



The SPRAY

Colorado Whitewater Newsletter

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Kayaking with Florida Manatee

By Kathy Holcombe

The freshwater springs of northern and central Florida are a definite must see for anyone visiting the Sunshine State. Millions of gallons of crystal clear spring water percolate through the limestone bedrock, creating pockets of pristine water surrounded by moss-clad Cyprus trees, lanky palm trees and other lush vegetation. It is an ideal sanctuary for a wide variety of birds and beast.



Pitt Springs, just north of Panama City, was our first stop. As we navigated "Winne the View", our home on wheels, down the serpentine road leading to the spring, we had no idea what to expect. To be completely honest, it started off pretty rocky. The narrow road dead-ended at small parking lot, which resulted in a few terse words and some creative problem solving on how turn around our 24-foot View with a 16-foot trailer in tow in a lot that was only 40 feet wide. We ended up intentionally jack-knifing the trailer and dropping it, which allowed us to turn the nimble View around and then reattach the trailer.

After shaking off our frustration from the dicey parking situation, we set out to explore the springs. We strolled down an elevated wooden path and into the lush vegetation. We discovered cabbage palms, magnolia and holly trees and a host of other flora unknown to us. After a short walk, we came to a tube launch area. While the park must be overrun with inner-tube clad tourists in the summer, the 60 degree January weather meant we had the place to ourselves. We decided to trade in the view of the springs for a more intimate experience and retraced our steps to return with kayaks. The tube launch is at the confluence of Pitt Springs and Econfinia Creek. The creek itself was cold and tannic with water as thick and dark as day old coffee. Once we crossed the threshold of the spring, the water was a balmy 70 degrees and so clear that is felt as if we were flying over the sandy river bottom.

In reading about Florida, our daughter, Abby, discovered that manatee spend the
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Mission Statement

Colorado Whitewater (CW) promotes the sport of whitewater kayaking in Colorado and the Rocky Mountain region. The club introduces new paddlers to whitewater, provides training in technique and safety, supports racing, informs the public about whitewater issues, including river access and conservation, and works to resolve related problems.

Membership

CW is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization run entirely by volunteers. Visit www.coloradowhitewater.org for membership info and to join the club. To change your contact information, contact Ryan Lee at: ryanleedba@yahoo.com.

Contributions & Advertising

To submit SPRAY content, contact Carrie Root at: carrieroot@mac.com. To advertise in the SPRAY, contact Jodi Lee at: jodilee23@gmail.com.

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From the Editor



As your new SPRAY editor, I am excited to announce a few changes in the layout of the club's newsletter. A short overview of the issue's contents will now be found right here on page two of each issue.

In keeping with CW's mission to provide kayaking training and support river conservation, each issue will now have a dedicated education and conservation page.

A Kids In Kayaks page is a new addition to the newsletter our youngest club members will appreciate. Please share the page with your paddling kids.

This issue's theme centers on epic paddling adventures 2015 has already seen. If your kayak is hibernating in a dark corner of your garage, then read on for some motivation to dust off your boat and head for the water!

In keeping with tradition, 30 of Colorado's bravest paddlers banned together to take on the Shoshone Rapids on the Colorado River. Can you guess the age of the youngest paddler? To find out, read about the frigid run on page three.

If dogging river ice makes you cringe, then check out the Holcombe family's Florida manatee adventure on our cover. Be warned, though; you may be inspired to strap your boat on your road-tripping vehicle of choice and head south.

Your wallet may prevent you from shelling out for a dry suit or a front-row seat to view bovine giants, but you can still enjoy winter boating with your Colorado Whitewater community at the Meyers Pool. Classes and open pool sessions are in full swing. Check them out on page four.

Work is also underway to make our spring and summer boating season incredible. Turn to page seven to find out how.

Lastly, get psyched to kick off the 2015 spring paddling season in style! Check out the details of CW's kick-off event on page 12.

See you on the river!

Carrie

Paddling Into 2015

By Carrie Root

Some people think the very act of squeezing into a tiny rolling boat, locking yourself in with a spray skirt, and hanging out upside down while white-water rages around you is simply crazy. We may all be crazy for getting into this sport, but some of us go to extremes.

On New Year's Day, about 30 of the wildest ones descended on the Colorado River to take on the Shoshone Rapids. A yearly tradition for many paddlers, this year's frigid 15 degree air temperatures brought out only the bravest. Included in the crew was 11-year-old Cardy, one of 12 children in the Kellogg family. Those old enough in the family to paddle moving water have been skimming down the one-mile run for the last five years.



"There's no better thing to do than start off the new year kayaking," Dan Kellogg, Cardy's dad, said, "It's insanely fun!"

Though you have to be a little nuts to kayak in 15 degree weather, most paddlers do come prepared. The Kellogg family paddled their Jackson creek boats instead of play boats to lessen the chance of flipping. Part of the family also wore dry suits. Regardless of what gear boaters show up with, they are psyched up for one very frigid run. (Read more about the Kellogg family's New Year's Day paddle at: www.kelloggshow.com.)



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Winter Classes and Open Paddling at Meyers Pool



Wether you are trying out kayaking for the first time, hoping for a bomb-proof roll, or itching to get into a play boat, winter is the best season to learn new kayaking skills. The warm water and certified CW instructors at Meyers Pool are waiting to show you the ropes. Find the 2015 class descriptions and schedule on page five and register at www.colorado.whitewater.com.

If you simply need some independent practice time, open paddling sessions are the perfect opportunity to solidify your skills. Join old buddies and make new ones as you work out in a fun environ-

ment. You do not need to be registered for a class to attend. Sessions are offered from 1:00 - 5:00 pm on February 22, March 1, 8, 22, 29, and April 19 and 26. There is a \$9.25 per-person entrance fee. Meyers Pool is located at 7900 Carr Drive in Arvada.

Boating Betties Classes and Events

Boating Betties is an instructional and mentoring program intended to encourage CW women members. As a "Betty", you will build confidence, master skills, and create strong friendships, both on and off the water. Register at www.coloradowhitewater.org.

Betties Basic Pool Class — Thursday, April 16, 7:00 - 8:45 pm

This class is intended for those who have been boating for some time, but never had formal instruction, or who want a "tune up" before the season begins. We will cover skills and drills related to boat control and recovery, as well as tips and tricks for overcoming fear. **This class is located at a new pool:** West High School 951 Elati St. Denver, CO 80204. The class fee is \$20 and there is an additional \$10 per-person pool fee.

Betties Flix Night — Friday, April 24, 6:00 - 9:00 pm

Watch women-specific instructional videos and hang out in the shop, on the sofa, or in the pool with other Betties. Bring your boat and practice moves in the pool as the movies play, or bring pool toys and just float! This event is located at: Confluence Kayaks, 2373 15th Street, Denver, CO 80202. There is no entrance fee, but bring your own drinks and money to order pizza.

Betties Whitewater Park Series — Tuesdays, April 28, May 5, and May 12, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

If you are a level-B "confidence builder" Betty, a level-C "river runner" Betty, or a level-D "working whitewater" Betty, join us for this series of classes at the Clear Creek Whitewater park in Golden. Come for just one session, or all three. The cost is \$20 per session and registration closes 48 hours before each class.

Please rinse out your kayak before getting into the pool. Either clean your kayak at home, or use a hose provided on the pool deck.

Stay updated on new Boating Betties classes and events this spring at : www.coloradowhitewater.org.

Meyers Pool Class Descriptions

Beginner Kayaking Class

This introductory class provides a safe introduction into the world of whitewater kayaking. Over the course of two, three hour pool sessions and one outdoor flat water/moving water weekend, you will learn about boats, essential gear, basic paddle strokes, river safety, and we'll introduce you to the kayak roll. No experience required.

There are three groups offered for this class.

Group A will meet from 1:00 - 4:00 pm on March 22 and March 29, plus the flat water/moving water weekend on May 2nd & 3rd. The instructors for this class are Dick Alweis & Leslie Tyson.

Groups B & C will meet from 1:00 - 4:00 pm on April 19 and April 26, plus the Flat water/Moving Water Weekend on May 2nd & 3rd. The instructors for these classes are Nik White, Amy White, Elizabeth Austen and Debbie Hathaway.

Cost: \$180 course fee, plus \$9.25 pool admission for each pool session. Includes rental equipment (boat, spray skirt, and paddle) for the two pool sessions.

Intermediate Kayaking Class

This class reinforces a wide variety of kayaking over the course of four weeks in a fast-paced format. You will spend 30 minutes focusing on a few fundamental skills of recovery, boat control, or fitness before rotating to the next learning zone. The final 30 minutes is spent one-on-one with an instructor working on skills of your choosing. The class structure will improve your bracing, roll, strokes, and overall ability in your kayak.

This class will meet from 1:00 - 3:00 pm on February 22, March 1, and March 8.

Prerequisites: Level A skills/coursework. Participants should have their own equipment (boat, paddle, spray skirt, helmet, PFD, etc.).

Cost: \$120 course fee, plus \$9.25 pool admission for each pool session.

Beginner Roll Class

Never tried to roll a kayak before? Tried but didn't quite get it? Come learn the basic steps in mastering this essential white water kayaking skill during two pool sessions. Learning to roll your boat upright will open the door to enjoying the rivers as opposed to being intimidated by them. Plus, learning in a safe and warm environment makes it all the more fun.

This class will meet from 3:00 - 5:00 pm on March 1 and March 8.

Roll Tune-Up Class

If you are looking to brush up on your roll or are looking for feedback on why you are "lifting your head", this two hour clinic will provide you with direct feedback that should help you on your path to improving your roll.

This class meets from 1:00 - 3:00 pm on February 22.

Prerequisites: Previous rolling experience is assumed; the class will not be introducing the roll from scratch.

Cost: \$25 course fee, plus \$9.25 pool admission for pool session. Rental equipment (boat, spray skirt, and paddle) available by request.

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Breaking Ground on Gore Canyon Whitewater Play Park

A new whitewater park is being constructed where the Colorado River emerges from Gore Canyon and enters the meandering flats of the Pumphouse Recreation Area. A gathering of Bureau of Land Management officials, Colorado Water Conservation board members, paddlers, and local land and business owners joined with Grand County officials on November 21 to announce the construction of the Gore Canyon Whitewater Park.



The park is integral to protecting the Colorado River, and a project that has been in the works since 2010. American Whitewater (AW) has worked with Grand County on the concept and design of the Park, helped secure political and financial support, and worked with hundreds of volunteers to define flows that sustain good paddling opportunities along this section of the Colorado River.

Mark your calendar to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony for Gore Canyon Whitewater Play Park on July 13, 2015.

"The project provides important benefits to river-recreation and river-health, in Grand County and for many miles downstream," said Nathan Fey, AW Colorado Stewardship Director, in his address to the crowd at the groundbreaking ceremony. "This project provides certainty for downstream water users, creates new opportunities for paddlers and anglers, and compliments many other river management actions currently being developed across the Colorado River Basin."

The Park is being built in association with Grand

County's Recreational In-Channel Diversion (RICD) water right. The RICD, which was filed in 2010, will protect 2500cfs from being taken out of the river, consistent with Colorado water law. The RICD consists of a new in-channel feature that is required by state statute to control and measure the water flow in the Colorado River at Pumphouse.

The control feature will be located on the river's left, between Pumphouse launches one and two and was designed by Jason Carey of River Restoration Engineers. The world-famous surf wave in Glenwood Springs, CO was also designed by River Restoration.

By building this project, and securing important water rights, our communities can enjoy long-term protections for our river and for its many uses. Colorado Whitewater members will benefit due to:

- Enhanced river-based recreational opportunities for paddlers of all ages and skill levels.
- A strengthened local economy, which in turn increases our enjoyment of the river.

November's groundbreaking ceremony kicked off the construction phase of the project, which is scheduled to be complete by April 2015.

(Reprinted with permission from www.americanwhitewater.org.)



Meet Abby

We caught up with Abby Holcombe recently. She is a 10-year-old kid just like you who is on an adventure living out of a RV and kayaking all over the country with her parents. We asked her some questions about her latest journey.

The SPRAY: How long have you been kayaking?
Abby: I have been kayaking ever since I was four. So, about six years.

The SPRAY: What is your favorite boat to paddle?

Abby: My favorite boat is whatever boat I am in. When I am sea kayaking I prefer my Jackson Journey. For when I creek or go on a run I am a little uncomfortable doing, I will choose my Jackson Sidekick. If I am fishing, I always choose my Jackson Cruise 10. I use all of these boats for different purposes, but my favorite is my Jackson Shooting Star, because I love doing tricks.

The SPRAY: Tell us about your recent kayaking adventure to see the manatees.

Abby: My family and I went paddling in some springs in Florida in desperate search for a manatee. Each day we would go to a different spring and every day I would always remember to bring my swim mask, so I could flip upside down and look at one and attempt to kiss one (since they are an endangered animal, you can't kiss them or touch them, so my plan failed). The manatees surprisingly liked it when we would roll and even when my dad did some of his flat water play boating tricks.

The SPRAY: How is kayaking in Florida different from kayaking Colorado rivers?

Abby: Normally in the winter it would be way too cold to go paddling outside and the water wouldn't be running. But here in Florida the water is pretty warm, you can at least roll without getting icicles in your hair or getting an ice cream headache because the water remains 70° or warmer. However, there aren't that many rapids, maybe just two or three in the whole entire state. The most waves you can find are in the ocean. One day, we went paddling in a spring and it was crystal clear water. I would put on my swim mask and flip over. I was very thankful that I had a solid roll so that I could leisurely flip and explore under water. I got a lot of freestyle practice and almost got a bow stall and a stern squirt.

The SPRAY: What is the next paddling adventure that awaits you?

Abby: My family and I are going on a ferry to the Dry Tortuga's. We will be spending two nights there and we will be paddling to ship wrecks and coral reefs. We plan to put on our snorkel gear and snorkel out of our kayaks. I am super stoked and hope to see some turtles! My Jackson Journey will be perfect for this adventure.

The SPRAY: What advice do you have for other kids who are learning to kayak?

Abby: Make sure you have a boat that properly fits your current size. You can't learn to roll in a boat that is too big. Also, make sure you have good gear because a cold day on the river is not that fun. I have a Kokatat Drysuit and it helps me stay warm and dry. Most important is have lots of fun!

KIDS IN KAYAKS

Join Colorado Whitewater Kids Paddling Team

Do you want to have fun with other kids, learning, paddling and growing together? Then the Colorado Whitewater (CW) Kids Paddling Team is for you! This series of classes is for youth, ages 8-18, whether brand new to kayaking, an intermediate paddler, or an advanced youth with professional kayaking dreams. You'll learn about boats, essential gear, paddle strokes, river safety, rolling and bracing, play boating, and more. The focus of this team is on safe, fun boating together.



- You do not need any kayaking experience to join.
- You do need permission from a parent to participate.
- If you do not own kayaking gear, a limited number of loaner equipment may be available.
- The cost for team participation is \$160. Go empty your piggy bank!
- There is an additional \$10 per-session pool fee for each participant.
- The team will meet from 7:00 – 8:00 pm for a class session. An additional half hour of practice time will be available immediately following each class.
- Kayaking parents are also permitted to practice in the pool during the class sessions for a \$10 per-person fee.

Team sessions are scheduled for Thursday evenings on March 12, 19 and 26, and April 9, 16, 23 and 30. Register online at www.coloradowhitewater.org. You must request a code from an instructor to register. Check on the CW website for details.



New Pool Location Alert!

**The CW Kids Paddling
Team practice sessions
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Florida Manatees

(continued from page 1)

winter in the relatively warm springs. She insisted on bringing a dive mask along, just in case we happened across one of the gentle giants. Once we crossed into clear spring water, Abby donned the mask and her world inverted as she explored the spring upside down, rolling back up only to breath. The spring was an enchanting playground with adventure around every bend. We

pushed our way through a labyrinth of cypress knees where we discovered red-eyed tadpoles the size of our palms. We succumbed to swirling currents above the spring vents that gently twirled our kayaks as if we were trapped in a kaleidoscope.

Hours later we returned home to Winne the View, spellbound with the magic of the springs and committed to continue on our search for the bovine like water creatures.

Blue Springs State Park, just west of Orange City in central Florida, was recommended to us as a sure bet in our quest to find a manatee for Abby. The approach to the park was down another narrow, sandy road, but this time it ended in a cul-de-sac with plenty of room to maneuver our 40-foot rig. We launched our kayaks into the river with so much tannic acid that the water was almost opaque. Our paddle blades vanished in the black water abyss and the prospect of finding the colossal mammals seemed grim. However, within ten minutes of our launch, we found the outlet of the spring with its warm, transparent water.

Unfortunately, it was barricaded with buoys and signs prohibiting our passage into the springs proper. Park officials had told us earlier that the springs were loaded with almost 400 manatee, which made the barricade that much more disappointing. Just when we were going to throw in the towel and head back to the parking lot, a giant light gray shadow passed under Abby's brightly colored boat. Then a head the size of a basketball surfaced within inches of her

paddle. It startled her so much that she almost tipped over in her kayak! Once over the initial shock of the close proximity and girth of the manatee, Abby relaxed and focused on getting to know the gentle giant. It hovered at the surface near her boat, its breath coming in soft sighs as it explored the entire perimeter. The manatee seemed particularly interested in Abby's paddle and nuzzled it for quite some time, almost as if rubbing its nose on the blade to satisfy an itch. Next it moved underneath her boat, nudging her



hull and spinning her boat and even lifting her up almost completely out of the water. This dance continued for almost fifteen minutes, before the manatee turned and briefly said hello to Peter and I and departed into the river.

Minutes later a mother and calf swam under the barrier and veered off course to investigate the

brightly colored watercraft. The calf and Abby were about the same size and seemed equally smitten with each other. They watched each other and played together for quite some time before the mother nudged the curious youngster to continue on their original path into the river. Abby waited at the mouth of the springs for hours while dozens of manatee surfaced near her kayak. They crossed the threshold of Blue Springs Sanctuary, often without a second glance at any of the other boats nearby. In our brief and not-so-scientific study, we could not help but conclude that manatee definitely prefer enamored little girls in brightly colored boats.

As dusk came, I followed Abby and Peter as they paddled ahead of me back to Winne the View. The river echoed with Abby's excited voice. "Daddy, did you see how cute the baby was," she asked. "Did you see how much it loved me?" "Did you see it lift up my boat?" "Do you think we could put a tank in the trailer and take one with us?" I smiled to myself, grateful for our time on the road as a family and all the incredible experiences we have shared. I can only imagine the experiences that still await us!

(Reprinted with permission by the Holcombe family. Visit their blog at: www.famagogo.com.)

Kick off Spring with The Reel Paddling Film Festival

There is no better way to get pumped for the season than watching jaw-dropping paddling films with great friends, food and drinks. Now in its 10th year, the Reel Paddling Film Festival is a film contest awarding submissions in 10 river-related categories. The winners are toured to more than 100 cities around the world. This year, Colorado Whitewater is a host for the festival. You don't want to miss this!

When? March 4, 2015, at 5:00 pm

Where? The Oriental Theatre at West 44th Avenue

What's to eat and drink? Two food trucks will be outside the theatre and a cash bar will be available.

What's for free? Digital copies of kayaking magazines for all attending, plus give-aways and raffles.

How much is it? \$13 for CW members, \$15 for non-members

Honoring Kim Saltus Johnston



The world lost a passionate adventurer and citizen on October 6, 2012 with the passing of Kim Saltus Johnston. Kim's family is currently working to dedicate a memorial along the banks of the Arkansas River in her honor. Kim had an enduring connection for more than 30 years with the Arkansas, the Town of Buena Vista, and particularly the river community that has called it their home. It is only fitting that we join with Kim's family to place a memorial here.

The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA) have presented Kim's family with the option of constructing a covered shelter along the river, with possible locations at Fisherman's Bridge or Hecla Junction. A plaque would be installed in Kim's honor. In the shade of this shelter, friends Kim made can join with friends she would have made and perhaps tell a story or two that inspires others to live life exceptionally, just as she did.

The donation goal to make this shelter memorial a reality is \$10,000. AHRA would then provide the balance of funds needed for the memorial installation. You are welcome to contribute to the Kim Saltus Johnston Memorial Fund in whatever measure you feel is correct for you. Donations for the memorial will be accepted through March 31. Visit www.coloradowhitewater.com for a link to the donation page, or visit www.giveforward.com and search for Kim Saltus Johnston.