

PADDLE **Oct 2021** *SPLASHES*

Kayak Polo with
OLLY GOTEL

Paddle-Packing with
RUSS FALLER

Farewell to
DAVID BRUCAS



Cover: AMC paddlers on Rich Breton's annual Adirondack trip. Photo by Marty Plante.

OCTOBER 2021

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STORY BY **DAVID MONG**
PHOTOS BY **CHRIS BICKFORD**

PADDLE- PACKING

Leader Russ Faller
at Carry Lean-To.

A Weekend Adventure with Boats and Boots

This was an inter-chapter and inter-committee AMC activity that combined leaders from the NY-NoJ and Potomac Chapters in Backpacking and Paddling on the same trip. Most of us met the night before at Wakely Dam near Indian Lake, NY due to the early start on Friday. For the trip itself we were out for four days.



We traveled outbound via canoe or kayak on Cedar River Flow to Carry Lean-To. Part of this distance was upstream on a narrow fast-moving stream to a shelter near the Northville-Placid Trail.

After setting up camp we paddled further upstream until, no matter how hard we paddled we could do no more than stand still. It was a fun float back to camp.

On Saturday we backpacked southbound on the trail to the Cedar Lakes Shelter #2 tent camping area. On the way back on Sunday we scouted out part of a side trail called the Lost Pond Trail. This is a seldom used and overgrown trail that has extensive beaver activity, which made the trail very difficult to find when we were on it last year from the other end. We plan to try again next month.

We continued to Carry Lean-To for one more night and returned to our cars at Wakely Dam by late Monday morning.



Above: David Mong cooking fresh beef that was kept frozen in a vacuum bottle. The potatoes, carrots and onions were also fresh and half cooked at home to shorten cooking time on the trail. The downside is they also had to be in the vacuum bottle.



Left: The group preparing for launch.

David Brucas

1956 - 2021

B

ack in the mid-2000s, when a lot of the creaking AMCs mostly paddled just the Dryway, we would run Lower Shohola at least once a year.

On one particularly frosty morning, we hiked the half mile to the put-in and slipped into a good flow. Most of us had drysuits, but there were a couple of wetsuit and drytop combos, too. At about three miles into the long 9-mile day, David found a beautiful grassy island and pulled out. Lunch was declared, and I watched everyone unseal and hop out of their very steamy kayaks. I was so surprised that anyone would stand around in 30-degree weather eating a sandwich, however this was, after all, an AMC trip and eating is a big part of the culture. But I was completely bowled over when David flipped his kayak over, making a “dining table”. He then unrolled something I recognized from my grandmother's formal dining table. A long lacy doily now adorned the length of the kayak. Fixated on the doily, I didn't notice David assembling plastic champaign stemware until he placed them on the decorative runner. My eyes were bugging out and then I heard a POP! David laughed at our reaction and explained it was time to have his favorite port wine and cheese. I chuckled and took a sip, which was amazing! I tried to hurry along the extravagant wine tasting, reminding everyone that we were all going to freeze, but nobody seemed to care. It was a moment on the river that I'll never forget, and it was 100% David Brucas' style.

Wayne Gulmantovich
(Gman)



When I heard the news about David's passing, I was shocked. David appeared ageless and full of life.

After the reality set in, I thought about how compassionate he was, how fun and crazy in a good way.

David was the man in the group who always seemed able to run everything. When we hear a river is at flood stage, most of us run away, but he runs towards it.

I always looked forward to his yearly Adirondack trips run out of the boy scout camp in the middle of nowhere, with memorable rivers that I would never have thought about running, and the camaraderie out of sometimes adversity was fun.

David always encouraged people to step up without bullying, and you knew that his expertise was a reliable indicator of what you could do.

He had a hearty laugh, or a toast ready, drink in his hand, while wearing his signature Hawaiian shirt. He embraced the camaraderie wholeheartedly and helped everyone do the same.

He would also seek out the local honky-tonk bars to experience everything that the area had to offer. My fondest memories were some of the crazy places and crazy things that we did in some of these out of the way places.

I miss David. I wish I could have spent more time with him. He was a really good, positive man who uplifted others. If something was wrong, he would figure out how to fix it.

The world seems a little bit emptier now that he is gone.

As pointed out by a fellow paddler, Jordan, Dave used an email signature that was so apropos: "Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, chocolate and wine in one hand, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming "WOO HOO what a ride!"

Rest in peace, David.



Mark Tiernan

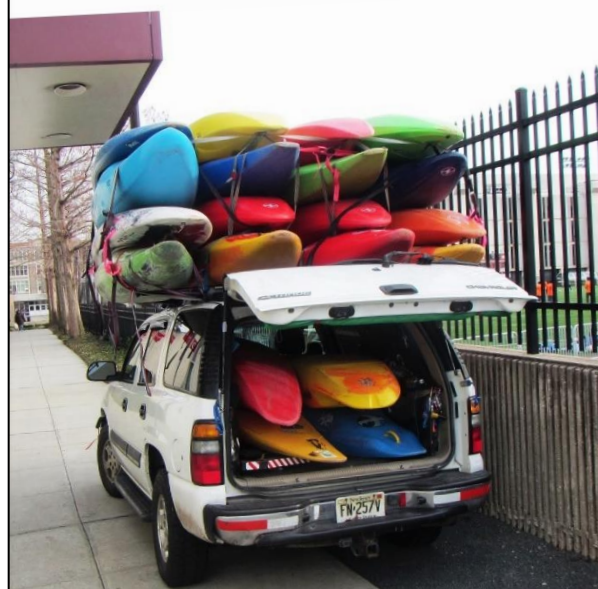


We all joked about the lavalava (Polynesian skirt) that David wore for many years, but I actually ended up borrowing it on our Middle Fork of the Salmon trip earlier this year. You can imagine how that made him chuckle and made me eat my words.

Olly Gotel

Whenever there's a need, David has always been there to help out. After the final pool session one year, we needed to get the kayaks back to the Barn. David didn't hesitate to volunteer. We loaded 16 kayaks on his roof and a few more inside. I don't think I've seen so many kayaks on a car before. On one occasion, one of the kayakers had to leave the river in an emergency. He towed the kayak all the way to the takeout.

Ara Jingirian



Boating With Brucas

BY CURT GELLERMAN

Many will remember the countless trips that David led for the NY-NoJ chapter of AMC while he was living in NJ: the Tohickon, Brodhead, Lehigh, and so many others. Those who knew him well will also remember the many parties that David and Kathy had at their homes in Jersey City and East Windsor. David loved Kathy, whitewater, cars, hangin' with friends, and a keen sense of adventure. You can't forget the old white Chevy Tahoe—it was David's vehicle of choice while boating and was purchased with plenty of miles on it at an auction of retired police cruisers. His everyday-vehicle was a BMW. The Tahoe had plenty of life left, especially when loaded with boats on the roof. After David and Kathy left for Hawaii, Eileen drove the Tahoe for a few more years.

He loved the numerous multi-day whitewater trips he organized up in the Adirondacks or down south as a week of southern whitewater. Sometimes he rented a Boy Scout camp, other times he rented a house, and the trips were always well-attended.

In the last few years while living in Hawaii, David had incredible luck winning western river permits from the annual lottery. This year alone he was able to obtain permits for Gates of Lodore, a section of the Green River in Utah; Desolation Canyon, another section of the Green River in Utah; and Westwater Canyon, a section of the Colorado River in Utah. Plus, he had friends in California that had a permit for the Middle Fork of the Salmon River in Idaho, one of the most coveted rivers in the permit system. They turned the organizing over to David so, with the permit holder's approval, he invited six friends.



David (left) and Curt paddling the Gates of Lodore on the Green River, Utah.

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David Brucas

A Life of Epic Adventures

Every single trip that David led was an epic adventure. He made sure that everyone in the group was comfortable and at the end of the day we would all be dancing to live music in an eclectic bar that he always found in the middle of nowhere. He was known for his meticulous planning and the king of the excel spreadsheet. He and his best friend Curt were the dream-team of the wilderness trips. Those were trips worth dropping everything for. Many cool people I have met on David's trips remain close friends to this date. In many ways, David was a central figure in building up our New York paddling community.

David was there many times when I stepped up to do a harder river—he led me down my first Dryway back in 2008 when I ended up swimming Dragon's Tooth—and he has done the same for countless other people. He encouraged weaker paddlers and supported them.

His annual Adirondack trips for the club in the first week of April were legendary. He loved the snow-melty northern New York rivers. It was on these trips that I first ran the Fish and the Lower Moose, which are my home runs today. One year, we ran the Lower Moose with Curt and our group was running very late. David had organized a big dinner in a restaurant and by the time we arrived, the buffet had been cleared but doggie bags with hot food were awaiting us. And I remember dancing that night with Curt and David.

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Paddlers Party

Come celebrate an eventful year in the natural haven of Van Cortlandt woods!

OPTIONAL HIKE from 12 to about 2pm.

Come stroll the sylvan hiking paths about the ponds and gardens near Van Cortlandt Park Mansion. Hike will be mostly flat terrain with walking paths, moderate to easy pace for about 2 hours. Exact location given upon registration.

PICNIC & PARTY 2pm to 7pm.

Bring your own picnic lunch or heat your hot cider on the grills in the spacious picnic area we've selected. There should be ample parking about the area's perimeter and in this neighborhood. Keep your picnic items there until after the hike, and someone will watch them or keep them in our cars.

Let us know if you need to borrow--or will bring and share--charcoal and fire-making tools! Exact location given upon registration.

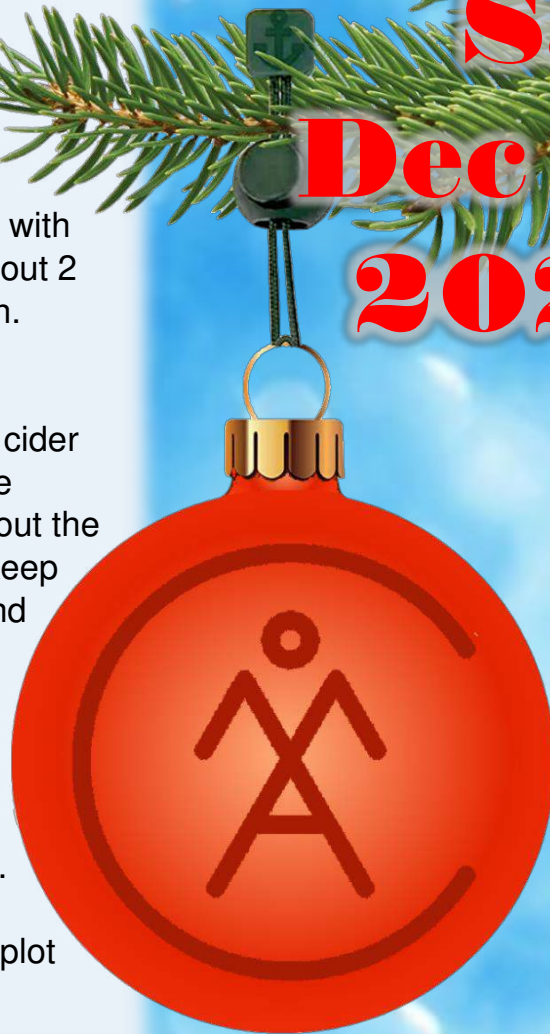
Safely share stories from the past year, and plot new adventures--safely--together.

All social distancing, mask wearing, sanitizer and wipes will be constantly required and always available.

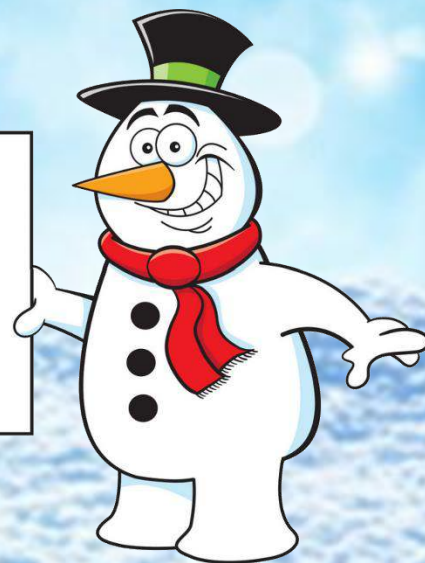
DO TELL US WHICH ACTIVITY--Hike or Picnic--or both when you answer the "How do I plan to participate?" question.

DO CANCEL YOUR RESERVATION if plans change or you feel sick or come in contact with someone ill.

**Sat,
Dec 4,
2021**



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Eileen Yin

Our new Interim MidAtlantic Regional Director

Eileen has been appointed to fill the vacant MidAtlantic Regional Director position. The AMC's Board of Directors has also nominated her for this position at the next election.

AMC's 146th Annual Meeting and Election will take place virtually on January 22, 2022. All active AMC members will receive instructions to cast a proxy ballot.

Making a Splash in Kayak Polo

BY OLLY GOTEL

As with most sporting events, the 2020 Canoe Polo World Championships, scheduled to be held in Italy, were postponed to 2021, then cancelled altogether. However, I have dusted off my helmet and the game is now being played again outside. First up were the USA National Championships in Austin last September. I have been training a new group of ladies and this was their first competition. Lots of great development over the weekend, everybody scored a goal, and I think this opportunity got them hooked on the sport. Our team had lost a player before the event, so we picked up a player from another club—a big challenge for playing any sport at a high level. We fought hard, improved over each game, and made it to the bronze medal match, but ultimately came in 4th.

Left: Olly (far left) with the New York Sirens.

Below: Olly practicing at the Pier 66 Boathouse.



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MAKING UP YOUR MINDSET

BY MICHEL LEROY
AS TOLD TO MICHEL LEROY



The Appalachian Mountain Club is a mindset more than a club to Michel Leroy, who joined AMC with his wife in the 2000s looking for adventure and some out-of-the-city weekends.

Michel and his wife Michelle (yes, you read that right) started by taking the kayak rolling class in the pool on Roosevelt Island over the winter, then the whitewater kayak instructional in the spring at High Point State Park, NJ. They were hooked and kept at it season after season, eventually becoming kayaking instructors with AMC and teaching the very class they took as students years earlier.

Crisscrossing the Northeastern region with a large network of AMC boating friends from the Youghiogheny and Lehigh to the Deerfield and West, the love of whitewater playboating became their lifestyle. The relationships you make in AMC are more than boating buddies; they are true friends that share your passions and support each other on the water and off.

When M&M had a daughter in 2012, they put a pause on big hole surfing and transitioned to other activities. As the years marched on and their daughter went from diapers to pull-ups, they felt a need to get back on the water and back to the community they loved and missed.

During the pandemic, with more time on his hands than expected, and a desperate need to get out of the apartment and into the calm and beauty of the outdoors, Michel retook the leadership training with Lenny and Henry and started paddling with AMC again.

The mindset was consistent, even if the boats and thrills have evolved over the years. Now Michel and his wife are navigating quieter waters and lakes with an expedition canoe filled to the gunwales with kids, dogs, and gear, but one thing remains: they still have the same sense of adventure that drew them to AMC twenty years ago.

Looking forward, Michel will be leading canoe and kayak trips in the Northeast for family-oriented overnight and weekend trips. Take a look at upcoming trips in 2022.

New trip leader Michel takes a selfie with his daughter.



The

LACKAWAXEN

It Ain't Your Grandma's River Anymore

Clubs of any kind—even chess or curling—only thrive as much as their incoming pipeline of new members. With whitewater paddling, that means supporting new paddlers as they step up, or welcoming “returning” paddlers as they re-enter the cockpit and the saddle.

Because of the intensity of such trips, clubs have learned to join forces, as AMC NY-NoJ did this September with KCCNY on the Lackawaxen River in Pennsylvania. Though off derided as “The Lack of Action,” Mary Ann Hoag defended this insanely picturesque bird refuge recently. “Maybe it’s just hurricane season, but with the speeding continuous current and impressive standing waves everywhere, the Lackawaxen sure isn’t lax these days.” And listen to co-leader Helga Trocha’s enthusiastic perspective.

**AMC and KCCNY
paddlers on the
Lackawaxen River.**

Photo by Mary Ann Hoag.

WOW, can I say what a great day. Water awesome. Temperature perfect. Blue sky., Birds of all sorts flying around us.

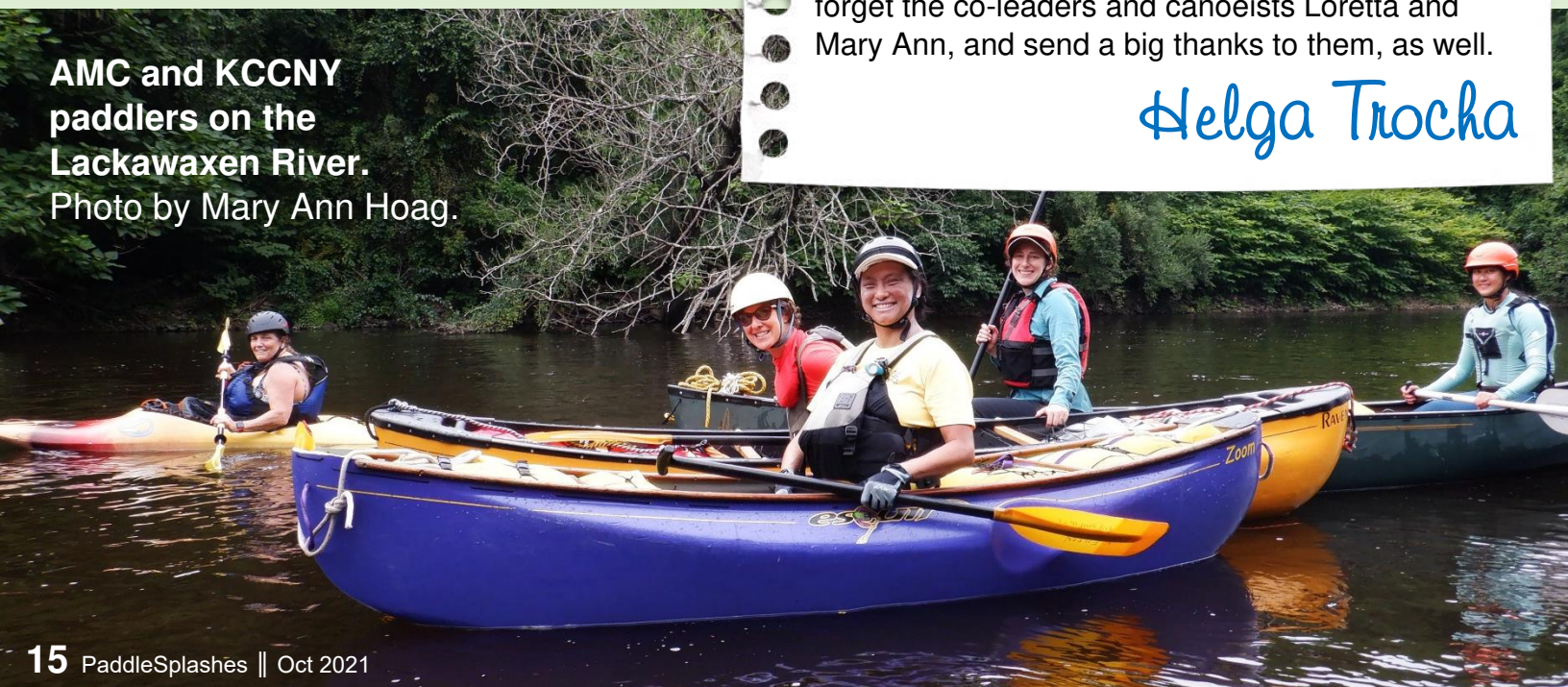
This is what it is all about, getting people together, strangers, acquaintances, people with a similar passion for the outdoors, individuals who want to do things, have some excitement, live outside the box.

I watched the lot of you chatting it up and bonding, laughing and helping each other out.

Thank you for indulging me at the take-out, practicing the Hand of God, T-Rescues, etc. Think about how much time you spend practicing ferrying and eddying out and compare to how much time you spend practicing safety techniques. You don't want to use them, but we should be experienced and skilled enough to be able to come to aid and assistance as the case may be.

A special shout-out to our experienced boaters Steve, David, Ram, Neil, who helped with support and instruction, and our sweep Michelle. I cannot forget the co-leaders and canoeists Loretta and Mary Ann, and send a big thanks to them, as well.

Helga Trocha



Liquid Assets: Adirondack Waterways

BY FRANK GALLO

From the first dip in the water, gliding from the put-in through the pristine trout breeding area of Little Clear Pond, if anyone needed evidence of what a special place the Adirondack Park is, this trip would end all debate.

As we headed to the first of our carries, a bald eagle monitored us from his perch in an evergreen just above us.

Once putting in again at St. Regis Pond, we headed off for another easy paddle to choose what is now our annual campsite equipped with a fine lean-to. We then turned our attention to the task of firewood collecting from the many blow-downs scattered behind our campsite. We had plenty for all three nights.

Our paddling adventures in the following days consisted of forays up into St. Regis Lake, hikes to Ochre Pond, and explorations of potential future campsites.

We discovered one with a secret rock formation hidden from view. Not more than 100 yards from the visible shore, this sweet gem consisted of large rock outcroppings with runoffs that cascaded through several openings, pouring into a small pool below.

The several carries of these days do wear one out a bit, but what a fine way to flex the physiology with which we are blessed.

One evening we enjoyed a paddle into the dark stillness of the night that only the wilderness can provide. Dipping a paddle into that infinity was a unique experience that all should try. The stillness of the surrounding forest also provided us with a surreal echo of conversation in case you missed what was actually said the first time.

On the last day, I slipped out of the campsite at predawn to be treated with another mystical experience. The air was cool and still, leaving St.

Regis Pond as smooth as glass. We paddled through the mist that drifted from surrounding hills and mountains. What a treat.

“ This trip reminded me again why I joined the AMC... ”

This trip reminded me again why I joined the AMC NY-NoJ paddlers some 20 years ago. We have a great group of caring individuals who I am fortunate to call my friends.

This is something we all cherish and must continue to support and develop. I am looking forward to our next trip together.

Algonquin Canoe Camping

Ontario, Canada

Aug. 24-29, 2022

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Canoe camping among pristine rivers and lakes, swimmable beaches, occasional wolf calls and maybe the northern lights.



WAIT, WHAT? WHICH WEEK OF RIVERS?

We're earning back our rep for total immersion paddling--trips that go big or go home. We're the club of expeditions. We're the traveling paddlers.

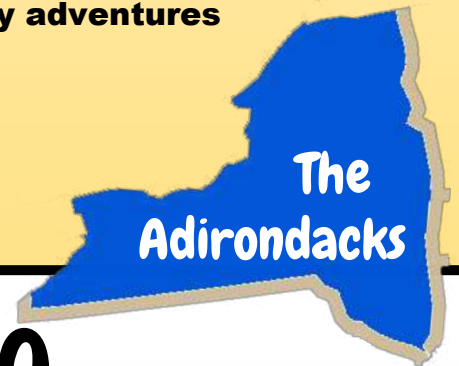
But new members might be confused.

chases whitewater in the gorges and canyons of Dixieland. The **NORTHERN** trip treasures the idyllic brooks and streams of the Adirondack Park's wilderness.

Culling from rave reviews for both trips this year, we've assembled their distinctions. Surprisingly, we also see the parallel joys that these watery adventures share.



There are now two recurring "Week of Rivers" trips. Both are justly popular. Traditionally, the **SOUTHERN** trip



REASONS TO GO

Super friendly new friends! Rivers and geology like nothing we have here in the East. A chill festival that's organized, calm, and relaxing! Clinics of all kinds. *NAR (Not a Race) & Pool Toy Over the Falls* events.



Campfire bonding with the nicest people you'd ever want to meet. Drift by super blooming wildflowers and hushed, dense woods as you move downstream.

SOCIAL SCENE

Folks from all over the USA come together to share a love of laughter and travel stories. Legends, advanced paddlers and beginners mingle freely.



Multi-generational hiker/boater types who relish remote wilderness, but still love to share stories and jokes. If it rains, some like to take a day off and stroll around the quaint village of Saranac Lake.

FOOD

Barbecue–Southern Style: pulled pork, cider-vinegar based sauce. Inspired rustic, farm smokehouse taverns. And ice cream at the ice cream social!



Barbecue–Northern Style: lamb burgers at rustic-industrial taverns. Home-made potluck tabouli, grilled sausage, beans, sauerkraut, tacos on Mexican-night, and roasted chicken kabobs.

WATERWAYS

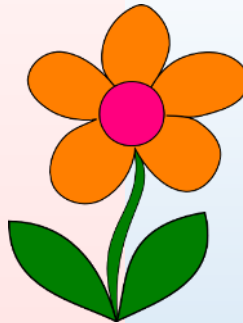
Stunning whitewater gorges with red clay cliffs, colorful ledges, and even caves among the sculpted rapids and boulder gardens. The insanely beautiful and varied sections of the French Broad.



Meacham Lake, babbling brooks, merging confluences, and meandering streams through alder tunnels. Footbridges to duck under; dead falls and dams to step around.

FLORA

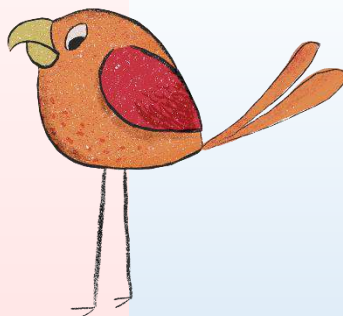
Redbud trees, kudzu creeping across the highways even, day lilies & tiger lilies, willow trees, Spanish moss, and old man's beard.



Wildflower riot: especially forget-me-nots, water hyacinth/pickerel weed, cardinal flowers, jewelweed, lily pads, black eyed susans, joe pye weed, and evening primrose.

FAUNA

Peregrine falcons, osprey, swifts and swallows flying about one's head, lightning bugs to rival the fireworks!



Diving and chattering otters. Curious beavers. Herons, loons, eagles, osprey, and mergansers.

DOUBLE DIPPING? **APPROVED**

Why were there two trips on the same weekend for Fall Foliage this year? Because the people demanded it!

At first Rich Breton tapped volunteers to run a duplicate Fall Foliage adventure in order to cover our bets to hit "peak" leafage on either the first or second week of October.

Plus, it would allow safer groupings, smaller numbers.

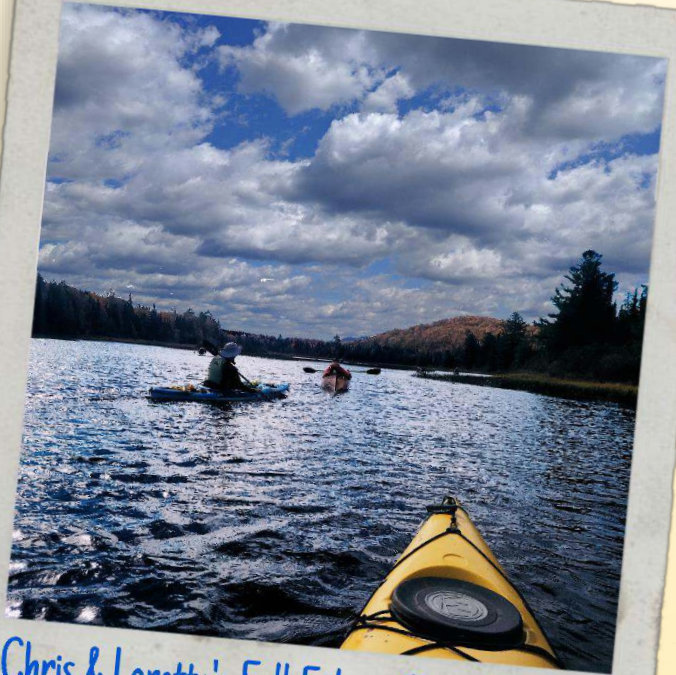
Deputized Chris Viani and Loretta Brady complied and posted their adventure for the long Indigenous People's weekend out of Meacham Lake to go with the "flow" of the Middle Branch of the St. Regis River and Santa Clara Flow, the Hatch and Salmon rivers, and Two Bridges Brook.

But then the masses demanded Rich's trip run on that weekend, too.

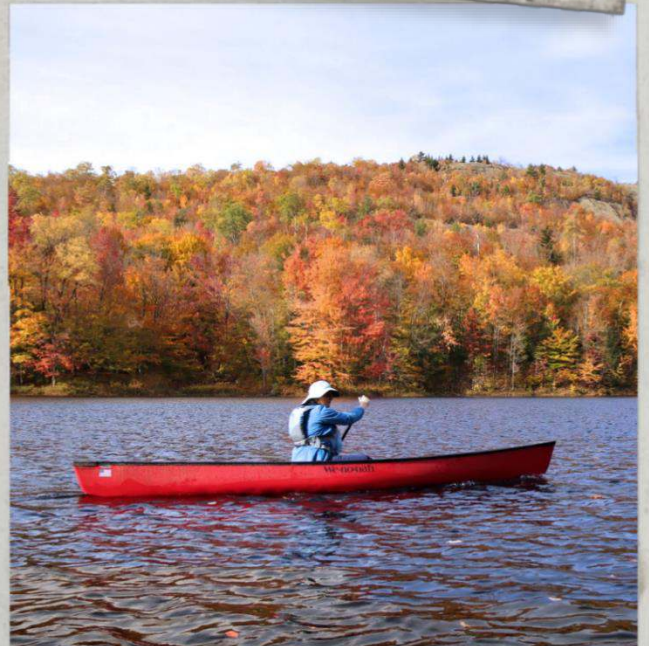
Ever flexible, Rich raked in his vast resources and hosted a group out of Eaton Lake, exploring the brilliant views on and around Round Lake and Little Tupper Lake.

Both groups got lucky. As many who knew these parts from the past 26 fall trips attested, "Never do I remember such brilliant reds, such glowing yellows and greens."

Along with the Adirondack Week of Rivers trip in July, Klara and Frank's St Regis trip in August, and Russ Faller's Cedar River trip, we've had quite a presence in the North Country this year.



*Chris & Loretta's Fall Foliage Trip, Oct 2021.
Photo by Brian Horowitz.*



*Bog River, Oct 2021.
Photo by Rich Breton.*



Adirondack Week of Rivers,
July 2021. Photo by Mary Ann Hoag.



St. Regis Canoe Area, Aug 2021.
Photo by Michael Sadler.



Fall Foliage Trip, Oct 2021.
Photo by Vadim Konstantinovskiy.

Congratulations!



Sozanne has rarely missed a Dryway release over the past couple of years and has been working hard to develop her skills. It has been wonderful to see her progress from looking terrified in some of the major rapids to now confidently going first and nailing the lines. This year we have been able to take a back seat on the Dryway in the knowledge that Sozanne can guide first timers down with a smile. Congratulations on a well-deserved 4R Dryway River Rating!

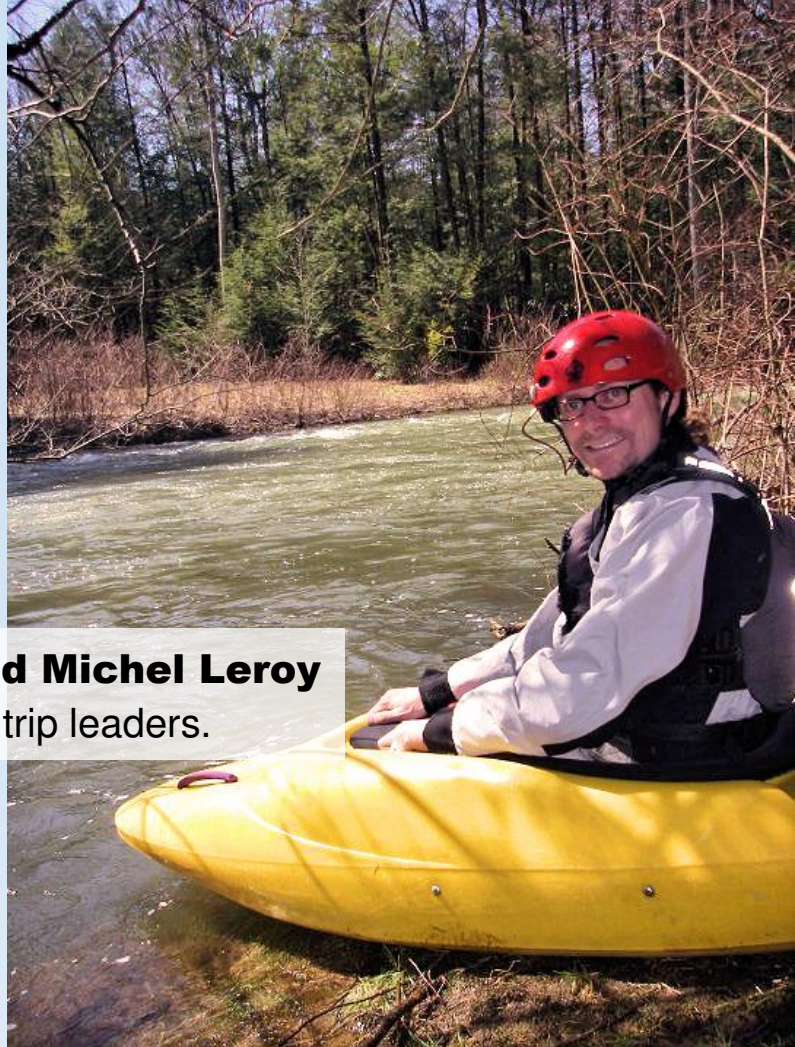
Olly & Dave

Congratulations to our newest Class 4 paddler. On the strong recommendation of the Chapter's most active Class 4 paddlers, I am very happy to award a White Water Kayak Class 4R (Dryway) rating to Sozanne Solmaz. I am so proud of her and just a little envious.

Charles



Susan Allen and Michel Leroy
Our newest trip leaders.



PADDLE SPLASHES

Loretta Brady, Editor
Marty Plante, Layout & Format

PaddleSplashes is published by the Canoe and Kayak Committee of the Appalachian Mountain Club, New York - North Jersey Chapter.

Guidelines for Submissions

Photos are preferred as high-resolution color jpeg files attached to email. Please do not crop, compress, resize or otherwise interfere with them. Current and prior issues of PaddleSplashes are available on the Chapter's website at <http://www.amc-ny.org/paddle-splashes>

Send all submissions to:
[canoekayak.newsletter <at> amc-ny.org](mailto:canoekayak.newsletter@amc-ny.org)

© Appalachian Mountain Club,
Boston, MA

Melissa Spooner

Our newest
Class 1+ paddler



PARTING SHOTS

New Jersey Canoe Club members running a small dam on the Ramapo River, March 1930.



Lifting over a strainer on the Mullica River, called the Atsion River at the time. Photo by Marriott Canby Morris, May 1906.

Canoeist on the Hudson River at Fort Lee, NJ, at what is now Palisades Interstate Park. c. 1920.



The Cranford Canoe Club (then called the Shanty Gang) at its Lobster House headquarters on the Rahway River, Cranford NJ. Unknown date.