

The DDRC Current News

Visit Us On Our Web Site @ www.down-river.org

Volume 26, No. 10

The Official Newsletter of the Dallas Downriver Club

October 1999

DDRC Annual Halloween Campout at Caddo Lake

The Dallas DownRiver Club formally invites you and your family or friends to help us haunt Goat Island on Friday Oct. 22nd thru the 24th. Camp will be at the usual location on the Southwest corner of Goat Island near Pine Needle Lodge. Put-in and take out will be at Pine Needle Lodge or Blair's Landing. Saturday the 23rd will include several events and contests:

12:00: Start of the pumpkin carving contest, bring uncarved pumpkin, knives, candles, pattern, etc., judging starts after dark. Plan on taking pumpkin home with you as they are not natural to Goat island!

2:00: Pinata for the kids

3:00: Best decorated tent site. All decorations must be removed when you leave.

4:30: Dutch oven cook-off, have your entry ready at this time so we can eat it for dinner!

5:00: Pot luck dinner, please bring enough for your group.

After dinner:

* Trick or treating from tent to tent, bring treats or you could be tricked!

* Bonfire, bring 2 or 3 pieces of firewood per boat.

* Costume contest for kids and adults.

* Apple bobbing.

* Ghost stories, bring your best!

Maybe the "Lady of the Lake" will make her appearance. Pretty scary stuff! Prizes and awards from local paddle sports outfitter stores and the DDRC.

Camping is primitive so bring water and appropriate camping gear.

Plan on leaving no trace of your stay on the island.

Directions and Map to Caddo Lake and Goat Island are on Page 7

Any questions? call

Charles Edwards: 972/867-6579

Jack Deatherage: 972/222-1407



August on the Ocoee (Part 1)

by Wayne Sanaghan

Yeah, I know I'm a little late on this one. I've been having so much fun doing things that I haven't had time to sit down and write about things. I had to pass on a free, three day weekend to St. Croix—I know that will get me a lot of sympathy! But I promised I'd get this out, so...

I got the call from Debbie Meller (Dagger Vertigo) and found myself piling into her Explorer Friday night for a trip up to the Ocoee River in Eastern Tennessee. Also on the trip were Mark Poindexter (Dagger Zealot C-1 fiberglass race boat) and Chris Burt (Atom C-1). Mark's more well known for his clinic's on the Guad. He was on this trip to warm up for his 11th trip down the Grand Canyon.

If you remember the jokes about Debbie and I being married, then this was the long, cross-country drive with the kids. They were fighting in the back for hours, punching, kicking, name calling (No swearing—just "Jerk!" "Flemboid!" for hours) and telling fart jokes. I started to sympathize with my dad, his threats to turn around, and the 8 hour trips to

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**The Dallas DownRiver Club web
page has an official new address:**

<http://www.down-river.org>

The only change is from .com to .org

The .com address should continue to work for probably a good long while.

But I suggest you update your bookmarks and html links when possible.

Richard Grayson

1999

DDRC OFFICERS

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Safety:

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Training:
Kayaks

Debbie Meller 214-727-9290

Guadalupe River Trout Unlimited Protests GBRA Application

Guadalupe River Trout Unlimited (GRTU), a sport fishing conservation group, filed a protest on September 15, 1999 with the Texas Natural Resources Commission (TNRCC) seeking fish and recreation friendly stream flows from Canyon Lake near New Braunfels, Texas. Guadalupe Blanco River Authority (GBRA) has submitted an application to the TNRCC asking for 40,000 acre feet of additional water rights to Canyon Lake

to sell as municipal water supply.

GRTU believes that GBRA has not balanced the recreational and environmental uses of the water with its desire to sell water. GRTU wants minimum stream flows up to 300 cfs released from Canyon Dam from May to October of each year. GRTU intends to show that enhancing the river's flow would create many new economic benefits and would help mitigate the destruction of the native fishery caused by Canyon Dam. GRTU intends to show that the cost to Canyon Lake's storage capacity could be as little as 6,300 acre feet a year (or 3/4 of a foot lake elevation) above GBRA's own projections of water released from Canyon Dam during the same time period.

The majority of warm water fishes that were native to 20 miles of river below the dam were lost as an unfortunate consequence of the construction of Canyon Dam. Water that is released from the dam is extraordinarily cold creating an artificial habitat that is unsuitable for these fishes. Their springtime spawn is not successful when the water temperature of the river remains January cold during the spawn. This problem is rather unique to Texas, but other States have lost similar warm water fisheries to deepwater dams. These States demanded mitigation for the loss of fish and wildlife resources. Oklahoma and Arkansas are two recent examples of mitigation actions. They have created a sport fishing resource worth hundreds of millions of dollars to their economies when trout was a replacement.

A replacement rainbow and brown

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Get Connected on the Internet

DDRC's website is provided by Inturnet, inc., a local ISP based in Richardson. In addition to providing our club with FREE web space, inturnet also offers access to DDRC members at a 10% discount off the regular monthly rate of \$19.95 per month for unlimited, 24 hours per day access.

To top it off, DDRC receives a 10% bonus for each member signing up, so it's a double win-win for you and the club. If you want your own web pages, inturnet provides 10MB FREE space, enough space to create about 900 pages (more or less)! You will also receive an e-mail address so you can communicate easier.

Call Tod E. Weber at (972)783-0066 for an account and be sure to tell him you are a DDRC member so both you and the club get the bonuses, or contact Rich Grayson.

Newsletter: The DDRC newsletter, Current News, is a monthly publication distributed to club members and affiliated paddling organizations nationwide. The deadline for submissions is the 1st Thursday of each month. Information may be submitted via e-mail, at schleter@dallas.net, or fax/phone to Steve Schleter, at (972) 329-0729. Articles about and of direct interest to DDRC members will receive first priority, paid advertising will be given second priority, and other materials will be included on a space-available basis. Unless otherwise specified, all information about river trips will be added to the DDRC Internet website trip calendar.

Change of Address: Please contact Chris Cockrell, Treasurer, if you need to report a change of mailing address. If you fail to get a newsletter, it will be because we do not have a current address or your membership has expired. Chris will be happy to correct wrong addresses, and take your dues if you are in arrears.

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DDRC Annual Membership
 \$20.00/year - Individual or Family
 \$200.00 – Lifetime Membership

Send to:
DDRC

P.O. Box 820246
Dallas, Texas 75382

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Kentucky with me and my brother. Really, I was just jealous I was stuck in the front seat.

About eight hours later the kids fell asleep and we finally pulled in around 3 am (Saturday). We camped by the #3 dam feeder at the start of the middle Ocoee. We circled the campground and it was all full with the exception of a couple of spots up front. We found out why later. It wasn't the traffic—it was the Stinkhouse. That bathroom was past ripe and deep into fermented. I don't think it was a slight wind carrying the smell our way, I think there was a dense, evil fog seeping out of it. We were very sensitive to changes in the breeze that night.

In the morning—and by that I mean a couple hours later when we got back up—Mark and Chris were completely soaked with dew. (I was safe in my tent). Debbie sprung out of the Explorer full of energy (we pried her out of the back), and we headed east and past the 96 Olympic runs. They were bone dry. The entire

river is dammed up and you have to wait for someone to turn the water on.

After the put-in, we played in the water and worked our way downstream. There were a lot of nice rapids and rock gardens to run through, and an increasing number of rafters to dodge. We got to Boof Ledge (river left) or Mule Kicker (River Right) and went for the Boof. It's



Debbie just below Boof Rock Falls

a waterfall, about 10 feet wide with an 8 foot drop (The rafters all took river right to avoid it). Mark portaged his fiberglass racing boat around while Debbie and Chris dropped over it without a problem.

After some convincing by Debbie on how it would be a great confidence builder. I ran it last, Deb poised with my camera below. You can't run it straight,

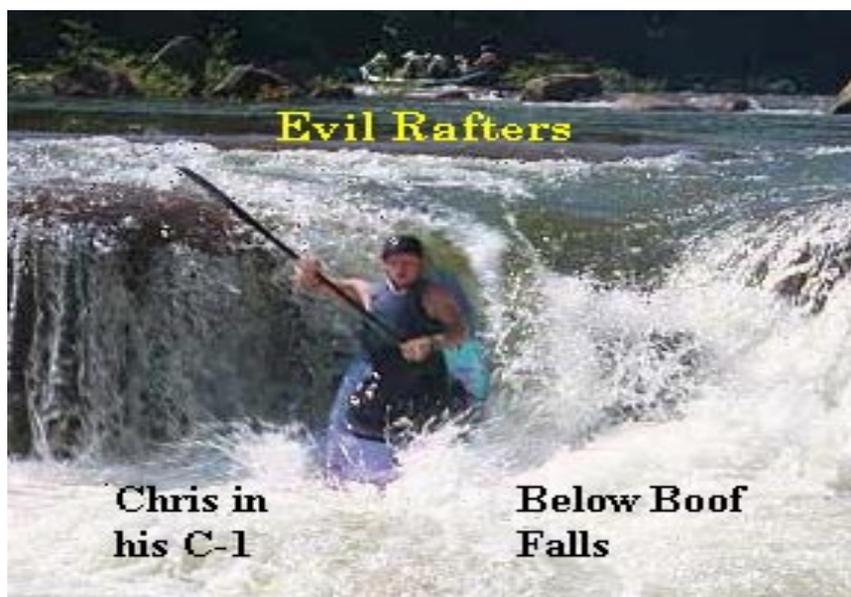
you have to "boof" off a partially submerged rock and run down at an angle. I hit the rock about six inches too far to the right and got stuck. It wasn't the safest place to be and I yelled out "What do I do now?" That's about all I had time to do because the stern of the boat swung around to and I ran the optional small slot to the right. I was confused over what

happened next had to ask Deb later. My bow was sitting on top of the flat rock as the stern spun around toward the lip of the drop. Just as I was going over backwards, I flipped and went upside down. Upside down and backwards. All I remember is the

paddle shaft getting slammed into my face, and my nose against the rock as I slid down.

Luckily my fall was broken when I lawn-darted into the rocks below (jolt!) and I sort of tipped over into the pool below. I still had my paddle and I think I gave a half-hearted roll, but I bailed out. Chris was down in the next eddy and he got my boat. I swam to the middle "island" and after a poor paddle throw (Chris eventually caught that, too), Mark tossed me a rope and got me back on the bank. The first thing I did? Run up to Debbie and yell, "Did you get a picture, did you get a picture?" Unfortunately, she was too worried about me to get a picture. Look, I'm going to die in a blaze of glory or an amazing stupid accident (odds are running 3:1 on the stupid accident), and either way it's going to be a Kodak moment.

Since going over it successfully was supposed to be a big boost to my confidence, I asked her what my giant flub was supposed to mean. There wasn't a good answer to that one.



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trout fishery was successfully introduced in the section of the river where the Guadalupe Bass used to thrive. They do not compete with, or displace, the native fishes because they live in different niches defined by water temperature. Trout have proven to be exceptionally popular with anglers and increasing numbers fish for them each year. It is a very unique recreational opportunity in Texas since the Guadalupe is the State's only year-round trout stream. Studies have shown that trout do exceptionally well and grow to trophy size as long as there is sufficient flow from Canyon Dam to keep the temperatures cold enough for trout. Spring and early summer flood releases from Canyon Dam have a profound impact on the native fishes that stretches 20 and more miles downstream. However, summertime releases are minimal. The river warms enough to cause trout to die in the designated trout fishery section. A dead zone is created where the habitat is unsuitable for any kind of fish.

Although the river is clean in terms of human use, it is a water quality hazard for fishes. GRTU believes that water quality would stabilize to the benefit of both native and trout fishes under its proposal. GRTU believes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the GBRA should accept responsibility for the loss of fish and wildlife resources. If pollution from industry or municipality were responsible, corrective action would be required. GRTU seeks a ruling from the TNRCC that would give recreation and the environment proper standing as more pressure is placed on the river to meet peoples needs.

Contact: David Schroeder, GRTU Flow Committee

11505 Charred Oak Drive
Austin, Texas 78759
(512)996-8283
dschroed@ccsi.com

GRTU Appeal for the Guadalupe Defense Fund

Guadalupe River Threatened with Lower Flows

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED NOW!
A GBRA (Guadalupe Blanco River

Authority) APPLICATION TO SELL 40,000 acre feet of ADDITIONAL water from the Guadalupe River and Canyon Lake is about to go before the TNRCC. Guadalupe River Trout Unlimited believes this application is fishing and recreation UNFRIENDLY. GBRA views the Guadalupe as a water commodity for sale. Flows from the dam would fluctuate depending on the purchase of water. Little of the flow would be left as it is pumped from the river. Habitat for fishes would suffer because of inconsistent flows and lack of water.

GRTU wants the TNRCC to require a minimum flow of 200 cfs to stabilize water quality, provide a consistent habitat for both warm-water and cold-water fishes and enhance recreation.

Neither fisherpeople nor canoeists and kayakers will be represented in this hearing unless you can help now. The Guadalupe River Chapter of Trout Unlimited has identified the legal counsel (required by TNRCC to present dissenting arguments) needed for presenting the fish and recreation point of view but money is needed to get it started and attorney's fees runs into the thousands of dollars. Let them know that the Guadalupe is Texas' best river and deserves protection! Tell them that the Guadalupe is more than a source of water supply! Contribute to the Guadalupe River Legal Defense we can't do it without you!

Please help. Send donations payable to:

Guadalupe River Defense Fund
P.O. Box 27156
Austin, TX 78755-2156
The GRTU Flow Committee,
David Schroeder, Chairman



A common place for river access/safety/conservation issues

Reprint of message posted by Rich Kulawiec (rsk@gsp.org) on Whitewater listerv

In the last couple of weeks alone, I've forwarded traffic about: Mountaintop removal in West Virginia, Possible access restrictions on the Chattooga (GA, SC), Guadalupe River problems (TX), Housatonic river release issues (CT), and Motorized rafts in the Grand Canyon (AZ)

I'm sending this note to a bunch of regional paddling mailing lists around the country (via BCC to avoid a cascade of followups; my apologies if anyone sees this more than once, but there's no way to avoid that) to invite everyone to use the Internet's oldest whitewater mailing list as the place to alert each other of these issues and to coordinate action. We each have our own issues in our own backyards (for example, we're fighting a proposed dam on Neshaminy Creek here in PA) but we can help each other out with letter-writing and petition-signing and whatnot...but only if we talk to each other.

The whitewater mailing list was started by the late Charles Daffinger back in 1987. I've been running it for most of the 90's, since we lost him in a caving accident, but frankly it's underused. (And, BTW, I do so on a volunteer nonprofit basis to try to make an attempt to do something positive for a sport that's done so much for me.) Since the charter includes all aspects of whitewater boating - conservation, access, technique, boats, instruction, safety, etc. - this fits right in.

And I think if (for example) those of us in PA help out the folks in GA/SC with their Chattooga issue, we can get them to help us out with our Lehigh issue. And so on. But we gotta talk to each other, and just as most GA/SC folks aren't on the PA-WW mailing list, most PA folks aren't on CCC or GACANOE. And the people from OR/WA probably aren't on any of them.

Our opponents — the people who would dam our rivers and dump garbage

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in them and keep us off them — are **very** well organized and well financed. We probably can't match their funding, but we can at least organize ourselves and start leveraging our numbers into positive changes. So that's why I'm offering this as a place for us to talk to each other via mail (just as rec.boats.paddle offers a place to talk via Usenet) about the issues that we all have in common.

You can subscribe to the whitewater mailing list by sending "subscribe whitewaterend" in the BODY of a message to majordomo@gsp.org (The "end" tells majordomo to stop processing; otherwise it'll eat your signature, try to execute it as commands, and get indigestion.) You'll get a note asking you to confirm your subscription — this is done to avoid forgeries — and by following the instructions contained in that note, you'll be added, instructions on how to use the list will be sent to you, and enlightenment on the true nature of reality will follow momentarily.

Okay, okay, no enlightenment, but you'll be on the mailing list. See you on the rivers.

TRINITY RIVER CHALLENGE NEWS

by Debbie Meller

The TRC '99 was a great success! I want to thank everyone who helped me and all the other coordinators in pulling this together. Some tasks were easier than others and I want to especially thank Al Curry, Chris Cockrell, Jack and Yolanda Deatherage, Marge Mitchell, Rich Manning, and Richard Steppe for their exceptionally hard work. Kathy Berns, Jerry Kier, Marybeth Kvanli, David Lamb, Pat Tittle and all the other volunteers deserve a big acknowledgement of their contributions. Your efforts will not go unnoticed. This race has become well known and well liked by the Texas paddling community because of these folks and previous year's volunteers. Here are the folks that volunteered to coordinate areas of the race:

Kathy Berns – Bake Sale
Chris Cockrell – Race Registration
Al Curry – Awards Ceremony
Jack Deatherage – Dinner and T-shirts
Jerry Kier – Raffle event
Mary beth Kvanli – Safety
David Lamb – River Cleanup
Rich Manning – City and Corp contact.
Officiating
Signs
Richard Steppe – USCA Insurance
Classifications and Rules
Putin Site Preparation
Pat Tittle – Flier

I definitely want to thank the sponsors for this race. We had wonderful raffle prizes and support this year. PLEASE take the time to do business with these companies that obviously support our beloved sport of paddling:

Academy Sports and Outdoors of Arlington
Tom Jenkin's Coyote Canoeing, Professional Instruction
High Trails Co. Rental and Sales in Garland
Helen Livingston
HPE Bicycles of Arlington
Mad River Canoe
Mariner Sails in Dallas
Mountain Sports in Arlington
Nantahala Outdoor Center
North Texas Canoes Rentals and Sales in Carrollton
Old Town Canoe Co.
Richard Steppe's RBSS Automotive
REI of Dallas
Tilley Endurables
Wenonah Canoes
Army Corps of Engineers of Fort Worth
City Of Carrollton

We had 84 total entrants, 76 of them put on the morning of the race, for a total of 49 boats. I want to congratulate all the racers! They are all winners to me!

For you bean counter types, we brought in over \$2000 for the race and have spent a little over \$1000. The goal of this race is not to make money, but to just break even, although we did a pretty good job with the finances this year. We'll be voting at a future meeting on how to distribute this money. Shall we donate it or spend it on ourselves!



applies the following activity offered through independent Guide Providers follows.

"Quick Start Your Kayak"

With ACA instructor
Chris Snider
October 23rd
Grapevine Lake
Lakeview Park
10am-2:30pm

Cost:
\$35/REI member
\$40/non-member

This class is designed for beginners. Boats are not included in class fee, however may be rented at REI on a 1st come, 1st serve basis.

For more info and sign up, contact REI Customer Service @ (972) 490-5989.

Needing Kayak Lessons?

Here are a few leads for kayak instruction, although there are a number of individuals in this area who are ACA certified to teach Moving water, these are people affiliated with a particular group or organization that I know about.

There are several types of kayaking, which all share some basic skills, but then become very specific. They are sea kayaking, tour kayaking (touring) or recreational kayaking, and whitewater kayaking. Tour/recreational kayaking is lake and moving water up to class II whitewater. The boats between sea, recreational, and whitewater are very different and require different handling once you get beyond beginner skill level.

Richard Fine teaches sea kayaking through Fun Ed and occasionally for the TI

Outdoor Club. As far as I know, he is the only person in north Texas who teaches sea kayaking.

Eric Juday teaches whitewater kayaking through Tarrant Community College (previously TCJC). Eric is an advanced whitewater paddler with a decade of paddling experience.

Contact the College for more information.

Bobby Narramore of High Trails in Garland at 972-272-3353 is an advanced kayaker that teaches classes regularly. Bobby both sea and whitewater kayaks.

Marsha Harner of KayakAtak teaches moving water kayaking. It's for introductory whitewater paddling. Her website is kayakatak.com.

Mark Poindexter is back in Texas for the fall and winter. Mark is an expert whitewater paddler, member of Team Dagger, and excellent teacher. Contact Mark at c1slalom@hotmail.com for information about his upcoming clinics and/or possible private instruction.

Lynne Andrus lives in Austin and is

certified by the ACA-American Canoe Association to teach and train teachers in all the paddle sport disciplines.

She may be teaching or know of someone else teaching the discipline you are interested in. Her email address is Andrus@io.com.

The Nantahala Outdoor Center-NOC or Rocky Mountain Outdoor Center-RMOC. This is top notch instruction from top notch instructors at top notch locations. These are the best in the nation, if not in the world. It's worth every penny. NOC website is <http://www.nocweb.com/> and RMOC is <http://www.rmoc.com/>.

Along with quality instruction, there are always DDRC trips that you can go on. Beginners can join any of the easier DDRC trips, that don't involve a lot

of miles and wilderness. They would be perfectly safe. More experienced boaters can join any DDRC trip that is within their skill level. Come to a meeting and talk to the trip leader. Someone will volunteer to help you if you need assistance. Rent the equipment and go on the trip. You'll have more fun than you could imagine!

Mark Poindexter has scheduled his whitewater clinics and races for 1999. Both are held on the Guadalupe river in New Braunfels, Tx. Races and clinics are open to everyone. This is an excellent opportunity for beginners thru advanced boaters alike. We are very fortunate to have the warm winter weather that we do in south Texas. The race weekend's primary purpose is to have fun, meet other boaters, and to practice river running skills with the use of gates. Every race weekend includes kayak polo games too. Call Carolyn Allbritton in Austin for more information at 512-335-7970 or thru email at jakea@compuserve.com.

Contact Mark on email at c1slalom@hotmail.com to register for a clinic. October: 16-17 Stroke Drill Clinic 23-24 Precision River Running Clinic November: 6-7 Race weekend 13-14 Precision River Running Clinic 20-21 Race weekend December: 4-5 Race weekend

The city of New Braunfels is in between Austin and San Antonio, right off Interstate 35. Taking the Hwy 46 exit and going west will bring you to River Road that runs alongside the Guadalupe river. The races are held on the class II Slumber Falls rapid located at the Hueco Springs campground.

Books such as 'Texas Rivers and Rapids' and 'Texas Whitewater' give directions to this location and a description of the Guadalupe river.



Presents..

1999 Fall Paddlesports Day

White Rock Lake

Big Thicket

October 16th

10:00 - 4:00

Join us for a fun-filled day on the water! Representatives from Dagger, Perception, Mad River, and Heritage Kayaks will be available to answer questions. Try out a nimble whitewater kayak or canoe, a sleek touring boat, or anything in between! Knowledgeable REI staff members will be providing assistance (including safety boats) throughout the day. Cost: Pre-register at REI for \$5/member and \$10/non-member. On-site registration: \$10 for all.

For more info and sign up, contact REI Customer Service @ (972) 490-5989.

To Caddo Lake, Texas:

From Dallas, take I-20 east to Marshall, exit Hwy 59, turn left (north). Watch for the state park sign just past an overhead bridge. Turn right (east) at Hwy 43, go approximately 14 miles to Karnack. Follow Hwy 43 as it bears left towards the state park.

To Blair's Landing:

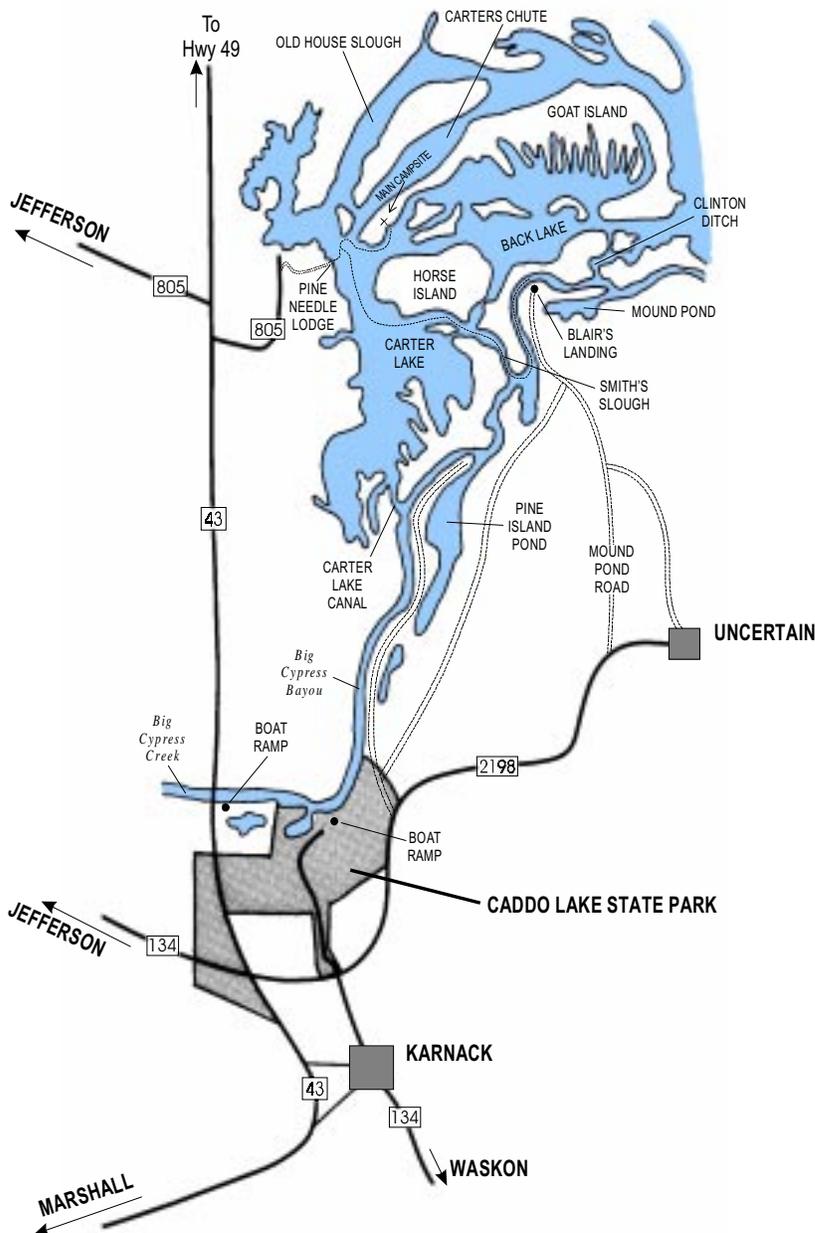
Turn off Hwy 43 (right), at the Caddo Lake State Park Road, FM 2198. Go past the park and stay on FM 2198 towards Uncertain. Turn left on Mound Pond Road and follow it to its end where you will find Blair's Landing.

To Pine Needle Lodge:

Continue on Hwy 43 past the state park turnoff, cross the bayou bridge and turn right on the next real road Hwy 805. Continue until the pavement ends and bear right to Pine Needle Lodge. As you go thru the gate, notice parking on both sides of road. Boat ramp is at the end. Unload your vehicle and move it quickly as space at the boat ramp is at a premium. There is a \$2.00 per day per vehicle charge payable to Ann or Barry Bennick, the owners of Pine Needle Lodge. Please respect their property.

Boat rentals:

Canoes can be rented locally from Mountain Sports in Arlington (Bill Anton 817-461-4503); High Trails in Garland (Bob Narramore, 972-272-3353); North Texas Canoes in Carrollton (Rich Manning 972-245-7475); or at Pine Needle Lodge on Caddo Lake (Barry and Ann Bennick 903-665-2911).



Dutch Oven Cook Off Entry Form

NAME _____

CLUB MEMBERSHIP (if any) _____

CATEGORY: MAIN DISH DESSERT

RECIPE NAME _____

NUMBER _____ (will be assigned at camp)

(To Be Filled Out At Camp)

CATEGORY: M D

NUMBER _____

RECIPE NAME:

Caddo Lake Halloween '99

Contests and Rules

- **The Dutch Oven competition includes desserts and main course. All entries must be prepared entirely on Goat Island, you may enter both but you must prepare and cook them your self. Any non-standard Dutch Oven must be cleared by the contest judge.**
- **The Costume contest has three divisions: Kids, ages 1-8, and 9-17. Adults, ages 18 plus. There will be two ribbons in each division, 1st. prize ribbon for best costume and 2nd. prize ribbon for the scariest costume, extra points for homemade costumes, in case of a tie the funniest costume will win.**
- **Tent and tent site decorating contest will have a 1st. and 2nd. ribbon, all materials used for decorations shall be removed from Goat Island!!**
- **Pumpkin carving contest, pumpkins must be carved on Goat Island. Each pumpkin will be signed by the artist and removed from Goat Island. There will be two divisions, ages 15 and under, and 16 plus with 2 ribbons in each. 1st. for the best carving and 2nd. for the scariest.**
- **Apple bobbing. Little mouths 10 and under, big mouths 11 plus.**
- **Please keep your pets controlled or leashed during the afternoon and evening festivities for the safety of the kids and cooks!!**

For Sale: Blue Prijon T-Canyon. Trained on big drops and wicked water. Gets helacious enders! Hard to flip, but easy to roll. Good beginner and expedition boat. Includes flotation. \$350. Contact Whitney Peters at 817-540-4636 or email Steep89359@aol.com.

Caddo Lake has it all

by Gail K Beil
Cox East Texas

Most descriptions of Caddo Lake begin with superlatives. It is the oldest lake in Texas, the only natural lake in Texas, and some would say it's not a lake at all - not on the Texas side anyway.

It's also a lake best seen the first time, and maybe always, with an experienced guide or on a tour boat. It is easy to get lost on boat roads called Whangdoodle Pass, Government Ditch or in places like Old Folks Playground, Hog Wallow or Hayrake.

Caddo Lake's history includes a lot of myth wrapped loosely around the facts. Most researchers now agree it was not formed by an 1811 New Madrid earthquake, though the story is still told for fact around the lake, and Indian lore does report a great movement of the earth around the lake at about that time. The 1811 earthquake most likely very much altered Caddo Lake's size, but it existed before then.

All sorts of other things from floods to log jams altered the shape of the lake. At least five maps can be found showing different configurations of water and land with about as many names. It has been known as Soda Lake, Sodo Lake, and part of it is still called Carter Lake.

The reason for the changes in name and shape is evident with a visitor's first tour. The Texas side is not a lake at all. It's a vast wetland - a swamp, if you please. Channels - some natural, some man-made - trail through islands of cypress and tupelo trees, all covered with Spanish moss. Mayhaws cling to the banks along the boat roads, and pines, willows, oaks and sweet gum grow where the land is a little higher. But except for the Cypress Bayou that transects the lake from Jefferson to the earthen weir at Mooringsport, La., Caddo Lake is shallow. The average depth is 4 feet.

Nevertheless, at one time, the lake was navigable, and paddle wheelers brought goods from New Orleans and took cotton from Texas to the Gulf Coast.

They didn't do it year-round, of course, but in the spring and fall when the water would be higher because of seasonal rains, towns such as Jefferson, Port Caddo and Swanson's Landing flourished because of the steamboat traffic.

Shipping came to an end about 1873 when a 100-mile-long log jam, known as a raft, on the Red River was removed. Over the next few years, the water level dropped, Jefferson dried up, and Port Caddo and Swanson's Landing disappeared. But stories about spectacular steamboat fires and wrecks add to the tales that make the lake a mysterious place.

Those steamboats are probably the reason for the name of the town called Uncertain on Texas maps. The word "uncertain" appears on a stretch of the Cypress Bayou on many of the maps used during the time of the steamboats. At the time, it probably referred to the uncertain depth of the bayou. Now, it is the name of the only incorporated town on the Texas side of Caddo, and the first place in Harrison County to serve liquor by the drink when Prohibition finally ended. Until then, there are those who say Uncertain and other Caddo Lake communities were the best place to get moonshine. There are those who say it still is.

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Trinity River Trips

Fall 1999

November 13 - West Fork, Belt Line Road to Sylvan, 13 miles, meet at 8:30 a.m.

December 11 - Trinity Mainstem, Sylvan to South Loop 12, 10 miles, meet at 8:30 a.m.

Call Charles Allen at
214-941-1757
for more information.

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An unsuspected treasure - pearls - was found when Caddo Lake drained at the turn of the century. The hunt for fresh-water pearls became a hobby for some and an obsession for others. Families came from all over Texas and Louisiana in the summer, camped at the lake and paid for their vacation with the sale of the pinkish, misshapen pearls found in the muddy brown shells of the mussels that were generally located with a toe in the goo on the bottom of the lake.

Pearl-hunting time was over when another of nature's treasures - oil - was discovered in the earth below the lake. Gulf Oil developed and perfected its offshore drilling techniques in Caddo Lake. To make offshore drilling work, however, the water level had to be stabilized, so the earthen dam at Mooringsport was constructed. Its addition changed Caddo Lake from the only natural lake to the only naturally formed lake in Texas.

Each of these events contributed to the mysterious lure of Caddo Lake. In the years since the oil boom played out, movie makers discovered the spooky Spanish moss and the colorful residents of Caddo. So have catfish-eaters, people who enjoy bed and breakfasts in unusual places, fishermen, bird watchers, hunters, paddlers and lovers of lands not usually associated with Texas. As a result, Caddo Lake grows in popularity in Texas - a phenomenon that worries some because of the fragile nature of the lake and its ecosystem.

DDRC Roll, Paddle, and Rescue

Sessions are every Wednesday from 5:00 pm to dark at Lake Grapevine, Rockledge Park. Everyone of all skill levels is welcome to come practice strokes and rolls or get in a boat for the first time. The Park is located at the northwest side of the dam (off the other side of the road from the spillway). If there is a dam release, then go to the spillway. No park fees. If you'd like to come out and need a boat call Keith Smith ahead of time at (940) 566-4869 and he may be able to supply a kayak and gear.

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