



## Nov/Dec 2010

- **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**
- **RIVER SPOTLIGHT**  
Toccoa & Ocoee
- **2011 CALENDAR PROSPECTUS**

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## Annual Meeting at Calhoun's - Nov 9. 6:30 pm

No it's not as fun as seeing each other on the water but future good fun requires us to meet and decide a few things to make it happen again next year. Please attend the meeting if you can.

In 2011, Chota Canoe Club will continue its 40 year history of providing paddling opportunities, safety education, and river awareness.

We support conservation causes to preserve the environment in a variety of ways. On Tuesday, Nov 9, join us to vote on our proposed annual conservation donations.

Calhoun's on Bearden Hill provides us with a private space where we meet and eat (1/2 price pizza!). We start at 6:30 pm and seldom carry on much past 8:30 pm.

*"Your willingness to share your time and skill keeps people coming back weekend after weekend and keeps the club growing."*

2010 Chota President  
Angela Garrison

## Carolina Weekend Has It All - Nov 11-14

Load up the river truck and make the pilgrimage to Tsali on Thursday, Nov. 11.

We will be camping in the group area at Tumbling Water Campground near the entrance to Tsali. The camping fee will be around \$25.00 per person, for the weekend. [www.tumblingwaters.com](http://www.tumblingwaters.com)

Please call 423-914-4070 or email [GWKilpatrick@misincinfo.com](mailto:GWKilpatrick@misincinfo.com) to book a spot.

### White Water

Friday we head to the Chattooga River and paddle section III or if you want, some might be up for section IV.

On Saturday we will run the Nantahala. On Sunday we will paddle either the Nolichucky or the French Broad or whatever we want to do.

### Touring

Options for touring are Fontana Lake at Tsali and the Nantahala Lake which feeds the power house at the river.

### Other things

Mountain biking, Tsali is known for its single tack trails, the best in the area. Hiking or whatever you can dream up, this area has it.

This is a great area and a no crowd weekend.

Gary Kilpatrick

**Chota Officers 2010**

President  
Angela Garrison  
865-577-2993  
ajwahl09@gmail.com

Vice President  
Ed McAlister  
865-250-2188  
ed@riversportsoutfitters.com

Treasurer  
Renee Harwell  
865-765-2169  
rharwell@cj-va.com

Secretary  
Doug Klaras  
865-806-8264  
footer40mph@msn.com

Newsletter Editor  
Scott Carpenter  
865-556-5252  
rsc@w3st.com

Member-at-Large  
Brian Belky  
706-202-3644  
brianbelke@mad.scientist.com

School Directors  
Gary Kilpatrick  
423-914-4070  
GWKilpatrick@misincinfo.com

Gary Christian  
865-293-6691  
scubadoogary@yahoo.com

Conservation  
Tom McDonough  
865-406-6416  
TTMCDONO@aol.com

Safety  
Randy Bigbee  
865-588-4249  
rbigbee@bellsouth.net

Whitewater Trips  
Mary Ann Grell  
865-207-6250  
magrell@yahoo.com

Touring Trips  
Doug Johnstone  
865-804-5240  
canoeone@tds.net

Webmaster  
Russell deCastongrene  
865-966-5918  
russelldec@tds.net

**Message from the President**

Fall has arrived and the year will soon be ending. New officers will be elected this month and my term as President will be over. I don't want my term to end without saying thank you to all the people that keep this club running from month to month and year to year.

A big thanks goes out to my Vice President, Ed McAlister who somehow managed to plan all our meetings and programs. He was also responsible for convincing Eric Jackson and crew to come to one of our roll practices. The annual kayak school went off without a hitch this year thanks to Gary Kilpatrick. He had lots of help, but it is a huge job and generates most of the club's income for the year. And let's not forget all the club members who volunteer every year to instruct at the school. They are the one's who influence the new paddlers with positive first time trips on white-water and inspire them to come back for more.

Thank you to Doug Johnstone and Mary Ann Grell who have been putting together the trip schedules all year. They have done an excellent job of finding trip leaders and fun places to paddle and explore. The swift water rescue class was a success this year due to the efforts of Randy Bigbee. I believe every swift water rescue class conducted makes the rivers a little safer.

Thank you to Renee Harwell for managing our finances and keeping us straight. Her efforts make it possible for us to have money left in the budget to make annual



Angela ripping through Table Saw on the Ocoee

charitable donations to local and regional organizations that Tom McDonough researches and presents to the club. This year we were able to set aside \$3000.00 for donations.

Doug Klaras had to leave us in the middle of his term but we can't thank him enough for all his help with roll practices and managing the clubs membership list. Our presence on the web is maintained by Russell deCastongrene who keeps everything updated so that we can easily find information about club events and trips. Thank you to Brian Belke, our member at large who filled wherever we needed help. And finally, a huge thanks to Scott Carpenter without whom you would not be reading this message. He has done a fantastic job with the newsletter. I look forward to reading every one of them.

With the arrival of fall another paddling season is drawing to an end as well. Now the creek boaters among us will tell you that the season is just now getting started, but for those of us who have been building our skills all summer on  
(cont'd next page)

the Nantahala and Ocoee rivers, the last scheduled releases and cooler temperatures feel like an end.

I personally want to acknowledge and thank all the Chota members that have shown me down so many new rivers and who have rescued me and my gear on most of them. Without your patience and encouragement, I may have given up this sport for something easier a long time ago. Instead I have kept at it and have grown as a boater and as a person. Some-

day I hope to return the favor. Thank you to all the trip leaders and safety boaters who have led this year's group of new paddlers down rivers all summer. Your willingness to share you time and skills is what keeps people coming back weekend after weekend and keeps the club growing. I look forward to another year of paddling with the club. And this time I have to agree with the creek boaters, the fun is just getting started. Bring on the rain!

*Angela Garrison*

### **Rio Grande - Holiday Trip Dec 27 - Jan 2**

Come join us for a great trip down a remote section of the Rio Grande. This is a trip that I have run multiple times. Only a thousand or two go down this section due to the remoteness.

We'll put in at LaLinda right outside Big Bend National Park and take out about 100 miles later. A river description can be found at [www.southwestpaddler.com/docs/riogrande8.html](http://www.southwestpaddler.com/docs/riogrande8.html)

Plans are to put in after lunch on Monday, December 27. We will spend 5 nights on the water and drive back to return on Sunday, January 2, 2011.

An attempt will be made to assist with carpools, etc. but the paid shuttles must be made in advance.



If interested, contact [ed@riversportsoutfitters.com](mailto:ed@riversportsoutfitters.com).

*Ed McAlister*

**Chota Christmas plans are still being constructed by elves.  
Look for information about an  
upcoming holiday gathering  
at [paddlechota.org](http://paddlechota.org), on our email list, and on Facebook**

#### **Want to Play A Bigger Role In Chota Next Year? Just Have Questions?**

Contact Angela or any of the folks listed on page 2.

#### **Editor's Note to Angela**

I believe Angela and I may have both started paddling in 2007. We've certainly both continued to learn and enjoy paddling with the Chota Canoe Club.

The 2008 Chota Canoe and Kayak school gave us the opportunity to work on basic flatwater kayak skills. After that, by coincidence, we got sleek touring boats.

By the summer of 2009, we both had a developing interest in whitewater and took classes at the Chota school to advance those skills.

In 2010, Angela's skill level booted way over mine and I've been delighted to see her become a really good boater. She's on the enviable threshold of "year-round paddler" status.

Angela, thanks for being president of Chota. Thanks for all the hard work in 2010. All of us wish you the best of luck as you pursue your personal goals and as you continue to contribute to our paddling community.

*Scott Carpenter  
Newsletter Ed.*

**Chota Conservation Donations 2010:**

**On Nov 9, Your Vote Counts**  
Chota officers have proposed that we donate \$1,000 to each of three organizations that promote conservation and/or improve paddling opportunities.

In October, club members voted for three organizations out of six that had been proposed.

The three receiving the most votes were:



Legacy Parks Foundation



Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning

At our November 9 meeting, Chota membership will vote on whether to approve making \$1,000 donations to each.

**Roll Practice in 2010 and 2011**

Despite our pleas, Chota was unable to renew our cold weather roll practice at the Tennessee School for the Deaf pool for this fall and winter, 2010-2011.

We are negotiating for other opportunities but at this time we have no concrete plans to report. If you have ideas about how to resuscitate Chota's roll sessions, please contact Angela Garrison.

Chota does plan to co-host a roll session with Eric Jackson and his crew on the UT campus in January.

In the meantime, we are happy to pass along a message from our paddling pals with the East Tennessee Whitewater Club. Ariana Beste, president of ETWC invites members of Chota to roll on over

to Oak Ridge this winter.

Ariana writes: We have renegotiated the contract with the Civic Centre in Oak Ridge to host our roll practice. We will have roll practice from 8:30 P.M. to 9:45 P.M. on Fridays during the winter season.

To hopefully cover our cost we will charge 5\$ per adult and 3\$ per child (< 18 years).

The dates: 11/5, 11/12, 11/19, 12/3, 12/10, 12/17, 1/7, 1/14, 1/21, 1/28, 2/11, 2/18, 2/25, 3/4, 3/11, 3/25, 4/1, 4/8, 4/15, 4/29, 5/6, 5/13

For regulations at the pool please talk to the attending ETWC member at location. (etwcweb.com)

**Your Comment Requested: Are Sandhill Cranes Sirloins in the Sky?**

On Oct. 16, 2010, the Knoxville News Sentinel ran an article on the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency's proposal to allow the hunting of sandhill cranes. In the article, hunters were said to prize the meat of the once endangered birds referring to them as "sirloins in the sky".



A group of Chota paddlers on the Tellico Blueway that day talked for a while about it. Some of us have paddled the Hiwassee Waterfowl Refuge in the winter where thousands, along with endangered whooping cranes, winter over during their migration.

We now have a formal opportunity to add our voice. The TWRA established a Web page providing information on Sandhill Cranes and a proposal for a hunting season in 2011-12.

TWRA is accepting comments through Jan. 19, 2011. [www.tn.gov/twra/sandhillproposal.html](http://www.tn.gov/twra/sandhillproposal.html)

## Isle Royale National Park – Aug 25 to Sept 5, 2011



Located on Lake Superior, Isle Royale's physical isolation and primitive wilderness challenged human use for centuries; ironically today it has become the Island's main attraction. Accessible only by boat or seaplane, visitors come to experience this island park through hiking trails, paddling inland waterways, paddling and exploring its rugged coast, or even venturing to the depths of its shipwrecks.

Isle Royale is 45 miles long and 9 miles wide at its largest width. 400 islands make up the archipelago of the national park. The park is 99% wilderness, there are 165 miles of scenic hiking trails, 36 campgrounds, and over a dozen inland lakes.

Moose live on the island and wolves feed off of the moose. In past trips, we've seen a moose or two, and some of our adventurers noticed a wolf sun bathing on a shore line rock. The fortunate will witness the Northern Lights streaking over Canada.

In 2011, we will venture back for our 5th trip to Isle Royale for a 6 night, 7 day totally self contained touring/camping in this majestic

water wonderland. This is a trip not to miss and will be limited to 6 adventure paddlers. The trip will be similar to our first trip in 2001, of which we will explore the North East area of the island.

We will depart on Sunday, August 28 via 3.5 hour ferry boat ride (60 miles) from Cooper Harbor. Each day will consist of paddle trip ranging from 5 to 8 miles, camp to camp type paddles.

We will be setting up camp each day, with plenty of time for exploration of trails, visiting old fishery ruins, enjoying geological shorelines, or just sitting back and listening to the call of the loons! Following morning, we will break camp to explore the next wilderness setting hide-away.

To reserve your spot, a \$150 deposit is required that is used to reserve your ferry boat spot. Cancellations/refunds are based on ferry boat deposit/payment guidelines. Campsite fees are \$4 per night per person. We will car pool on this 1,100 mile journey to the Keweenaw Peninsula of upper Michigan. Each adventurer is responsible for their own touring boat capable of open water seas and wind induced rolling swells (sorry no recreational boats), paddling gear, camping gear, food, etc.

This trip is ideal for the intermediate to advance paddlers with self contained camping experience. For more information, contact Doug Johnstone at 865-804-5240 or email at canoeone@tds.net.

*Doug Johnstone*

### Tentative Chota Meeting and Schedule for 2011

January:  
Eric Jackson roll session

February:  
Chili cookoff party

March:  
Meeting and program

April :  
Program and Wilderness Adventure Race

May:  
Pre-school social

June :  
Canoe and kayak school

July:  
After-school social and swift water rescue class

August:  
Meeting and program

September:  
Meeting and program

October:  
River clean up and cookout

November:  
Meeting and program

December:  
Holiday social

The mist was all gone from the river now and the rapids sparkled and sang. They were still young as the land was young. We were there to enjoy it, and the great machines seemed far away.

~ Sigurd F. Olson

## Whitewater Trip Report: Gauley River, WV - September 10-13th

I met Doug Klaras around 7 p.m. in Johnson City, and from there we rode together to West Virginia. It was my first time in the state. Doug handed me the wheel in Wythesville, and gave me the following advice: "You're going to end up having to go down to third on some of these hills, and don't hesitate at all about going from fifth to fourth if you want to stay above 60 mph." He wasn't kidding. If the freeways have this much gradient here, what are the rivers going to look like?

We arrived at camp around 10:30 that night. David and Glenn were already there waiting for us. I sat listening for the next two hours as they discussed "humorous" stories about Gauley trips of yore. They sounded more like horror stories to me. "When I first started coming to this river, I would leave notes on my desk at home for my friends to find just in case," said Doug. "I once went into the room of doom and straight under a raft. Then I was on the elevator out of the room to the ground floor of the river in complete blackness for so long that I had time to calm down and chill out," said David. "You remember that time you ended up upside down on Volkswagen Rock? You were left so high and dry that you had to wait for a surge so you could roll off it." Etcetera, etcetera. Needless to say, I found myself tossing and turning most of the night, which is even worse on the ground in a mummy bag than in a bed at home.

The next morning I was awake an hour before I ever moved a muscle. I didn't want to make any noise that might wake anyone else. I was attempting to prolong my life by sleeping in. Eventually, everyone woke up and we made our way to the river at around 10:30. I went to the little kayaker's room about three times in the thirty minutes that we spent getting ready at the put-in.

Doug, David, and Glenn had all been down the Gauley before, so even though I was the youngest person in our group by about 20 years, I'm still reasonably sure that I was the closest to having a heart attack. However,



everything went really well the first day. Of course there was some rolling on this rapid or that one, but nothing too serious and no swims.

There was some talk of portaging Pillow Rock, but in the end none of us could walk away from the rapid. I found myself stuck high, dry, and backwards on a rock at the very top of the rapid with visions of myself "taking the elevator" from the Room of Doom down to the bottom of the river. I decided to get myself off the rock before I completely froze up, and I managed to spin off it and end up in a kind of micro eddy below it. Still I wasn't going to be able to stay out of the main current long, and I knew I needed to get going. I took a couple of strokes and suddenly David was right beside me. I wasn't sure whether I should paddle like crazy or attempt to slow myself down. The last thing I wanted was to wreck us both by running the rapid side by side. Thankfully David was able to catch the edge of the water slowed by my rock. He graciously gave me the go ahead, and I took off paddling as hard as I could. I was pretty far left, so I decided that the only thing to do was to paddle directly into the pillow and trust it to wash me right around the rock. It did so, and the next thing I knew, I was at the bottom of the biggest rapid that I've ever run.

Things continued in this manner until we reached Sweets. Here I had another scare. I went over the horizon line and found myself

upside down before I even knew what had happened. I missed my first roll for no good reason, and by the time that my second roll had brought me to the surface, I was hopelessly offline and going straight into a slot between huge boulders on river right. Everything that I'd ever read about the Gauley came back to me in this moment.

**STAY OUT OF SLOTS  
UNLESS YOU KNOW  
THEY ARE GOOD.  
THEY CAN BE DEADLY.**

I looked up at the people on the banks above me for some confirmation that I was heading towards imminent doom, but no one was frantically waving their arms or screaming at me. As it turns out, the slots below Sweets are clean as long as there isn't already a raft stuck in one.

Thus ended my first trip down the Gauley. Doug's lines had taken me safely through In-significant, Pillow Rock, Lost Paddle, and Iron Ring.

The next day we were joined by Clay, Alex, Carl, and Daniel. Doug, rather kindly, loaned me two long sleeved shirts to wear under my dry top since I'd been cold the day before. With the added insulation of these two shirts, not to mention a thick layer of Klondike fur trapped between them, I was able to stay warm and comfortable on my second run, which went a lot like the first except with cleaner lines.

I flipped midway through Iron Ring and must have stood up in my boat because my skirt imploded, and I found myself swimming. The guys chased down my boat, and David towed me to the bank. Then a benevolent raft guide gave me a ride the last 100 yards downriver to my boat after I'd already scrambled through roughly 100 yards of foliage. The rashes have finally disappeared. The rest of the Upper trip was uneventful as far as I can remember. I even managed to stay upright in Sweets.

We had decided earlier to extend our Upper trip by another couple of miles in order to avoid the strenuous hike out to the AW leased field; thus, Doug, David, Glenn and I found ourselves finishing out the run on a stretch of rapids that were entirely new to us.

Approaching Wood's Ferry, Alex told us to that we didn't want to be right at the end of the rapid and that we would have to "step on the gas" in order to get left. We should've taken him more seriously. The four of us barely made it to the left of the house sized rock at the bottom of the rapid. In fact, I didn't quite make it. I washed over its left edge and found myself promptly window shaded. Apparently, there is a term for this. Alex said that I got "juiced." The rock itself is known as the juicer.

After this run, everyone took off except for Doug, David, and I. We finished out the full 26 mile Gauley marathon by going on down the Middle and Lower Gauley. Doug's only two rolls of the trip were ironically on the Lower. We saw some amazing seal launch sights, and I turned white at the sight of a terrible pin rock despite the fact that I was already passing it 20 yards to the left.

The next day, we awoke to clear skies for the first time on the whole trip. It was warmer and a great day for paddling. After my swim the day before, I'd found myself regretting my decision to stay through Monday, but it turns out that I'd made the right call after all. My last day on the Gauley went very smoothly and was very enjoyable. It is always nice to end on a good note.

Thanks to David, Glenn, and especially Doug for showing me down the Gauley my first time. Also, Alex, thanks for saving my boat!

*Nathan Briggs*

## Touring Trip Report: Norris Lake at Sycamore Creek - Sept 19 Eleven Touring Boaters and One Lucky Dog Makes a Paddler's Dozen



On Sunday, September 19, eleven touring paddlers and one four-legged passenger explored the Big Sycamore Creek arm of Norris Lake. Susan Freeburg brought her dog, Molly, who fit perfectly in her stern hatch.

We put in at boat ramp off of Hwy 25E at the upper end of the lake in the Tazewell area. The creek is surrounded on both sides by public land managed by TVA. With a touch of fall color just beginning to appear along the mountainous terrain, the scenery was beautiful. There are no houses or docks to be seen on this section of the lake, just tree lined shoreline. This is a great place for viewing wildlife. In addition to many deer tracks, we saw herons, kingfishers, and ospreys.

After paddling about four miles, we took a lunch break on a small peninsula. The map showed this site as being an island, but with the lake drawn down about 10 feet from full pool, it was a peninsula. Some of us cooled off in the water. David Mann, who is always glad to offer a teaching moment, helped Iris

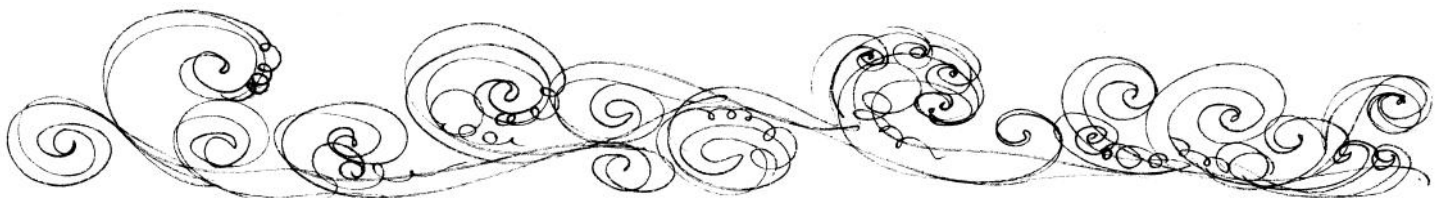
Leung practice rolling her kayak. Others walked along the shoreline and were amazed to find hundreds of flint chips sprinkled on the surface of the ground. Apparently, a group of Native Americans had enjoyed making arrowheads at this same site hundreds or perhaps thousands of years ago.

After our break, part of the group paddled another mile to Big Sycamore Creek's confluence with the Clinch River, passing a rusty railroad bridge and several massive rock outcrops. The rest of the group enjoyed the peninsula a while longer and then headed back toward the boat ramp. Both groups met at the ramp where we loaded our gear, talked about future adventures, and headed home. It was a great day to be on the water, but aren't all days on the water great days?

*Tere and Tom McDonough*



Photos submitted by Tere McDonough and Becky Baldus



## Touring Trip Report: Tellico Blueway Overnighter - Oct 16 & 17

The trip started at 10am with meeting at the Vonore Hardees. The seven trip participants were eagerly awaiting the beautiful float in near perfect padding weather. After running shuttle, we put on the water a little after 12. The temperature was perfect in the mid 70's and the sky could not have been more blue.



There was a small amount of angst in the air as users of the blueway the day before informed us that the Monroe

County sheriff's department had threatened to tow their car. This was an obvious overstep in their authority but who's right doesn't really matter if you're standing at the put in with no vehicle and no cell service. Luckily we had no issues and the problem has been resolved. The bright side is the boat ramp is getting patrolled by Monroe County, TWRA, and TVA which adds to the safety of leaving a vehicle overnight.

We arrived at camp at approximately 3pm. After a refreshing beverage or 2 we set about to make our home for the evening. It was 10pm before Russell finished unloading his barge (canoe) but we were all thankful for the 5 person hot tub he had packed. Kevin was thankful for all the guy-gear we had brought which will aid him in his letter to Santa this holiday season (let's hope Santa has an REI credit card). After logistics and dinner were behind us we settled in to enjoy a campfire.

Once the fire was lit Mr. Hardee Merlotinstine showed up (he is always good for a few laughs). Mr. Hardee fueled the conversation which proved to be a valuable learning experience. We learned that ducks do in fact frequent bars and Tom has smelled moth balls despite the logistical challenges that presents.

Tere taught us the importance of finding level seating ground as Mr. Hardee can be a proficient practical joker and Jamie showed us the latest in battery powered tent heating technologies. Special thanks to Scott for agreeing to defend any of us if this information causes us to come into conflict with the local authorities! We laid our weary heads down at about 11 when the temperature officially got into the lower 40's.

Tom awoke early to get the fire going and make coffee to serve us in our tents. We mulled about until later in the morning waiting for the much anticipated sun to rise over the ridge top. Once thawed, we were able to pack up our camp and drain Russell's hot tub for travel.



We put on the water around 10 just when the morning light was accenting the fall colors. We enjoyed a nice paddle to the take out seeing only 3 other boats (one was a canoe tied to the bank). Those were the only other crafts we encountered on the whole trip (not bad for a beautiful fall weekend).

Overall the Tellico Blueway trip was filled with solitude, camaraderie, and just the right amount of general silliness. Looking forward to next year as this will become an annual pilgrimage.

*Clay Guerry*

## Touring Trip report – Tellico Lake, Oct 23

Seven of us, Tom & Tere McDonough, Marc & Shelly Mangold, Doug Johnstone, Charles Nadia, and myself paddled the upper section of Tellico Lake on a warm sunny day. We launched from Harrison Branch boat ramp and headed across the lake. The fall colors along Citico Creek were spectacular, golden hue with patches of crimson red dispersed amongst evergreens.

In order to get further upstream, we all performed the “limbo dance” in our kayaks to get past a huge tree that had fallen across the bank. After checking out the creek, we headed back along the main channel.

During lunch, on a boat ramp across from Harrison Island, we witnessed a woolly worm making a beeline straight for the water. After floating for a while, it got washed ashore and retraced its footsteps and headed back up the ramp. We surmised that the worm needed “ a sip of water ” as it was a warm day.



At Chilhowee dam, one of the paddlers, John Doe\*, paddled right next to the bottom of the dam. John Doe had always wanted to photograph the words on the warning sign hung on the dam. Since the turbines weren't running at the time, it afforded a great photo opportunity.

Charles's wife and daughter met him at a boat dock next to dam. This was their first time to see him paddle an 18 ft seakayak. His previous trip with the club was in a 10 ft recreation boat. Charles is now looking to purchase his own touring kayak to participate in the 340 race on the Missouri river next year. 340 river miles from Kansas City to St. Charles, MO.!

*Iris Leung*

\* name changed to protect the guilty - from the old TV police show “Dragnet” with the character of Joe Friday



## More about the **TELLICO BLUEWAY**

The Tellico Blueway has developed as a partnership between the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Chota Canoe Club. TVA and Chota Canoe Club are working together to clean up the area, establish four backcountry camp sites, mark camp sites, build informational kiosks, and develop a blueway map. The map is now available on the Chota web site - [www.paddlechota.org](http://www.paddlechota.org)

**TVA PUBLIC LANDS are in your hands**

## Spotlight on the Toccoa and Ocoee Rivers

The Toccoa and Ocoee Rivers are actually one river with two names. The part of the river in Georgia is named the Toccoa River. When it crosses the Tennessee stateline, its name changes to the Ocoee River.



Toccoa River, photo by Johnny Malloy  
The headwaters of the Toccoa River are located in the Chattahoochee National Forest. This section of the river offers little whitewater other than a few class II rapids, but the scenery, water quality and fishing are good. The area is popular for low-adrenaline paddling, fishing and camping.

An 11 mile reach of Toccoa River is impounded by the Blue Ridge Dam, which was completed by the Tennessee Electric Power Company in 1933. It is currently owned and operated by TVA. The ecological health of Blue Ridge was rated good in 2009 by TVA. Blue Ridge has consistently rated among the highest of all the TVA reservoirs. Blue Ridge Reservoir has about 60 miles of shoreline. With almost 75% of the shoreline undeveloped, the lake offers a wonderful outdoor experience.

Below Blue Ridge Dam, a canoe and kayak launch provides nonmotorized boaters access to the Toccoa River. This section of the river is popular for sunfish, trout, and bass fishing. When water is released from Blue Ridge Dam,

the river becomes a Class I-II float through rolling Georgia hills.

About 10 miles downstream of Blue Ridge Dam, as it approaches the Tennessee border, the Toccoa River enters the Copper Basin. The Copper Basin is a unique geologic area with rich deposits of copper and other metals. The Cherokee knew of these deposits smelted copper from this area. White settlers "rediscovered" copper in Copper Basin in 1843 and started mining it. Mines also produced iron, sulfur, zinc, and small amounts of gold and silver.

Prior to 1900, the Copper Basin was the largest metal mining district in the Southeast. Metal-bearing rocks were roasted in outdoor heaps to extract the metals. High concentrations of sulfur dioxide released from the open-air ore roasters killed what vegetation hadn't been already cut for fuel.

Over 50 square miles became a deforested, barren, eroding landscape that resembled the moon. Astronauts once used the denuded Copper Basin as a landmark that was visible from space. Mining and smelting operations devastated the Ocoee River. Massive amounts of eroded soil partially filled the stream beds and three reservoirs on the Ocoee River. Acid and metals leached from deep mines and spoil piles. Parts of the Ocoee River were devoid of fish and most forms of aquatic life for decades.



Train in desolate Copper Basin area, c. 1930

Cooperative reclamation efforts (by the TVA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, copper companies, and other Federal and State agencies) started in the 1930s and continue today. Thousands of acres of land have been treated and re-vegetated. More than 16 million acid tolerant trees were planted. Acid and metals draining from historic mining sites have been mitigated. Environmental conditions have improved dramatically. Songbirds, fish and other aquatic life have begun to return to parts of the Ocoee watershed after a long absence. While reclamation efforts have greatly improved the area's environmental quality, much more needs to be done to restore this remarkable area to its pre-mining condition. About 100 acres of barren land at The Ducktown Basin Museum has been left unreclaimed for future generations to see the consequences of severe environmental neglect that was done to the Copper Basin.

Downstream of the Copper Basin, the Ocoee's flow is controlled by three TVA dams. The three Ocoee dams are numbered sequentially, with #1 being the farthest downstream and #3 being the farthest upstream. TVA acquired Ocoee #1 and Ocoee #2 from East Tennessee Power Company in 1939 and started building Ocoee #3 dam in 1940.

The Ocoee #3 Dam is located about 7 miles downstream of the Georgia border. The powerhouse is located 4.2 miles river downstream from the dam. Water is diverted into a tunnel that was carved into the mountainside and carried to the powerhouse. Because of the drop in elevation from the dam to the powerhouse, power generation is significantly higher than it would be if the powerhouse was next to the dam. Ocoee #3 Reservoir is 7 miles long and has about 360 surface acres. The reservoir has limited storage volume. Releases from Ocoee 3 support whitewater recreation in the reach below the dam. Releases from Blue Ridge Reservoir, augment these recreational releases.

TVA provides 34 days per year of recreational flows in the upper Ocoee, below Dam #3, on summer weekends. This 5 mile run includes



numerous class III and IV rapids. The main attraction of this section is the Olympic White-water Course, a mile long reach that was the home of the 1996 Olympic Whitewater Slalom races. This stretch of river had been dry for decades except during flood control releases. Event planners engineered a river channel that was one-third the width of the original river channel. Sandstone boulders, weighing up to seven tons each, were used to shape the new river banks. The outer sections of the old river channel were used for viewing the races and to convey high flows during floods.

The Ocoee #2 Dam is located approximately 5 miles downstream of Ocoee #3 Dam. The reservoir has no significant storage and is



dependent on Ocoee #3 and Blue Ridge Reservoirs for stream flow. Ocoee #2 is unique in the TVA system. The dam diverts water into a five-mile-long wooden flume that conveys water to the powerhouse 5 miles downstream. When power is being produced, the entire flow of the river is usually diverted through the flume to the powerhouse.

In September 1976, the wooden flume was shut down for reconstruction and, once again, water flowed in the middle section of the Ocoee River. Boaters flocked to the Middle Ocoee to run its five miles of continuous class III-IV whitewater rapids. Rafting companies sprang up while the TVA repaired the flume. TVA renovated the flume and placed it back in operation in 1983. After much negotiating with paddlers and rafting companies and a Congressional Act, TVA agreed to schedule 116 days of recreational whitewater releases per year on the Middle Ocoee. The Ocoee has become one of the most popular whitewater rivers in the world, attracting over 250,000 visitors annually.

Ocoee # 1 Dam is located approximately 12 miles upstream of the Ocoee's confluence with the Hiwassee River. The dam impounds the 1,930-acre Parksville Reservoir. It is the farthest downstream of four dams on the Toccoa/Ocoee River. Parksville Reservoir extends for 7 ½ miles up the Ocoee, two miles southward up Baker Creek, and 1 ½ miles up Sylco Creek. Most of the reservoir shoreline is part of the Cherokee National Forest. The National Forest allows paddle in or walk in backcountry/primitive camping. There is a developed campsite at Greasy Creek on the North side of the lake, also several swimming areas and boat ramps on Highway 64.

TVA has assessed the ecological health of Parksville Reservoir every other year since 1995. Parksville Reservoir's ecological health score has improved this period and was rated good in 2009. The 2009 ecological health score was the highest to date. Sediment quality remains the most important ecological health issue for Parksville Reservoir.

Past mining practices in the Copper Basin left a legacy of high concentrations of metals: arsenic, copper, iron, lead, and zinc in the sediment. In addition, elevated amounts of PCBs have been found in the sediment. PCBs, arsenic, and lead concentrations have decreased through time, although concentrations remain above normal levels.

The lower section of the Ocoee begins at Ocoee #1 and extends about 12 miles to the Hiwassee River. Currents can be swift if Ocoee #1 Dam is discharging. There are no rapids in this section, but it offers an opportunity for a relaxed paddle through farm lands and rolling hills. There is a boat ramp just downstream of the dam. There are take-outs Nancy Ward Boat Ramp at Hwy 441, Two Rivers Campground, or upstream on the Hiwassee River at the Old Patty Bridge Ramp.

Many Chota whitewater paddlers would be bored in the summer if it were not for the Ocoee River. Being within a 2 hour drive from Knoxville and running when free flowing rivers are too low to paddle, the Ocoee is a popular destination for experienced whitewater paddlers. With improved water quality, spectacular scenery, limited development, and an opportunity for backcountry camping, the Ocoee watershed is a destination that touring paddlers should consider.

*Tom McDonough*



Conservation really is for the kids!

**CHOTA CANOE CLUB MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Membership for one year from July 1 thru June 30



\$20 Membership Fee Enclosed  
 New Member  Renewing Member  Change of Address

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
City / State / Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate boats currently paddled:  K1  OC1  OC2  C1  Touring K1  
Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
Skill level:  Beginner  Novice  Intermediate  Advanced  Expert

Interest Area:

- Whitewater Class 3 and above trips
- Hairless whitewater Class 1/2/(3) trips
- Touring Adventure Trips
- Overnight canoe camping trips (rivers/lakes)
- Touring kayak overnight trips
- Day trips
- Weekday evening local trips
- Youth Activities
- Weekday evening paddle trips
- Hairless trips
- Whitewater trips
- Conservation Activities
- Safety Activities
- Canoe School
- Whitewater canoe or kayak
- Touring kayak
- Western Trips
- Whitewater
- Touring kayaks
- Gulf kayak touring Trips
- Day trips
- Self contained overnight trips

Waiver: Chota Canoe Club activities may involve risk to persons or property. I agree to hold harmless from any liability the Chota Canoe Club, its officers and its members, collectively or as individuals, for any damage or loss of property or any personal injury or death to myself, anyone in my boat, or any member of my family covered by this membership while at any Chota Canoe Club function or on the way to or from it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date / Signature(s) / (Parent or Guardian if under 18)

Send to: Chota Canoe Club  
PO Box 51194  
Knoxville, TN 37950-1194

Chota Canoe Club ~ Promote community paddle sport activities, safety awareness and techniques, while being actively environmentally responsible.