



The Quarterly Newsletter of the Monocacy Canoe Club
www.monocacycanoe.org

January 2010

ANNUAL MCC WINTER MEETING

(Thumb your nose at old man winter and c'mon out!)

Program: Sheila Chapelle will provide a slide show and lively commentary from their trip to the Grand Canyon.

Election Day: Come prepared to consider and discuss a new slate of Club Officers.

Trip Leaders: Get on the calendar to lead one or more trips in the upcoming months.

Thursday, February 18

7:00 pm

**The Annual MCC Winter Meeting will be at Thomas
Johnson High School,
1501 North Market Street, Frederick MD**

Helping Out Your Club - Ron Ray

Chair

Ron Ray

ronaldaray@verizon.net

Co-Chair

Dick Gramm

r.gramm111@verizon.net

Treasurer

Sherwood Jones

sherwoodjones@comcast.net

Safety Chair

Tony Allred

(See Roster)

Safety Co-Chair

Ron Ray

ronaldaray@verizon.net

Cruise Schedule Committee

Ron Ray

Mike Sawyer

mikesawyer@yahoo.com

Bob Whiting

bbwhitng@verizon.net

Smoke Signal Chair

Alan Dickerson

dickerson_alan@yahoo.com

Smoke Signal Co-Chair

Phil Dawson

(See Roster)

Paddle Prattle Admin

Jay Herbig

jay.herbig@earthlink.net

Web Master

E. Bradtke

lbradtke@aol.com

Conservation

Colleen Davies

monocacyWeb@gmail.com

Programs

Mike Sawyer

mikesawyer@yahoo.com

Programs

Dennis Krizek

denniskri@msn.com

The Monocacy Canoe Club needs your help. The Club needs people for several functions. We need officers, operating committee members, and helpers to keep the organization functioning. We need trip leaders and helpers for picnics and classes. We need members to vote in elections, and tell the officers and operating committee what is working, what should be changed, and what new efforts should be started. We need sensible folks to post inquiries, information, answers, and pick-up trips on Paddle Prattle. We need trip reports and other articles for the newsletter, and good programs for Club meetings. And yes, the Club does need some money to operate.

Why should **you** care?

There are the tangible resources that the Club offers. We get a full Cruise Schedule of trips, so folks don't have to research and organize their own. The membership Roster is an excellent contact list of paddlers and resources. And Paddle Prattle, while suffering the problems of an open message board, still is the best local resource for getting paddling information that's not in a printed guidebook.

But more important than the resources are the people... us. I shy away from new-agey ideas of "Community-with-a-capital-C", but I do like to have fun with good people. And the Club primarily is about good people who like to mess around in boats. The Club and its functions are a great way to get together often with a good bunch of friends, and to enlarge that group. Frankly, I think it would be a sad existence if we all stayed at our computer screens in virtual unreality, or only dealt with the small clique of our peeps. OK, I'll avoid any attempt at hip lingo, but you get the point. Rivers are fun, there are lots of great people on them, and the Club is a great way to experience both the water and the people. So if I've reminded you that you care about keeping MCC going, **what can you do to help?**

First, come to the Club meeting on Thursday, February 18, 7 PM at Thomas Johnson High School in Frederick. We'll have a great program on boating the Grand Canyon, and selection of Club officers. Yeah, we do need to do some of that mundane business that keeps the Club operating.

Second, offer to lead a trip. It doesn't have to be boating... it could be a hike or some other event. Carpool to a film festival, bank-scout a stream, make an expedition to an out-of-area outfitter. If it is boating, folks will be interested in just about anything. Flatwater, mucking about in a swamp or pond, Class V expedition... folks will be interested. Contact me, Mike Sawyer, or Tony Allred if you have an idea, or questions on what leading a trip involves.

Third, take an occasional look at Paddle Prattle. Offer up some information, ask a question. Be sensible, and use a name or nickname that folks recognize. Keep the board alive as a resource, show that it's useful, and demonstrate civility. Don't fight with the trolls, thugs, and self-important fools with too much time on their hands, but don't abandon the board to them.

Fourth, give the Club officers and operating committee feedback on how you think the Club is doing. What you like, what you don't like, ideas to fix what you don't like, new things you would like to see. But don't be surprised if you get asked to help implement your great idea... there's no hired staff, so everything gets done by members.

Last, and most important... meet up with the other members and have fun. That's what the whole thing is about.

Temagami, Ontario Summer 2007 - Jay Dover

The thunderclap overhead was quickly followed by a flash of lightning. Laura and I looked at each other and agreed that this was no time to get back out on the lake to return to our island campsite. We had been hiking the most magnificent of the three trails winding through the old growth pine forest surrounding Blueberry Lake just west of Temagami, Ontario in Canada's "near north" country with our 22 month old son, Isaac. It looked like we would be sitting tight until this storm blew over.



shore, Potomac at Shepherdstown, and the Gunpowder were paying off as we confidently led him into the wild. We are lucky – he has always been an easy baby. He busied himself with some picture books and played in the canoe while we paddled.

We covered about 10k that day and blew by all the close in campsites where I thought we might stay. We committed ourselves to the site across the lake from tomorrow's portage. Bushwhacking new sites is

tough in the Temagami area as the undergrowth is often prohibitively thick. I have done it before, but it was not how I wanted to start this trip.

Being conservative about the lightning threat, we picked up Isaac and bushwhacked a couple of hundred feet up into the woods through thick cedar, birch, and pine scrub. I had a lighter and ziplock full of birch bark in my pocket so there would be no problem starting a fire if we needed, but a little shelter would be nice during this cold, north country storm. I kicked myself for not bringing our camp tarp on this day trip.

Before the shivers could set in, I headed back down to the lakeside where our canoe was lying bottom up by the shore. With the canoe on my shoulder, I bushwhacked back to the small clearing in the forest where my wife and son sat getting wet and eating crackers. I wedged the canoe at about chest level between two old birch trees and we all crawled under. Isaac didn't even realize how momentous this was – his first (of many – I hope) storm bivouacs!! We sat tight until the sun began to peek out and the thunderclouds overhead moved on. It was nice to get back to our campsite that day.

The sky had been overcast but the water was calm as we had set off on our first day down Snake Island Lake. Isaac played with the small paddle that the outfitter had given him and our heavily loaded canoe sliced smartly through the dark, deep water. As we put the first few kilometers behind us we also left behind the weekend and summer cottages. We were surrounded by towering pines and high rock walls on the lakeshore.

Laura and I were so excited – we were really doing it. All those shakedown canoe trips with Isaac on the eastern

The first night in the backcountry was spent on a bluff at a nice site on the far end of Cassels Lake. The steepness of this site was representative of the area around Blueberry Lake, where we would be portaging into tomorrow. The rugged topography spared the surrounding area from the logger's axe. Unfortunately, due to the demand for tall straight pine, even this hard to reach area is being considered for logging. It is very conceivable that within five short years, this entire area will have logging roads cutting through it and heavy machinery tearing it up. For now, though, the forest was in its natural state and playing gracious host.

We set out in choppy waters the next morning to the half mile portage into Blueberry Lake. On the trail, a small stream tumbled over mossy rocks on our right hand side as we ascended the well worn path into the steep country surrounding Blueberry Lake. We were in the home of one of the last stands of old growth pine in North America. I carried Isaac on my shoulders as Laura walked in front of us down the trail. It was a well maintained portage and representative of just about everything you might see on a portage trail in the north country – tall, verdant forests, marshy bogs, slippery rocks, and even a little bit of boardwalk over an especially mucky section. Laura and Isaac sat down at the far end of the portage while I ferried the rest of our gear and our canoe over.

As we pushed off into Blueberry Lake, the sky was sharp and blue and a cool Canadian breeze kept the bugs down

and heat bearable. We were having ridiculously good weather and the recent drought, while drying up all the wild blueberries, had also decimated the population of biting flies and mosquitoes. No blueberries was a bummer, but no bugs was a gift so we weren't complaining!!

We scouted out some potential campsites and decided that the small island in the western arm of the lake suited us best. It had a fire ring on the water and just enough room in the small clearing for our tent, a kitchen area, and a tarp area. Camp went up quickly and Laura and Isaac went down for a nap as I pushed off in the unloaded canoe, looking to explore the rugged shoreline and pick up some



firewood while I was at it.

The shoreline of Blueberry Lake was the literal textbook definition of "pristine old growth." All along the rocky shore, old cedar and pine trees hung towards the water.

They created

snags for downed limbs that accumulated on the water. Cruising the shoreline in my canoe, I plucked the dry bleached wood off of the snags in the lower branches.

I took my time gathering the wood, basking in the sun, enjoying the glide of my canoe along the water, and stopping to swim in the cold clear lake. There are few things in life more joyous than a blue northern sky on a deserted lake.

We spent the next couple of days enjoying the trails that have been maintained through the Old Growth forest. The highlight was the aptly named Old Growth Trail and the storm bivouac experience, but the short Charcoal trail was also interesting. It led to an area that had burned significantly in 1996 and demonstrated the resiliency of a healthy ecosystem. Many of the tall pines were charred but they provided great cover for the small saplings and all the other undergrowth that sprang up in the wake of the fire. Unfortunately, many of the tallest pines carried spray paint marks indicating their worthiness for lumber or telephone poles. The provincial officials describe this as "two stage" cutting – thin some of the biggest trees first in order to maintain shade and the right soil balance so the saplings can take root and (presumably) be harvested at some later

date. Sounds like a clear cut in slow motion to me.

After four nights on our private island at the foot of the towering pines, we decided it was time to move on. The route had us heading south – portaging a half mile or so around a swamp into an unnamed lake, a brief paddle across the lake, and then another portage of the same distance into Sunrise Lake. Sunrise, while not surrounded by Old Growth, was reputed to be as beautiful as Blueberry Lake and we were looking forward to it.

After two hours of trying to find a useable portage trail on that route, I was beginning to wonder if we would get to see Sunrise Lake at all. With Laura and Isaac sitting in the canoe waiting for the verdict, I had pretty much bushwhacked all the way to our destination. I found plenty of short portions of footpath that had been portage routes at one time, but nothing consistent enough to get my family through the swamp and over the rocks that separated us from Sunrise. I bushwhacked and we paddled up and down both sides of the small south arm of Blueberry Lake looking for the obvious portage route I had missed. After two hours of searching, I concluded that either I was a blind fool or the portage route south out of Blueberry towards Sunrise hadn't been maintained in some years.

Laura and I sat in the canoe and talked while Isaac read stories on the canoe floor in front of me. The sky was looking ugly and it spit rain off and on. We decided that we had achieved our goal. We had paddled and portaged and hiked in the Old Growth with our son. I was grateful to Laura for following through with the trip. We laughed about the logistics of returning next summer with Isaac a year older and a new babe in arms.

We headed back out the way we came. We portaged to Cassels Lake under heavy wind and threatening grey skies. Isaac fell sleep at my feet as Laura and I plowed through the 10k or so back to the landing. We discussed how well the trip went and when we will next return. Laura was happy to have traveled in Canada for the first time. She heard the loons call and ate crusty trail bannock cooked in a reflector stove before an open fire.

While chatting with another canoeist at the takeout, I was told that the route from Blueberry to Sunrise hadn't been maintained in at least ten years. I had to smile. Sometimes, you find exactly what you are looking for. Other times, the thing you spend so much energy searching for doesn't exist at all.



Trip Report: Lower Antietam Creek, January 1, 2010

Ron Ray

The traditional New Year's Day mellow paddle launched, but only had four folks. I had made noises about doing the Funkstown or Devil's Backbone sections for a change of pace, so we met at Devil's Backbone. Well, the park was gated and not plowed, the level didn't look generous, the scenery was cold, shadowy, and gloomy, and the only folks who showed were me, Dick, and Rae. Quite a bit different from 2005, when we had sunshine, 50 degree weather, and over a dozen boats. So we headed for the lower section, aiming for more current and a shorter day. We met Hendrick running late, so he U-turned and followed us.



At the Maryland 34 bridge, we found the put-in guarded by snow in the lot and on the banks, and a plow ridge along the berm. We had to be careful unloading and dressing on the shoulder. On the good side, the snow also guarded our boats while we all drove to the takeout. We didn't want to leave anyone standing in the cold while we ran shuttle. The takeout parking was clear, so no problems there.

Back at the put-in, we finally stuffed ourselves into our boats and launched. As with most years, I found a rock in the first riffle, got stuck sideways and a bit on edge, and had to stick in a nice brace to wriggle off. You don't want to follow my line in this riffle on New Year's Day, but you might want to get your camera out. I've yet to start the year with an ignominious swim, but you might get lucky and get a photo op.

Anyhow, the trip went smoothly. Hips loosened, edging got smoother, and strokes more efficient as we refamiliarized ourselves with our boats. The weather was above freezing, not by much, but no ice on skirts or drysuits. Very little bird life was evident. A few ducks passed high overhead, and a few tiny birds flitted about the banks, but that pretty much was it. We didn't see any kingfishers, which is very unusual for the lower Antietam. We did hear one, so maybe they're just smarter than the paddlers and were staying warm.

The only excitement was getting boats up the banks at the river and aqueduct takeouts. The viscous surface mud slid and oozed over the frozen underlayer, and footing wasn't good. We resorted to lining boats up the bank at the aqueduct.

While loading up, we joked about ice cream at Nutter's, then decided we should stop. Well, they were closed. Picking up Dick's car at the put-in, Hendrick noted that the Boonsboro Creamery should be open. So we did stop for ice cream. As we walked out afterwards, the sun finally broke through for a bit.

Overall, a good way to start the year.

One safety thought... when you try on your winter gear for the first time in the season, you might want to have another person around in case the gear has shrunk since you last had it on. You don't want to have to make a phone call, even if you can figure out how to dial while trapped in a straightjacket.



Monocacy Canoe Club
P.O. Box 1083
Frederick, MD 21702-0083

Membership Form

Membership dues are still only \$15 per family living in the same residence. Please make check payable to **Monocacy Canoe Club** and send to:

Monocacy Canoe Club
P.O. Box 1083
Frederick, MD 21702-0083

Name: _____

Do you want delivery of the newsletter and cruise schedule as Adobe PDF files via email instead of regular mail? Yes No

Any changes in membership information? Yes No (If No, please do not fill out the rest of this form).

Family members: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Day Phone: _____

Additional Phone: _____ Email 1: _____

Email 2: _____ Email 3: _____

NOTICE AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK

Canoeing or kayaking (paddling) can be physically demanding and/or dangerous. Canoeists and kayakers (paddlers) take personal responsibility for their personal safety. By participating in Monocacy Canoe Club activities, you acknowledge an assumption of the risk involved in paddling, which could involve risk of serious injury or death.