

## Troop 49 – The Pathfinders

### Delaware River Float Trip and Campout

June 2011

Water was the theme of Troop 49's June, 2011 Delaware River float trip and campout, both water from the river and water from the rainclouds.

The troop rallied at 8 AM on Saturday morning, under the cover of dark clouds, and headed north. Many vehicles drove north up the NY Thruway, then headed west on Rt. 17 and I-84 to Port Jervis. Driving through Port Jervis, we passed Bon Secors Hospital, which I personally have never seen in daylight before. (The three times I've been there before were late night runs from Camp Turrell. Those details are from other trip reports, and will not be elaborated on here.) We're happy to report that we did not see the hospital again until passing by on our return trip home Sunday. From Port Jervis, we drove north through "Hawks Nest", which is a winding road that runs along the ledge of the cliffs on the New York side of the river. As you drive along Hawks Nest, the sheer mountains go up on the passenger's side (east). To the west, there is a four foot stone wall along the road's edge, and then a sheer drop down to the river. Adding a level of complexity along this stretch, the southbound lane (along the cliff side) is closed for repair work. There are two mobile traffic lights set up about a half mile apart, which regulate the traffic flow.

We arrived to Indian Head outfitter by 10 AM, and checked in. Scouts set up their tents while the ground was relatively dry. We squared away the rafts and canoes with the outfitter and off we went. About a mile up the road, we realized they had 4 canoes on the trailer when we needed 5 for our group. The driver turned around and returned to the camp so that we could get one more canoe transported up to our put in site. Soon after, we were back on our way north. We put in at the Ten Mile River launch area. Prior to embarking on our Journey, our SPL (James) reviewed the Safety Afloat procedures with the troop. There was also a National Park Service ranger there to remind us of the regulations on the water. We loaded up the 5 canoes and 2 rafts, and off we went for the seven mile journey to Barryville.

Within the first half hour of paddling, we saw two bald eagles. That was just the start of two days of encounters with eagles, hawks, heron, geese, ducks, and smaller birds such as goldfinches, red-winged blackbirds, and orioles. One funny encounter was when one of the rafts was floating under a young eagle on Sunday. The bird was perched on a branch, and looked down at the rafters while they were watching the eagle in return, hoping it would fly. The stoic eagle watched them, and took one side step to its right, as if to say "I'm not moving, but if I step over here, maybe they will go away", and sure enough, the current kept the raft moving downstream while the eagle remained on the branch.

Another thing we saw soon after launching were dead fish in the water. All were larger in size, and our first instinct was to think that these fish were killed by pollutants in the water. On Sunday, when Mr.

Johnsen arrived, he informed us that these were American Shad fish, which had swam upstream from the Atlantic Ocean to spawn. Most die, like Pacific Salmon, but not all do. After returning home and looking up this species of fish, the Delaware River Basin Commission has some more information about them on their website: <http://www.state.nj.us/drbc/edweb/shad.htm>

The weather never fully cooperated with us throughout the weekend, with rain varying from a heavy mist at times, to a windy rain when it was blowing and it was hitting us head on. We paddled until 1PM, and then found a rocky area on the New York side to stop for lunch. The rain had stopped by that time, and scouts ate their sandwiches and rehydrated. After our stop, we headed back down stream. We encountered a group of people in canoes marked "Park Ranger" and we asked them what sort of program they were doing. They informed us that it was a river cleanup day, and they were scouting out and collecting trash along the banks of the river. We were on pace with this group for a good portion of the day. They let us know that there will be another river cleanup in July. For anyone interested in participating (this won't be a troop event), they can reach out to the National Park Service [www.nps.gov/upde/](http://www.nps.gov/upde/)

When we had the Aqueduct Bridge in sight, we stopped at the boat launch area on the Pennsylvania side, and on the hill was a house once owned by western lore writer Zane Grey, known for "Riders of the Purple Sage" and other books. The Aqueduct Bridge was designed by John Roebling, who is more famous for designing another bridge that links Brooklyn to Lower Manhattan, the Brooklyn Bridge! We knew that the bridge was a landmark which designated that we had only a mile or so left of the trip. We took this time to swap out the canoe paddlers with the rafters, to give the younger scouts who had been rafting some time in a canoe. Knowing our day was almost complete, we had an easy paddle. A couple of scouts got separated from their boats along the way. One particular scout (Patrick) was ejected from his raft, and as he went to fetch his paddle, ended up riding the rapids for the entire stretch of rapids under the bridge, until the next raft pulled him in. All were impressed by his ability to remain calm for the entire incident which was about a football field's length in distance. He earned "style points" for the fact that his baseball hat stayed on his head the entire time!

We arrived back in camp by 4PM. The next order of business was getting in to dry clothes and then on to dinner. The Indian Head canoe outfitter has hot showers that are coin-operated. The owner of the company explained that there were too many instances where people took too long in the shower, or they were left on all night, and so this was a great way to regulate the usage to a reasonable amount of time per guest.

Two of our newer scouts, Marc and Alan took on the job of planning and buying food. For dinner, the scouts made tacos. The older scouts coached the younger scouts, and all did a great job in cooking and made quesadillas with the leftover cheese and tortillas. The adults had London broil, potatoes, and asparagus. We cleaned up and turned the cooking fire into a campfire. After a round of toasted marshmallows and other snacks, there was no need to encourage anyone to turn in and get sleep. All were all tired from a long day on the river, and had the prospect of another day's paddle in our minds. We were lulled to sleep by the tapping of rain, heavy at times, on the tents.

On Sunday morning, we woke to skies that were not quite as threatening. Everyone got right to work cooking breakfast and cleaning up the site. We decided to leave tents up until we returned from the river, in hopes that the sun would come through, and dry things off. At least, we were hopeful that the rain was done, and they would get no wetter before we got back. The scouts prepared pancakes and sausage on the large griddle. No one went hungry. For the adults, it was "McMuffin" style sandwiches. The outfitters opened up at 8AM, and we squared away the number of rafts & canoes for the day. We assembled at 8:30 near the water's edge, and got our life jackets and paddles.

The route on Sunday was 9 miles from Barryville to Pond Eddy. There was some concern that this was a longer trek, but the staff at Indian Head assured us that this stretch of the river goes quicker. They were correct for the fact that there were more rapids on this stretch. We navigated through Cedar Rapids without incident. A short while later, we passed under a bridge and came to another set of rapids. This set of rapids claimed Eric and Carlo's canoe. Both scouts made it to safety, but the canoe was perpendicular to the flow of the river, and swamped against a wide rock.

Many of the canoes and kayaks pulled over on the Pennsylvania side. On the New York side was Mr. Burns, Mr. Dente, Matt W, James and Patrick. Mr. Burns was in his kayak, and went to see if he could get the canoe out on his own. The others walked upstream and flagged down the raft with Mr. Leymeister and several younger scouts. The younger scouts got out and the older scouts with the 2 adults got in, and went out to aid Mr. Burns. By the time the raft headed out, Mr Burns had dislodged the canoe, but he and the canoe went downstream, and his kayak was now pinned in the same spot that claimed the canoe. The rafters headed down, and were able to maneuver the raft to the eddy of the next rock over. They thought through the plan, and then paddled hard to get to the eddy of the rock holding Mr. Burns Kayak. A line was attached to the kayak, so it could be towed, but not even the weight of the raft and rafters was strong enough to pull the kayak out. By now, another raft had been assembled of more adults, who came to assist. Just as they arrived, Mr. Leymeister found the strength to dislodge the kayak enough from the rock that it came free. The raft and kayak headed back to shore. All headed over to the bulk of the group on the Pennsylvania side, and we regrouped. Having heard a lesson about how strong water is, we were ready to move on.

We paddled a while longer and stopped for lunch on a bend in the river that had been created of sand and small rocks. Scouts had fun watching the large spiders and making stacks of rocks. Lunch was a trail lunch. Each scout had been given a zip lock bag before departing. Each bag had an assortment of snacks, including beef jerky, cheese stick, rice crispy treat, dried fruit, crackers, trail mix, and a single serving of iced tea mix. After we cleaned up lunch, we got back on the river, and headed to Pond Eddy. We arrived to Pond Eddy about a half hour later than we anticipated, but given the fact we lost time on the canoe and kayak rescue, we arrived right on time.

The Indian Head crew met us and we waited a few minutes for the vans to arrive. We loaded up and headed back north to Barryville. Back at the campsite, we changed in to dry clothes, broke down the tents and packed up the remaining items. We checked out with the camp office, and headed back to Oakland.

Submitted by Mr. Rob Dente, SIC for the trip.