



# Coureurs de Bois

## CdB Newsletter Spring 2003

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## Trip Report: The Bottom Moose



By Rob Monti

Last summer while snacking next to Pushbutton on the Ottawa, club member Peter Kostyan mentioned running a river in New York State. His conversation prompted me to do some more surfing - this time on the Internet. I wanted information on the Bottom Moose because he said something about an, "18-foot vertical runnable drop."

Excitement and adrenaline would be on the agenda for this trip! I had destroyed a pair of skis the previous winter skiing with Peter on some of the harder trails that Gatineau Park offers. Plus, I had witnessed the lines and drops that he ran during the spring when every other boater in the group portaged.

On a Friday afternoon in October Larry Wong, Adrian Erkelens, Don Millward and myself left Ottawa together in two vehicles. This trip was a first for all of us. We had paddled all season with each other and were confident in the

paddling and judgment skills in our group and individually. We arranged to meet Peter at the put-in the next day.

The Bottom Moose does not have friendly pool and drop features like the Ottawa. There are drops to be sure! And they are separated by stretches of flat water. But it is also imposing and stark. The Bottom Section is a section of river that is billed as having the most runnable drops in the Northeast.

The difficulty rating is Class IV-V when the river gauge is at 4 feet. Above 6 feet, a local river guide describes the Bottom as suicidal. Rafting companies run the Lower section, but not the Bottom. If you want to test your limits and mental confidence, the Bottom Moose has what you want. Plenty come looking for the challenge.

Every October, the American Whitewater Association hosts the Moose River Festival, based out of the town of Old Forge. The local businesses depend on tourists and welcome the paddlers because the regular tourist season has ended. This festival extends their season.

The town becomes flooded with boaters for the weekend. Restaurant and motel parking lots in town were transformed at meal times. From desolate monochromatic black or gravel surfaces the parking lots became a profusion of colour with row upon row of kayaks, resembling freshly opened Crayola boxes.

At the put-in for the Bottom we found Peter at the crowded put-in (it doubles as the take-out for the Lower Section). He was with two other paddlers Gillian and Glen. They had all run this section of river before. They were unofficial guides for the trip.

As soon as we put in on the river, there was no mistaking the level of difficulty here. There is no gentle warm up or leisurely flat paddle from the put-in. The Bottom section starts with a 40-foot drop at a 60 degree angle not two minutes after the put in - Fowlersville. The line is very far left. Not center-left, far left. Center-left will land you in a hole that may eject you only at some uncertain future point long after you lung capacity has expired.

Scouting on the left shore, we watched a succession of boaters, plunge down the chute and disappear beneath the rooster tail of whitewater at the bottom of the drop to pop back up moments later and yards downstream.

After Fowlersville, we came to the rapid called the Funnel. It is Class IV drop with a hole at the bottom centre and a triangle of rock that periodically pops out from just under the surface with surges and drops in the level. Many boaters were upside down by the time they cleared this rapid, but no one had any major encounters with the rock.

The next serious rapid was Knife's Edge. The river narrows into a canyon with a steep rock wall embankment on the right shore providing a ledge that narrowed in sections to accommodate only one foot at a time. It was about six feet above the river's edge from which to scout. Two thirds of the way down the rapid, boaters must execute a technical Z turn caused by boulders protruding from the left side and then the right side. The second boulder is no more than 30 feet below the first. Timing is everything. After the second boulder is a terminal hole that had to be grazed on river left.

A sneak route exists on the far left, that is reportedly Class III but it cannot be scouted from the right shore where we stood. Nevertheless Don and Larry figured they liked what they couldn't see better than the drop and Z turn that they could see. Local unconfirmed hearsay has it that this particular rapid was modified due to blasting to extract a body.

As it turned out "the sneak" offered up a number of holes. One of them flipped Larry's

kayak. The river "played" with him quite often on this trip, rather than the other way around. Larry's low volume slicey Ultrafuge was not well suited to this particular river. By the time he rolled for the last time, blood was running down his face from a cut to his eyelid. He was checked out on shore and fortunately the cut was not serious. It did transform into a nice shiner later! (Larry purchased a creek boat shortly after this trip).

The next rapid was Double Drop and was comprised of a seven foot and an eight foot drop stacked one after the other. We approached the drops from river left. The first drop was friendly but there was a keeper hole center right on the second drop. One of our paddlers spent quite a time side surfing and rolling in the hole before finally wet exiting to clear the hole.

The next drop in the sequence was my motivation for coming and the place Peter described, Ager's Falls. It is preceded by a concrete hydro dam, complete with bold warning signs on the shore directing paddlers to a portage on the right river bank. There is a rope suspended on buoys the length of the river warns you to get off the river.



Adrian going over Ager's Fall

Some ignore the warning. For those who do, the run starts with a slide down an eight-foot concrete dam into a small flat water pool that terminates shortly in a horizon line demarcating a vertical 18-foot drop. If you line up in the centre and not too far right there is a bit of a rock lip you can catch as you go over the drop. It will help your boof and project you laterally forward as you drop down horizontally (instead

of pencilling) into a well aerated foam pile. Do it that way and you barely notice the landing – sweet!

At the moment of truth, the sun (that we had not seen since leaving Ottawa on Friday) momentarily broke through the low-lying rain filled gray clouds. The constant rain of the past 24 hours abated. The sun's rays shone directly into our faces. The rippled surface of the water shimmered with liquid diamonds as we passed over the horizon line, boofed the drop and were momentarily airborne. Life doesn't get any better! Right after the pool at the bottom of the drop is a Class IV run out that drops another six feet or so in gradient.

After Ager's is a rapid called Shurform – a shallow and technical rapid named after a rasping file. The name is appropriate. Boat scraping and pin potential are both relatively easy on this rapid. Following Shurform is Power Line which is fairly straightforward.



Glen doing the limbo at Shurform

But it is followed shortly by the jewel of the day on this river trip for those with the skills and confidence - Crystal. Crystal attracts the hard-core boaters. By comparison Ager's is just a baby.

Crystal has three connected drops, five-foot drop-ledge- six-foot drop- ledge-10 foot drop. My personal goal for this trip had been Agers and so there was no need for me to scout Crystal. Nevertheless I did because if you kayak you know that the goal is to run rapids, not to

carry your damn boat around them.



Peter taking his own line at Crystal

But looking at the many potential places I didn't want to end up in Crystal, I reluctantly admitted that a clean run here would be due to luck and a generous river god, not my skill set. Measured against potential consequences that was just not good enough here.

There was a "sneak route" on the right side that Glen, Adrian and I chose. Larry and Don took the extreme right line (with boats on shoulders and feet firmly on the ground). Gillian and Peter boated flawlessly through the succession of three drops. Both boats submerged at the last drop. Both rolled up and paddled away without problems.

Drop number 9 is just below the take-out and is called Magilla. It was run by some. Many paddle directly to the take-out, as did half of our group. Once reunited we agreed to rendezvous back at the Old Mill in Old Forge – a local dining spot with a reputation for huge portions. A perfect spot for ravenous paddlers after a Class V day where we could review our adventure and plan for the next!



Lunch on the Gatineau

## Schedule Of Events 2003

### **Pancake breakfast and Mississippi River Trip**

Date TBD: Everyone is invited to meet for breakfast cheer the paddlers on, however only cold water paddlers on the river. Contact Wendy Gilmour.

**Lower Mad trip:** 19 April (tentative)

**Cold water rolling:** 26 April (tentative)

Practice your cold water roll then warm up in the hot tub at Steve Hick's place.

**Palmers weekend:** 24- 25May.

**Newcomer's Day Paddle and Party:** June 14 weather permitting. Location to be announced. We're looking for a volunteer to host the party.

**Gatineau weekend and Beerfest:** 16-17 August

**Family Weekend at Palmer Rapids:** 23-24 August. Contact Holly Blair who has arranged group bookings with Paddler Co-OP

**Gatineau riverfest:** 23-24August.

**Annual General Meeting:** 15 November

## CdB Executive Committee

- President: Sandra Houston
- Vice-president: Lisa Maille
- Equipment Guy: Larry Wong
- Pool Sessions: Don Millward
- External Member: Wendy Gilmour
- Membership: Alison\_Edgar
- Treasurer: Steve Hick
- Member at Large: Mark\_Harley
- Newsletter: Adrian Erkelens
- Webmaster: Mike Cockburn



Mark Harley at Normans

## Photography on the River



by Larry Wong

During the past several years there has been an evolution and a move towards digital photography and video equipment. Although I still prefer film type cameras, I never took mine on day outings because my camera wouldn't fit in the kayak. With the introduction of digital media, the overall reduction in size of the equipment has made this possible; in other words size does matter. I won't get into suggesting on what to buy because the market is saturated with digital equipment, and if you have deep pockets the sky's the limit. This article will provide some tips, learned from experience, to get better photos.

**Planning:** Have a plan and take some time to get set-up in position for your shot. Be especially aware of the sun's direction. My preference is for a hazy bright day so the shadows on peoples' faces are minimized.

**Know your equipment:** It is a good idea to have the basic knowledge on how your equipment functions. If you haven't used the equipment for a while this would be a good time to remember where you put that instruction manual and have a quick refresher before you leave home. You will probably also like to be in some pictures as well, so you will have to give some simple operating instructions to your paddling buddies.

**Know your subject:** Well not personally, but have a plan on what you want to photograph. Then make every attempt to fill the view finder with the subject, either by the use of the zoom or if possible moving closer to the subject. Your subject will then be the focal point of your photograph.

**Take lots of shots:** My rule of thumb is one good shot per roll of 24. Digital cameras now have the delete feature which is great. If you can take shots continuously in a sequence, that is also a good feature of any camera.

**Communicate with the group:** Inform your group that you have a camera and want to take some pictures of a descent or at a play hole. If members of the group are paying attention and want to be captured on film it will be up to them to cooperate with the photographer.

**Guidelines for the subject:** If you want to be photographed on the descent there is only one guideline, WAIT until the photographer is ready. If you like to run "ducky style", this will greatly decrease your chances of being caught on film. If there is somebody ahead, WAIT until that person is finished because the fun might not go as planned and definitely any photographer will pounce on the opportunity to catch that on film. Then WAIT until you see the photographer face back upstream or signals you for your turn. Taking photos at a play hole is much easier. You don't have to be an advanced paddler to be photographed. But if there is an incentive to become a better play boater this is got to be it. A still photo will not reveal if you are spinning or cartwheeling under control or not. The ability to maintain a side or front surf long enough is very important, which allows time for the photographer to focus, zoom, and shoot. The surfer's technique and form should also be good. Remember to keep your arms down not for the obvious reasons, but for the simple reason the paddle shaft has the tendency to block the face. Once in a while look at the photographer. In my opinion, this takes a good photograph to the next level.

Although these tips are for taking still photos, the same principles can be applied to videos as well. Tons of practice is necessary to consistently get good photographs. Have fun in the process.....

(Editor's Note: To see some of Larry's photos go to <http://community.webshots.com/user/kayaker12345> )

## Message from the President (and also the VP)

The VP is off snowboarding in BC (amazing the things that older people can do isn't it?) so this message is from her too. I hope everyone had a great winter (I had a terrible winter myself – I hate the cold and I had way too much work to do). I am glad it is finally spring (although it is minus 9 on the wind-chill so maybe it isn't spring) – but hey – who says I am bitter? On the other hand, I think Lisa enjoyed winter very much given all the time she took off work to go snowboarding.

We had an executive meeting on March 18<sup>th</sup> and came up with a tentative schedule for the upcoming paddling season. Please feel free to make suggestions for other activities.

Some notes from the Executive meeting, March 18, 2003:

**Tee shirts and decals:** It was agreed that it is time for new tee-shirts and we thought that a tie-dye pattern would be good – something for all you Grateful Dead fans out there. Wendy Gilmour has volunteered to look into this.

**Brochures:** *Sandra and Lisa will update brochures, print some, and distribute to a few places in town.*

### Discounts on Lessons:

- Steve Hick has arranged a group discount for MKC.
- Holly Blair has arranged group discount for Paddler Co-Op.
- Paul Gallagher has made a deal with Down to Earth Kayaking School

**Treasurer's Report:** The club has about \$2500 left, down from \$3000 last year, however we have not yet received any membership money for this year

**Trip Leaders:** More people are needed to organize and lead trips. Experienced paddlers are asked to take the initiative and post trips.

**Memberships:** All members who have not sent in their membership are asked to do it soonest. A membership form with instructions is attached.



Wendy Gilmour at Normans



A chilly lunch on the Gatineau

**COUREURS de BOIS CLUB OTTAWA INC.  
Membership Form**

**MEMBERSHIP YEAR: 2003**

**Check this box if this is a renewal**

**PART A - WAIVER OF LIABILITY**

In consideration of my membership in the Coureurs de Bois Club Ottawa Inc., I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby agree as follows:

1. that I fully understand that the Coureurs de Bois Club Ottawa Inc. is a democratic, non-profit organization of equals engaged in canoeing, kayaking, hiking, skiing, and other outdoor activities for the mutual benefit of all participants;
2. that, accordingly, I understand that the Coureurs de Bois Club Ottawa Inc. does not lead, nor contract to take myself, nor any other person, on trips;
3. that I recognize the risks involved with river trips and outdoor activities, including the risks of capsizing, collision, drowning, injury to body and damage or loss of equipment;
4. that, in addition to the acknowledgments of such risks, I agree that I will not, in any way, hold the trip organizers, other participants, members, executive or directors of the Coureurs de Bois Club Ottawa Inc. liable for any claims or demands for damages or injuries or losses of any nature or kind to me or my property, however caused, which I, my successors, executors, heirs or assigns have, or may in the future have, by reason of, or in any way arising out of my participation in Coureurs de Bois Club Ottawa Inc. activities;
5. that I agree to pay the cost of any emergency evacuation of my person and belongings that may become necessary by reason of or in any way arising out of my participation in Coureurs de Bois Ottawa Club Inc. activities;
6. that I further acknowledge that any medical conditions or physical disabilities as set out in my Medical Disclosure Form, attached hereto, constitute full and absolute disclosure of same and that there are no other medical reasons that would not allow me to participate fully and safely in any activities of the Coureurs de Bois Club Ottawa Inc. or which may jeopardize or bring risk to the safety or health of other participants in such activities or their equipment;
7. that I undertake to disclose the contents of my Medical Disclosure Form, attached hereto, to the apparent organizer of any Coureurs de Bois Club Ottawa Inc. activity in which I participate insofar as such contents are reasonably relevant to the particular activity; and
8. that as a parent or guardian of a child under 18 years of age, I will accompany and responsibly supervise that child while they are engaged in a Coureurs de Bois Club Ottawa Inc. activity, and will accept responsibility for them;
9. that I acknowledge that I have read the above and fully understand the nature and consequences of granting my consent and waiving any and all claims for liability of damages against the trip organizers, other participants, members, executive or directors of the Coureurs de Bois Club Ottawa Inc.

Dated at \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Witness:\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*Signature of parent or guardian required if under 18 years of age.

**PART B - MEDICAL DISCLOSURE**

**I. OVERALL HEALTH** (Check appropriate description)

“ excellent    “ very good    “ average    “ fair    “ poor

**II. SPECIAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS OR PHYSICAL DISABILITIES**

Describe any special medical conditions that you have that may interfere with your full and safe participation in any activity of the Coureurs de Bois Club Ottawa Inc. or which may jeopardize or bring risk to the safety or health of other participants in such activities. Include, where appropriate, any prescribed drugs used for treatment and any allergies.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \* \_\_\_\_\_

Dated at \_\_\_\_\_ this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_\_

\* Signature of parent or guardian required if under 18 years of age.

**PART C - ADDRESS INFORMATION**

Name: (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov. \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(for addition to our email list, please ensure this is easily readable!)

Telephone - Home: \_\_\_\_\_

- Work: \_\_\_\_\_

- FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

**Single or family memberships are \$15.00 total, a separate signed form is required for EACH participant. Please return completed Membership & Waiver Form with membership fees (\$15.00) to:**  
**Coureurs de Bois - Membership**  
**908-530 Laurier Avenue West,**  
**Ottawa, K1R 7T1**  
<http://cdb-ottawa.com>  
**email: membership@cdb-ottawa.com**

