
Trails

The Newsletter of the Permian Basin Outing Club

Colorado Canyon Trip Report

Well...let's see...where do I start? Well, I started at 9 p.m. Thursday night on May 7th to avoid the obvious heat of the weekend...wanting to avoid high heats while pulling a 10-canoe trailer all the way to the Big Bend. I just about "stroked out" loading canoes in a very heated and sunlit storage unit...just about decided it wasn't worth it but, as it turned out, it really was worth it. I arrived at our campsite at Madera around 2 a.m. on Friday morning and had the riverside campsite to myself. The drive down through the desert between Ft. Stockton to Alpine, to Study Butte, and on to camp under a full moon and NO traffic was really nice. I woke up Friday morning and unloaded the canoe trailer and went back to Terlingua to load up on gas and ice, snacks, etc. On the way back to camp I received a call from David Crum who had spent the night in Presidio in his camper. We decided to meet up at the Barton Warnock Center to register the group and secure the campsite for everyone. Get this...the predicted temperature for Friday was 117 but it hit that by mid-morning. We decided that it probably hit 120 before the day was over. David and I played lizard all day and jumped from shade to shade while consuming loads of liquids.

Later in the day Taffy Armstrong found us under the roadside park teepees near the take-out of Colorado Canyon and within sight of our camp. After a short wait we started seeing people arriving so we went back to camp to find Steven Schafersman, Don Moore and the rest of the gang arriving. We did a short exploratory trip up Madera Canyon to a spring area (though we found no water) and then decided that we needed to go back to Terlingua to the Starlight Theater café for real grub. The Starlight Theater café was dubbed the Starlight in that, at one time, there was no roof and people literally ate under the stars. Believe me when I tell you that you can see every type of character in the world if you sit there long enough. After supper we went back to camp just in time to see an incredible bolide (a meteor leaving a long green tail). It was actually close enough to us that the very strong sulfurous smell of the thing overcame us almost immediately. I've been watching meteors my entire life and have never been close enough to actually smell the entry into the atmosphere. We didn't hear the sonic boom but we definitely smelled the entry! It really lit up the countryside in an eerie green glow. Something you don't get to experience that



often!

On Saturday morning David and I got up early enough to get the canoes loaded and ready for the "long haul" up the Big Hill. I had been worrying about this for some time in that my truck isn't getting any younger (nor am I) but the old girl pulled all 10 boats, trailer, and David and I up the hill with no complaints. We got to the put-in and started unloading the watercraft that we needed. Eventually the group showed up and we started loading up boats for our 11 mile trip through the canyon. Though the water had been up for several days the river had dropped noticeably overnight. Far Flung Adventures was also unloading a couple of rafts for an outfitting job. I was visiting with them and one of them mentioned "how much fun" it was going to be canoeing the river at the water level." *Interpretation: You're gonna drag.* Since this was the norm for us (cont. on page 2)

May 2009

Special points of interest:

- *Once again...hot weather but a very successful float through Colorado Canyon*
- *Plans abound for June's visit to Mike Rush's Burnt Rock Ranch*

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Colorado Canyon Trip Report (cont...)

for us I didn't think too much about it (besides, I was in my kayak and I knew I could slide over the rock easily....*Interpret: selfish and self-centered.*) Taffy and Don teamed up in one canoe, David Crum soloed in a canoe, Tom Cooper and his son teamed up in another canoe, and Steven and I started out in our individual kayaks. Sure enough, in no time we were flipping canoes in the Class I and II rapids (nothing more than relief from the heat....Colorado Canyon is a fun and safe canyon). Taffy did lose her camera but otherwise no harm done. We played catch-up and pass the lag behind the Far Flung group who, I think, had a ball watching our group flopping around in the water (they were in expedition rafts so no flips for them....and half the fun). I think everyone got wet at least once except for the two kayaks.

At about 1 p.m. we found a somewhat shady spot on the Texas side and stopped for lunch. I sat in the water and ate my apple (couldn't get anybody to join me...the temperature of the water was great but fortunately the air temp had dropped to a reasonable degree with the cool front that had finally made its way to the Big Bend). I guess that everyone else had had enough time in the water (sorry for the jibe). I hung back for awhile to enjoy a little solitude after the group proceeded on down the canyon

(and we had passed most of the rough spots). I finally caught up with most of the group and, wouldn't you know it, a perfect day of temperature and a steady tail wind became a gale force wind in our face with only about 2 miles to go. Don had already joined David in his canoe for the second half of the trip and Taffy was struggling to make headway in her solo canoe against a very strong and persistent wind. We even tried the old trick of putting river rocks in her bow to bring it down and out of the wind. Steven and I tried several tricks to try to keep her keel straight but we were actually drifting backwards in our kayaks! I finally decided to tie my kayak onto Taffy's canoe, put her in the bow, take the stern, and use my kayak paddle to help propel us down the last mile or so. Don't think for a minute that any man could have gotten the canoe in! It would have been impossible against a wind that strong to get a canoe in. Between the two of us we finally got back to our take-out/camp. Steven was right behind us with his kayak and we finally got everyone home. Except for the wind and a few technical rapids our progress was strong and steady and I think that I can speak for everyone that we had a great day on the river.

After loading canoes and a kayak back on the trailer with Don, Tom, and Jonathan helping

everyone decided to head back home except for David, Stephen, and I. We heard the siren call of the Starlight Theater calling and decided to end our day with a good meal. A tremendous thunderstorm was brewing over Big Bend National Park (complete with hail I later discovered) and we enjoyed sitting outside of the café and watching in build. Steven eventually took off for home and David and I decided to retreat to a lot that he had bought in Terlingua and watch the storm some more. It was really building. Eventually I decided to try to beat the hail and we broke up what remained of the group to head home. I ran into Steven in Alpine while gassing up and he decided to follow me home (which was a relief to me while pulling that datted trailer.) Eventually we all made it home happy but tired.

“Luck can't last a lifetime unless you die young.”

Note: Steven took a LOAD of great photos that I didn't have room to add but a lot of them will be in the slide show!



Class I Rapid—photo by Steven Schafersman



Preparing to go—photo by Steven Schafersman

Details on the June 26-28 Trip Planned for Mike Rush's Ranch near Coleman

These are in Mike's own words when I emailed him and asked him to give me an idea of what we should expect on the June 26-28 trip to his ranch:

Richard,

Well, I have been wondering what to say. It's not that big, a section, but it's a special place. It has suffered greatly from the drought, threatening the fishing opportunities. The creek is dry from end to end and the main tank is low but holding. There are abundant bass, perch and catfish in the tank. We have a little john boat for those wishing to fish further out. We have a cabin with a nice sitting porch facing east toward the tank that catches the afternoon shade. It's a good setup for barbecuing and evening campfires. It's lovely sitting there as the sun sets behind us and will make a good storytelling venue. We also have a full kitchen and bathroom in the house.

I named the place Burnt Rock Ranch because of the prevalence of numerous burnt rock middens—the place was a frequent camp site for native peoples traveling to and from the Colorado. We are about 10 miles north of Lake Ivy. I have a nice collection of flint pieces. One area with some old oil field surface damage is a good place to see scattered pieces.

Wildlife is abundant: deer, turkeys, quail, dove, bobcats, skunks, possums, snakes. Should be some good birding too. Birds I see regularly are

red-winged blackbird, nighthawks, and scissor tails. Barn swallows have festooned the house with their mud nests and will be patrolling overhead.

I take a lot of photographs, some of which are attached. Unless it rains a lot, the picture with the low water level is what you will see.

I enjoy hiking around the varied topography and I will have maps to direct folks to different parts. I have enjoyed an old 45 acre field in native grasses which are coming on slowly. An ancient crumbling barn is a good photo op or place to see a snake.

A brangus cow herdlet with young calves (not mine—leasing this time to a guy from Ballinger) is on the place to provide visual and audio diversity.

Lots of good camping spots around the tank.

An interesting day trip would be to see the pictographs near Paint Rock, which is south of Ballinger. I haven't been there in a long time so don't know about the arrangements. I believe they are on private land and you have to make reservations. I will do some checking.

If people want to eat out, I can recommend Alejandro's in Ballinger, next to the courthouse and Big O's BBQ in Valera. Big O is originally from the big O.

The ranch is 5 miles south of Talpa, which is on US 67, between Ballinger and Santa Anna. The dirt road down to the ranch is easily passable by pickups and SUVs and I see cars from

“Winners never fly higher than when they're bouncing up and down on the egos of those they defeat.”

In an effort to simplify things, I'm going to copy/paste Mike's answer to an email asking him to give me some details regarding his ranch. This from Mike:

June Meeting

The June PBOC meeting to finalize plans for the Burnt Rock Ranch trip will be held at Casa Lopes, 4415 W. Illinois in Midland on Tuesday, June 23rd at **6 p.m.**

Be there or be square....and let me know **beforehand** if you're planning to attend the trip.

The Newsletter of the Permian Basin Outing Club

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In Colorado Canyon—photo by Steven Schafersman



Photos of Mike Rush's Burnt Rock Ranch...June's trip
photos by Mike Rush

