

Southern Rivers Trip Reports

2005 to 2013

Part 1 – 1992 to 2004

SOUTHERN RIVERS TRIP - 2005

By Michael Duvall (Liberally edited by John Kobak)

NOLICHUCKY

The Southern Rivers trip always starts on the Nolichucky. This year's cast included John Kobak and Elliott Drysdale, Judi Cleary, Bob Weible, Bob Nicholson, Shawn Reese, Eric Olle, Joe Yilek and Lee Owen and Kay. We all met at Warrior Path State Park, which has a great group camping area with showers. The St Louis group, Santo and Kris Albright and Eric Roush joined us on the 16th after doing a low run on Little River on the 15th.

We chose to schedule the trip in mid April in hopes that we would have milder weather. It turned out not to make much difference. The weather on Easter weekend was just as warm and more rivers had good water levels. This weekend we had plenty of water on the Noli and the Chattooga, however every place else was dry. So we skipped the Tellico and took advantage of the higher levels on the Noli. by running it both Fri & Sat at 3000 & 2700 CFS.



The Noli is basically class 3 and not much harder than the Lower Yough so it is a good place to wash off the cobwebs from a long winter. The weather was cool but sunny. Judi brought both a kayak and the shredder (2 person cataraft) but really wanted to shred so she was trying to round up a partner. Bob W stepped up and took the single blade paddle challenge on both days. Traditionally someone always has to swim at "On the Rocks" and this year was no exception. However the "prank" of the second day was when Eric O. played in "Jaws" then baited Joe to try it with less than perfect results.

Michael on Nolichucky

OCOEE

Sunday on the Southern rivers trip means we must be at the Ocoee River. The nite before, Judi and I somehow became the lead car from the Noli heading toward Cleveland, TN. Because we were coming from I-75 and not the back way we would miss the Mexican restaurant in Copper Hill. Kobak was surfing, the web not a wave, looking for a Mexican place to eat in Cleveland. As the lead car it was our job to find his elusive restaurant with vague directions. As luck would have it we found a different Mexican place, "Tres Hermanos" (3 brothers) right on the bypass at Ocoee St. We pulled into the parking lot and asked people leaving if they liked the food and they were very positive. That was it, Judi called Kobak and gave him the location. Everyone liked the place but a word to the wise; do not get the Grande Margarita (\$11) unless you plan to spend the whole day there. Even their Medium is huge.

Sunday always starts with a pancake breakfast with Kobak's secret recipe of adding bananas to the batter. John and Elliott worked at one grill and Shawn fired up his stove with a cast iron grill. Judi fried up the bacon. After everyone enjoyed breakfast we started to get ready to shuttle. Some of the play boaters went looking for boats to demo. The initial plan was for the remaining boaters was to drive to the put-in to unload and then we would take all but one or two cars to the takeout.

As we drove over the bridge from the campground to the main highway we noticed water coming from up stream. This could only mean one thing, the Olympic course had water. This was not a scheduled release weekend so we had

no way of knowing what the flow was or how long it would last. Nonetheless, we continued to the put-in to get organized. Judi, who had convinced John to shred, and Lee were the only ones to wait at the put-in. Elliott, Bob W., Joe, Bob N. and I rearranged the shuttle to do the Upper and Lower. When we tried to get to the put-in for the Upper we found that the gate was locked so we went to the Visitors Center and carried up to just above Mike's hole missing some boogie water and one named rapid. We saw people in slalom boats practicing although there were no gates. They were catching every eddy. Someone said that the course was class II but it was more like class IV. The current was very pushy and the holes very trashy. We were told "When in doubt go left" and that is certainly the case at "Humongous". I remember seeing more than a couple Olympians swam there during the '96 Games. We dodged the holes and caught a few eddies and thought we were finished with the course. That is when we almost blundered into a big pour-over hole named "Pumphouse", I think. Then it was fun boogie water to the lake and only about a third of a mile of flat water to the dam and the lower section.

When we got to the dam we joined up with John, Judi and Lee who patiently waited for us as well as the rest of the crew that went for demo boats. After putting on the Lower we went with the usual scenario, half the group broke off and cruised down with little play. I went with the much slower group that had a "play till you puke" attitude. When we finally got to "Hell Hole" I took two quick attempts at surfing then left the group to paddle out. At the take out I was grateful to find that Judi my co-pilot had retrieved my dry clothes from Bob's car and my car from the Visitors Center. All right, now we head to the Chattooga.

CHATTOOGA - Section IV

Elliott and Judi thought it would be a good day to hike instead of paddling so they helped with the shuttle and watched us put-on at "Bull Sluice." "Bull Sluice" provides the paddler with 3 choices; door number one, put-in below the drop, door number two, run the easy single boof in the middle, and the third door is the "hero" route. Those taking door three were both Erics and Santo, with only Eric Roush being successful. Bob W had an excellent line between door two and three. The remainder took door two with a simple boof or slide. We checked the gauges at the bridge, 2.05 and 1.95 (USGS & Bridge). Joe and Shawn were the only two that had never run this section, so John took the lead and only needed to provide minimal explanation. Woodall Shoals, Ravens Rock, and Seven Foot Falls all went smoothly.

It wasn't until the Five Falls area that we needed to take extra precautions. The problem with this section is that there is very little recovery time between rapids. Starting with Entrance John set up at the top and directed us one at a time through the drop. At Corkscrew we all got out and scouted. Someone would have to walk this one and set up a throw line above Crack in the Rock. Having been the recipient of the rope a few times I figured it was my turn to be on the throwing end. After walking around river right and setting up on the downstream rock we were ready to start. Bob W ran first followed by John who ran it smooth without a bobble or splash. I will just say that not everyone was that smooth, but no one needed the rope. Then, we all ran the center crack without any problems.



The next rapid is Jawbone. With the water being a little high we could take the easier left line into the "Parking Lot" above Jaw Bone. Bob W. and John eddied in and John got out with his throw line to set safety above Sock-Em-Dog. This is where we had **the "Incident."**

John signaled the group to hold up but most did not see the signal. The group entered the crowded eddy one by one. When Bob Nicholson started along the left sneak into the eddy he flipped. He attempted a few rolls but then went into the crease of Jawbone. Erik O and

Santo started down after him. Bob swam in Jawbone and bumped into Hydro Rock. He swept around the left side and drifted toward Sock-Em-Dog rapid. John, still running down to his set-up position, was shouting for Bob to swim right to avoid the serious pothole entrapments in the center of the drop. Eric & Santo followed in hot pursuit, Santo wisely went to river right and got out with his rescue rope. Bob swam over the drop falling onto a rock and self rescued. Erik got too close to Sock-em-Dog and ended up dropping sideways into the big hole and could not get out. He finally wet exited and was pulled out of the hole by Santo who just got there with his throw line.

The rest of us, not able to see what happened, ran Jawbone and went to see what we would do at Sock-Em-Dog. John and Joe then walked down and paddled across the pool to see how Bob was doing. We could see that Santo was with him just out of the water on river right. John came back to tell us that Bob's leg was broken and we needed to get help. I suggested that Joe accompany John because his truck was at the takeout and I knew that he had a cell phone. The rest of us walked the Puppy Chute and paddled across to help Bob.

When I got to the other side, the Erics were working on splinting Bob's leg with rope and sticks. Bob was in good spirits and had good color showing no signs of shock. It became obvious that no one had a good emergency kit. If we at least had a roll of Duct tape we could have almost made Bob a cast. I could see that Bob was being well taken care of, so I turned to help Santo who had started making 3 kayaks into a raft with long sticks and rope. To evacuate Bob, we still had Shoulder Bone and some class II rapids to run before the lake, then 2 miles of flat water to the take-out. The raft, like many other ideas was re-evaluated and modified to better fit the situation. If the raft went over a rapid and broke apart, the resulting tangle of boats, sticks and rope would be a dangerous. The decision was to put Bob in his boat with his splinted leg out and a boater on each side, Santo and Eric R, holding his boat steady. Eric Olle towed them across the pool to the other side of the river, which looked like a possible sneak. Erik R said to find a stick for a crutch and I said Bob should not walk. I was then told that Eric had rescue experience and was in charge. I don't know when that decision had been made but it is the first rule of both rescue and first aid, someone needs to take charge. The statement had a unifying effect on the whole group. We seemed to work together even better after that. The six of us working together carried Bob over the big boulders around Shoulder Bone then alternately walking and wading Bob in his boat, backwards with both legs out, along the shore and carrying him in the boat over smaller rocks until the river was calmer.

In the meantime, Joe and John raced ahead and reached a fisherman who had a cell phone that surprisingly enough could reach a 911 operator. They then paddled to the boat ramp to wait for the rescue people. Two ambulances, 5 cars and a motorboat eventually responded to the emergency call. The first two paramedics arriving, commandeered a fisherman who took them up the lake in his fishing boat.

Once again we returned to the method of steadying the boat with Eric Olle towing until reaching the lake. We proceeded down the narrow lake a short way until a fishing boat arrived with paramedics. We met at the shore where the paramedics took over and replaced our sticks with an inflatable splint. They started an IV, and administered some morphine for the pain. While evaluating Bob, one of the paramedics said he grew up in the Toledo area very near where Bob lived, what a small world. After a while, the Sheriff's boat with another rescue worker in a wet suit appeared. All the rescue workers transferred Bob to a body board and into the boat and took off. Nothing left for us to do but continue across the lake with Eric Olle still towing Bob's boat.

Rumor has it that the sheriff was going to fly Bob out with a helicopter but Kobak couldn't find Bob's credit card so he negotiated down to borrowing a fishing boat!! Actually, the waiting ambulance took Bob to Oconee hospital in Seneca, SC which was 30 miles away. We gave Bob his cell phone so that he could call Dawn with the bad news. Bob Weible drove to the hospital to see how Bob was doing and called us to inform us that Dawn was flying down and would bring Bob home after his operation. They didn't operate until Wednesday where they fastened a steel rod for faster and better healing.

The next morning John dropped Bob's car off at the hospital and found Bob still in good spirits. He loved that Morphine I guess. Elliott shuttled John back to the section IV put-in where John, Joe, Eric O and Shawn would attempt to successfully run the river. The rest of the group headed back home as planned.

The day was uneventful, with a smaller group, communication was better and John set-up a throw rope at the two dangerous rapids but it remained dry.

It was only Tuesday and the trip still had three days to go, but where was the water. The weather had warmed to the 70's but everything in the South except for the Noli and Ocoee was dry. The group decided that since the Noli was on the way home they would head there. They all got together in Ashville for a nice dinner and camped at the picnic area at Rock Creek Campground. Lee & Kay had arrived earlier and were given permission to camp there, since the campground itself was still under repair with a delayed opening.

John took a rest day and worked out the shuttle so that all the cars would end up at the take-out. This would have been great except that Lee had his third out-of-boat experience attempting to run "On the Rocks" and then decided to walk back to the put-in. He hoped to be able to hitch a ride back but was unsuccessful. He ended up relaxing in the sun until the group finished and Joe drove back to pick him up.

Lee, John & Elliott decided that they would head home but the die-hards, Eric O, Shawn and Joe drove up to WV. They took a rest day on Thursday but then headed for an Upper Yough release on Friday. Ted Pablo and Jason Miller met them and showed Shawn down for his first Upper Yough run. All did well so the group headed up to the Stonycreek Riverfest.

Safety Lessons Learned

Throw lines are mandatory on dangerous rapids. Communication with the entire group is very important. If a throw line had been set up before people started into the staging eddy, the waterfall swim may have been prevented. We all carry throw lines, some carry spare paddles but few carry good medical kits, duct tape can be used for lots of emergency situations and is as valuable as a spare paddle.

Update on Bob's condition.

Both the doctors in SC and OH said that the fast action of splinting the break helped prevent the break from coming through the skin. Dawn got him home on Saturday but by the following Thursday they realized that Bob had a blood clot that needed to be treated, so back to the ER for injections of a clot dissolver. Dawn needed to give Bob two injections daily for the blood clot. The clot finally dissolved and he is now starting physical therapy. The doctor and Bob are hopeful that he will be kayaking in August, while Dawn is figuring out a way to destroy that "Bad Mojo" kayak.

SOUTHERN RIVERS TRIP 2006

By Debbie Avallone and Pat Guzowski

This accounting of facts & tales recalls ten rivers in ten days, 2,178 road miles, new friends, adventures and a great time! Pat G. and I car pool for our first Southern River adventures.

Initial packing of two people into my CRV is not too bad really. There's even room for firewood. Pat reminds me that there are grocery stores in the south. No need to take chances. Pack plenty of food. South or bust!

First day's run is the Upper Meadow (800cfs). Group meets at Mabel's Diner. Part of the group is lost on the shuttle. The discovery is not made until we reach the takeout. John goes back. The poor crew got left behind in the parking lot. It's our 1st introduction to Kobak Boot Camp (at all times be ready to run).

The road to the takeout is a logging road by definition but it's really more a goat path than a road. The night's rain ensures there is plenty of mud tossed up onto the roofs. To ensure the full rearrangement of car contents...proceed slowly in low gear while dodging rocks & holes then....fly like the wind though the curves of hills & hollers when one reaches a cinder covered road. The roadside collection of rusty truck parts and old cars would indicate this is where old cars & trucks go to die. Rain stops just as we put on. A fun, creekly, river - perfect for the first day. Pat demonstrates a really cool prolonged (unintentional) stern squirt. Just for extra style points, he throws this squirt in the middle of a rapid. The bow stays in the air for a full 6 seconds before he throws it down (upside down) onto a boulder and proceeds several yards in the bottom-up position before demonstrating a hardy roll. 10 points for style!



John Kobak on the Meadow

Day 2 - the Nolichucky (1075cfs). Our mighty leader, invites the wrath of the River Gods by saying 'he does not swim'. Inevitably he is swimming the first rapid. Later at Quarter Mile Rapid, Rescue Weekend skills come in handy as Michael Duvall, Pat & Bob Nicholson extract me from a large boulder. It's a perfect scenario for this year's Rescue Rodeo.

Easter Sunday we have the Ocoee (1250cfs) all to ourselves. Not only aren't any rafts around this morning (normally it's a sea of rubber beasts) there are only a handful of kayakers. We all run Hell Hole, a large, intimidating hole by the power plant. Usually this hole is nearly inaccessible to all but the big-dogs. It's friendly enough once in there but, the line to play is usually so long, the players so good and the crowd of kayak groupies so thick that mere mortal boaters rarely play long. Today, there are only a few and they are friendly. It's so fun to actually get a few seconds of surf time.

A note from Pat G. inserted here. On one rapid on the Ocoee, Deb used her woman's prerogative to send me off to the left side "where the line was" and then she proceeded to scurry to the right. Hmmm.....What's wrong with this picture? I head halfway down the left side before getting back to the right, I still do not know what diabolical plan she had for me there!

On the way back up river to the Olympic Center visitor area we notice that there isn't any water in the riverbed. Rafts and kayakers are high & dry. A foul up in communication had lead to the water being temporarily turned off. As we walk around the Olympic Center I speculate about which rock removed the skin from my backside last year.



Santo on Cheoa



Marina - Steve - Doug in Tallulah Gorge

That evening our trip organizers are proud to see we've arrived at the destination with daylight to spare—Not getting lost, not even once! There's time to time to hike Tallulah Gorge - a steep rock valley with huge waterfalls. Rumor has it that there are 700 steps down to the suspension bridge and 700 back. The view proves to be worth every step. We make it back to camp just as the daylight runs out.

The Chattooga has a reputation for being an attention getting class IV run with fatal holes and undercuts. This is the river that broke Bob Nicholson's leg last year and where the movie Deliverance was filmed. The experienced paddlers say that 1.45 ft is perfect for a virgin run.

Early in the day our mighty leader jumps out on the rocks to point out a path through a relatively benign looking rapid. Our group is big. Can't quite hear what was said. No worries, everybody is making it though. Kris, just in front of me, gets tossed a bit so... I sit forward prepared to work, follow the path directed by the paddle and head over the drop. BIG MISTAKE. I've fallen into Woodall Shoals hole. No amount of forward paddling can overcome the backdraw of this hole. Flip, Flip, Flip, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, Stubby & his rider are window shaded with great vigor. No problem, I'm a practiced swimmer. Calmly, I pull the skirt. The boat is not willing to leave this enthusiastic hole. The paddle is removed from my hands and I am returning to the froth. Bye Stubby, see you later! I get a ride to the rocks. Eventually Santos & Marina retrieve Stubby. The paddle reappears. They all seem so worried. What's the big deal? Sure swimming is inconvenient and embarrassing but certainly not unheard of. John says "She missed the line by eight feet!" Apparently, the paddle was pointing to the EXACT spot to place ones boat, not a general direction. It's another two days before it is revealed that this hole kills people. Guess that explains the worried looks.

Another note from Pat inserted here. I purposely kept this little bit of info from Deb so as not to upset her fine flowing river Karma.



Mike at Seven Foot Falls



Bob at Seven Foot Falls

The next few hours are intense. Instructions at Cork Screw/Crack in the Rock are "You must roll. If it doesn't work in 2 rolls, pull the skirt and look for a rope". Ropes are set up. The rocks below are deadly undercuts. Geez, too bad there isn't anything exciting on this river. No swimmers here. We all walk Sock 'em Dog, the rapid that broke Bob's leg last year (just too boney). Bob surveys and takes pictures. We listen intently to the story of the swim, broken leg, masterful team rescue and trip to the hospital. Around one corner on the long flat paddle out, our team is piling kayaks up on the shore to gain access to a rope swing. YEA!!! Weeeeeee. SPLASH! Just what my poor tortured nerves need!!



Steve at Raven's Rock



Pat at Corkscrew



Doug at Corkscrew



Marina at Jaw Bone

Some of the group heads to the Pigeon others to the Cranberry & Williams. A senior member of our little group runs a creek section of the Williams upside down, then sideways, then upside down again. Oh, ouch, yikes. SWIM. Bump, bump bump. A few strategically applied steri-strips put him back together again. Proof exists in photo form and may be had for just the right price.

Day 8 the plan is to meet Doug, Steve, Marina, Tom & Lee in the afternoon for a 2nd run on the Middle Fork (4.0') & Tygart (5.6'). When they return with bruises, bloody knuckles, harrowing stories of 5 swims and a lost paddle (with pogies). I graciously volunteer Pat & I to scout the upper area of the Middle Fork while our battered comrades rest & recover. The poor gentlemen in our group just hate having to see the Spring Break teens warming themselves in the sun & working their bikini tans.

The river above Audra State Park is a nice Class II-III run, something along the lines of the Casselman or Cheat Narrows. Plenty of CFS to keep us moving on the flat stretches. The river even has a few areas to stop & surf. That evening we meet Bill Michaud & his friend Paul. Bill is an experienced open boater with more than 350 days on the Grand Canyon. We make plans to paddle together the next day. Not only are they experienced Tygart runners, they have a key to a private takeout which eliminates the dreaded railroad track walk out.

The Tygart is down (3.7', 4.8), the shuttle short, the experienced group is strong and we have a key to the secret takeout. Happy day! Two hours after the intrepid shuttle crew left for the 20min shuttle we conclude something is amiss. A drive to the secret shuttle finds three very muddy, hot, tired shuttlers emerging from the road. ALL THREE 4WD vehicles are stuck To The HUBS in the mud. A farmer with a tractor & tire chains pulls the team from the slimy mud. Mud covers every body and every thing. By the end of the day our swim count is 4 without any, blood, bruises or lost items.

We head to Teeters in hopes of catching Steve Ingalls' trip in the morning. Pulled in after dark in the rain glad to find a few hardy souls huddled under Rick Collins' new rain cover. A special thanks to Mr. Collins for putting up with whiny, bitchy, tired Pat G's plea to use Rick's vehicle to string a tarp only to change his mind and just set up his cot under Rick's canopy. The group of about 12-15 includes people not seen for a year or more. Catherine Curly is there with her new husband. The Dry Fork of the Cheat is at a perfect level both days (2500? CFS). Play, play, play all day for two days it's a surf fest.

We head home dirty, smelly and happy as kids at Christmas. What an excellent week! 10 rivers in 10 days. Met nice people. Paddled great rivers. Thanks to all who showed us the lines and paddled at the back with the nubies.

Pictures by Jeff Macklin

2008 Southern Trip

by Wayne Carey

I guess I just don't have that Kobak charisma. I planned a trip and everybody bailed. My bags were packed and I had a van load of firewood to keep my paddling buddies warm at night. I couldn't very well cancel my leave and go into work with my tail between my legs. So it was off to the Nolichucky. And believe it or not, there were about 100 boaters there. Bluegrass Whitewater Association was having their annual clinic. They were nice enough to let me tag along on the Noli for two days. It was running about 800 cfs. A few students stayed over Monday to run the lower Noli. I headed over to the French Broad.

There was plenty of water in the French Broad, but no boaters. I hung around at the takeout for a while and then drove over to the Pigeon. There was a release and raft trips, but no kayakers. Planned releases don't start until the end of April, but there were releases all week.

The Pigeon is right next to the eastern side of Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP). Just up the road from the put-in is Big Creek Campground. It is a cross between walk-in camping and drive-in camping, like a mule, which is what you need to haul all your food, coolers, and cooking gear back and forth from your campsite to your car every morning and night. There are twelve sites. I picked the one closest to the parking lot.

Big Creek from Big Creek Campground to Walter's Power Plant, the put-in for the Pigeon, is a popular class IV run. A virtual gauge is on Boatingbeta.com at <http://www.boatingbeta.com/cgi-bin/myflows.cgi>. Upper Big Creek, above the campground is seldom run.

There are two good hiking trails from Big Creek Campground; Big Creek Trail and Baxter Creek Trail. Big Creek Trail follows an old road bed for five miles along upper Big Creek. Midnight Hole swimming hole is at 1.8 miles and Mouse Creek Falls is at 2 miles.



Midnight Hole

Big Creek Trail also serves as a horse trail. Horses are available at liveryes. Baxter Creek Trail climbs 4100 feet in 6.2 miles to the top of Mt. Sterling. There is a fire tower at the top with great views in all directions over the Smokys. Both trails have back country campsites at their ends. There is also a trail connecting the two campsites, which would make a great two night backpacking trip. I had my backpacking gear but chose to hike the two trails out and back and stay at the campground. I did have that van load of firewood.

April 23-27 was the Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage at GSMNP. This may sound lame to a bunch of badass boaters, but they were spectacular. There were trout lilies, painted trilliums, crested dwarf iris, fire pinks, and many more. The scent filled the air on sections of Baxter Creek Trail.



Crested Dwarf Iris

Gas - \$165, camping - \$69, one meal at Ryans - \$11, springtime in the Smokys - priceless. And no mosquitoes!

Cold Southern Trip

At least we were not in Cleveland

By John Kobak

This is the 33rd year that we have been running our Southern trip. We went on Memorial Day in the early years but we eventually moved to Easter week to take advantage of the extra vacation days that people get and the higher water levels. Sometimes Easter comes early and sometimes we start in the snow. This year we had an early Easter and a late Winter.



Michael, Wayne, Me, Bill, Elliott, Judi decision time

Because of the cold weather many people dropped out leaving only a small group of 9 hardy paddlers. Elliott Drysdale led the trip with me as his advisor. Wayne Carey, Bill Miller and Michael Duvall came down for the entire trip. Bruce Bookless came down and after one day of paddling headed back home. Judi Cleary and Larry Fordyce joined us a day late but stayed the entire trip. Erin Bethea came late and left early.

We decided to utilize Warrior Path State Park for our first two nights. They opened up their overflow area for us, so we had our own private campground including hot showers. A big campfire warmed us up.

We left Cleveland on Thursday in a heavy snow but it was much nicer in Northern TN. It was sunny and in the low 60's. The Nolichucky River was a low 875 cfs but the group thought it was perfect for our first river paddling of the year. No problems, just a little windy. We met Judi & Larry at camp that evening where everybody cooked-in in spite of the cool

weather. The weather turned cold and we awoke to 3" of snow and no water in the Tellico or Little Rivers. Judi suggested that we try the Pigeon River which runs along I-70 at the NC/TN border. It is a dam release and when we got there we saw plenty of water. However, we also saw snow and it was 30° F. We all agreed that it would be a nice day to shop and headed over to the NOC store on the Nantahala. Bruce gave up and headed back to Ohio.



Author at Bull Sluice – Click photo for animation

So Saturday night, as is our tradition, we arrived at Thunder Rock campground on the Ocoee. We enjoyed a Mexican dinner in Copperhill and met Erin who finally made it after some car problems. We started a big campfire and made sure that no one was drinking any alcohol.



Erin on the Pigeon

Up drives a TVA police officer, who quickly comes to our campfire to check our drinking habits. No one was drinking, however he was not happy. He asked Elliott, do you have beer in your cooler? I answered; "You have no right to look in our coolers." Boy was that the wrong thing to say. He promptly collected everyone's

ID and he said that alcohol is not permitted on any federal land. Elliott and everyone but me generously opened their coolers showing him their beer and wine. He said no alcohol is permitted even if it is locked away and no one is drinking. Of course he was wrong but he was on a roll.

Bill Miller pulled him aside and asked that he let us all go, since we were just a bunch of old guys. Well, he agreed but he still was mad at me for questioning his authority. He finally drove away, but we still can't figure out why he harassed us.

I wrote the forest service to complain about the harassment. They returned my call and said they would contact the TVA who patrol the area. The TVA supervisor called me and apologized and said he would discuss the complaint with the officer. He felt that he was over zealous. The TVA supervisor did discuss this with the officer who agreed that it happened exactly as I said. He was told by the supervisor in no uncertain terms that no searches of coolers can take place when there is no actual alcohol consumption taking place. Finding cans in the trash is not probable cause either. I decided not to ask for a formal reprimand because I was assured that this type of action will not happen again.

On Sunday morning we had our annual pancake breakfast and got on the Ocoee (1200 cfs) by 11 AM. Judi & Larry decided to Shred it. The only real entertainment of the day was when they tried to punch Hell Hole unsuccessfully.



Michael at Seven Foot Falls

We got an early start for Tallulah Falls Campground where we camped for two nights. The weather was a little warmer here but the Chattooga was only running at 1.3'. Elliott, Judi, Larry and Erin decided to do a hike of the Tallulah Falls Gorge while Bill, Michael, Wayne and I tackled the low water on Section IV.

Our biggest challenge at this level were the hundreds of rocks strewn all about. Five Falls is where the action starts. We set our usual safety rope up at Corkscrew and Jawbone. But it stayed dry, as the group looked solid. The low flow made the middle crack in "Crack in the Rock" look doable but we all decided to carry, Wayne was the only one to give Sock-Em-Dog a try and hit it perfectly. The day was sunny but cool with a windy paddle across Lake Tugaloo.



Bill at Corkscrew

No one wanted to do a repeat run at these levels so we drove back to the Ocoee. No water, so we kept on driving until we reached the Pigeon River again. The dam releases here are very unpredictable. We just missed a morning release of 2100 cfs but we paddled the dropping flow which was probably below 1000 cfs. It was the first time for everyone but Wayne. It is a nice challenging class III run and not as dirty as some say. The best part was that there was a Bar-B-Q restaurant at the takeout that is worth a stop.



Wayne at Sock-Em-Dog

We jumped back in our cars and everyone but Erin headed up to the Big South Fork, which was also running low. We made it by dark. The alcohol policy at Bandy Creek campground is reasonable. "Keep all your drinks in your campsite. No drinking in your car." Rain was predicted and started up when we did our shuttle on Wed morning.

The river was only running 875 CFS and Elliott told everyone that it would be no fun. He was wrong, it was a good level and the first three rapids were very challenging. Everyone got sluiced at a rapid called the EI, and ended up upside down. Luckily the winter roll practice helped all but one, which was our only swim on the entire trip. The steady rain all day long was more than 1-1/2" and the river went up to 2500 cfs on Thursday, but the temperatures were turning cold again so most of us headed home while Judi and Larry headed to the Lower Yough only to find that it had risen to over 4.5' with a snow storm predicted.

This was probably one of the colder trips that I remember but it was still fun to get out on the river to kick off Spring.

Thanks to Wayne, Larry & Judi for the pictures

Annual Southern Trip

By John Kobak

Right after the movie *Deliverance*, a group of Keel-Haulers decided to head down to the Smoky Mountains in the summer of 1973 to see what these rivers were really like. We all met up at the Nantahala to get started, the Ocoee was not paddleable in those days because of the power dams.

We drove over to the Chattooga River which we heard had 4 sections ending in Lake Tugaloo. Dean Norman, still in the club, started on Section 1 with a small group. This section has lots of waterfalls and is now closed to all paddlers.

Our large group tried Section 2 which was mostly flat water. The next day we gave Section 3 a shot, led by a park ranger who saw us safely down the class III section culminating at the class IV Bull Sluice. Peggy & I paddled both sections in our decked C-2.

The next day a more daring group decided to paddle section 4 at about a 2' level. Paddlers like Hank Annable, Jim Botamer, Chuck Singer and me prayed that we wouldn't meet any mountain men like in the movie. It was a very tough section considering our experience level and boat designs at that time. In fact Chuck broke his kayak in half at Woodall Shoals and had to walk out. The rest of our group made it to the takeout after saving a rafter from drowning at Crack-In-the-Rock in the Five Falls area.

We were hooked, over the next 38 years we probably only missed doing this trip 5 times. There are some of our recent trip reports on our website. <http://www.keelhauler.org/khcc/Oldsouthtrips.htm> Many of these trips had 20-30 paddlers of all skill levels.

For the past 3 years this trip had sort of petered out. Weather, gas prices, and other reasons have all entered into the equation. This year the club had two Southern trips, the March trip led by Jim Murtha had a great time and camped at Tim Gill's cabin, near the Chattooga. I think they had 6 paddlers.



We had 8 paddlers in 4 cars for our warm Easter trip; **Bob Weible & Jim Hunt; Michael Duvall & me; Jeff Macklin & Carolyn DeVenney; Carl & Donna Homberg.** The Hombergs, Hunt and DeVenney were new to these Southern trips.

Our original plan was to start on the Upper Meadow River near the Gauley in WV. We all met at the campground below Summersville Dam, several other groups of paddlers had rolled in overnight and

were also looking to paddle in the area. We checked the river gauges and weather. The Meadow was now too low and a very heavy rain would make paddling not a lot of fun on the Lower Gauley.



Carl Homberg

So we hit the road for Erwin, TN. We decided to get a campsite at the Nolichucky take-out and then immediately head up to the put-in over the mountain in NC.



Lunch Stop

The weather had warmed to the high 70's and it was sunny. Even better the river was running at 2000cfs which is a nice medium level covering all the small rocks, yet not making the hydraulics too large. This was a nice warm-up, with everyone having great runs for their first outing of the season. We found a nice family restaurant North of Erwin at the Unicoi exit called Maple Grove.

A check of the river gauges check showed that the Tellico River was about 380 CFS and the air temperatures were going to be in the 80's. We got on the road about 8 AM for the 3-½ Hr. drive to this little trout stream just north of the Ocoee.

Carl and Donna said they would feel more comfortable on the lower river below Jared's Knee, so I paddled with them while our other 5 tackled the ledges section. I believe they all had good runs at Baby Falls after portaging past a large tree just above the falls. The Eric Jackson family paddled with them on this section.



Jim Hunt - Tellico Ledges

We then hit the road for the Ocoee with a traditional stop at El Rio restaurant in Copper Hill. The NF Thunder Rock campground had plenty of room for the night.



Bob Weible on the Ocoee

Easter morning has always been a good time to paddle the Ocoee. All the good Southern Christians are at church and we had the river to ourselves with a 10 AM put-in. The flume has been broken so they have been releasing daily, the flow today was about 1600 cfs, and as usual one paddler had some trouble getting stuck in the hydraulic at Broken Nose. We quickly got on our way and were off the river heading to Tim Gill's cabin near Clayton, GA by 1 PM. We did some grocery shopping along the way and finally decided to have a little cook-out for a change.



Tim's Cabin (Warwoman Waldorf) near Clayton, GA

Tim had left the cabin open for us, so we made ourselves at home. The Chattooga has been running a little over 2' so everyone thought that it might be a good idea to try Section 3 first. It has been 12 years since I paddled Section 3. We decided to cut 3 miles off the run and start at Sandy Ford on the GA side of the river. It was an easy shuttle aided by Tim. You can drive right down to the water and with the higher water level it only took us 3 hrs. to get to Bull Sluice, the last rapid on Section 3. There were a bunch of rafts and duckies scouting when we got there. The extra water allowed for a SC sneak line or a double boof over decapitation rock. Paddlers tried both routes.



John Shoots the Bull

We got a localized hard rain overnight but were surprised that the Chattooga water level had stayed about the same. Donna came down with an illness and they decided to call it a week and started for home. Tim had to work but his 21 yr. old daughter Tiffany and her friend Nate joined us for our paddle on Section 4.



Carolyn



Everything was going great until just before our lunch stop at Raven's Rock. When we passed Stekoa Creek that flows out of Clayton, it was roaring, adding about 300 CFS to the Chattooga. The level was noticeable higher at Raven's. When I pulled into the eddy above the first drop of Five Falls I couldn't even see the rock that is on the left side of the straight forward drop. Nate ran the drop staying close to right side and then set safety for the rest, Bob tries a slightly different line and almost back ended into the hole. Michael was the only other one to try. The rest of us walked the drop. I knew right away that I wasn't even going to look at Corkscrew so I took the right hand sneak and set up a throw line for anyone running it. Nate runs OK but flips next to the wall but rolls OK. Everyone else then decides to sneak as well..

At Crack-in-the-Rock we all take the far right sneak. I set up a throw line below Jaw Bone but when everybody saw the fast water flowing right into Hydroelectric Rock they all walked down from the left side staging eddy. Almost all ran the Puppy Chute on the left side of the Dog. I walked that one also.



Michael runs the Puppy

The rest of the rapids to the lake were almost uneventful. It turns out that Tugaloo Lake is 4' below normal, so we got one extra rapid to run. Of course I got stuck in the last hydraulic but quickly ended out. The 40 min paddle across the shallow lake was

interesting; we saw lots of big sand beaches, turtles and sand bars that would make it impassable for power boats to make it up the lake.

We ate out at Mama G's in Clayton which has great Italian food. We watched the TV weather report about the severe storms heading our way. We decided that our best option was to either head back to the Nolichucky or go all the way to the Tygart in WV. The morning reports predicted storms across TN so Jim & Bob decided to head all the way home. The remaining four of us decided to head up to Audra State Park on the Middle Fork in WV. Little did we know that a few hours after we passed near Dillard, GA and Johnson City, TN that a few tornados would pass by our route? These were the same storms that killed hundreds of people in Mississippi and Alabama.

The gauges on the Tygart looked OK for a Thursday paddle if we didn't get a lot of rain. I put out a rain gauge and marked the water level in the river. It rained hard that night and we got almost an inch of rain. The Middle Fork was on its way up and with that kind of rain we were concerned what the main Tygart level would be when we reached the confluence with the MF. After a short discussion we decide the safe decision would be to paddle the 5 mi stretch upstream and take out where we camped. None of us had run this stretch before but even with the MF running close to 5' it was an easy Class III run. It was scenic and worth the paddle. It would be a good training section like the lower Slippery Rock.

We all packed up and headed home since everything in Northern WV that we were familiar with was already too high and still rising. It was a great trip and we finally got to paddle in warm sunny weather wearing short sleeve paddling jackets. We had no problems and it was a really fun week with really good friends.

Jeff Macklin took most of the photos that are posted here. If you want to view hundreds more that he took on the trip go to his SmugMug photo page for April 2011.

<http://jeffmacklin.smugmug.com/Whitewater/2011>



Easter in the Doe Gorge

Event Date: 04/07/2012

River/Location: Doe

Trip Skill: Advanced

Easter on the Doe Gorge or Revenge of the Paddle Snake or Visit to Goat Beach

On Saturday 4/7, a group of 7 paddlers took Rich Rulen's advice ("I know nothing about the Doe Gorge except the location of the takeout") and headed out to see what the Doe Gorge was all about. We had heard of its tendency to have a lot of wood, and to never trust a blind drop, which is good advice for any class IV creek. The Ohio contingent was led by Michael Duval, and included David Herron from Cincinnati and Jeff Cramer from Akron. The Carolina contingent included Brian McPherson, Jeff Dennie, Paul Scrutton, and Kent French. Michael had paddled the Doe Gorge a few years ago, but this was going to be a PFD for the other six of us.

We grabbed our first helping of river karma by shuttling another boater up to the put-in. That probably saved us 30 minutes of trying to find Bear Cage Road, which was tucked away as an almost U-turn to the left. The best way to find this road is to turn left exactly 6 miles from the Doe River bridge at the takeout.

As we began the run, the river gave us a feeling of being on the Nantahala. After $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, however, we got to a section of class III boogie water. What a great way to kick off a river. Bear Cage rapid at this level forced paddlers to pull their boats over the edge of a river-wide log on river left, drop into a small eddy, and catch the curling wave to drop into the bottom pool. Everyone that ran it came through cleanly, though the portage was not a bad idea. Getting trashed in the first rapid with an unclear line is not the way to start your day.

The AW site has 6 named rapids. Between most of these rapids, we found plenty of class III boogie water, plus some that would qualify as class IV due to the length of the rapid. I would NOT like to swim very long on this river....rapids are shallow, and the boogie water is fast-moving.

Toaster Slot at this level was kickin', but the slot itself sort of disappears with the higher water. The paddle snake managed to grab a paddle, which was quickly found in the pool below the rapid. This would be an omen for things to come. Bodysnatcher, on the other hand, has only one line (that we could figure out), and you WILL run this rapid. The portage would be epic, with cliffs on both sides of the river. Now that we've run it, we can say that its bark is worse than its bite. It's actually a fun run, including two boofs, a screaming S-turn, and a 5-foot ledge that requires a good boof to avoid the hole at the end. The best view ever was looking upriver

from the bottom, thinking "how did we get through that mess of rocks"? Overall, the rapid has about 20-30 foot of vertical drop.

Body Snatcher on the Doe River TN



After running such a great rapid, Brian decided that he would be getting out of his boat at the next beach. The beach, however, was patrolled by a goat. Though it appeared that he would just be visiting the petting zoo, Brian discovered that the goat was pretty protective of his territory. We all decided that shore leave was a BA-A-A-AD idea. The only damage, however, was to Brian's reputation.

Once we got through Bodysnatcher, Michael told us that the rest of the river was just run-out. I can't remember how many times David and I asked each other if we'd gotten to the run-out yet, having just run another class III rapid. In addition to the un-named rapids, Diagonal Ledges reminded me of Land of Holes on the Cheoah, Flagpole was vaguely similar to Triple Drop on Wilsons, and Schooner's Folly reminded me of CHAOS. Three people, three boats in the hole at the same time. Though it's not a bad swim (it's only 3 foot deep), you can't get out by yourself. It reminds me of a pothole. Now that we know better, you should run this river-left ledge by boofing the edge of the hole either left or right, or bouncing down the rock slide on river right to avoid the (w)hole thing. The paddle snake absconded with two paddles in this drop, which river karma allowed us to find about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile down the river. One paddle was able to be relayed back up to its owner on the shore. The other paddle was reunited to its owner after running a class III rapid with the only breakdown we had with us.

The level was around 750 cfs, which AW says is a primo level, and I think the entire group would agree with that assessment after the run. The notorious wood did not cause any problems. We had to portage a few logs, but all the rapids had clean lines. It was a great day on a great river, and we'd all go back for a second helping in the future.

Taken from Carolina Canoe Club Web Site

Additional Pictures of the Southern Rivers Trip by Michael Duvall



Dave Herron at Kayakers Ledge on the French Broad NC.



Michael Duvall running Elbow on the Little River TN.



Jeff Cramer after running the Sinks of the Little River, TN

Southern Rivers 2013

By Michael Duvall

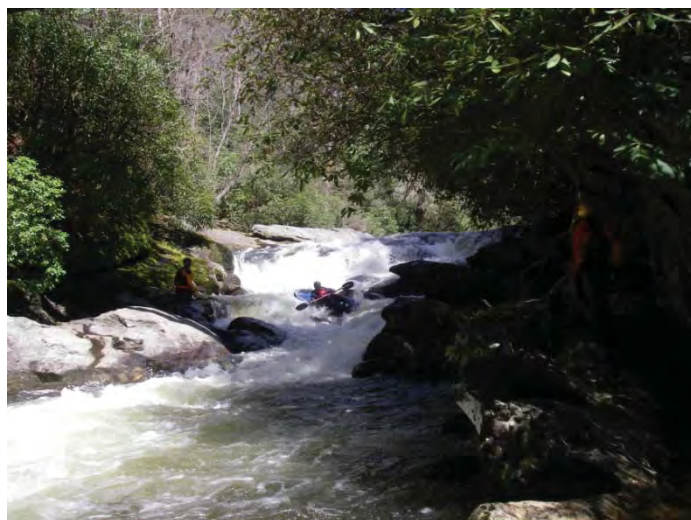
“One of the best!” “Hit some real gems of Southern Appalachia”

This year’s trip started with a bang – of thunder and a huge downpour. The plan was to meet Jeff Cramer and Joe Marks at the campground at the Nolichucky Friday morning but a huge storm moved in overnight and caused the Noli to go from around 2000 cfs to near 10,000 cfs. The campground manager who is often a pain warned us that if we didn’t leave the camp in a hurry we might be stuck there because the water level was nearing the access road.

High water eliminated two of the standards of previous Southern trips, the Nolichucky and section 4 of the Chattooga. However when one door closes another one opens. Friday Hugh Barrow was going to join us on the Nolichucky but suggested the Big Laurel into Section 9 of the French Broad. We met at the take out in Hot Springs NC. When we got there Hugh was talking to some of the local raft guides that had just run a local little stream, Spring Creek. It was a lot of fun and a good warm up for me because I had not paddled much this spring. After that we went on to paddle the Big Laurel and French Broad as planned.



Big Laurel



Joe Marks- first drop of Section Zero

That night we hooked up with Bill Warble at the Tallulah Fest and camped next to Jeff Prycl, Seth Burdett and the TRPC crew. Saturday morning we joined them on Section Zero of the Chattooga. This section has been closed to kayaking for 30 years so this was a chance of a lifetime. The level was minimum but started off with some big drops then flattened out towards the end. In the flat section a ranger pulled us over and asked for our permits. He was kind enough to let us fill out permits on the spot with a warning instead of a \$50 ticket each.

Sunday we went to the Tallulah Gorge with 825 cfs which is higher than the 500 on Saturdays and the 700 for Sundays. After descending the 500+ steps you launch into the first rapid, Tanner, which calls for a wave boof to avoid a hole. Next is the largest rapid in the gorge, Oceania. I walked that one and waited for the others at the bottom. When I got there I met Joe swimming out of the eddy hole. When he got back in his boat he noticed that his paddle was broken so he was provided a breakdown to finish the run. I had a bad day myself with two swims when I got trashed in holes. I thought this was harder than the Upper Gauley at this level.

Monday it was just Bill, Jeff, and myself. Joe left because he needed to save himself for his upcoming Grand Canyon trip. We were determined to hit as many of the best runs before they got too low so we headed to the Little near Gatlinburg Tn. from the Sinks to Elbow in the morning. We had some incidents at the ledges leading to the Sinks that concluded with Bill breaking his wood paddle. Later that afternoon we ran the Tellico, Ledges to Jared’s knee. Tuesday we did two laps on the Doe.

Wednesday we got some rain and called Hugh for guidance. He said he could join us on Wilson Creek in NC. It was coming up so our first lap was at -.2 and our second lap was zero. We said thanks and good bye to Hugh and headed to Teeters in West Virginia looking for something to paddle on the way home.



Jeff at Elbow on the Doe



Bill at Body Snatcher on the Doe



Michael on Wilson

Thursday Bill dropped off his broken paddle with Jim Snyder and picked up a new one he had on order. Then it was off to the Lower Big Sandy for a quick run at 5.6 ft. There Jeff got his first run of Big Splat and it was perfect. After that, we all headed for home with fond memories of a great Southern Rivers trip.