

Thursday, June 4th, 2015

*Mark River: River or Pond?*

*The Arkansas Delta and Greenville Bends Expedition*

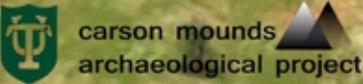
*"...The river is bank to bank, with the willows flooded around every bend. All the bayous and sloughs are open, flowing connecting various waterways on Big Island. We dip into a manmade infrastructure trying to stop the White River from jumping over to the Arkansas River. The flow is tremendous. A six foot drop of raging water making the low road unaccessible. Large silver and big head carp shoot out of the water like salmon headed upstream. Young willow trees cling for their lives. You can feel the incredible power of water in your soul..."*

*(continued below)*

**Upcoming Events in June:**



Archaeology in the Mississippi Delta



carson mounds  
archaeological project

June 5<sup>th</sup> 2015, 4pm at the Clarksdale Public Library  
Presentation by Jayur Madhusudan Mehta, Tulane University



The image is a promotional poster for an event. The main part of the poster is a photograph of an archaeological site, the Carson Mounds, showing several large earthen mounds and a winding river. In the top right corner, there is a QR code. In the bottom right corner, there is a smaller photograph of a man, Jayur Madhusudan Mehta, standing in front of a window with a decorative pattern. The text at the top left of the poster reads "Archaeology in the Mississippi Delta". At the bottom left, there is a logo for the "carson mounds archaeological project" which includes a stylized 'C' and 'M' inside a shield. At the bottom, the event details are listed: "June 5<sup>th</sup> 2015, 4pm at the Clarksdale Public Library" and "Presentation by Jayur Madhusudan Mehta, Tulane University".

## **Carson Mounds Archeological Site**

(Tomorrow Afternoon) Friday June 5th 4pm

Jayur Madhusudan Mehta

Clarksdale Carnegie Public Library

*(more details below)*

## **American Queen's 20th**

Friday June 12th, 7:15am

Helena Harbor, Helena Arkansas

Our Paddles Are Up!

The American Queen 20th Anniversary Celebration

*(more details below)*

## **Bike and Build**

South Carolina to Santa Cruz Tour

in Clarksdale, Mississippi on June 15/16th!

*(more details below)*

## **Outdoors, Inc. Canoe and Kayak Race**

Saturday, June 20, 2015

Memphis, Tennessee

*(more details below)*

## **Canoe, Kayak and Stand-Up Paddleboard Rescue Workshop**

Quapaw Canoe Company

Saturday, June 14, 2014

All Day Annual Training event in the Helena Harbor

## **Transylvania Daytrip**

Monday, June 29th, 8am

Leaving from near Transylvania, Louisiana:

Louisiana Delta Adventures: Mississippi River Daytrip

Goodrich Landing to Madison County Port

Twelve Miles, Open to the Public

*(more details below)*

## ***Johnnie Driftwood Report:***

*We just got off the Arkansas River, running the last 40 miles into the Mississippi. It was wild. Muddy churning, fastest I've ever seen it... High Arkansas, low Mississip' A giant steamboat-slurping swirling eddy at the confluence! The Arkansas averages 40-50K cfs, but it's now approaching 400,000 cfs at the confluence!*

*The normally clearish and sluggish Arkansas is running full & strong, and very, very muddy (tangerine orange color in contrast to the Mississippi's darker and grayer mud). The Arkansas is slamming violently into the Mississippi and making a maelstrom of powerful eddies, whirlpools and masses of debris and driftwood.*

*Arkansas River Forecast: this morning's forecast shows the Arkansas rose .57 feet in the last 24 hours -- and is still rising -- and now above bank full. This is creating a highly unusual situation on the big mother Mississippi... The Mississippi River is falling upstream of the Arkansas Confluence. (At Helena, for instance, it is at medium level, around 20, and dropping). But below the Arkansas Confluence the Mississippi is rising, and creating high water conditions in everything downstream! Several hundred miles downstream it will climb above Flood Stage in a week. I can't remember ever seeing similar conditions in my 30 year tenure on the Lower Miss... this is creating a highly unusual situation on the big mother Mississippi... The Mississippi River is falling upstream of the Arkansas Confluence... But below the Arkansas the Mississippi is rising, and creating high water conditions in everything downstream!*

*John "Driftwood" Ruskey is the CWWMH of Quapaw Canoe Company, and amongst other things edits the Lower Mississippi River Dispatch. (PS: CWWMH = "Chief Who Wears Many Hats!!!")*

## **Mark River: River or Pond?**

## **The Arkansas Delta and the Greenville Bends**

### **Day 1 - The Arkansas River**

The morning comes fast for the expedition team. It's a beautiful, sunny day in the Delta, as we finalize our packing and head towards the Arkansas River. As we head out of town, fisherman line the highway fishing the backwaters of Moon Lake, taking advantage of the spawn. Going over the bridge to Helena, AR, the Mississippi River is rising, covering every bit of sand. We continue to Dewitt, AR and cross the White River overflowing its channel with only the tops of willow trees showing. We stop at a catfish restaurant in Dewitt.

The waitress takes my order, "Catfish, onions, and bread."

She replied, "River or pond?"

"River", I answer with conviction.

Having the choice between wild or farm raise catfish made my day. The wild catfish has a distinguishable taste that separates them from all. After a delicious lunch, we made a quick stop at the Arkansas Post museum to look for books and pick the curators mind about early Quapaw establishments. We eventually make our way to the boat launch. Below the dam was loaded with fishermen. One husband and wife had fourteen catfish. A raft of pelicans drift down stream on a log. Two bald eagles greet us at the boat ramp. That's a great sign. Before

the day was over, I had spotted seven bald eagles. We came to the first island and made camp. Barred owls hoot in the distant. Coyotes yap out of key. Cliff swallows nest in the cut bank. A storm briefly hits us, but moves on. The sunset was amazing, as the fish start to feed in the shallows. Mark River

## **Day 2 - On to Cat Island**

It's five thirty in the morning, the rains start and hammer us for the next two hours. I take this chance to sleep in, waiting for the front to pass. The storm moves on and I immediately head for the cooler to grab grapes, cantaloupe, bacon, and eggs. There's a small amount of garlic steak sauce in the dutch oven, so we decide to cook the bacon in it. Good paddling fuel for the team. A bald eagle flies over heading for breakfast also. We do a "wet pack" and start towards Cat Island. Planing ahead knowing the top of the island will be the only sand between us and the Mississippi River.

The river is bank to bank, with the willows flooded around every bend. All the bayous and sloughs are open, flowing connecting various waterways on Big Island. We dip into a manmade infrastructure trying to stop the White River from jumping over to the Arkansas River. The flow is tremendous. A six foot drop of raging water making the low road unaccessible. Large silver and big head carp shoot out of the water like salmon headed upstream. Young willow trees cling for their lives. You can feel the incredible power of water in your soul.

We find a grassy forest with big trees and have lunch. The river is foot below the cut bank. Probably a long walk during low water. Eagles continue to fly around us as we paddle long bends. The wind stirs up the big bay-like channels, making the paddling challenging, only to calm around the bend. As we get closer to the Mississippi River, it pushes into the Arkansas River, slowing its current. Hunting camps start to appear, so I know we are getting close to camp. We spot a sandy oasis just above Cat Island. Beautiful sand dunes and flooded willow forest with amazing spots to camp. You could hear the towboats on the Mississippi River in the distance and it soothes my heart.

I walk over a bluff of sand and sit by the flooded willows. I trade calls with redwing blackbirds as fish feed, splash, and spawn in the shallows. I hope the river doesn't recede before the spawn is complete, so the fish will be able to return to the main channel and secure good fishing for the future. But we know the ones that don't make it, will be recycled in the cycles of life. Mark River

## **Day 3 - The Mississippi River**

I role over at 5:40 am. Perfect, I head to the campfire. Oatmeal and fruit for breakfast, as I feel strong from the dinner of lemon salmon and brown rice from the previous night. I prepare breakfast and take a walk to the flooded willow forest I visited yesterday. The redwing blackbirds are at it again. Trading songs of courtship, but today the tunes seemed tweaked, as if they listened to a jazz improvisation, prior to the day. Storms start to develop, so we broke our tents down to insure ourselves dry tents for later.

We pack eagerly, looking forward to the Mississippi River, Arkansas River confluence. The channels are wide do to the flooding of Cat Island, as we paddle over the bottom end of the island. The grasslands and the strip of willow trees are flooded with rafts of driftwood congregating in between. A lone raccoon scavenges through the debris looking for trapped fish. It turns to us as if in amazement- then scampers on through the pile. The rivers are so high, the towboats appear to weave in between the trees.

The Mississippi River is in our view. I feel like I'm reuniting with one of my college buddies. Two towboats side by side thrust upstream and we take the chance to ride the wake headed towards Catfish Point for lunch. A survey boat goes back and forth across the colossal channel as we eat lunch. The crew explored the gravel bars and admired the big beautiful sandbar.

Choctaw Island is in the distance. Our plan is to set up and prepare a campsite shielded from the south wind, because storms are in the forecast. We find another flooded willow forest with high bluffs of sand. A plethora of great campsites throughout the island. I picked a camp three bluffs from the canoe, protected by huge cottonwoods. Three female deer walk across the sandbar adjacent to my tent carrying big stomachs. They looked like they were ready to calf. The rain starts and we prepare a shelter over our kitchen and start a fire with wet wood. I spend the day exploring in the rain, eventually getting to my tent early, to weather the storms throughout the night. Mark River

#### **Day 4 - Choctaw Island**

A storm pounds our camp throughout the night. I laid in my tent as I hear strong winds building in the canopy of trees, but not feeling its strength, due to a strategic choice of campsite. It finally moves on and I head to the canoe knowing it would be full of rain water. I bail out the canoe and start the bacon for breakfast. The day is cloudy, but there's no chance of rain. We discuss a loud booming sound heard throughout the evening. Some think it's a catfish farm trying to ward off the cormorants, some think it's a farmer trying to keep the redwing blackbird from their crops.

I venture back to my tent, only to see in the distant, a large buck grazing in a grassland about 100 meters away. I marvel at the size of his hips, they reached the first branch. I circle around to get a closer view only to spook him. Investigating the branch, I was correct, he was huge. This island is a haven for deer.

Packed and ready to go, we continue downstream to enter the Greenville Bends. Instantly started to see hunting camps and vacation homes. Water snakes swim around every bend. Islands 81 and 82 are trophy deer and turkey hunting camps. Integrated channels only accessible by ferry. We met a great guy from the area, who shows us the entrance to Paradise Lake and explained how they controlled the flow by releasing water out of Lake Chicot.

He commented, " Paradise Lake is a beautiful place, created by the Lord and the flood of 1927!"

We have farewell laugh and continue on. A beautiful lake, but mostly private. After the rest of the team took a swim break, we paddle back out to channel and make another detour down Spanish Moss run-out, eventually connecting to the back channel of Island 82, back to the Mississippi River. We camped on the back channel between the bottom of island 82 and Warfield Point after a long day of paddling. We even skipped lunch! We sat around the campfire and listened to great live music, sharing our last night together. Who-ute! Mark River

#### **Day 5 - Warfield Point**

The morning comes quickly, but it's the best day yet. I left my tent flap opened, so I was awoken by the song

birds and a speck of sun atop the trees. I rose with great energy and spirit-overload from the music the evening before. A barred owl hoots from nearby and the doves are singing the same song as usual, as I trample to the fire ready to start breakfast. Raft potatoes, a Quapaw staple, for breakfast.

I take a walk to the same place I sat the night before and instantly the scenery started to work my mind and soul. I'm looking across the channel at the tall flooded willows of the bottom of Island 82, with a rising river flowing swiftly, but effortlessly, down the back channel. I sat upon a asphalt mat that had been cool by the river, peeking through small flooded sycamores and ash trees. Ideas are breeding in my mind, while the sun glistening off the water. I fluff my cypress knee-like hair and a toothpick falls at my feet. I chuckle by myself, and thank the Creator for this fabulous day.

We leisurely packed the canoe, having plenty of time, knowing we are just two channel crossings to our landing. We make an enthusiastic crossing, stopping in the flooded willow forest, floating between the trees, taking a break from the hot sun. The temperature drops immediately in the trees, as we finally get our hot Mississippi River day. Our second channel crossing has the same feel, as our fresh paddle strokes carry us through. We float pass a rock structure constructed after the flood of 2011, and land at Warfield Point. The Quapaw's take the opportunity to enjoy the swing set in the park. We are quickly informed, the park is closing due to high water. Perfect timing as our shuttle arrives.

## **- Mark River**

*Mark River is a river guide and youth leader with the Quapaw Canoe Company. Mark River grew up hunting and fishing along the river with his father in the St. Louis area. When not on the water, Mark River mentors Delta youth and educates them on the importance of the protection and preservation of our national treasure for generations to come. Mark River works hard on changing the perception of our great river and its tributaries. Through river trips, cleanups, and workshops, Mark's goal is overall systemic health of the Mississippi River. Please go to <http://1mississippi.org> for more Mark River Blogs -- with photos, maps, videos, and other depictions of the Big River. And become a River Citizen while you're at it!*

**(Tomorrow Afternoon) Friday June 5th 4pm**

**Carson Mounds Archeological Site**

**A Presentation by:**

**Jayur Madhusudan Mehta**

**Clarksdale Carnegie Public Library**

Jayur Madhusudan Mehta is an environmental archaeologist at Tulane University. He has been working at the Carson Mounds, located just north of Clarksdale, Mississippi, for several years now. He will be presenting on his research at the Clarksdale Public Library at 4pm on June 5th, 2015.

His primary interests are directed at studying prehistoric environments and understanding how native peoples transformed their world into domesticated landscapes. His research also addresses the modes of economic production among small-scale and complex societies and the ways in which ideology is embedded within economic and social spheres. His theoretical interests are in defining the role of ecology and ideology in

the development of centralized control mechanisms. He currently studies environmental dynamics at the Carson Mounds site, located near Clarksdale, MS. Once containing over 89 earthen mounds over the extent of 2.4 kilometers, the site today only has 5 remaining mounds. His research interprets mound chronology, site occupation and labor investment and defines the leadership principles structuring occupation at the site. In addition to archaeology, he has interests in the environmental humanities, anthropology, and social justice. His is passionate about conserving coastal environments, protecting endangered and threatened coastal habitats and working towards building a just and equitable future for all.

**Friday June 12, 7:15am**

**Helena Harbor, Helena Arkansas**

**Our Paddles Are Up!**

**The American Queen 20th Anniversary Celebration**

*The American Queen 20th Anniversary Celebration will be held Friday, June 12th from 7:15am until 7:45am at the Helena River Park!*

The Helena A&P Commission and Main Street Helena invite the community to a celebration, reception, and ceremony to commemorate the American Queen's 20th anniversary. The mayor and other dignitaries will make brief remarks at the River Park after passengers have disembarked (around 7:30am), followed by live blues music and birthday cake. For more information, contact Marilyn Trainor Storey at 601-826-8470 or [mtstorey@gmail.com](mailto:mtstorey@gmail.com) or Karen Harris at 501-831-2034.

**Outdoors, Inc. Canoe and Kayak Race**

**Saturday, June 20, 2014**

**Memphis, Tennessee**

**Director:**

Joe Royer/Mary Hays

**Email:**

[JoeRoyer@OutdoorsInc.com/mary@outdoorsinc.com](mailto:JoeRoyer@OutdoorsInc.com/mary@outdoorsinc.com)

**Phone:**

901-482-5998/901-324-2506

**Website:**

<http://www.outdoorsinc.com>

**Distance:**

5000 meters or 3.1 miles

**Details:**

This canoe and kayak race is held on the Mississippi River in Memphis. The river is the largest in the U.S. It has strong currents and powerful eddies. The wind can also create additional problems for the canoeist. The start of the race will be at the mouth of the Wolf River. The course will take us out of the Wolf River into the Mississippi River; down under the I-40 bridge; past Mud Island Park and up into the Memphis Harbor to finish.

**Monday, June 29th, 8am**

**Leaving from near Transylvania, Louisiana:**

**Louisiana Delta Adventures: Mississippi River Daytrip**

**Goodrich Landing to Madison County Port**

**Twelve Miles, Open to the Public**

### **Introduction:**

This is a twelve-mile daytrip paddle down the big waters of the Lower Mississippi River, the largest river in North America. Enjoy stunning views of the Louisiana/Mississippi Delta and long distance sights of islands, floodplain forests, and giant flocks of birds. Main channel is your fastest route, but many alternate routes are possible during higher water levels.

Put in at Goodrich to Madison County Port. Paddle in the main channel for the quickest route (11.6 miles), or follow alternate routes for visiting islands, back channels and other points of interest. Appropriate for canoes, kayaks or Stand Up Paddleboards, but only for experienced (and strong) paddlers capable of big volume waters, big waves, long crossings over open water, chaotic currents and possible side winds, head winds or tail winds. Carry VHF marine radio and use US Army Corps Maps of the Lower Mississippi for navigation. In general stay off the river if the wind is gusting above 20-25 mph. Please read below for more instructions and precautions.

### **Mississippi River Maps & Mileage**

For best navigation, use the US Army Corps of Engineers 2007 Maps of the Lower Mississippi River, which can be viewed or downloaded from the following website:

<http://www.mvm.usace.army.mil/Missions/Navigation/RiverNavigationCharts.aspx> Mileage refers to the number of miles above the Gulf of Mexico (at the Head of Passes). This section of river begins at mile 468.6 and ends at 457, hence it is approximately 12 miles on the Mississippi River.

### **River Speed and Trip Duration**

The Lower Mississippi River averages 3 mph at low water, 5 at medium water, and 7 at high water. An average paddler can make 2-3 mph. Making adjustments for wind speed, stops along the way, and any alternate exploration, you can use the above to roughly estimate your time of travel on the big river. The last unknown factor is towboats. You might lose time due to necessary waits for passing tows. Never try to outrun a tow,

and never paddle across their line of travel.

## **Expert paddlers only!**

Expert paddlers only on Mississippi River. Must be very familiar with your canoe or kayak, its abilities and its limitations. Should be able to self-rescue in your vessel if necessary. Your canoe should have high enough sides (recommended min. 13") and ends (recommended min. 20-22") to handle waves. No racing canoes. Kayaks should be made for big open waters. If your kayak has an open cockpit you should bring and wear your spray skirt during inclement weather. Sea kayaks are the best for the Mississippi because they are made for the big waters. Shorter kayaks are okay, but playboats are generally not recommended unless you are a very strong paddler because they are slow. You should be strong enough to paddle through big waves, strong winds, and make long-distance ferry crossings from one side of the Mississippi River to the other (usually a mile or more). You should be comfortable paddling in the vicinity of 1/2 mile long towboat/barges. You should be able to negotiate big strong boils, powerful eddies, and possible whirlpools. You should be strong enough to paddle through transitions of fast currents (such as coming out of an eddy into the main channel). You should be strong enough to handle long sets of wave trains, sometimes a mile or longer, with waves coming from multiple directions.

## **Towboat Protocol**

Towboats are paddler's most dangerous hazard. Towboats can't stop easily, and they often can't see you. But the good news is they move slow (10-14mph) and their motions are usually predictable. In general upstream towboats seek slow water and downstream seek fast water. The most dangerous place around any tow is in front of the tow. It is usually safe anywhere behind their route of travel. Never try to outrun a tow, and never paddle across their line of travel. Carry VHF marine radio and monitor channel 13 for traffic in the nearby vicinity. For more information, go to: <http://www.rivergator.org/paddlers-guide/safety/>

## **What to Pack:**

In your vessel be sure to pack bow and stern lines, rescue rope, bailers and sponges, and at least one extra paddle. Bring VHF marine radio if you have. Bring cell phone in waterproof container. Wear clothing appropriate to weather, but also pack (in waterproof drybag or drybox) rain gear, change of clothes, fleece or woolen tops and bottoms. Pack extra food and extra water. Pack at least one gallon of water per person per day during hot seasons. For more reading and a complete description of paddling the Lower Mississippi River, please go to the Safety Page for the Rivergator at: <http://www.rivergator.org/paddlers-guide/safety/>

## **Mississippi River Water Levels**

Paddlers can view water levels for this section of Mississippi River using the the Vicksburg Gage

Low Water = 0 to 20 VG

Medium Water = 20 to 33 VG

High Water = 33 to 43 VG

Flood Stage = 43 VG and above

VG = Vicksburg Gage

To view water levels, go to: <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/lmrfc/?n=lmrhc-mississippiandohioriverforecast>.  
Paddlers are advised to stay off the Mississippi River at or above flood stage, which is 43 on the Natchez Gage.

## **Trip Description:**

### **Goodrich Landing**

**to**

### **Madison County Port**

**Note: For photos and a complete description of this stretch of river please visit the *Rivergator: Paddler's Guide to the Lower Mississippi River* which can be seen at <http://www.rivergator.org/>**

#### **Goodrich Landing to Madison County Port:**

<http://www.rivergator.org/river-log/greenville-to-vicksburg/lake-providence-to-vicksburg.cfm/pg/1/>

#### **PADDLER'S ROUTES ARCADIA POINT BAR/COTTONWOOD BAR**

<https://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msid=217859314001592865582.0004e6cd566bf1ee49263&msa=0&ll=32.646765,-91.13848&spn=0.018212,0.027959>

<http://goo.gl/maps/wDTHU>

#### **WILLOW ISLAND, CHOTARD LAKE AND EAGLE LAKE: PADDLER'S ROUTES**

<https://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msid=217859314001592865582.0004e6d829fd264811d35&msa=0>

<http://goo.gl/maps/RJ5Go>

Canoeists and kayakers can stay Main Channel to find the fastest route, or if the water is high enough jump behind Willow Island and Tara Island for back channel paddling (above 25VG). Opportunities for deep woods exploring by canoe or kayak is found paddling into the wonderland of Chotard Lake/Terrapin Neck Cutoff. You can paddle up the Eagle Lake Pass only when the river is bankful 35VG.

#### **Main Channel**

The fastest water in the Main channel follows predictable lines around Willow Island. Approach left bank past the mouths of Chotard and Eagle Lake Pass, past Tara Landing and then ease back across mid channel and slide towards the left bank past the Madison Parish Port and Tara Island, and stay right bank all the way down to Paw Paw.

### **Mile 468.6 Goodrich Public Boat Launch**

Steep concrete ramp made from revetment falls steeply into back channel at base of Cottonwood Bar. Road access from US 65 over levee. Parking and ramp located south of Bunge grain elevator. Do not leave vehicles overnight.

### **Willow Island Back Channel**

Willow Island back channel opens through in low water, around 15 Vicksburg Gauge, with good flow in medium water 25VG. By 35VG the back channel is flowing as fast as the main channel and long-distance paddlers might want to use it and shave off a few precious miles.

### **RBD 462-459 WILLOW ISLAND**

The Main channel runs southeasterly from Cottonwood Bar into Willow Cutoff (1934), and continues south around Willow Island, and then slides southeasterly past the Madison Parish Port at Milliken Bend towards Paw-Paw. The five mile channel between Cottonwood and Willow almost a mile wide and nearly featureless. For expediency the strongest flow is found right bank descending past the Goodrich Light (RBD 466.9 and Dogtail Landing (RBD 466.5). You'll want to avoid the long series of wing dams (Tennessee Bar Dikes) lines the left bank. As with all dikes, these slow the water, create turbulence, and you will have a long line of buoys to weave through.

As you enter the cutoff a scrubby group of willows atop a mid-channel island will take shape and grow in size. This is appropriately named Willow Island, since not much else grows here. You'll find a few cottonwoods, and some flowering bushes and grasses such as buttonbush, and maybe a few migrating invasive plants. Tumbleweeds have been seen in recent years. In the low water of 2012 we discovered a plot of watermelons near the Willow blue hole. Willow Island is predominantly composed of young willows. But these small trees are nothing to scoff at. They have survived many years of high waters, high winds, severe thunderstorms and the nearby crossing of an F-4 tornado (see below). Even the great flood of 2011 failed to unearth the willows of Willow Island. There was no sand to be found on May 21, 2011 when the river crested but the willows were still there, making their presence known by their leafy green tops reaching towards sky above the churning mass of orange-brown water.

At low water Willow Island extends 3 miles north to south with a high point near mile 460.5 and a short ridge not far below at 460 topped by a single line of mature willows. There used to be a channel in between the two high points, but the 2011 flood filled it up and now they are connected by a long high plain of sand that starts going under around 30VG. The huge Willow Island back channel opens up in low water, around 15.

## **Chotard Lake/Terrapin Neck Cutoff 461 LBD**

The Mouth of Chotard Lake/Terrapin Neck Cutoff opens up to paddlers in low water around 16 VG, maybe a little lower, maybe a little higher, changes from year to year. Two mile narrow chute opens up into a giant oxbow lake. Two miles across lake to Laney's Landing, or continue beyond for exploring, birding and fishing.

### **Chotard Lake: Laney's Landing**

Well-designed concrete ramp at the edge of Chotard Lake north of Eagle Lake. Ample parking, and safe place to leave your vehicle for overnights. Check in at store. Formerly private ramp now made public through 2011 acquisition by the Miss Dept of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.

## **461 LBD CHOTARD LAKE TERRAPIN NECK CUTOFF**

For a spectacular glimpse into the hidden jungle you've been paddling through (but can't see from the main channel) duck into the narrow opening left bank descending near mile 461. This is the entrance to Chotard Lake. You are in for a treat. Especially if it's hot, or cold & windy. According to local resident and river expert Tommy Shropshire, "Chotard is connected to the River by a narrow canal that is unobstructed except by an occasional fallen willow or log. Below 16 VG you'll likely bump bottom or maybe an old stump. Each year it continues to silt-in and becomes more shallow. Pending the rate of rise & fall, the meandering access to the canal also changes. So folks should note that what one saw last trip may or may not be the same this trip."

You are the edge of an extensive vibrant bottomland hardwood forest which stretches out here almost unbroken to the Loess bluffs at Vicksburg. This is the old route of the Terrapin Bend Cut-Off of 1886. Enter the narrow channel and meander the best part of two miles through dense overhanging willows to reach the wide expanse of Chotard Lake beyond. There is a private boat launch two miles down the lake on its south shore called Laney's Landing which you can use for a small fee. Chotard cuts a hairpin curve through the woods and connects with two other large oxbow lakes, Tennessee Lake and Albemarle Make, creating endless possibilities for paddling and exploring in all directions. Other connected lakes (depending on river level) include Vining, Louisiana, and Airplane Lakes. Go to Google Earth (link provided below). When viewed from above this curvy collection of cut-offs and cuticles creates as swirling watery/woody wilderness, a land of the lost, a veritable paradise for paddlers!

"The two abandoned riverbeds, Albemarle Lake and Lake Chotard, have now become popular hunting and fishing resorts. Together the two lakes cover more than a 1,000 acres. Since both are on the river side of the levee system, they have not suffered as heavily from agricultural chemical pollution as some of the landside oxbow lakes, and they are periodically restocked when the Mississippi rises high enough to flow into and through its old channels." (Historic Names & Places)

### **Eagle Lake Pass LBD 458.8**

At low water this is nothing more than a ditch through the scraggly tornado ravaged woods. At medium water you can paddle in a short ways but might have to portage over fallen trees and a beaver dam. At high water you can work your way a little over two miles through this wildlife-filled chute to where it opens up into a small lake at the base of the levee.

## **LBD 458 TARA LANDING**

Every year at the end of August thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of waders including anhingas, egrets, herons, roseate spoonbills, terns, killdeer, double breasted cormorants, sandhill cranes -- and many others -- roost in very particular and very remote wetlands along the Lower Mississippi River. This roosting period always occurs at the end of August. It's predictable as the start of school. The only unknown is exactly which watering hole the waterfowl gang will gather at. This seems to change from year to year and epoch to epoch.

Some of these gathering places are located within the 9,000 acre Tara Wildlife Preserve. Ten years ago Halpino Lake was the place to be at sunset. As you're coming down the Mississippi River you might get lucky and stumble into one of the these watering holes filled with thousands and thousands of squawking birds shaking their tail feathers and spreading their wings in and out as they make their final adjustments before settling in for the night. This is a remarkable sight. But equally remarkable and maybe even more startling is the scene gathering on the other end of the lake. Imagine an open air bus driving up, driven by a jocular Aussie named Gilbert. The people on board the chopped-off school bus all have big cameras and spotting scopes or binoculars. Gilbert and his crew swiftly offload the bus and set up a table full of bottles and start popping corks. The birders filter through in between glassfuls of wine and watching the waterfowl. Have you dropped in on some sort of American Safari? Well, yes, you have. Welcome to Tara Wildlife celebrating its annual "Stork & Cork!"

Tara Wildlife celebrates the river, its bottomland hardwood forests, and its waterfowl with an annual Mississippi River Nature Weekend ("Stork & Cork") towards the end of August and a Spring Birding Weekend at the end of April. Tara's philosophy is founded on a strong commitment to the management, development and sustainable use of a broad spectrum of natural resources. Tara recognizes the importance of wildlife, timber, water, wetlands, agriculture and recreation in maintaining a high quality of life for current as well as future generations. To this end, Tara has endowed the future by placing all 9,000 acres under conservation easements. As a further commitment to conservation, in December of 2001 Tara was deeded to a private foundation, Purvis Grange Foundation Inc. While promoting an appreciation of the environment through educational and direct-performance activities that conserve land and protect the wildlife that inhabit it, Tara is a model center for the study of habitat and the animals that are part of the ecosystem. Maggie Bryant, Tara's Founder, is a past-two term Chairperson of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and retired from her board position in 2001. Maggie has been awarded the prestigious Chevron Conservation Award as well as the Governor's Award for Conservation in Mississippi. She is active in conservation measures around the world. (From the Tara Wildlife website)

## **RBD 457 MADISON PARISH PORT AND PUBLIC BOAT LAUNCH**

Primitive launch point. Carry your vessel to the water's edge over mud, sand, gravel, rip-rap and whatever else you might encounter there. No concrete, no improvement. Rough parking on muddy gravel above rip-rap. Don't leave your vehicle overnight and plan to arrange a shuttle. In an emergency you could find water at the nearby Bunge Grain elevator offices. But otherwise keep on downstream for resupply in Vicksburg. Land access from US 65 at Talla Bena.

## **Mississippi River Water Levels**

Paddlers can view water levels for this section of Mississippi River using the the Vicksburg Gage

Low Water = 0 to 20 VG

Medium Water = 20 to 33 VG

High Water = 33 to 43 VG

Flood Stage = 43 VG and above

VG = Vicksburg Gage

Low Water on the Vicksburg Gage is 0-20. (Giant sandbars, back channels not passable) Medium water is 20-33 (Most back channels open, water flowing over dikes). High Water is 30-43. (All back channels open and flowing strong). The river is bank full at 35 Vicksburg Gage, and at 40 almost all islands are under water. Flood Stage: 43. To view water levels, go to:

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/lmrfc/?n=lmrfc-mississippiandohioriverforecast> Paddlers are advised to stay off the Mississippi River at or above flood stage, which is 43 on the Natchez Gage.

Contact: John Ruskey 662-902-7841 [john@island63.com](mailto:john@island63.com)

Mark Peoples 662-902-1885; Braxton Barden: 706-340-2962

## **Bike and Build**

### **South Carolina to Santa Cruz Tour**

### **in Clarksdale, Mississippi on June 15/16th!**

Quapaw Canoe Company and the Lower Mississippi River Foundation will be hosting 35-40 riders & guests from the acclaimed Bike & Build organization on Thursday-Friday June 15-16th in downtown Clarksdale, Mississippi.

Bike & Build riders will be conducting a free bike clinic with bike repairs for Clarksdale kids at 5-6pm in Clarksdale as part of their mission.

Clarksdale is on the route for the May 22 - August 11, 2015 South Carolina to Santa Cruz Bike & Build tour (SC2SC). This route will take them off the Atlantic seaboard, through Appalachia, across the Mississippi Valley, Across the Great Plains and over the Rockies to the Pacific Coast in an epic journey of over four thousand miles!

#### **Monday June 15th**

3-5pm riders arriving in Clarksdale

5-6pm bicycle workshop at Quapaw Canoe Company 3rd & Sunflower

6-7pm Southern Potluck Supper: Please bring a potluck dish and meet the international team! Musicians, bring your instruments, and show them the soul of Clarksdale.

#### **Tuesday June 16th**

8am Potluck Breakfast: Please bring a breakfast dish and send the international team off on their day's adventure with good Clarksdale cheer and southern spirit!

Bike & Build works with young adults in cross-country fundraising cycling trips. Each rider fundraises before the trip, and the proceeds from their trips are then disbursed to affordable housing organizations to underwrite projects chiefly planned and executed by young adults in this age group. Clarksdale Habitat for Humanity has been awarded several grants in previous years by the SC2SC group, but this year the award will go to the Spring Initiative Program.

Besides coordinating meals, Quapaw Canoe Company will be providing housing in its Driftwood City International Youth Hostel (under construction) for the Bike & Build team.

Please call hosts Mark River 662-902-1885, Braxton Barden 706-340-2962 or John Ruskey 662-902-7841 for donating food or more information.

## **Bike & Build**

### **South Carolina to Santa Cruz Tour**

**4265 Miles**

**May 22 - August 11, 2014**

Starting in historical Charleston, the South Carolina to Santa Cruz (SC2SC) route will be a Bike & Build journey of epic proportions. Riders on SC2SC will log more build days than any other trip in Bike & Build's history, funding and building an entire house in the process. From its scenic beginnings in the Lowlands of Carolina, the trip makes its way West through the heart of the South, with stops in amazing Southern cities such as Columbia, Athens, Birmingham and Little Rock. After leaving Arkansas, the route will slowly start to make its way up towards Colorado, eventually riding North alongside of the Rockies and into Colorado Springs for a Blitz Build with Pike's Peak Habitat for Humanity. Over the course of nine days SC2SC will build an entire house on top of the foundation laid the week before by the North Carolina to San Diego route. After the Blitz the trip will continue to head Northwest with stops in Salt Lake City and Boise, eventually taking a turn to the South when it reaches Oregon. The remainder of the trip will be spent riding through the lush California valleys, eventually meeting up with the Pacific in beautiful Santa Cruz.

May 24 - Charleston, SC

May 27 - Sumter, SC

May 31 - Greenville, SC

Jun 10 - Tupelo, MS

Jun 15 - Clarksdale, MS

Jun 20 - Oklahoma City, OK

Jul 2 - Colorado Springs, CO

Jul 13 - Silt, CO

Jul 18 - Provo, UT

Jul 24 - Twin Falls, ID

Aug 7 - Davis, CA

Aug 10 - Santa Cruz, CA

## **What is Bike & Build?**

### **Core Values**

Young Adult Driven:

Bike & Build unlocks the potential of young adults to do incredible things. Our participants are the face of our organization, and the driving force behind all that we strive to accomplish. Through engaging young adults as active agents and ambassadors for affordable housing efforts, Bike & Build enables them to test their limits, become engaged and active citizens, and impact the housing landscape.

Vision Statement:

Bike & Build envisions future generations who are committed to a lifetime of civic engagement and who inspire individuals and communities to create fair, decent housing for all Americans.

Mission Statement:

Through service-oriented cycling trips, Bike & Build benefits affordable housing and empowers young adults for a lifetime of service and civic engagement.

Empowerment:

We aim to instill a sense of empowerment among all of our participants by offering them the opportunity to accomplish big things and tackle big problems.

Integrity:

We always aim to do what is right for our participants, our donors, and affordable housing partners. Bike & Build values integrity, transparency, and honesty among all of our constituents.

Fun:

We like to have fun, and aim to build a culture and organization where we all have a good time while help