48	\$5	\$13	\$103		
Creeking Clinic					\$35	
T-Shirts	-\$220				\$0	
Banner/Canopy				-\$107	\$0	
Net ACA Cost	-\$85	-\$120	-\$205	-\$325	-\$213	-\$20
Whitewater Fund	\$52				\$0	
Reel Paddling						
Filmfest		-\$207	\$92		\$0	
Net Income/						
Expenditure	\$716	-\$43	\$171	-\$513	-\$473	\$640
Final Balance	\$3,037	\$2,995	\$3,166	\$2,652	\$2,180	\$2,820

Hugh Pritchard
Treasurer
December 2013



Vermont Weekly Whitewater Beer Series (Nick Gottlieb)

Below: Daphnee Tuzlak and Rick Cooley, Otter Creek Gorge.



Vermont Weekly Whitewater Beer Series

By Nick Gottlieb

Arriving in Vermont in February after three months paddling in South America, it was hard for me to accept that paddling season here isn't year round. My sheer refusal to stop kayaking was met with much skepticism, but naysayers were soon silenced as I discovered that Otter Creek Gorge (in Middlebury) is runnable every day of the year. It, along with Sumners Falls on the Connecticut River, is one of the only stretches of whitewater that is never too low. And while I haven't tried to paddle Sumners in the dead of winter, I imagine there's some concern about ice blocks floating downstream.

Anyway, like the addict I am, I dutifully paddled at least three days a week on Otter Creek until the last throes of winter, and even after, as spring never truly sprung until July this year. In all that time, I saw no one out on Vermont's premier winter paddling resource other than a small handful of Middlebury local paddlers (read: whoever I could drag out). I was shocked – how was no one else taking advantage of the single year-round whitewater resource we have? I mean, I know it's not the Little White, but any whitewater is better than no water, right?

So, in an effort to shine a light on this hidden treasure, once the summer rains ran out, I started a weekly race series on the Gorge. Initially, the plan was to have each week's winner define the format for the following week, but after a mixup where we allowed Mike Mainer to decide the format, we decided to just have the format be the same every week: a mass start facing upstream (a la Lozer Cup on the Deerfield Dryway) from Belden's Falls (the put-in) to the campground.

The race hasn't been limited to Otter Creek, either. Thanks to Ryan McCall's contacts at GMP, we've been able to schedule a handful of releases on the Little River in Waterbury, which has lured out some members of the elusive Montpelier paddling community. I hope in the future that it will be something of a traveling race series – based on Otter Creek, but with races on other rivers if the water level permits. Racers are hoping for a Mad River race before the river freezes over.

The race season thus far has been an emotional rollercoaster. One week saw 19 participants – some folks must've driven from out of state because I don't think there are 19 paddlers in Vermont. Another saw two. Week-in, week-out, through ups and downs, one thing has remained clear – that people will paddle fast if there's a six pack on the line! And, on a more serious note, it's really been great for the community – even in times of no water, we've all been getting out and enjoying ourselves paddling together in an area where paddlers are few and far between. While I expect the number of regulars to dwindle (from two down to one) as winter returns, I plan to continue the race well into the fall, if not through the winter. Even if we're not racing, come down to Otter Creek and you'll see me out there scooching across icebergs on my way down the river.

Trip Reports

Lower White River Saturday

Mar 30, 2013

Character: novice WW

Water Level: medium

Organizer: Tony Shaw

Participants: (K1): Mark Cook, Dottie Dupey, Grant Leibersberger, Heidi McCullough, Rod McIver, Chris Weed; (OC1): Tony Shaw

Gauge Info: USGS Gauge Height: 5.13 ft.; USGS Flow: 1430 cfs; USGS Station: West Hartford



Chris Weed on the White River (Tony Shaw)

Running at a lower-than-normal ~900 cfs for most of the preceding week, the USGS online gauge at West Hartford dissuaded our group from attempting to run the (planned) "Upper White" from Stockbridge to Bethel. In hindsight, when the gauge suddenly popped up over 1400 cfs on Saturday morning, we probably would have made it down The Upper...

Spring - that is to say, March - 2013 proved to be much better suited to sugaring than boating. But today it was about as nice a March day as you could want for a get-out-the-cobwebs class I-II river trip. We waited 'til noon to meet, to let the day to warm up some, and put-in close to 1:30 (once a loaner PFD for yours truly had been procured). Thanks to Mark and co. for making that happen!

The 2.5 mile stretch to West Hartford was bathed in sunshine with a moderate, steady tailwind. The ravages of tropical storm Irene are still evident in many places along the banks, but not much in the riverbed itself. This is in contrast to the upper White, where many parts of the riverbed AND its banks bear no resemblance whatsoever to pre-8/28/2011.

We played to our hearts' content at the 8 or 10 low ledges that make the Lower White popular throughout the summer months, and no one got into any trouble. We stopped on a sandy beach to stretch our legs at one point and eat hors d'oeuvres (thanks, Heidi). At the take-out Mark shared his wife's macaroons with us all. I would paddle again with this bunch, any time! Paddling time: 2:45. Daytime high: 51 degrees.

- Tony Shaw

Post Work Mad.... Monday Apr 8, 2013

Character: nov-int WW

Water Level: medium low

Organizer: Tony Shaw

Participants: (K1): Jamie Dolan

John Atherton

Chris Weed

Ryan McCall; (OC1): Tony Shaw

Gauge Info: USGS Flow: 600 cfs; USGS Station: Mad River - Moretown

Where do you open your season... Yup - the Mad. I've been in VT for over a decade now and every season opener but two have been on the Mad River along one of its sections. We'll this year was more of the same. The sun was shining, it was 55 degrees and the company was good. It was a moderately lazy run with lots of eddy hopping and farting around. I made sure I could roll on a couple of occasions and Chris pulled a solid one too.

More or less the same old lower Mad run. Work the eddys goof off surf under the 100b Bridge and get down to Horseshoe. All ran clean, Tony rolled his titanic of an OC1 and we were off to Washing Machine and the lower gorge.



Playing on the Mad River (Jamie Dolan)

Other than a bizzare swim after the last rapid, it was a clean fun run...

The start of another season....

Browns River - Westford

Wednesday Apr 10, 2013

Character: novice WW

Water Level: medium low

Organizer: Tony Shaw

Participants: (K1): Paul Carlile, Ken Emery, Brock Richardson, Chris Weed, Brian Wilcox; (OC1): Eric Bishop, Jack Daggitt, Tony Shaw

Gauge Info: Painted Gauge Height: -0.33 ft. (VT 128 bridge, Westford (put-in)); USGS Gauge Height: 6.50 ft.; USGS Flow: 4270 cfs; USGS Station: Lamoille - East Georgia (falling)

We got some overdue rain on Tuesday, bringing up the Browns to a respectable level - 4" below the bridge footing at the put-in. For a river with an average gradient of just 24 feet/mile, the Browns has its share of technical features - 5 in all.

First up is the collapsing dam on the way north out of Westford, where Tony's canoe nearly got back ended in the hole, where Eric counted fish, and where Brian and Jack (upon witnessing this mayhem) opted to carry.

The beefy diagonal wave near the bottom of

the S-Turn Rapid extracted a pair of swims, giving Tony some early season throw bag practice. Many signs of beaver activity were noted along this reach, not to mention 2 real live beavers.

Paul enjoyed the first major ledge so much he carried back up to try an alternate boof move. Up next, the Double Drop was the one place where we could have used a tad more water. But at least now it is free of strainers, thanks to Ken, John A., and a chainsaw in 2012.

Both sides of the island were explored at the last drop, without incident - also clear of obstructions thanks to Ken and John's 2012 handiwork. The "path" up from river

right before the VT 128 bridge is a little easier to negotiate than the one on river left below the bridge, but either way works.

Brock noted 1/2 way down that if only the water quality was better this would be a classic New England novice whitewater run. To which I replied, but hey, then it'd probably not be "The Browns".

3.8 miles, 2 hours

<http://www.vtpaddlers.net/paddle/geo/index.php?load=1365818023349>

Pre Work Patterson...

Wednesday Apr 10, 2013

Character: int-adv WW

Water Level: medium low

Organizer: Ryan McCall

Participants: (K1): Dave Packie

Ryan McCall

Hmmmm...not much that I can say that I've not already said about Patterson but feeling somewhat verbose, here we go.....

So the story goes - phone calls, emails and texts start to bounce around the night before. Talk of the NBW is tossed out, others say Mad, but Dave says - looks like Patterson should be in tomorrow. That's like your mom asking you if you want some sugar on those nasty stale dry tasteless hunks of shredded wheat you would eat for breakfast. Yea I just likened sugar to Patterson Brook. If you



Patterson Brook (Jamie Dolan)

haven't tried it, do so, it's that sweet!

So the alarm goes off the dog licks my face and I know I have to get my gear together, make coffee (add some sugar) and get down the road to pick up Dave and head to my personal cup of sugar, Patterson Brook... (ok that was kind of cheesy). Its a wee bit nippy but not cold. We load Dave's gear and the shuttle vehicle and head over the Northfield Mountains toward Granville, VT. Along the way everything looks so close to being boatable, Stony Brook, Freeman Brook. We are so close to a really good spring run-off. Who knows maybe this weekend???? So we get to Patterson and it looks doable - as Dave says, "I've run it lower."

Up we go into the GMNF to the put in scouting along the way...All looks good, some ice shelves and a little bit of wood here and there, but relatively clean. We gear up and get in our boats.... Um - spray skirts are a little snug and stiff....Guess I should have eaten shredded wheat this morning!!!!

Finally on water - everything feels right! The river is familiar and comfortable.....enjoyable. Dave and I take turns hopping down the river and re-learning

old skills left dormant since the late fall of 2012. Kind of wobbly at first we are knocking out cobwebs as we go. The gorge section of the river is clean and goes smoothly eventhough lines are flubbed. The level was about as perfect as it gets for taking it in. A perfect way to open up the season on Patterson.

It was a one lap day as we both had to get to work by noon, but I could have run a dozen more laps on Patterson today... It just felt right!

For those of you looking to get in a run there this year. Make sure you scout it on the way up to the put in. There are some spots with wood that could come into play if there is more water in the river... They will move around on the next good flush.

- Ryan

Whitewater Weekend - PA to VT, Pt VI

Friday-Monday Apr 12-15, 2013

Character: int-adv WW

Water Level: medium low

Organizer: Ryan

Participants: (K1): Jason M, Dan M, Jamie D, Paul C, Ryan M

This was the 6th annual pilgrimage to VT for the Pee-yea boys. Over the years it's been a mish-mosh of buddies that have made the trip up every April since 2008, but two of the guys have been a constant and were the only ones to make it up this year, Jason McMullen and Dan Mayer. Both solid boaters an considerably better than me. So being on the water with them is both fun and usually low stress. This year would prove to be a a lot of the former and mostly some of the latter.

Day one. They drove up through downpours to hit the VT/NY state line and be greeted by sleet and snow. WELCOME TO VT! This sort of screwed up the late afternoon paddle that we had slated for the day. No worries, a class IV+ drive up Route 100 filled their cup with enough gnar for the day. Plan B - eat, drink and be merry.

Day two. We had planned to hit the Baker Valley in NH for the day. Knowing that Jamie S and Brandon A were going to be over there as well, it was a no brainier to hit it and have some good local knowledge with us. A quick call to Paul and Jamie D also brought two other solid boaters into the fray. With a group of 6 we were all set for the day. We ran the South Branch Baker first and it was at a medium low level. It is for the most part read and run with fun bedrock stuff at the top down through the Mill drop (which always requires a scout because of wood) and then below you have cannibal falls (walk) and then lots of fun pinball stuff to work through. We spent a few extra moments at cannibal because Jason was planning to run it until he finally gave up the ghost, concerned that he wouldn't make it far enough across the current to where he needed to pull the boof stroke. On down the river we went to the last drop above the take out. Impressive in view it is less than inspiring when paddling down it at lowish levels. However one of our group found the deep spot and had a little town time in this hole, both in and out of his boat. Crazy and sort of comical at the same time - everyone was just fine when it was said and done with. The run was over and the NH boys had to get off to their respective duties for the weekend and Paul and Jamie D headed back to VT for late day commitments. Jason Dan and I were off to Pond Brook... At a low fluid level, pond offered up some really fun drops and a couple of great slides and one of the best boofs in the north east that you can sky off of. We all had solid runs down this river with a couple of funky miss haps, like a wicked piton on Megaslide for Dan and a sideways pin-flip-kick-donkykong think for Jason on one of the drops that he drifted into sideways. However the sun was shining and the day was shaping up nicely. We all finished off the run with a three amazing boofs off the flake in succession at the end of the run. Back

to VT for a night on the town in Burlington - man these boys like the UNTZ UNTZ UNTZ. I think the hardest part of the day was negotiating the class 5 crowd at the red-square that night!

Day three. Recuperating from the class V night in Burlington, we watch some golf and got our bearings straight, before heading out into the raw spring day/afternoon for a run on the local standard. The Lower Lad was around 900 cfs and was feeling much more grumpy than usual. Jason was still foggy so decided to sit in the warm truck as Dan and I got in a run. I found out I was still foggy once on the river, flipping in the eddy and making a necessary roll (a rarity for me). The run went with out incident and we were headed back to my place for some more R&R and some of my wife's class IV+ curry!

Day four. Time to head back to PA for the boys. We stopped by every damn river on the way south to find them all running too low (WHAT THE HECK!) until we got to Rutland, then things seemed to have a good bit of flow coming into them and were on the rise from the warm sunny morning. Bingo - that is when we pulled the trigger on the Clarendon Gorges. Man what a high quality run! It was at a much high level than I had ever been on it, but was a load of fun. The first gorge was clean of wood and mostly read and run with great ferry moves and boof's galore. Then the flats leading up to the Mill Drop were less bony than usual (more water + Irene scour) making for quick work. Mill Drop was looking rather stompy and had some nice fluffy holes in the lead in to the crux. We all ran it cleanly down through the slot - VERY COOL! Off we went thru the next shallows section to the head of Devil's Gorge (Lower Clarendon). Grundle Puncher - the class VI rapid at the head of the gorge looked more ugly than I've ever seen it - terminal would be the right word. So off to the portage we went to put in below this rapid. The portage is a total PIA and to top it off it was still covered in ice because the gorge doesn't get sun in this area. Options - seal launch 20 feet down the ice bank and slam the wall on the opposite side of the gorge or toss in your boat and jump in to get an eddy! Neither option was ideal, but we got down to the river in one form or another and

started paddling. If you haven't been in this gorge it is as tight as anywhere I've ever boated. Some places are less than 10 feet wide. The rapids are more or less class IV and sport some pretty good holes to ruin your day if you aren't on line and there is the occasional vertical drop that can take you by surprise. We all had decent lines through the gorge except for one of mine which ended in a bit of a thrashing, but in the end it was HIGH QUALITY white water in a beautiful setting! We got off the river around 4:30 and it felt like it was pushing 70 degrees. Spring had sprung in Rutland County. The guys had about 6 hours of driving ahead of them and I had a little over an hour back to Monty-P. Life was good and we wrapped the 6th edition to the PA-VT series.

Looking forward to Next Year....

- Ryan

Wolcott Rapids on the Lamoille

Saturday Apr 13, 2013

Character: nov-int WW

Water Level: medium low

Organizer: Brock Richardson

Participants: (K1): Justin John A, Brock; (OC1): Jason Cohen; (Inflatable): Dan

Gauge Info: USGS Flow: 950 cfs; USGS Station: johnson

Wolcott rapids proved an enjoyable new paddle for myself and John. It was a welcome close by trip for Dan and Justin. It provided a spot for Jason to try his hand at a whitewater canoe in his new to him Nitro. The river starts from the dam and continues over a series of ledge drops. None of them are particularly hard but several of them required a move or a brace especially at this lower level. We had several swims. Jason did amazingly well for his first time in a Whitewater Canoe. This is a surprisingly pretty and very fun little section of the Lamoille. It took us a leisurely hour and a half to complete and I would rate it a 2 plus 3 minus.

We returned to the parking area with time to burn. What better way to burn time than a long Drive to Derby Center. Jason had sense enough to call it a day but the rest of us headed up for a run on the Clyde. Justin had a section in mind

below Charleston Pond in West Charleston. We followed him for a look. It looked like a long solid class 4 plus drop to me with really sharp rocks some wood and a pinning rock right in the middle of everything. Justin could convince no one to Light it up so we saved that run for another day.(or in my case never) . Dan knew a section downstream of Lake Salem so we headed

There. Unfortunately all the ponds and lakes were frozen so we could not use the usual access points. We managed to squeeze in a short run and the river was quite beautiful a real Kingdom Gem Like paddling through an enchanted forest. The whitewater was marginal class 2 minus pretty much a straight flush with few features but the beauty was incredible.

Quote of the Day: " The Moose, I'm not driving to the Moose, that's too far.Lets go to Derby Line"

Thanks all for a great day
Brock

New Haven Ledges

Wednesday Apr 17, 2013

Character: advanced WW

Water Level: medium low

Organizer: Alden Bird

Participants: (K1): Jamie Dolan, Justin Crannell, Mike Mainer, Connor, Rogan Brown; (C1): Alden Bird

Gauge Info: USGS Flow: 500 cfs; USGS Station: Brooksville, VT

April 17th began early as and continued through its length being a truly beautiful spring day. Warm temperatures and blue skies beckoned even at 6 am, as I drove to work through the Winooski Valley to Montpelier. It was only then that I realized I had forgotten my boat and would have to return home after work before driving back over the mountains.

The scheduled trip of the day was the Lower New Haven River, an intermediate trip through the town of Bristol, Vermont. After driving home from Montpelier to Randolph, I picked up my boat and sped over the mountains toward Bristol. With Roxbury Gap muddy and Lincoln Gap closed, the drive took me over the Bethel Mountain Pass and then over the Middlebury Gap -- a roundabout



All-American Boof, New Haven Ledges (Jamie Dolan)

route, but on this day a beautiful one. The rivers on the east side of the mountains had more water. On this day the Middlebury River appeared to be running at a medium water level.

The only other scheduled participant I found in Bristol was Jamie Dolan, though we met the usual cast of characters already on lap four or six of the Ledges upstream. With a quick look at the river, Jamie and I decided to join the crowd and leave the lower section for a higher water day.

We put on at Eagle Park and found the river at a nice level. There is always something fun to me about running the first slot at the top of the first boulder field on the New Haven. I still remember my first run through this slot on a February day eleven years ago when the both sides of the slot were fresh with ice. Here the river takes off downhill in a way that is striking for newer paddlers.

Secret Compartment, the third rapid, changed again this winter. The pin rock became more prominent and now the pin danger is greater. At this level the rapid was nice and fluid. A boater-tall wave curls off the "compartment" boulder and curls boaters into the river right eddy at the drop's base. The New Haven Race, coming this weekend, was on all of our minds as we ran this

drop, which comprises the crux of the race course. Avoiding the eddy at the base of the drop and remaining in the river's main flow separates the competitive racers from the non.

The s-turns below here were sweet and full of water. The Slides below are another site of choice and separation for racers. Several lines present themselves here, as well as through the next rapid, Oh, By the Way. Hydraulics frustrate the entrance to this rapid and a well timed stroke is required to move right and avoid sinking down the Schott Slot on the left: roughly akin to being flushed down a ten foot wide toilet.

The Roostertail Rapid was impressive as always, post-Irene, and landings off both Toaster Falls and the All-American Boof were softer for the canoeist on this trip than on recent trips.

All that was left at the take out was to hope for snowmelt and rainfall and swift lines for the race this weekend.

- Alden Bird

Huntington River Sunday Apr 21, 2013

Character: novice WW

Water Level: low boatable

Organizer: JimF & JimP

Participants: (K1): JimP, JimF, Frank, Ed, Ken, Paul, Sue, Mark, Dottie, Jonathan, Silas, Rod, Jamie, Chris; (OC1): Tony; (C1): Ryan; (Inflatable): Tina

(non-paddlers): Dawn, Jessica, Charlotte, Derek, Joann, John

Was this a river trip with two food events or a couple of food events that included a river trip? Well, I guess I'll let you decide...

There were five parts of this "trip" so the trip report will deal with each portion separately.

Part I – Brunch

Sunday morning, April 21st started off cool and clear. A perfect day for brunch! Seventeen (17!) paddlers and five hungry non paddlers descended upon Main Road in Huntington, home of the Fecteus. Jim and Jessica did a marvelous job hosting the brunch and many participants brought dishes to augment the feast. Plus the time spent socializing let the temperatures warm to somewhere just over the freezing mark!



Part II – Put in to the Huntington Gorge

We launched from Port Fecteau at around 11:30. The level was “Low Fun” which means we can make it down! The first stretch, while the Huntington is a wide valley river, proved challenging in a few spots. Not so shallow that you had to get out of your boat, but not fluid enough to float over everything.

JimP ran lead and TonyS was sweep boat so we could keep track of everyone. As one can imagine, seventeen boats can stretch out quite a bit on the river! And you try doing a head count on 17 moving paddlers – I came up with a different number every time! 15, no, 16, no, 15, grrr, no wait 17!

Once we entered the Gorge Section – which I identify as paralleling Dugway Road – the river pinched and low flow is less of an issue. There were a few smaller play spots that got some love.

We made it to the Huntington Gorge without incident and everyone made the “must make” eddy before the Gorge. It was at this point that Tina and Sue decided they had enough. (or conversely, starting thinking about the waiting hot tub at the take out!)

Part III – Huntington Gorge to Three Buckets

So the remaining group of fifteen shouldered our boats and portaged around the Huntington Gorge. Not exactly easy but we made our way down to rejoin the river about 100 yards below the Gorge. This section of river is a very short stretch, maybe one half mile. But it contains a nice stretch of whitewater. With the sun shining

Future Paddler? (Jim Poulin)

brightly overhead, the water was glistening white and everyone navigated down to the next portage from hell.

Part IV – Three Buckets to Jonesville Takeout

All the boaters trudged up the steep unimproved bank to Dugway road. There was sweating, swearing and heavy breathing all about. OK, that was just me and it wasn't pretty! Once on Dugway Road we needed to repeat the process working our way back down to the river. This was done via a path maintained by the Richmond Land Trust and much easier than the ascent. We put in right at the end of the Three Buckets. There is a tricky wall shot immediately after launching. This move gobbled up three of our group. Once safely repackaged in their crafts we ventured downstream only to be greeted by a river broaching log in the next rapid.

We set safety as the portage included a “must make” eddy on river left right before the log. With JimF standing in the shallow eddy snagging boats and JimP strategically sitting mid-river on the log itself, we managed to get all boaters, save one, into the eddy. That one lucky boater got to see what it is like to float into a river wide strainer and gave Jim (and the rest of our group) a bit of a panic attack! But it all worked out OK and soon we were headed downstream again.

There were a few more rapids that were highlighted by limited visibility of the whole rapid and the white froth of sunlit whitewater. Fun, bouncy, class II stuff. After the last rapid we were greeted by the non paddlers that had walked up to a popular swimming hole just to greet us.

After a few hellos, the paddlers hit the watery trail and the non paddlers hit the dusty trail for the remaining half mile of the trip.

Part V – BBQ

Once the paddlers were out of their gear and the shuttles run, we settled down for the second eating event of the day! Some paddlers delayed the food event so they could warm their core temps in the hot tub. Others dug into the feast like they hadn't eaten in five hours! There was good food and drink and many an exaggerated story. You woulda though we just finished some class V death run, not the tame old Huntington!

But all in all it was a great day with a great group of people – both paddlers and non. We all agreed this was an event that should make its appearance on the trip calendar every year. So we renamed it the First Annual Huntington River Paddle/Eat Fest.

Eat to Paddle, Paddle to Eat

--JimP

May 2013: There was water on the Moose Saturday-Sunday May 11-12, 2013

Character: advanced WW

Water Level: medium low

Organizer: Mike Mainer

Participants: (K1): Tom, Rogan, Will, Scott, Erik, Clay, Dylan, Jordan, Danny

On May 6, I posted the following to the VPC message board

This coming weekend (May 11 & 12) is spring Moosefest. A couple of us head over religiously every year, but I am hoping to see a larger-than-usual crew of Vermonters enjoying the remarkably fun Bottom Moose. It's quality pool-drop and by picking different lines and channels you can create anything from a friendly class IV to challenging class V sort of day, and it is otherwise basically New York's response to the New Haven Ledges.

It will probably be between low-runnable and medium, depending on how much rain we see later this week. Often times there are some other fun creeks over there that we can hit as well, though given the dryness that may not happen. Plan would be to leave after work on Friday, camp near the put-in, paddle Saturday and Sunday, and be back at a reasonable hour on Sunday evening.

and then I eagerly awaited a flood of emails from excited VPC'ers eager to get some quality NY boating in during an otherwise very dry month. Friday afternoon rolled around and I had heard from no one. Fortunately, my standby UVM friends were heading over (as we always do). The level looked like it would hold around 2.7, which, while lower than I had run it, was way better than anything in Vermont at the time.

And on that note, we left Burlington on Friday evening at the reasonable hour of 8 PM, planning on a 4.5 hour drive to the campsite near the put-in, arriving to steady rain at 2 AM. The following morning included both Danny's arrival from New York City, and heavier rain which soaked us while we put our gear on. Despite receiving significant rainfall overnight, the gauges had not budged and it looked like the Moose would be on the low side for the weekend, and our hopes of nearby creeks would not be realized. On a positive note, the dam operator told us he was shutting down the turbines for the weekend, meaning that the entire river would be ours (the dam normally releases only 2.5 feet into the second half of the run, a very scrappy but essentially low-boatable level).

As it turns out, 2.7 is a fine level for the Moose. I was pleased to find that many of the rapids remained fluid while at the same time having a more technical, creek feel. Funnel in particular feels more like a rapid from the New Haven Ledges than the juicy New York ledge-slide it normally is. By the time we made it halfway through the run, the skies were clearing.

The added water made for a friendly level on the second half of the run. This was a great chance to explore other, less commonly run lines through many of the rapids. I was pleased to learn how fun and manageable the left lines at Sureform and

Crystal are, making this one of my favorite runs of the year so far.

After finishing up the Moose, we checked the gauges again and saw that Woodhull Creek, about 30 minutes south, had come up to a low-boatable level. We drove down and spent the remainder of the afternoon lapping it's fun clean slides and ledges. This is a relatively unknown run but it's actually really fun. That evening I procured a half-pound burger with all of the fixings for \$6.

Sunday morning we awoke to much chillier temperatures, occasional sleet and a brisk, motivation-sapping wind. The rain must have done something, because the river was at 3.7 and rising... with the dam off-line, 3.5-4.0 feet is a great level for the "free-flowing" Moose - enough to make it really fun, but the steeper, dam-controlled second

Petawawa River (Jamie Dolan)



half of the run is not yet beefy. The only incident of note on this day was a heavily pig-nosed boat at Crystal and a timely and accurate rope thrown by Taylor. Also, Rogan made a ridiculously tricky attainment between two eddies in the run out - it happened so fast I didn't see exactly how he did it, and I wouldn't believe it possible had it not happened in front of me.

We leisurely packed at the take-out and hit

the road by mid-afternoon, and made it back to Vermont at a very reasonable hour.

All of the dam-release runs in New York (including the Beaver as well) are a lot of fun and something of a god-send during dry spring and fall weather. It would be great to see more Vermonters taking advantage of the plethora of classics in the western Adirondacks.

- Mike M

Petawawa River

Friday-Sunday May 17-19, 2013

Character: intermediate WW

Water Level: medium high

Organizer: Brock Richardson

Participants: (K1): John Atherton, Chris Weed, Jamie Dolan; (OC2): Brock Richardson, Eric Bishop; (Inflatable): Tina Sharf (Ducky)

With the Batiscan River too high We were scrambling to find a different river to run . After a talk with an outfitter We decided on the Petawawa. Located in the Algonquin Park near Pembroke Ontario about a 6 hour drive from Burlington. We Left Winooski at 6:00 AM after a few wrong turns and a stop at the Outfitter we got our gear loaded and put in around 4:00 pm.

Lake Traverse was our put in. We paddled a couple of miles into a stiff wind to our fist nights campsite. Tina fighting wind and feelings of abandonment, from the rest of us, managed to secure a ride on a john boat for about half the trip. I was

suprised and heartened to see her pull up about 30 seconds after we did . I was thinking we would unload the canoe,paddle back, and give her a tow and I was really glad not to have to.

Tina and I the two Birders were really excited to hear a Whipporwill calling . They have been declining and it is becoming rare to hear them. Dinner of salmon and Veggies and we were ready for bed.

Saturday dawned sunny and beautiful.Our first stop was big and Little Thompson Rapids. These are fairly easy class III rapids. Everyone helped portage the gear from the canoe as we scouted and everyone ran them without incident.

Our next stop was Crooked Chute Rapid. After looking at it we all elected to Portage. It is labeled class IV but at this level it looked more like a V . There did not appear to be a make-able line. the Kayaks were able to Run all but the corner chute with a short drag through an old sluiceway. We all portaged the gear over a really rough path wondering how we would do with the canoe. Luckily we found we were on a side path and the main path was much better. A half mile portage with the canoe and we were ready to go again. I would love to see someone run this rapid at this level.

Our last rapid of the day was Rollway. This is a really long class III plus boulder hopping run. Nothing very tricky but a nasty swim and few eddy's to empty out. The kayaks ran it with Jamie running the Ducky for Tina. Eric and I elected to carry after paddling a good portion of the easier entrance section.

We got to the beginning of Natch Rapids and decided to camp and run them Sunday.

Sunday dawned cloudy and sprinkles soon started. We scouted Natch Rapids and found them runnable by everyone. Two nice pool drops big enough to be challenging and a nice big pool to collect the pieces if things went wrong. John practiced his roll after getting stopped in a meaty wave but he was up like a pro. We then headed into the canyon section and were really impressed.. It is short but shear cliffs rise several hundred feet above both sides of the river making for spectacular views. This combined with the rapids above was my favorite part of the trip.

The remainder of the trip was long stretches of easy class II interspersed with flat water. followed by a lake paddle to the take out. We elected to end the trip a day early as it was raining and no one was eager to set up a camp in the rain.

A good time with great people.

My impressions are as follows:

This river gets a lot of traffic. We saw two other groups of canoes in early May. If you are looking for wilderness Algonquin park is probably not the best choice, too close to major population centers. I would imagine in summer that all the campsites would be full.

The rapids are fun but it's not a fabulous whitewater river. Quite a bit of flat water and the end rapids while long are not too interesting.

Portage trails are good. most portages can be shortened with scouting.

--Brock Richardson

Lower Mad Run Wednesday May 22, 2013

Character: nov-int WW

Water Level: medium low

Organizer: Tracy Wilson

Participants: (K1): Tracy, Mike Beers, Tom Rodgers, Ryan McCall, Jim Poulin, John Atherton, Chris Weed, Rich Carlilse, Justin ?; (C1): Alden Bird

Gauge Info: USGS Station: 423

Fun 'after work' trip. Water was a decent level. Lots of play to be had. No incidence to report .There was a large tree sitting on the rock in the center of the river at Horseshoe. Ryan decided to try to do the right thing by removing it, which then put it in the cauldron below the right side of horseshoe, recirculating. This made it abundantly clear that hole is at least 20 feet deep. Eventually, after many tries to remove it from there, the angry tree revolted and tried to pull Ryan in. Eventually he was able to get it out and put it up on the left shore. Otherwise, fun, uneventful trip!

- Tracy Wilson

Joe's Brook Saturday May 25, 2013

Character: advanced WW

Water Level: medium

Organizer: Alden Bird

Participants: (K1): Hugh Pritchard, Ryan McCall, Tom Rogers, Paul Carlile; (C1): Alden Bird
Gauge Info: USGS Flow: 3500 cfs; USGS Station: Passumpsic River, Passumpsic, Vermont

I have always preferred a river to a river section. This dichotomy extends, I believe, to my own start in the sport as a slalom racer, during which time the difference between paddling miles up and down a single slalom training rapid was always quite clearly juxtaposed against that for which it was considered training: paddling a whole length of river, or at least the parts acceptably white.

In hang gliding, the dichotomy persists between ridge soaring, whose practitioners remain aloft in uplifting winds on a single ridge before landing in a familiar field, versus cross country flying, whose pilot soars as high as he can before leaving familiar ridge and field to fly across many such local instances, refreshing himself on what uplift he may find, until he must finally land. To be setting out, to be pushing away from shore, to be paddling always toward the next horizonline -- this is the appeal of running other than a short section of river.

But a long river in itself would not do, only a long river with constant constriction and descent. I have always preferred rivers whose rapids are linked together continuously, requiring one who would descend them to join together many complex moves to reach the bottom. This is the promise of the technical challenge of an unending slalom course writ large, spiced with the element of real danger.

As I have gotten older and become both less engaged in paddling, and also more appalled by the river's danger, I have become less enamored of the very epitome of the unrelenting river such as I once preferred. I no longer aspire to paddle the fabled 15 miles above Banks, Idaho each summer, or to make my eddy turns among trees.

Now the river's passage through a deep gorge is more striking than its effect on my central nervous system. Now it would seem more striking to me to witness a river advancing through varied geographical rooms than through varied

hydrological terrors.

Joe's Brook, in its ten mile descent from the height of the land in Danville, whose residents view both the White and Green Mountains, is as long a steep river descent as may be found short of Quebec and long of West Virginia. It is Vermont's class four crown jewel, and we were lucky enough for it to run on Memorial Day weekend of this year.

Yet it may well as have been winter. On this late May morning, we put on to hail, portaged and paddled through rain, and strapped boats on in snow. No matter the aberration, but both Paul and Tom completed successful personal first descents of Joe's Brook.

One long portage was made in the early part of the river around a dangerous log. This portage, up and down a steep, loose bank, reminded one of how effective a conveyance through wild places is a river. Another portage was made around the steep rapid beneath the covered bridge, and a future portage will no doubt be made by the canoeist around the big roadside slide after the most recent scarifying descent, yellowing the rocks with plastic.

The promise of a river and not a river section is that we may one day remember all of its many rapids well enough that we may confidently link all of its moves together while staying in our boat and while leading our friends. Joe's Brook constricts frequently enough -- yet has water infrequently enough -- that this promise remains there for me.

- Alden Bird

North Branch Winooski At a Good Level...

Sunday May 26, 2013

Character: advanced WW

Water Level: medium

Organizer: Ryan

Participants: (K1): Ed C, Robyn B, Damon B, Ryan M

Gauge Info: Painted Gauge Height: 4.50 ft. (Putnamville)

Day 2 of a high quality Memorial Day boating

weekend.

I was sort of sitting around twiddling my thumbs in the morning not sure what may be running. Saturday was an amazing day on Joes and I was sort of dazed and just relaxing. Everything was up and running - we got lots of rain down low and the mountain tops were dressed in white with Mansfield seeing in excess of 18 inches.



North Branch Winooski, final drop. (Ryan McCall)

There was a last minute group headed out to fire up the North Branch Lamoille, but that was more of a drive than I had planned to make in the 60 minutes between when I got the call and when they were putting in the river. About 20 minutes later I got a call from Damon that he was headed this way and was curious if the NB Winooski would be in play. I honestly wasn't sure but would be happy to go run it with him. About 10 minutes later I was loading up my gear and another call from Damon said we would have Robyn and Ed along for the run as well. Cool - I honestly can't say that I've ever paddled with these guys, so it was going to be a new group on an old river. FUN.

At the take out the last drop looked plenty fluid and good to go so we loaded our gear and headed up to the put in. Right after the stone chimney there was a downed tree that was passable, but not something I'd want to trifle with at higher water. After that the river was completely clear - even the

hemlock below DD was further out of play.

The river was running at a very ideal level and allowed all of the standard lines and some variation if you were game. The first few warm up drops were quality and clean and the two after broken falls gave up huge boofs. The first major drop was bouncy down the right. Manky Mank was considerably more clean than usual (however the first portion had a log on river right). Big Bouncy was big and bouncy. I took the speed route for a change and didn't catch any eddies in the lead in. Amazing how much easier the drop is when you just run it in succession to the main portion of the drop. Damon and Ed had HUGE boofs and Robyn had it going all over the place with crazy sideways boofs and such. Good drop! Next up were the successive drops up to Double Drop. I think we all had cool lines some right of the sweet spot some on it. I ended up bouncing off the last part and rotating in mid air to finish backwards??? Never did that before - must have got a little rowdy off the initial boof. On down to Cave Falls - everyone ran the slide to boof. The hole at the base of the falls was looking particularly hungry today. And the last drop..... Ed and

Robyn ran river right and Damon and I ran the river left. Both Ed and Robyn had relatively clean lines. Damon was looking for the big boof off of the curler and ended up getting ejected into the hole (it looked pretty awesome, but not the line). I got on the sliding board and never got a piece of the flake that bounces you out and off of the bottom of the drop, but it was clean and smooth none the less.

It was a quality day on the river and I got some great shots of some great drops.... Keep an eye out on the pix section for them.....

- Ryan

Gale River (aka the river of lost gear)

Monday May 27, 2013

Character: int-adv WW

Water Level: medium high

Organizer: Brock Richardson

Participants: (K1): Brock, Jamie D, Chris W; (OC1): Tony S

Gauge Info: Painted Gauge Height: 1.10 ft. (river left side of bridge at Streeter Pond Road and Crane Hill Road)

We met in Richmond at 10 am, on a stunningly beautiful day. After a quick scout of Joe's in West Danville, with Tony and Jamie deciding the level was higher than they were comfortable with, we headed to Franconia, NH.

None of us had done the Gale and we didn't know what to expect. I was feeling particularly proud as I was bringing Tony Shaw to a river he had not run. What are the chances of that? We were pleasantly surprised to find a real gem. The river starts with a pleasant class II boulder-hopping and wave-catching run and gradually builds in difficulty to become an easy class III—similar to the lower New Haven. Beautiful clear water and remote wilderness surroundings enhance the experience. I was able to relax with a quick dip below one of the numerous holes.

The crux of the run is the Gorge section. It is a quarter mile with three distinct drops. The first drop is about a three foot ledge with a rather large river wide hole at the bottom. Jamie ran it first and

rolled up about three feet clear of the drop and began a slow creep backwards as the hole sucked him in. A valiant side surf ended with Jamie being bagged out of the hole. A chase for boat and paddle ensued.

I ran down-river and Jamie used my boat to give chase. He made it as far as the third ledge drop. I had stopped Tony to make sure he looked at it before he ran it. It runs into a huge foam pile on river right. (See photo of Chris Weed.) Tony styled it. Jamie was in my Mamba 8.6, an unfamiliar boat not fitted to him. He missed the ferry and ran the four foot drop river left into a frothy mess. Thus began his second swim of the day, albeit in a new boat.

Earlier in the day we had been speculating whether the gorge was really anything to worry about or if it even existed. After the fracas ended Tony pointed upstream and said: "I think that's the gorge."

The boats, Jamie, and my paddle were recovered in an eddy below. We hiked up and gave Chris the scouting report and set safety. Chris styled everything resulting in a great photo from Tony of Chris lost in a foam pile. I borrowed Tony's spare canoe paddle, gave Jamie my kayak paddle, and proceeded down-river in K1/C1 hybrid fashion. I actually really liked it. [I'm not sure "styled" is the term to use in my case; "near death experience" might be more appropriate. Nonetheless, I'll accept the compliment. —CW]

At the takeout, Jamie's inventory revealed lost paddle pogies and a throw rope. Tony realized he had managed to dump his throw rope while emptying his canoe. Despite the unusual amount of lost gear everyone added a new river to their list of favorites. Paddle the Gale

if you can; it's a gem.

Navigation, with help from Alden Bird's Let It Rain:

Take I-93 Exit 38 in Franconia, and take an immediate right (north) onto Route 18/116, which runs along the Gale River. Go about a mile and take a left onto Streeter Pond Road (by Coffin Pond). Travel for several miles until you come to a T-intersection. Take a left here (Sherman Road), go 0.5 miles, and park just before the bridge over the Ammonoosuc. The Gale comes in just downstream; a short hike gets you back to your shuttle vehicle. That's the takeout.

To get to the put-in, go back up Streeter Pond Road and watch for Crane Hill Road on your right, where it crosses the river. (That bridge is the gauge bridge.) Follow Crane Hill Road for about 0.75 miles to a point where it is close to the river. Park your vehicle(s) here, gear up, and put on.

Video: See this spring 2012 video on Vimeo, showing the Gale at a slightly lower level than we encountered. The ledge drops in the Gorge look a bit more friendly.

- Brock Richardson

Double Decker on Patterson and Bingo

Saturday Jun 8, 2013
Character: int-adv WW
Water Level: medium low
Organizer: Ryan
Participants: (K1): Noah P. Jamie D
Ryan M; (OC1): Tony S
Gauge Info: USGS Flow: 188 cfs; USGS Station: Ayers Brook

Two runs after a Friday night drubbing.

Patterson was an easy choice and there were a couple of guys that had never had an opportunity to boat it. The other logical option was Bingo and we all wanted to see how bad it was loaded up with Wood from Irene.

Tony Jamie Noah and I all met down in Granville. The level was low fluid. No complaints here. Great level to show the crew down this Green Mountain Gem. Check the pictures that Tony and Jamie posted - great stuff. It was a beautiful day to be on a beautiful river. The run went way too quickly and we were wanting for more, so we headed south to the little run Bingo. Rumor had it, that Bingo was chock full o' wood from Irene. We only came across one mandatory portage around wood and it was at a drop that would have required a portage that day anyways. Bingo was a blast of bedrock slides and channels. At the level we ran it, it was stupid low and most likely was the culprit of the new crack in the bottom of my boat!

Great day on the river(s) with a great crew. Looks like more great days are upon us with all of the rain we keep getting too!

- Ryan

NBW in warm weather

Friday Jun 28, 2013
Character: advanced WW
Water Level: medium
Organizer: Ryan
Participants: (K1): Ryan M, John A, Chris I; (OC1): Tony S
Gauge Info: Painted Gauge Height: 5.00 ft. (Putnamville)

Fantastic level, Fantastic Crew, A newby and an open boater! What more could we ask for.

Everyone ran the drops they ran with tight lines and big boofs. Tony fired up every drop in his Outrage sans Big Bouncy. Chris was as smooth as butter as usual. I had a complete run and cleaned everything pointing down stream for a change. John had a great run on all of the drops he ran and opted for the alpine line on his back side out of his boat on Final Drop from 30 feet up into 12 inches of water. He wins the big balls award for 2013. How he walked away with out a single broken bone is full on testament to the sheer ruggedness of a born and bred Vermonter. You'll have to ask him about the full story.

Gale River (Jamie Dolan)



We finished at dusk and in spite of the Superfly Snooka impersonation that John pulled - we were all smiling from a phenomenal run!

The NBW - DAMN it has to be the best waterfall run in VT. I think I may have heard that somewhere else before.....

- Ryan

North Branch Lamoille

Saturday Jun 29, 2013

Character: advanced WW

Water Level: low boatable

Organizer: Alden Bird

Participants: (K1): Tom Rogers, Ryan McCall, Andrew Blease; (OC1): Gigi Rioux; (C1): Alden Bird

Gauge Info: Painted Gauge Height: 1 ft. (Waterville); USGS Flow: 2000 cfs; USGS Station: Johnson, VT (level dropping)

In our approach are the makings of our outcome. As one's physical approach to a rapid can determine remarkably one's fate below, one's mental approach to a day's leisure can determine one's enjoyment far beyond his original resolution.

For my own part, I had last run the North Branch several years ago with a group of paddlers who had, while recognizing the efficacy of paddling the North Branch over doing tax work, would rather have been elsewhere. The experience had colored, or perhaps desaturated, my memories of the North Branch. Fortunately two years later, on this day, my joining up with friends more particularly relishing this trip did yield an altogether different outcome, whose ultimate trajectory might have been predicted by

our approach, as early on in the day as in our resolute optimism following a stop at the gauge rock.

The water low and dropping, we put on at the covered bridge slide and then paddled our boats to the irresistible current drifting slowly around the bend, and like nervous adolescents, bid goodbye to the town elementary school. The Lower Gorge lay beneath us, a buried vein of white in the Waterville woods, and we mined the amalgam of boulders and gradient for each golden nugget of boof or wave, taking our time in prospecting. The river here reminded me very much of Maryland's Top Yough River, with its small, sculpted riverbed a constant occasion for technique.

We entertained ourselves with little difficulty. Gigi, a Canadian, made proud her heritage by paddling her Esquif open canoe with great skill. Andrew, a recent southern transplant, had recently traded his creek boat for a playboat. Ryan, a creature of Northeast creeks, schooled him in the disadvantage of so doing. Tom Rogers, paddling



Waterville Ledges, North Branch Lamoille

again with the VPC after the Joe's Brook trip, showed himself one of Vermont's best up-and-coming boaters.

In my experience, the Waterville Ledges seem to magnify any eccentricity in the river's volume. I have thought the river above high only to encounter household hydraulics here, and on this day a river thought low was almost completely dissuasive in its grating Ledges.

Yet even here did apparent loss turn to gain by dint of resolute optimism. After Ryan's paddle snapped mid-drag down sandpaper slide, he had resolved that with unfamiliar equipment it would be unwise to attempt the more challenging river we had in mind for the afternoon. Ryan proposed running the upper section of the North Branch instead, and though we knew it would be nearly dry, we acceded to this plan with the characteristic enthusiasm of the day. We finished our improvised lunch (once again we turned seeming ill fate -- the Belvidere Store's unwillingness to bow to the relatively recent fad of selling sandwiches for lunch -- to a surprisingly rich alternative of pepperoni, cheese, and crackers), and then drove to the very upstart of the river drainage, to the bog in the shadow of Mt. Belvidere, from which the North Branch winds and gathers toward its fall.

This bog put in, so reminiscent of one in Quebec or Maine, was unique in Vermont, and seemed to me to bode well, despite the looming sky. As it grew darker, we encountered a final turn similar to that which earlier beckoned the Lower Gorge, yet here we found the river coursing through a forest more lush than constricted. The verdant, mossy forest bid one feel he is high above on the ridge, hiking a slightly wider Long Trail, so intimate is the glade. The river was also straight for long distances, which, coupled with its slight gradient, meant that one could behold the scenery from some distance. The water, though low, still lapped consistently across our bows, and on some occasions buried them. Both the character and consistency of the whitewater was ideal. One felt his passage through a rare gorge had been both facilitated by conveyance, and enhanced for sport.

Just below town we scouted the culminating

class IV rapid and among the bones of low water had cause again to marvel at the changes wrought by Hurricane Irene on our Vermont. We paddled well through this granite convergence.

I cannot think of a river I have run in a long time that all participants have so lauded and so sworn to return to. I hope to return myself to run the North Branch from bog to bedrock. What better place for a paddler than Waterville?

- Alden Bird

Gihon with a crew Sunday Jun 30, 2013

Character: advanced WW

Water Level: medium

Organizer: Ryan

Participants: (K1): Ryan M, Justin W, Chris W, Jamie D, Jim F, Jim P

The Gihon at medium level in the summer time is about as fun as it gets. Pool drop character and big fluffy drops at that.

This was a group of newbies to the river and they all showed up to boat. The first drop on the river is probably one of the largest easily run horizon lines to be had in VT. It is a 35+/- dam that you run down into the gorge. With out taking a look at where and what is happening below, it scares the pants off of you when you drop over the wier at the top and onto the face of the dam. 4 of us fired it up and 2 walked (I walked it my first time too and found that it was more of a class 5 portage) The dam drop is more like class III and may be the best entry to a river....EVER!

As we worked our way down through the upper gorge there are 3 or 4 very distinct drops that are a blast with Balls to the Walls being the biggest and MOSTEST FUNNEST! Stick hart right on the wall and let'er rip. All that ran it came out of it up right and smiling. A few more boofs and we were at Mustang. This is a Monster of a rapid and is the highlight of the run. At a full on class 5. No one was feeling it this day so we all either walked or seal launched in just below the last drop. Still fun in the slot gorge.

Flat water for the better part of a mile between



Ryan McCall on the Gihon River (Jamie Dolan)

the two gorges and then Bed Head came into play. Again looking rather munchy and unfriendly, we all put in below and ran Eldorado with varying degrees of competence. On to Spinich all taking different lines and then down to Pin Cushion that most ran far left and I ran over the boil. All cleanly.

Only Power House and Sunshine were left and all ran then cleanly....

Good day on the Gihon for a bunch of newbies for sure!

- Ryan

The many faces of Patterson Brook

Tuesday Jul 2, 2013

Character: advanced WW

Water Level: medium high

Organizer: Ryan

Participants: (K1): Hugh P, Justin W

Patterson...Yea another report from Ryan about Patterson....

This is a good one. Two newbies to the run. One a budding creek boater and the other a world class athlete. They both played it up like champs on the first run. Low and mellow, but as always.....Fun.

Then Hugh and I ran shuttle..... really we ran. He sucks to run with btw. I thought I was going to puke twice! Anyways while running up the sky uncorked and dumped in excess of an inch of water in about 15 minutes.

DUH - Lap 2 was on tap! We drove up and put on again to a much more fluid river. By the time we got to the inner gorge the waterfall coming in on the right was HUGE and pumping brown doubling the flow at that point. Needless to say the rest of the run was fluffy and fluid. We all had a great second run and I managed to count a few fish after the last

rapid! OUCH!

- Ryan

Gihon with another newbie

Saturday July 6, 2013

Character: advanced WW

Water Level: low boatable

Organizer: Ryan

Participants: (K1): Ryan M, Andrew Blease

Good old Gihon..... Great drops no matter the level.

We broke a welded boat on the first drop - The dam! Taped it up and headed down river. Andrew is a class III boater from North Carolina - that means he is more like a solid clas IV+ boater. He cleaned everything easily and styled the river way the heck better than I did that day. And get this he is an open boater boating in a hardshell right now still making everything looks easy.

We walked Mustang and ran everything else below with style only leaving small shards of plastic on occasion.

For a change we ran down through town to the Studio Center drop and finished out there.

Good warm Gihon lap on a lazy Saturday.....

- Ryan

Saranac take 2 in 2013 Sunday Jul 7, 2013

Character: advanced WW

Water Level: medium high

Organizer: Chris Weed

Participants: (K1): Chris Weed, Brock Richardson; (OC1): Tony Shaw, Eric Bishop; (Inflatable): Dan Sherbrook

Gauge Info: USGS Gauge Height: 5.75 ft.; USGS Flow: 2670 cfs; USGS Station: Plattsburgh, NY (3 miles from LC)

Based on participation in two runs in 2011 led by Tony Shaw, Chris had been promoting the Silver Lake Road to Redford section of the Saranac on the message board for a few weeks, and had made a run on June 15th with Jamie Dolan. Normally this would not be an option in June and July due to lack of water, but 2013 is not a normal year. It's the weekend after July 4, and Lake Champlain is almost at flood stage!

After another rainy week in northeastern New York and northern Vermont, the Saranac was holding nicely into the weekend at around 6 feet on the Plattsburgh gauge. Brock had been hoping to do the Swift in New Hampshire for the first time, but it was way too low. I pushed for the Saranac as an alternative, and a small group came together. Only Tony and Chris had done it before in recent years (twice in 2011, plus the June 15th run), and Eric's last and only run was over a decade ago. Brock and Dan had never been on the river.

Four of us met at the Milton Park & Ride off I-89 Exit 17 at 12 noon, Sunday. Dan caught up with us about 20 minutes later on Route 2, after a bit of cell phone communication. The drive to Redford is straightforward: Take Route 2 and Route 314 (VT) to the Grand Isle Ferry, cross the Cumberland Head, take Route 314 (NY) to I-87 south, take the next exit (38N) onto Route 374, go 7.3 miles to Route 3, and stay on Route 3 to Redford (12.1 miles). We used the regular takeout, which is at the intersection of Silver Lake Road and Route 3, adjacent to a bridge. The North Branch of the Saranac enters the Saranac at that point.

The put-in is a canoe trail off Casey Road (in the town of Saranac). Drive 3.4 miles up Silver Lake Road to where Casey Road splits off on the right by a house. (There is no sign. If you come to a bridge over the Saranac you have gone too far.) Drive another 0.9 miles down Casey Road, and STOP! Get out of your vehicle, and walk the left side of the road. The trailhead is right there, but it is easy to miss while driving. The distance is from AW's river guide, and it is exactly right. (Google Maps clearly shows the convergence of road and river.) The trail lies on a narrow swath of New York DEC land between private parcels (which are posted). The river is not visible through the woods at this point. The trail is about 200 yards long.

Unfortunately we did not follow the above advice to the letter, and wasted a few miles of driving and some time. Nonetheless, we were headed down the trail by about 3:00 pm after completing our car shuttle.

Chris was last to arrive at the river; everyone had launched or was about to launch. As he put on his gear, he felt for his car keys in his PFD. They weren't there. After an anxious search he yelled across the river that he was headed back up the trail. Back at his car, he confirmed that the keys were not on the roof (part of his normal routine) or in the ignition. A search around the car yielded nothing. So he headed back down the trail, studying it closely but finding nothing.

At the river, Tony and Eric were back at the put-in. After a bit more searching Chris abandoned the effort and decided to put on. Some discussion of options ensued on the river, while paddling the introductory class 2-3 rapids to Tefft Pond. Gradually, the concern about the keys was set aside and attention turned to the river.

This run has a nice warmup. It starts with two rapids that certainly get one's attention with a few ledges, holes, and substantial waves, but are not long or difficult. It then quiets down to slowly moving flatwater through Adirondack marshland, a section known as Tefft Pond. A couple of houses appear along the pond. After the second house the channel narrows, and before long it rounds a

bend at which a low roar can be heard. This is Tefft Pond Falls, a class IV+ drop. At higher levels, it is certainly a class V drop. The portage is on the right. Fortunately, it is easy to take out here. At this point one has covered a bit more than 1.5 miles on the river.

We have never considered running Tefft Pond Falls, although undoubtedly it can be run by solid class 5 boaters. At the bottom of the falls and the very short portage trail it is clear that the game has



Paul Carlile on Joe's Brook

changed. One ferries out into a wave train. There is a brief pause, and then another beefy class 3 rapid with plenty of holes. This leads down to the top of a steeper rapid—essentially a cascade of wide ledge holes. It is crucial to eddy out on river left at this point, and we did.

We took some time to scout, and everyone decided on a line. Eric wasted no time, and took his canoe down the far left channel between the left bank and a small island. (It is obstructed by a tree at the top, so a brief walkaround is needed.) This is a somewhat tricky line with ledge holes, but the volume in the channel is relatively small.

Tony took his accustomed line, on the left side of the main channel, where he could skirt the really big holes that start at that point. As in previous trips, his canoe skated neatly over the edges of a staggered series of holes, and he eddied out on river left. While he ran his line Chris and Dan were still in scouting position downstream on the river left bank.

Brock had declared his intention to follow Tony, and he hiked back promptly to the top of the rapid. (Chris had some misgivings about this, because in the past runs Tony's line had not been friendly to kayaks, even creek boats like Brock's Dagger Mamba 8.6.) As Chris and Dan were making their return trip Brock started downstream and launched over the first ledge. He meant to avoid the first big hole, but a log had to be first passed on the right, forcing a right-to-left maneuver.

That maneuver didn't go as hoped. The hole grabbed its quarry, and Brock was quickly out of his boat and swimming. He

later said that while the ledges were smooth he was very glad to receive a rope from Tony, who had quickly set up downstream for the rescue. This concern was understandable, because from this point on the river is almost continuous class 3+ rapids easing eventually into big class 2-3 rapids, all in a wide channel with relatively few narrow eddies at the banks, traversing 3.5 miles or more. Unfortunately, Brock's paddle was caught up in this flow, and continued on to points unknown.

Chris and Dan saw all this, and hurried back to the top of the far river left channel. Chris had selected another line for them, referred to as "Noah's line". (Noah Pollock had used it in April 2011.) It required a quick ferry across the river

left channel and an immediate drop onto a small tongue to the right of a second tiny island with a tree on it. The tongue was framed on the left by a log, well out of the main flow. The tongue led right into an eddy, where subsequent options could be assessed. All in all, this is the most conservative route for a kayak (or a packraft like Dan's).

A minute or two later, Chris and Dan were down in an eddy near Tony. Brock was getting into an eddy downstream. At that point we saw Brock's boat; it had partially washed up on an island near the bottom of the main rapid, surrounded by wood as it turned out. Eric had earlier seen where Brock's boat had settled and had ferried out towards the island, but ended up with his canoe under a log on its river left side, not so easily seen from upstream. At this point he was out of his canoe and working to free it.

In a few minutes Eric did free his boat and tied it off so he could focus attention on the marooned kayak. However, something was amiss; the painter wasn't securely attached to the canoe, and it soon floated free. In a matter of seconds it started moving downstream. Eric was unable to reach it, and returned his attention to the kayak, quickly reached it, and after a few attempts freed it, pulled it onto the island, and dragged it to an eddy on the downstream side.

Those of us on river left were expecting to tow the boat over to river left, but Eric had another plan in mind. He settled himself in Brock's boat, and paddled it sit-down C-1 style downstream, deftly ferrying over to river left. He had kept a rope with him and soon had the Mamba securely tied to shore.

At this point the choices were pretty clear, if unpalatable. Brock and Eric hiked downstream on the river left bank. Tony followed them on the river. The details from here on are a bit sketchy, but Eric's canoe was recovered quite some distance downstream and Brock paddled his Mamba C-1 style with a spare canoe paddle for the remainder of the run, after an unpleasant hike along the heavily wooded bank. This was his second opportunity to do this, after a recent experience on the Gale River on May 27. He admitted (as an experienced canoe

paddler) that it was quite an enjoyable alternative to using a kayak paddle, even sitting down.

Dan and Chris continued downstream, expecting to rejoin the group when the second canoe was recovered. Chris got ahead, and lost sight of Dan, who had seen the canoes and (eventually) got himself over to river left bank. Chris even stopped and scouted back upstream for some distance, but saw no one, so he returned to his boat and headed downriver solo. This included a run of the last big drop, consisting of a beefy wave train alongside an island, requiring that one catch an eddy and work left to avoid a big hole—not so hard if its expected.

Chris reached the takeout well ahead of everyone else, but eventually all were reunited, and Tony and Chris headed up to the put-in to retrieve Chris's car. Of course, the missing car keys were now the main concern. On the river, Chris had gradually realized what he had probably done. His boat and gear had been pulled a few yards down the trail by the rest of the group during the first shuttle run. He had walked to it, set his keys on the stern (as he often has at a put-in), and pulled on some of his gear with the intention of completing the process by the river. The keys had slid unnoticed off the boat and onto the trail, and the crucial step of zipping them into a PFD pocket had been skipped.

During the drive back to the put-in Chris explained this possible scenario, and Tony was the first one down the trail to where the boat had been left. Sure enough, the keys were sitting on the side of the trail in plain sight. Tony and Chris returned to the takeout in their respective vehicles and were greeted with relief by Eric, Dan, and Brock. It was well after 7:00 pm at this point (on a Sunday!).

The moral (at least one) is: On a river like this, be really well prepared to recover gear in case of mishap. In this case, that meant that anyone taking a somewhat risky line through the ledge cascade should wait until the remainder of the group is assembled at the bottom and ready to recover whatever comes downstream. Of course, the other implication is that having a good-sized group is highly advisable. Two boaters alone would

be hard put to handle the situation, with miles of continuous rapids to follow. As for the trip leader, well, mea culpa.

That said, this is a beautiful river with a ton of quality whitewater, fed by multiple lakes in its headwaters. It really deserves to be run more often. It offers an easier option—a four mile run from Union Falls Dam (on Union Falls Pond) which can be reached via Casey Road or via Silver Lake Road and Union Falls Road.

KEEP THE SARANAC IN MIND!

- Chris Weed

Fiddlehead before work Wednesday Jul 10, 2013

Character: intermediate WW

Water Level: medium

Organizer: Ryan

Participants: (K1): Ryan M

Hugh P

Gauge Info: USGS Flow: 2500 cfs; USGS Station: Montpelier

Had planned to run the Marshfield section of the Winooski but by the time we arrived it was well below a boatable level, so back south we went to the Hidden Dam....

Put in below the hidden dam and had a great run above the Kubota Dam on what would be a AWESOME big water run. I was getting the feel for my new old skool boat donated by Paul Carlile. Gotta luv the sleek!!!!

We portaged the Kubota dam through some of the thickest poison ivy I've ever crawled through and caught it...UGH

We ran the Fiddlehead and then headed to work. Not a bad way to start the day....it so makes the drone at the office less painful!

Go get some flow before work kids....

- Ryan

The Great Canadian Epic part 1: Tewkesbury and the Mistassibi

Saturday-Monday Aug 10-12, 2013

Character: int-adv WW

Water Level: medium low

Organizer: Felix

Participants: (K1): Clay, Mike, Felix

A lot of what is posted in the online kayaking world - blog posts, trip reports, facebook statuses - especially ones detailing longer or harder rivers in particular - often times seem more about touting one's own achievements than about sharing information with fellow paddlers ... so while this is going to be a fairly long account of two weeks paddling in Quebec, I'll try to make it more informative than boastful. After all, we paddled a few rivers that are not really that far from Vermont, are really high quality, run when most runs in Vermont are bone dry, and yet are almost never run by Vermont boaters. If that piqued your interest, read on - it'll be a long one, but if I have written accurately, then you just may find yourself paddling something different one of these weekends.

Also, please keep in mind that many, many rivers in Quebec are under threat of hydropower development, and the more people that run and publish a record of those runs, the harder it is going to be for the axis of evil to divert them.

Clay and I left Burlington Saturday afternoon, August 10, drove up and picked up our new Quebec friend Felix. Felix actually knows a lot of Vermont paddlers, but if you don't, just know that (1) He knows every single person in Quebec and (2) He pretty much embodies everything you know about French-Canadian paddlers, i.e. he runs everything in a playboat, is a virtual encyclopedia of inappropriate humor, wears sunglasses at all hours of the day, even at night, and will likely return from running shuttle with some attractive Quebecois woman. If you read further, you'll learn that without him our American asses would have gotten lost many times over the course of the next few weeks and I'd advise against boating in Quebec without him.

That evening, we ran the Tewkesbury section of

the famed Jacques-Cartier River, just 30 minutes outside of Quebec City. It was running a bit on the low side for early August, but a little rain the past week had brought it up to -1 on the put-in gauge, or about 50 cms (1700 cfs), which turned out to be a really pleasant medium-low level. The raft companies maintain a very nice put-in available to paddlers (park at the back of the lot) and after the customary opening of beers, donning of kayaking regalia and vague comments about the late hour, we put on a little after 7:00. A short section of flatwater and class II and we got into a great section of fun, boat-scoutable class III-IV rapids in a small canyon. It had something of a bigwater feel with some nice playspots, lots of interesting eddies, a few good boofs and minimal flatwater but plenty of pools between rapids - very similar to the West Branch Penobscot at lower levels. The scenery is pretty nice - like the Deerfield Valley, but in a boreal way that reminds you that you're on the edge of the vast Laurentian wilderness. There were perhaps a dozen rapids total and by the time things started flattening out we felt pretty sated. I did the very hill shuttle on foot, which as about 5 miles and took 35 minutes. All in all, the run took about an hour, with shuttle being less than 10 minutes each way. I expected something mediocre, but was pleasantly surprised to find a river that is really a local classic. It's nothing like the Taureau or Malbiae, but for something you can run on a summer evening it's really good. Look for about 25 cms as a fun minimum, Alden's book has directions... go get it!

That evening in Quebec City, we talked about what we should do tomorrow. Lapping Tewkesbury seemed like a fine option, but Felix insisted that the Lac St. Jean area was sort of in the direction we needed to go (and about 3 hours away), and there were some really good runs up there like the Mistassibi and Valin (which was actually very high at the time). Clay and I hesitantly agreed to make the drive up there.

Now for an interlude... if you are in Quebec City and are looking for Kayak regalia/paraphernalia, there are two shops in Quebec City: Mountain Equipment Coop (essentially Canada's REI) and La Vie Sportive (sort of like the OGE of Quebec City). MEC has a good selection of standard

outdoor gear, though they have limited whitewater gear (i.e. just a few skirts and paddles). La Vie Sportive has a really good selection of boats, paddles, skirts, drytops, etc and has a much greater inventory of whitewater gear than any shop in New England. The prices are good and they are willing to negotiate. By my calculations, they are closer than MountainMan in Old Forge, and the exchange rate is still somewhat favorable.

Anyways, we headed up to Lac St. Jean, making the very scenic drive up Autoroute 73 through the Laurentians. We headed straight for the Mistassibi, paid the \$3 per person take-out fee at the raft company, and got to the put-in by late afternoon. If you're one of the few people who have not read about it in Alden's book, the one thing you should know about this is that it's a big-water run. Gearing up, we could see the first rapid downstream, which looked like a class II riffle. Felix assured us it was actually a big class IV rapid. Once on the water, we started to realize the scale of many of Quebec's rivers when those class II riffles turned out to be a giant wavetrain with a few big holes here and there.

The Mistassibi was awesome. Thunderstorms floated in the distance, with bolts of lightning hitting the horizon, while we paddled in hot, golden evening sunlight which refracted through the clean water which was as translucent and clear as white wine. There were several long, big-water rapids, almost all read-and-run with only short stretches of moving water in between. You may recall the largest rapid, Hawaii, was featured in the 2012 Whitewater Grand Prix. At the level we paddled (200 cms... about 7000 cfs... I would say medium-low, though levels mean nothing on a big-water river like the Mistassibi) the massive curler was actually a massive diagonal hole, which we avoided. This was a great run that challenged Clay and Me, who had not paddled bigwater in several months. Felix said he ran it in a playboat at 600 cms and that it was a lot of fun. I would say the Mistassibi is basically a bigwater version of the New Haven Ledges (even though it's a totally different style of river) - short enough to be convenient, but long enough to be a full run, challenging enough to be interesting, but never scary, with a quick shuttle (6 miles, 15 minutes in the car or 45 on foot) and

runnable at a very wide range of levels. Anyways... go run this river... it has the finest class IV bigwater this side of the Zambezi, it's running while you read this and you can hit lots of other great rivers nearby, and on your way to and from there.

That evening met the landowner at the takeout. Felix chatted with him a bit, and he said it would be fine if we camped there. The folks around Lac St. Jean are really nice - the whole area is something of an enclave with a slightly different dialect and culture and with the absurd amount of whitewater in the area it's a place worth a visit.

Tourtierre, because it's so key to the whole Lac St. Jean paddling experience. It's the ultimate post-paddling food - delicious, hearty, caloric, readily available and inexpensive (I got a massive serving for about \$6). It's basically spiced ground meat and potatoes in a flaky pot-pie crust. It has the same classic Quebec cachet as poutine, but it's culturally more important - it's as Quebecois as thanksgiving turkey is American. You can get it at almost any diner, deli, or grocery store hot-food section in the Lac St. Jean area.

So that concludes the paddling in this portion of the trip report. Our next destination, the Magpie



New Haven Ledges (Jamie Dolan)

In the morning, we did two more great laps on the Mistassibi, stopping to run Hawaii twice on each lap and trying out the tricky right line of the rapid just below. Unfortunately our time on this wonderful river had to end and we headed east again, but not without stopping for some of the signature Lac St. Jean comfort food, Tourtiere, a delicious meat pie.

I'm actually going to add a little more about

River, lay 8 hours east and given the significant nature of that run, I will describe it in a separate trip report. The drive was long and very scenic and brought us to an area that all of us had heard of, but had never been (including Felix) - the Cote Nord.

In the meantime, you should start planning you're paddling trip up to Quebec City or Lac St. Jean. Keep in mind that there are many, many

other rivers of all sorts in these areas, but given the dry summer they weren't running while we were there, though many of them often run in August.

- Mike M

The Great Canadian Epic part 2: The Magpie River Wednesday-Tuesday Aug 14-20, 2013

Character: advanced WW

Water Level: medium high

Organizer: I blame Tom

Participants: (K1): Tom Nielson (VT), Eric Orenstein (DC), Borge Hamso (NOR), Will Seegers (VT), Taylor Krammen (VT), Andrew Krammen (MA), Brian Rockwood (CT), Felix Touzain (QC), Clay Murphy (VT), Mike Mainer (VT)

Gauge Info: USGS Flow: 10000 cfs; USGS Station: CEHQ Lac Magpie

If you read the last trip report, about Clay, Felix and myself paddling in the Quebec City and the Lac St. Jean area, you probably already have an idea as to what is going on here. If not, just know that 10 people, 7 Burlington-area paddlers (mostly UVM-affiliated, or previously UVM-affiliated), one Quebec paddler, a Norwegian and a Washingtonian were all headed for Sept-Iles, where our adventure on the Magpie river would start.

I'll try to keep this more informative than boastful, without spoiling future trips with too much information. Apologies for the length, but it seems there is a lot to say about this river (much of which is not contained in the trip report)

If you don't know much about the Magpie, read the description in Alden's book. Or, here are a few more resources:

<http://riversenses.blogspot.com/2008/06/magpie-river.html>

<http://www.ukriversguidebook.co.uk/reports/north-america/magpie-river-diary>

<http://www.npmb.com/3/forum/tripping-camping-poling-etc/magpie-trip-report/>

http://www.bassioutdoors.com/Magpie_River.html

html

To summarize, the Magpie is a 5-8 day, wilderness trip that starts on the West Branch of the Magpie, descends that to Lake Magpie, crosses that and then finishes on the Magpie River proper. The general consensus is that August and September are the best time of year, and that at typical levels for that time of year, the river has lots of class III-IV but with some class V rapids thrown in there. The best way to access the run is by float plane. The typical put-in is at Lac Vital - (<http://goo.gl/maps/8d23dsee>). I'll put more logistical information you might find useful in planning a trip at the end of this report.

Typical flows on the Magpie gauge for this time of year are around 170 cms, though as August rolled around, the river was historically low, dropping down to 60 cms. We were concerned about having enough water for the trip, especially on the smaller West Magpie - but as departure time approached, the river started rising and by the time everyone started driving it was near 170 cms and still rising slowly.

Anyways, Clay, Felix and I drove down from Lac St. Jean while the rest of the crew departed Burlington on Monday, August 12. We stopped for the night on a random logging road near Les Escoumins, and were surprised when Tom, Borge and Eric somehow found us there in the middle of the night - two groups randomly encountering one another in the middle of a 600,000 square mile province. There was a great meteor shower that night. The remainder of the drive was really scenic with spruce-clad, craggy granite mountains rising out of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and many large, appealing rivers, rapids and falls visible from the road. Adventurous boaters take note: there is clearly a lot of stuff to explore out here, even later in the summer, though unfortunately many runs have been dammed/diverted, or will be soon.

Sept-Iles is something of a boom town, with an aluminum refinery, large port (which handles iron ore from up north), and lots of activity related to hydropower and mining development. All day long helicopters and float planes buzz overhead, carrying not just boaters and fishermen but also

prospectors and HydroQuebec survey crews. The consequence of this is that Sept-Iles looks a lot like Rutland, with many fast-food joints, chain stores and gas stations. It also means that open motel rooms are impossible to come by and the cheap ones are still \$200 or more. The float plane company said that camping at their place was fine, but the forecast was calling for 2" of rain, high winds and adverse travel conditions the following day. Felix came to rescue and called a local friend, who called their friend, and so on, and before long he had found us a nice, inexpensive beachside cottage with space for 10. Sorting gear, packing boats, picking up a few more food items, etc. took about 5 hours. Shuttle to the Magpie takeout is 80 minutes to the east in the middle of nowhere. As an auspicious start to the adventure, we were treated to a pretty decent Borealis on the drive back and pulled off, turning off headlights and admiring the unearthly swirling green light to our north, clearly visible nearly 100 miles from any major population center.

Up at 5:30 the next morning, the weather didn't look too bad and so we were off to the float plane base. The pilot said that bad weather was coming in, but he could get one group of five in - but probably not the second. This concerned us a bit - when flying into a wilderness area several times the size of Vermont, you want to keep the group together. Felix, the skilled negotiator cut a bargain - we'd fly in a day later at a slightly reduced price - and we headed back to the cabin and made a huge breakfast with the rest of the crew. Sure enough, the clouds dropped down and the rain started. We passed the rest of the day paddling on the ocean, taking quick, cold skinny dips, warming up in the hot tub and sampling various liquors.

Up at 5:30 a day later, the first group of five piled into Tom's truck and by 7:00 Labrador Air Safari's baggage handler/secretary/radio operator/dispatcher/accountant/customer service rep (a large, mustachioed man named Tarzan) had loaded 5 80-pound creek boats into the back of the 1963 DHC Otter, and after a quick warm-up lap around the lake to get the big piston engine to stop mis-firing, we were airborne and headed north. I don't want to spoil this part of the trip - but that part of Quebec is awesome... 1500' deep canyons

with big rivers and big rapids cross the pristine landscape. There is a lifetime of exploration available to a motivated boater in this area! A little over an hour later we were pushing our boats onto a small windswept beach, set amid stunted spruce and acres and acres of open, spongy reindeer moss. We picked blueberries, took a nap and paddled across the lake to find the outlet and just two hours later, the second group of five had joined us. At this point (12 noon exactly), there was not much to do but get in our boats, paddle across the lake and start down La Riviere Vital (nice class III), which soon deposited us into the West Branch of the Magpie.

At this point, I'll provide a brief description of each day, but will leave out many details, such that subsequent groups may derive pleasure from exploring this fine river as if it had never even been run before.

The remainder of Day 1 involved paddling some flatwater to the first set of rapids, most of which were ledgey big-water drops with big pools and holes, though there was one very beefy impressive gorge which turned out to be one of the most memorable rapids. There were some extended sections of pool-drop class II and III, a few class IV and by evening, some big, meaty class V rapids returned. We ran almost everything that day, except for a steep, unfriendly boulder garden that only Eric and Borge fired up, making it through by the skin of their teeth. The remainder of us learned how exhausting dragging a loaded creekboat through the woods can be. The holes in this section were huge! In fact, after I blew a line and plugged one of the largest, scariest pourovers I've seen (fortunately getting worked briefly before flushing out in my boat), we all realized that we were tired, on a pretty tough river and in a setting where a swim would be disastrous. We set up camp and cooked dinner above another big horizon line and were snoozing pretty quick.

Day Two started with a similar set of big rapids, before settling down into many, many miles of quality, long, boat-scoutable class II, III and IV rapids interspersed with short sections of moving flatwater. Things flattened out a bit towards the end of the day, and the drizzly cold rain yielded

to warm sunlight and a beautiful evening. We stopped on the only sandy beach we could find... the UK Rivers Guidebook said that there were nice beaches everywhere... where were they, and why was the water nearly up into the bushes? At any rate, the scenery was astounding up here, and it felt great to build a nice big fire, get dried out, and enjoy portions of our scotch rations. So far, the river had been much more challenging than we expected, but with standout rapids and lots of in-between stuff that was still absolutely awesome. While I had originally imagined the Magpie as a flatwater river with some good sections of whitewater, it was turning out to be a fantastic whitewater river with just a few modest sections of flat-but-still-fast-moving flatwater.

Day Three had more sun and a bit of pleasant flatwater to start with. The goal was to push through a fairly steep, 6-mile section of continuous rapids and hopefully make it close to Lake Magpie. After just an hour we hit the first horizon line and made fast progress through a mile of tense, continuous class IV bigwater before an even larger horizon line had us out of our boats and portaging. The rest of the day was tough, with plenty of great bigwater rapids, many boat-scoutable, but many tight lines complicated by massive holes and high gradient - yes there was some portaging, which was exhausting. By midafternoon we were all getting pretty beat and were confronted by a walled-in ledge drop with two nearly river-wide holes and a house-sized pillow. The portage took a few more hours and a lot of energy, and when we dropped back to the river, we found more big rapids. Fortunately things yielded not long after and we boat-scouted miles of class II-IV big-water before the sun set and we climbed out on a rock slab to find a nice, flat, lichen-padded campsite, still miles from our intended destination. This turned out to be one of the hardest days of boating I've done, and we made a futile effort to dry our gear out before we crashed, hoping to start tomorrow early.

By this time, it was clear that our expectations had been exceeded - we had paddled incredible whitewater over three days, with no more than a few hours of flatwater total. The rapids had, in general, been really big, and the volume seemed

comparable to high-water Dead River or spring Hudson Gorge (5000+ cfs, we thought), though the rapids were steeper and narrower. The sandy beach campsites we heard about were not to be seen, and the tributaries we had seen were bankfull. Were we just wussy Vermont creekboaters lost in a land of bigwater, or was the river higher than we thought?

Day Four started with a cold rain, and easy rapids that tapered to flatwater, with occasional big ledge drops with bad holes. Exhausted, we ran most of this without getting out, but before long we paddled into a long class II rapid that ended with a narrow, misty horizon line. Clay and I hopped and out were pleased to see we had reached the final gorge above Lake Magpie. The gorge looked huge and almost runnable, if not for the enormous hole at the end, the largest any of us had seen. There was a pretty acceptable portage trail on river left, and we gratefully used it, making the portage in about an hour. It looked like portions of the gorge could be very runnable, at the right level, but you'd want to start on river right, which offers easier access to the river.

An hour later we reached Lake Magpie, an arresting blue fjord. The sun came out and we stopped on a beach for lunch. 25 miles south lay the Magpie River, and we had to paddle that entire distance. I think Borge, the sage Norwegian, pretty much summed up how we felt at that point: "Make epic portages, camp in the rain, get bitten by blackflies, run huge, awesome rapids and keep going until you are exhausted and beaten down... then you'll be halfway". The group was certainly learning how challenging, and rewarding multi-day boating can be.

That afternoon we paddled about 12 miles into a moderate headwind, which took about 5 hours. Finally we could take no more, and we headed for a beach on the east side of the lake. The strongest among us were beat, and when I looked back, I saw several of my friends drifting in the waves, heads hung low, too tired to paddle the last few hundred yards. There was a light, cold rain while we made camp, which persisted over night and into the morning. If this was a true expedition journal of a truly epic trip, now is when I would

write something like:

Today was the day we had to amputate Clarence's toes... he was stoic despite the lack of anesthesia and the use of a camp-axe for the task.

We were not in such dire straights, so instead, I will write:

Today was the day we ran out of Tequila... Fortunately, Clay had brought a lime

Day Five saw a very tired group out in the wilderness, wondering how a run known for forgiving class III and IV had been so rough. Borge, the hearty Norwegian who paddles through Norwegian winters wearing only fleece had started having an allergic reaction to black fly bites, and Eric, former Great-Falls race champion, had a cold which was working its way into his chest. I was in the best paddling shape I'd ever been in after the incredibly wet summer in Vermont - effortlessly laying down 6-8 high-water New Haven runs in an afternoon, multiple laps on the Big Branch, a podium-finish at the Wells Race... and yet my arms felt like lead and just a few paddle strokes had been agonizing. We had pretty much concluded that the river was high... but how high? Would the main Magpie, which is three times the size of the West Magpie, even be runnable?

The sun came out almost as soon as we got on the water, and we were pleased to find a brisk tailwind. For the next four hours, we surfed whitecaps down the lake, the powerful wind pushing us towards our destination. 13 miles later, we stopped for lunch at the outlet of Lake Magpie and took off our drysuits to dry out our baselayers in the sunshine. Back on the water, we found miles of boat-scoutable, high volume class II, III and IV rapids - nothing complex and with only a few holes to avoid, mostly just wavetrains with powerful seams and boils and pleasant recovery pools at the bottom of every one. We stopped early on a beautiful, flat rock ledge with just enough space for 10 people. With a stiff breeze and warm sunshine, all our gear was dry in about 30 minutes, and a couple folks pulled out fishing rods and practically pulled 12" brook trout out of the water with spoons. We voraciously devoured them. It seemed that

having proven ourselves for the first four days, the river was permitting us easy access to this amazing place.

The plan for Day Six was to paddle as far as we felt like - maybe making it to the takeout, maybe not, but certainly enjoying the river and running as much high-quality whitewater as possible. On the water early, we paddled miles of class III-IV bigwater, with Tom doing some incredible boat scouting. We carried a few ledges with absolutely massive holes - entire rivers flowing upstream amid an even larger river, but on the whole we found quality, runnable, forgiving whitewater. Late afternoon saw some large, flat pools and eventually a huge horizon line. We portaged the Magpie Gorge on a nice trail on the right, stopping to admire what we estimated to be 10,000 cfs dropping several hundred feet in less than a mile. These were far and away the largest rapids any of us had seen. Perhaps someday these cataracts will be run, but we were content to walk, fortunate to have just seen the place. Another pool and another huge horizon line, this one Magpie Falls, where the entire river drops around 100 feet. 6 days of hard work to get here, and we were feeling the reward. The amount of energy expended by 10,000 cfs dropping 100 feet is not easily understood. After following this river for 6 days, it was now going somewhere that we will never go, but seeing it do so was an honor.

A little more flatwater and a few rapids, and we came around the corner to the rude site of the dam and the take-out trail on the right. We were too tired to really feel indignant over the dam, which has flooded the last quarter mile of river, but in retrospect that was really the only unpleasant part of the trip... we can make epic portages, take beatings in giant holes, camp in swamps and paddle until our arms hurt and be the better for it... but damming rivers like this hurts everyone far more, human species and otherwise.

At the takeout we opened beers and changed into dry clothes. There hadn't really been time to let the whole experience sink in. But over the past few days, I've been thinking about the experience and whether I'd do it again. At first I didn't really know - it was a hard trip, much harder than I could

have imagined - but now I am quite sure I will do it again.

Logistics:

Water: Folks typically do the run in August or September, at seasonal minimum flow. Earlier in the season is possible, but it will be quite high and the bugs will be out in force. The average August/September flow is 170 cms. As it turns out the level was around 300 cms (10,000 cfs) while we were there - near historical high for that time of year. I would not call that too high, or even high - it's a perfectly reasonable level for the West Magpie, which by its nature is a challenging run that folks typically run at low water - and it's an absolutely fantastic level for the Magpie proper. Vermont paddler Mike McDonnell once ran this in June at epic high water, and there was a lot of carnage and a float plane evac. My guess is that with half the water, the main Magpie will be good but less interesting, and the West Magpie will be more laid-back class III-IV but still pretty darn good. Even at low water there will still be some class V.

The gauge is here: <http://www.cehq.gouv.qc.ca/suivihydro/graphique.asp?NoStation=073503>

Access: You can take a train way up into the West Magpie headwaters for less than \$100, then paddle 55 miles of flatwater to the normal put in. Otherwise, call Labrador Air Safari/Air Saguenay to book a float plane trip. Price for 10 people was around \$500 per person (after exchange rate, which was slightly favorable) - folks in the know say Labrador Air Safari has pretty reasonable prices. The DHC Otter can take 5 people, maybe 6, including boats, the DHC Beaver can take 3 people including boats. You want to fly into Lac Vital, and ask the pilot to drop you off as close to the outlet as possible (Lac Vital is really big). There is a limit of about 310 pounds per person. The hydrobase is right outside of Sept-Iles at Lac Rapide. The takeout is 90 miles east on Route 138. There is a big HydroQuebec quarry on river right - follow the road to the back of the quarry and farther into the woods where there is a small parking area and a trail up from the river.

Food: We packed a lot of food, and ate almost

all of it. We definitely brought pretty energy-dense stuff too - GORP, sausage, dried fruit, etc. We split into groups of 3-4 for cooking/planning purposes. Team Fluff'n'Stuff ate: Mac'n'cheese, with tuna sometimes. Team Norge ate instant mashed potatoes and Mac'n'cheese. Team Steak and Eggs ate Cashew Curry, Vegetable Beef Soup, Reindeer Moss Crepes with a blueberry compote, Portugese Sausage and Cheese Potee, freeze-dried Foie Gras, and Mac'n'cheese.

Gear: Almost everyone brought drysuits, and I'm sure glad I did. I imagine in warmer weather you could get away with drytops and thick synthetic pants (to keep the bugs off), but the weather was, for the most part, cloudy, with lows in the low 40's and highs in the 60's. The two sunny days we had were a bit warmer, very pleasant and probably more typical for late August. Definitely bring a bug hat - you'll absolutely need it - even in late August the bugs can be pretty bad. We also brought 5 breakdown paddles for the whole group, and used one, and a Sat Phone (\$130 total to rent) which we did not need, fortunately. A few folks brought collapsible fishing poles - we didn't have a ton of time for fishing until we got to the Main Magpie, but the fishing there was excellent. People spend good money to fly into places like this and go fishing for a few weeks. I'd strongly recommend bringing topo maps of the whole run. Tom had plotted them out ahead of time.

Sept-Iles: Sept-Iles is a pretty good-sized town with banks, grocery stores, restaurants, etc. There is a decent outdoor shop which isn't great but will probably have whatever last-minute stuff you need - it's in the shopping mall near the Federal Building. They're friendly and helpful and know some of the nearby rivers, and the fellow there told us that they had 6" of rain the week before we arrived. Inexpensive lodging is very difficult to find. Actually, even expensive lodging is difficult to find. Plan on camping, or make arrangements ahead of time.

The river: For the whole run I'd plan 5-8 days. We took 6 very big days. 3-4 days on the West Magpie, 1-2 days on the Lake and 1-2 days on the Main Magpie is pretty reasonable. Portaging is possible everywhere, but is time- and energy-

intensive. Total length is (I think) about 80 miles, with 25 being the lake, and roughly 30 miles on the West and Main Magpie - but that's bigwater mileage where individual rapids can be close to a mile long, so the miles can go pretty fast.

Other thoughts: All in all this is a pretty expensive river trip - between the plane, gas money, lodging, food, etc, I'd say \$700-\$800 per person. Some folks noted that you could probably swing a trip to Ecuador for close to this price. I would agree that if you're just looking for the most paddling for your money, or for logistically simple rivers, there are other options (like staying in VT), but the experience of going way, way out in the wilderness on a river that sees at most 2 groups per year is unique and something every boater needs to do.

Epilogue:

The following day we had a leisurely morning involving lots of food. We then started on the leisurely, scenic drive back to Quebec City, arriving at the Tewkesbury put-in at 10:30 PM. The following morning we made two leisurely low-water Tewkesbury runs at -2 or 25 cms - which made it feel a bit like the Upper Yough. I would call that a reasonable minimum. That evening we drove to Montreal, eating a massive amount of Poutine near Felix's apartment. Friday Clay, Felix and myself went out to Lachine to surf Big Joe and Pyramid, which was really the frosting on the cake of the trip - being out amidst 300,000 cfs, carving across a wave so big it would not fit in my living room. There were a couple top-notch Lachine regulars out there but Clay and Felix were holding their own, blunting, spinning and looping like it was easy. I was pretty happy to get some clean(ish) spins and backsurfs, face-planting only periodically. By the time Clay checked his watch I had surfed and hauled myself back up the lines dozens of times, and was happy to head into shore, barely making the long ferry back. Only two days off the Magpie, I was delighted to be in a boat, on an awesome river, exhausted.

- Mike M

Ottawa River Weekend

Friday-Monday Aug 30-Sep 2, 2013

Character: intermediate WW

Water Level: medium low

Organizer: JimP

Participants: (K1): PaulC, BrockR, JimF, JimP

Gauge Info: Painted Gauge Height: 1.00 ft. (Owl Rafting)

Pre-Trip Preamble

The original list hit a high of 13 participants about two weeks before we were to head nord. Through steady attrition, we ended up with the Final Four – Paul, Brock and the two Jims.

Friday, August 30, 2013

Paul & Brock hit the road a bit after 10am. This got them to camp around 4pm. With sunset at 7:45 they thought a burner (non scouting mission) of the Middle Channel was in order and they were off.

Meanwhile, back at the border...

The two Jims hit the road at high noon on a gloriously sunny day. All things were looking up. Then we hit the Canadian border. The border guard asked a litany of questions and then said those dreaded words "pull to the left and go inside to see an agent". After about 20 minutes they called us to the counter. They asked me where I was from and where I worked. And then sent me on my way! And here I was all geared up for a full cavity search! Jim had a couple of innocuous questions too and we left shaking our heads wondering what that was all about.

Fun in cities. It was not quick-quick getting through Montreal or Ottawa with delays of about 30 minutes each. All in this got us to camp at 7pm. We found camp the boys had set because Paul left a beacon of his presence – his gold Seda helmet. With sunset in 45 minutes and it starting to rain pretty hard, the Jims decided an evening park and play was out of the question and we would wait for Paul and Brock.

The boys got back to camp around 8 wet and happy. We busted out the shuttle and headed down to the pavilion for a dry dinner since it was teaming rain.

Today's level was $\frac{3}{4}$.

After many exaggerated stories we headed back to camp and went lights out in the rainy Canadian

wilderness.

Saturday, August 31, 2013

With no first time Ottawa participants and the fact that Paul & Brock ran the Middle last night, we broke tradition and started the official weekend with a Main Channel run.

The level was just under one foot, let's call it 0.9. Not a great play level. So this led to fewer crowds and of course, less play options. But still plenty of fluffy, warm whitewater!

Pretty uneventful run. Other than reacquainting JimF with the river (it had been a number of years) and the occasional Brock swim. We got back to camp around 1pm for lunch. Now the group had a big decision to make. Do another run or start the demotivation process (pffsst)? Cooler heads prevailed (as opposed to coolers) and we decided to do a Middle Channel burner run. Brock did pull off a bouncy, banging, far left run of Garvins while the rest of us watched anxiously from the usual portage location.

Sunday, September 1, 2013

Sunday lived up to its name and was a very nice sunny day. It was also competition day for the King of Clubs – a multi-faceted event to crown the best paddling club in Ontario. This year had five teams participating. Today's level was an even 1.0 on the gauge.

Since we have never seen it, we decided to follow the flotilla down to see cardboard boat race at the Lauren. We took in the relay at McCoy then moved downstream to see the card board boats swamp at Lauren. It was over before we knew it. But we got to see a new event, foam ball collection. Basically release a couple of hundred baseball sized foam balls at the top of the Lauren rapid, then mass start 25 boats and have them charge through the rapid collecting as many as they could.

We ended up being part of the floating competition for the day as we seemed to be on the same pace as the group. So we took in advanced boater cross – 25 mass boat start through Normans and Coliseum. And yes, there was carnage to enjoy. Then came the intermediate boater cross – 25 mass boat start through Dog Leg and Blacks. Finally at the take out, the final water based event, barrel pull. This is where five boats daisy chained together pull a large barrel filled with water for a

specified distance for time.

After lunch break it was decided that we would take a 2nd run – but start at Lauren to miss McCoys (boo) but also a long stretch of flatwater (yah!). Why has this brilliant idea never surfaced before?!? Could be a new Ottawa tradition!

The Final Four enjoyed cocktail hour with kayak toss and rope throw events. And the whole competition came down to a rope throw-off between the top two teams. There was much trash talk as you'd see in a NBA game and was quite entertaining.

BBQ anyone? Part of the King of Clubs finale was the pulled pork dinner. When our newly found Canadian friends asked to have us join them for dinner (for a scant five bucks) who could say no? Why cook! Although to be totally accurate, this was Brock's plan all along since in past years he has poached this dinner.

Later we sat around our non campfire with our new Canadian buds. Too lazy to get wood, never mind light it on fire, we hung with four Canadians and swapped stories. Some true, some stretched so far, they sorta resembled the real story.

For future reference we did find that the King of Clubs is moving to first weekend of August for 2014, which is also a three day weekend in Canada (Civic Day). Then back to Labor Day in 2015, alternating in that fashion every other year.

Monday, September 2, 2013

Last night we hatched a plan. Unlike most plans developed in a tequila haze, this one still held water the following morning. The theory was to take a semi burner run of the Main Channel. A little play, but not too much, keep moving with no scouting. Put in targeted for 9am.

Two of our buddies from last night's non-campfire, Chris and Ed, joined us for the run. Unfortunately, all the remaining (or not too hung over) King of Club participants had the same agenda. So pretty much every boat on the Main channel today, around 25, were moving as a pack downriver.

Well this was going to spoil our early morning (we actually did put on at 9:15) wilderness run of the Main at 0.5. (see how I snuck the level in there?!?) So when we got to Push Button, we hung back. It was kind of surreal. First there is a line of 20 boaters for the main play feature (nothing new

for the Ottawa). But then as each boater was “one and done” the lines shortened to just our group. We let them get out of sight before we too, headed out. From then on it was just us on the lower part of the Main Channel. A very nice experience.

The rest of the river was uneventful, or that’s how I remember it! Too tired to take note of any extracurricular activity. There was a bit of time for Paul and Jim to get their loops on at Blacks and we were spent.

Back to camp to pack up. Another first for Ottawa, we on the road before 2:00! We usually struggle to get to the takeout by 2:00!

Quick ride home for all. Jim and Jim went the normal route through Montreal. Paul and Brock went through Cornwall. Both rides took a bit more than 5hours with everybody home before dark!

A great trip with a small and enthusiastic group. Can’t wait to do it again. See ya’ll next year!
jimp

West Fest 2013 Saturday Sep 28, 2013

Character: int-adv WW

Water Level: medium

Organizer: Ryan

Participants: (K1): Me and about 1100 other boaters

Gauge Info: USGS Flow: 1500 cfs; USGS Station: Ball Mountain dam - West River

The weather was perfect for the single day release this year.

Paddlers from throughout New England converged on Jamaica State Park in southern Vermont last weekend for the annual release on the West River. The annual one day release, held the last weekend in September, is the only remaining scheduled release by the Army Corps of Engineers from the Ball Mountain Dam. Over the past two decades, the Corps has eliminated 5 of 6 scheduled releases from the dam, depriving the paddlers of opportunities to paddle this treasured river and harming the local community of the economic benefits that it enjoyed when there were two day releases in the spring and fall. Despite the discontinuation of efforts to restore Atlantic Salmon to the Connecticut River Basin last year, the Corps has not restored the spring

releases.

Spirits were running high as approximately 800 boaters and an additional 300 commercial rafters enjoyed the warm fall day. In past years when there were two day releases, the number paddlers coming up to the West Fest was double the number who come out for single day release.

Rest assured, the VPC and AW are actively continuing efforts to restore releases to the West River.

- Bob Nasdor

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 Lockey, Ryan McCall

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

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

Wildwater Canoeing World Championships

By Hugh Pritchard

Solkan, Slovenia, 14-16 June 2013

Despite the objections of the USA, the International Canoe Federation wanted the word 'Canoeing' in the name of every (primarily kayak) discipline, so Wildwater Racing is now officially and unhelpfully known Wildwater Canoeing. Races are individual and team time-trials on class 3 or 4 water, with sprint races of ~1 minute and classic races of ~20 minutes. This year's world championships consisted only of sprint races.

Kayaks and single canoes are 4.5 meters (14'9") long, and weigh a minimum of 10kg (22lb). Compared to creek boats, they are wobbly, delicate, expensive and extremely fast.



The Course

For this year's wildwater world championships, I arrived on the Monday, taking the train from Venice airport, and Chris Norbury met me at the station in Gorizia. We drove across the invisible border into Slovenia and went straight to the course: a short stretch of whitewater, not hard; the river a beautiful milky turquoise. It would be nice for slalom, with plenty of eddies and a fast current. A coffee at the cafe by the kayak centre, then Chris took me to my hotel about three miles from town.

At the hotel I borrowed a bike and rode into town to join Chris for supper. It was getting dark as I

rode back along the quiet country lanes, among the vineyards.

The Valentincic was a beautiful place to stay. With stone walls 18" thick including 3" of render on the outside and 2" inside. Our room had a balcony wrapping around the corner of the house, with a table and four chairs on it. Shutters kept the room completely dark when needed. The broad eaves provided the balcony with little protection from the elements. The room was much smaller than American hotel rooms, but adequate – I could just squeeze a yoga session in. There was a small swimming pool behind and above the house, and a terraced loggia on the northeast side of the house where the sun warmed us even at breakfast.



Our little corner of Slovenia

Breakfast was magnificent, served outside on the terrace. 'Herb and ham' omelette; apple strudel or similar dessert; a plate of cherries; a plate of ham and cheese; a jug of elderflower cordial. The cherries were presumably from the garden; the ham appeared to be cut from one of the many hanging downstairs in the cellar where they make seven different wines.

The first morning one of the Austrians at the next table asked for black tea, but there was none – so I brought out my tub of English tea-bags and supplied one.

This part of Slovenia is beautiful. The architecture is identical either side of the border, and the houses

and roads around Solkan are just as well-kept as they are on the Italian side. The houses have walls around their yards and gardens, and everywhere are the smells of blossoms. The people are not overtly friendly in the sense of everyone greeting each other at every passing, but they seem fine – apart from one bizarre waitress at the Hotel Sabotin who refused to split our bill, with neither explanation nor apology, just a curt 'One bill!'. All the other waiters there split our bills without hesitation.

Emmanuel Beauchard arrived in the middle of the night, occupying the room next to mine. His father was the Chief Judge for the event. Emmanuel immediately offered to lend me his extra boat and paddle.

My boat, a SpeedArt Wish, arrived on Tuesday, with Joschko the local Hiko-Sport dealer. He was very helpful, and also sold me some air-bags when the ones that I had arranged with Zastera failed to arrive. The boat is beautiful: reasonably light at 10.6kg (the minimum was dropped this year to 10gk), very stiff; I am told that Speed Art has the best construction quality so I hope it lasts well. It was also very cheap compared to other makers. The finishing is not as neat as the boats that KickTheWaves had on display, but those probably cost twice as much.

SpeedArt is rather mysterious. There is no company web-site, and one can only order a boat through an agent. There are a few boats that have SpeedArt and Wish marked on them; some have a label glassed inside; one even said 'Wish II'. My boat has no identifying marks either inside or out. I was given the option of two constructions, Training or Race, made from the same materials with different preparation. It turns out that my boat appears to be carbon-kevlar mix throughout with a carbon cockpit rim, though other SpeedArt boats were clearly differently constructed. I expected an adjustable footrest, but it came with a fixed footrest too long by about 3", for which Chris gave me some foam. Chris also lent me his paddle as the Jantex man had not yet arrived with the one I had ordered.

I used to think that carbon-kevlar looked very

cool, but now that I have seen so many pure carbon boats they no longer seem quite so.

For my first run down the course I followed Emmanuel. That went OK. The next one was a bit messy. The third one I flipped in the little drop at the top and took three attempts to roll. I had forgotten how hard these boats are to roll. I suppose it is worth practising to get an idea of how to work the boat onto the correct side to roll. I took a couple more runs.

We parked next to the Australians. I introduced myself and I was struck by how polite and deferential they were. Then one asked me 'Are you Emmanuel's Dad?'

Thursday was official practice day, meaning



Fast new boat. Holding the stroke too long at the back.

that for an hour we shared the course with only the Slovenes and the Dutch. We tried a team run, and as we neared the bottom of the course an Austrian C2 pulled out to cross the river right in front of us. I was in front and thinking 'Why on earth are they doing that right now?' Manuel in the front of the C2 had the same look on his face and told me afterwards that Gerhard in the back had been unsighted and pushed off hard, to Manuel's surprise. Emmanuel was very angry, shouting 'Putain!'

Julie arrived on Thursday, and Chris was kind enough to drive me to the station to pick her up. We had a team supper and went on to the opening ceremony. Once we had worked out that the Slovenian for USA is 'ZDA' we got into line, and marched on just ahead of Slovenia – the host



Team Run Practice

nation is always last in. There followed some flag-waving and dance shows, and we dispersed to prepare for the races.

Friday was women's races, at a lower water level. Marin Millar (CA) and Elaine Campbell (Readsboro, VT) did OK, though both were slower on their second runs despite appearing better. I watched Brit Hannah Brown's first run: what a beautifully straight line she runs, winning the qualifying on that run and then winning the final that night.

The water was supposed to be higher at 6pm and for our race on Saturday so we took an evening practice run. In fact it seemed no higher. The lines seem less critical at the lower levels.

On Saturday was the men's individual race. I was first of our team, with Chris just behind me. I did a reasonable run, though I noticed afterwards that everyone else was going much further right at the end than I was so I decided to take that line on my second run.

My second run seemed better, but was in fact 2" slower. The tail-wind had shifted to a head-wind, and very few people were faster on their second runs. I was a few places off the bottom, which was exactly what I had hoped for. As I carried my boat back up beside the course Marin met me with a pint of beer: just the thing for post-race refuelling under the hot sun.

The course is of trivial difficulty, in the sense that if you wanted to float down it in a creek boat, you could do it with your eyes closed and without a paddle. But that does not make racing it easy – you have to keep the boat on a very precise line, and every moment of steering or support strokes is a moment when you slowing down relative to the guys who are applying power all the time. After all, you aren't trying to survive: you are trying to do it better than other very good paddlers, which is hard to do whatever the water is like.

I find it difficult to control the boat in the rough. I have a slalomist's habit of trying to control by holding onto a stern sweep, which is pretty ineffective in a wildwater boat. The good paddlers time their strokes very distinctly in the waves, paddling sometimes with a very slow cadence to plant each stroke on the back of a wave, then raising the cadence when the waves are not so large or distinct. Some also move their body-weight fore and aft, I am not sure whether that is to reach for optimal stroke placement or to counteract the bouncing of the bow.

Team runs on Sunday in the noon-day sun. Chris was sufficiently slower than me that I could fairly easily pass him, so the team strategy was mostly about optimising his run. On the first run I had a wobble early on that sent Emmanuel shooting off to the right. He was quite angry, though I don't think it made any difference as he still got to the finish line with Chris.

At the beginning of the second run, as we started the sprint across the flat Emmanuel shouted 'Go-go-go! Hup-hup-hup!'. I shouted 'Putain!', and Emmanuel said that he had been laughing all the way down. That's a good result, getting an ambitious youngster like him to laugh in a race. We thought our second run was better but it was only a fraction faster and we finished last. We had no right to expect anything better but still had hoped to get ahead of someone.

After the race I accosted a fellow getting changed beside a Belgian car (lurking until he had pulled his trousers up) and asked about getting my boat to Belgium. He said his car was full but he would speak to the others and check in with



Race over!

me after the awards ceremony. Watching the ceremony I realised that he was Maxime, the new world champion. Anyway, his friends had room on their car and I sent the boat on its way to Belgium for me to pick up in a day or two.

While organising that I ran into the Brits who were staying at my hotel – they were from the same club as Hannah, who had already gone home, so they had collected her medal. That was my first,



It's not supposed to look like this.

and possibly last, touch of a world championship gold medal.

Monday morning Julie and I were up early to catch a train to Venice, where we spent the day

and night, rising at 3.30 Tuesday morning to get the water-bus to the airport and a flight to London. My mother met us at the airport and drove us home; we took a bottle of Slovenian rose made at our hotel down to the beach and drank it watching the sunset after a bracing dip in the sea.

On Wednesday I drove to Belgium to pick up my boat with my mother as co-driver, leaving Julie to catch up on some sleep. Once the boat was wrapped up in a tarpaulin in the jungle at the end of my parents' garden, my wildwater world champs was over. What a great trip.



One for the Vermonters!