

The Alamo City Rivermen Babbler

Issue MMCCLX

March 2006

The monthly newsletter of the Alamo City Rivermen

Paddling the fine line between geek and Bubba.

Still That Time of Year

Next Meeting

March 8, 2006, Hungry Horse Rest.,
12333 West Avenue, near the
intersection with Rhapsody. 6:30 to
9:00.

-o0o-

Club Officers

President Chris Vogeler
alamochris at birch dot net
830-885-5324

Vice President Gib Hafernick
gibguy at compuserve dot com

Sec./Treas. Marie Searight
marie at wireweb dot net
830-625-0604

Editor Kenneth Bennight
bennight at alumni dot utexas dot net
210-826-7071

Mailings Marie Searight
marie at wireweb dot net
830-625-0604

Dues are due for 2006: \$15 to receive the newsletter by email or \$20 to receive it via the Postal Service. Please send them to Alamo City Rivermen Canoe Club, P.O. Box 171194, San Antonio, Texas 78217.

If you joined in the last four months of 2005, you are golden. Otherwise, cough up. Please. Thank you.

-o0o-

Cruising the Colorado River

Bob Heinsohn

Last year in 2005 the water flow on the Colorado was low enough that one could walk across bank to bank in many places. Paddling upstream was also not difficult using a double blade. Using the La Grange and Columbus boat ramps, I was able to navigate downstream and upstream for easy one-day trips. White Rock Park at La Grange would have been a good choice had the local police remembered to unlock the gates daily.

Besides going by canoe or kayak, the Colorado riverbanks can be explored by foot. Cool temperatures of 60 degrees or below during winter months offer snake-free water and terrain.

The primary reason I took multiple mini-day trips was to look for petrified wood, fossilized bones, Indian artifacts, antique glass, and other unusual items. My finds included petrified wood pieces up to 35 pounds, as well as a 30-inch section of petrified, partially decayed tree limb or trunk with a woodpecker hole. One 18-inch section was on the edge of a swift current, making retrieval tricky. Most pieces had to be soaked in a chemical solution to clean off the slime and algae.

(Continued, next page)

Upcoming Events

March 4-5, 2006	San Marcos Cleanup	Gary Tupa, gltupa at yahoo dot com
March 8, 2006	Monthly Meeting	Hungry Horse Rest., 12333 West Avenue, near Rhapsody. 6:30 to 9:00.
April 8-9, 2006	Hidalgo Falls Festival	Gary Tupa, gltupa at yahoo dot com
April 12, 2006	Monthly Meeting.	Hungry Horse Rest., 12333 West Avenue, near Rhapsody. 6:30 to 9:00.
April 22, 2006 ???	Earth Day Canoe Rides at Woodlawn Lake	?????
April 28-30??, 2006	Caddo Lake Trip ?????	
May 6, 2006	Medina River Cleanup	?????
May 10, 2006	Monthly Meeting	Hungry Horse Rest., 12333 West Avenue, near Rhapsody. 6:30 to 9:00.
May 27-29, 2006	Memorial Day Trip	?????
June 14, 2006	Monthly Meeting	Hungry Horse Rest., 12333 West Avenue, near Rhapsody. 6:30 to 9:00.
July 1-4, 2006	Independence Day Trip	?????
July 12, 2006	Monthly Meeting	Hungry Horse Rest., 12333 West Avenue, near Rhapsody. 6:30 to 9:00.
August 9, 2006	Monthly Meeting	Hungry Horse Rest., 12333 West Avenue, near Rhapsody. 6:30 to 9:00.
September 2-4, 2006	Labor Day Trip	?????
September 13, 2006	Monthly Meeting	Hungry Horse Rest., 12333 West Avenue, near Rhapsody. 6:30 to 9:00.



(Colorado Cruising, continued)

One drizzly day as a cool front arrived, I went to a downstream island, hunting for rocks. The lightning in the distance caused me to paddle back upstream twice. I didn't find much that day, but I did get exercise. On a later trip to Columbus from Beeson's Park, I found a uniquely shaped piece of wood. It resembled a natural sponge with large holes, an example of nature's art. On that same trip, I found a 20-inch, rusty crane hook with attached cable under the railroad bridge. It may have been lost during construction or repair of the bridge. The large sand and gravel bar under IH 10 yielded only minor finds.

Other places I also visited last year were the put ins at Highway 183 in Austin, FM 973, the Bastrop boat ramp, and Riverbend Park in Smithville. Unfortunately, I found no Indian artifacts on my many river excursions. But I did find an almost complete fossilized vertebrae in the middle of the riverbed. It measured 5 inches by 8 inches and was from a large animal.

I'm waiting for future high water on the Colorado to bring more exciting finds and low water to be able to access them. I really enjoy exploring the water.

-o0o-

Paddlecraft Registration Followup

Texas Parks and Wildlife has indicated it is dropping the plan to call for paddlecraft registration for want of support in the paddling community. That's encouraging news, but a lot can happen between now and when the next legislative session adjourns.

I got an email from TPWD canceling Walter Dabney's April presentation. TPWD still needs funding, and they gave no explanation.

-o0o-

Historical Note

In his article above, Bob Heinsohn mentions launching into the Colorado from Beeson's Park in Columbus. Beeson's Park commemorates the name of the original settlement at what is now Columbus. Benjamin Beeson, one of Stephen F. Austin's original 300 colonists, settled there in 1822. His residence and business operations and a scattering of homesteads formed a settlement known as Beeson's Crossing. In the early spring of 1836, the settlers found themselves between Sam Houston's Army, camped on the east bank of the Colorado River opposite Beeson's Crossing, and the Mexican Army led by General Juakin Ramirez Y Sesma, fast approaching from the west. Retreating in the direction of San Jacinto, Houston's army burned Beeson's Crossing to deny it to the enemy. <http://www.columbustexas.org/tourism/museums.htm>

-o0o-

Agkistrodon piscivorus



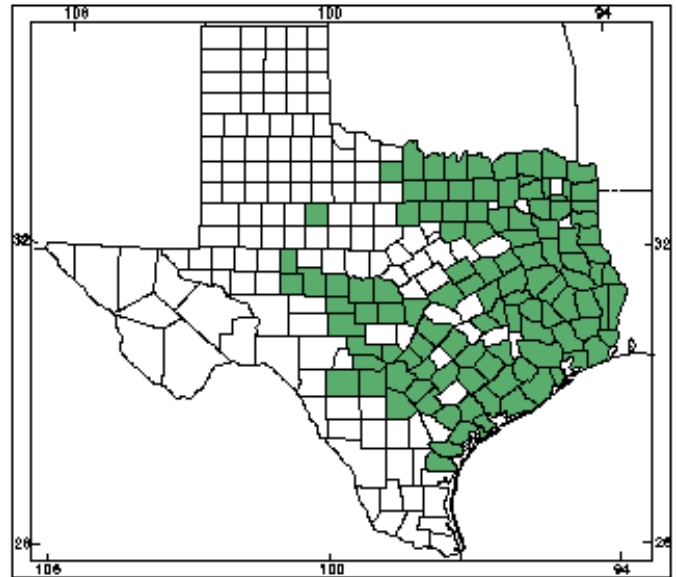
The Western Cottonmouth is a dark, faintly patterned snake, best known for its defensive posterior of a gaping mouth. It is so named because of the white lining of the mouth cavity. In fact, the subspecific name **leucostoma** means "white mouth," although all three subspecies of **A. piscivorus** have light colored mouth linings. Cottonmouths are venomous and therefore highly dangerous. Although they may flee if given a chance, they will stand their ground if confronted.

Similar species. -- **Agkistrodon piscivorus** can be confused with other venomous and non-venomous snakes. The wide triangular

head should not be used as a characteristic to separate the Cottonmouth from non-venomous snakes because many water snakes can spread their head and neck and appear to have a diamond-shaped head. Having heat-sensing pit organs (found between the nostril and eye) separates *A. piscivorus* from other non-venomous snakes such as the water snakes (genus **Nerodia**). Rattlesnakes also have heat pits and a triangular head, but differ from cottonmouths in having a rattle. **Agkistrodon piscivorus** is also distinguished from the water snakes by having elliptical pupils (vs. round pupils), an undivided anal plate (vs. divided), and a single row of subcaudal scales (vs. a double row of subcaudals). The Cottonmouth also has a thicker and heavier body than water snakes. The banded pattern of copperheads and cottonmouths are similar in the juveniles of both. But as the Cottonmouth grows the pattern is obscured because the snake becomes very dark, almost black. The grayish coloration and the blackish cheek stripe (behind the eye) of the Cottonmouth separate it from the copperhead, which lacks the dark stripe but has a tan patch below the eye.

Natural History. -- The specific epithet **piscivorus** means "fish-eater" but cottonmouths are also fond of frogs, mammals and other snakes. The Cottonmouth is extremely aquatic and is most at home near or in the water. Its cousin, the Copperhead, is frequently found away from water and can be seen deep in woodland habitats. Although it may be commonly seen in lakes and ponds, areas frequented by humans, few human fatalities are recorded. Juvenile cottonmouths often look drastically different than their parents, because they have a distinct pattern of black crossbands over a tan or gray background. These juveniles also have a bright yellow tail, used in luring small prey within striking distance; this color is lost as the snakes mature. The young are live-born in late summer and early fall. The number per litter averages five snakes, with the snakes measuring 15-28 cm (6-11 in).

Subspecies. -- The smallest of the three subspecies (76.0-106.5 cm [30-42 in]), **A. p. leucostoma** (Western Cottonmouth), has a dark brown or gray background color with a black or brown belly. There are usually uniformly colored black crossbands, but these may not be very distinct against the dark background; some individual snakes appearing not to have any vestiges of crossbands. The Western Cottonmouth also lacks distinctive head marking seen in the other two subspecies.



Distribution. --No populations of **A. piscivorus** are found in Mexico. Only one subspecies is found in Texas, **A. p. leucostoma**. It ranges from central Texas, including portions of the Edwards Plateau, to the eastern Piney Woods and south to the Gulf Coast. In the U.S., the Cottonmouth is found from central Texas, north to Missouri, east to Virginia and south to Florida.

<http://www.zo.utexas.edu/research/txherps/snakes/agkistrodon.piscivorus.html>

-o0o-

San Marcos River Cleanup

Gary Tupa is coordinating our participation. (gltupa at yahoo dot com) Meet at 9:00 AM at Spencer's Shady Grove Campground. To get to Spencer's, you go East on 80 to 1979. Make a right on 1979 and go over the river.

Spencer's is on the left just over the river. There we pick up bags and locations on where to deposit the spoils of the day. Later we return for barbeque.

It is early enough that the snake aren't out yet. Water is low enough to make it easy to reach bottom. Speaking of reaching, Home Depot has these grabbers called Nifty Nabbers. They look to be great for grabbing cans and stuff off of the bottom.

(This article was adapted from an email from Jeff Bauknecht of the Austin Paddling Club).

-o0o-

State Park Funding

On Friday, April 7, 2006, the Houston Regional Group/Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Texas Coalition for Conservation in cooperation with the University of Houston-Downtown are co-hosting a forum on underfunding of Texas state parks and possible long-term funding options. Its purpose is to give people the information they need to be effective advocates for our state park system.

In addition to explaining the current financial and political situation facing the Texas state parks, the forum will go beyond the Texas experience. The state park systems of Arkansas and Florida went through tough times, just as in Texas. Speakers from Arkansas and Florida will tell us how they solved their funding problems and how they gained the support of their state officials and voters to implement long-term funding solutions.

The forum begins at 8:45 AM at the Wilhemina Cullen Robertson Auditorium and ends at 3:45 PM. Registration check-in will begin at 8:00 AM. The cost of the forum is \$28 and includes continental breakfast, lunch, and snack and an information book. People can continue the conversation at a reception after the forum. Our confirmed speakers and topics include:

Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks & Recreation Department
Welcome & Opening Remarks: Why a City Parks Director Cares About State Park Funding

Dr. John Crompton, Distinguished Professor of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, Texas A & M University
Economic Contributions of State Parks

Walter D. Dabney, State Parks Director, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
The State of the Texas State Parks

Todd Kercheval, Chief of Staff, House Committee on Culture, Recreation, & Tourism, State Representative Harvey Hilderbran (Chairman)
What the Texas Legislature Can Do

Richard Davies, Executive Director of the Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism
The Arkansas Turnaround

Steve Dana, Budget Manager, Division of Recreation & Parks, Florida Department of Environmental Protection
The Forever Florida Solution

George Bristol, President, Texas Coalition for Conservation
State Funding of Parks

Ken Kramer, Director of the Lone Star Chapter Sierra Club
Panelist

There will be two panel discussions:

The Pros & Cons of the Arkansas & Florida Solutions in Texas, and

Telling the Parks Funding Story to the People & the Legislature

Send your \$28 registration to: Houston Sierra Club, P.O. Box 3021; Houston, TX 77253-3021. Please include your NAME, ADDRESS, TELEPHONE, AND E-MAIL ADDRESS. Registration should be received no later than March 31, 2006. Confirmation and directions will be sent by e-mail. Please contact Evelyn Merz at 713-644-8228 or at elmerz at hal-pc dot org if you have questions.

-o0o-

Boat for Sale

Hardly ever used classic Folboat for sale. In good shape. Includes two-piece wooden paddle and accessories. \$275. Boat is 14'11" long; two-piece wooden paddle is 271 cm (106.5") long. Boat comes with removable shoulder carrying yoke, along with spray skirt, two flotation bags, repair kit bag (including vinyl and fabric pieces, glue, nuts/screws, screwdriver, scissors), and boat carrying bag.

Steve Daniel, 979-846-4649, sdaniel at philosophy dot tamu dot edu



Alamo City Rivermen Mileage Log Sheet

Date: _____ River: _____ Put in: _____ Take Out: _____

Estimated Miles: _____ Comments: _____

Date: _____ River: _____ Put in: _____ Take Out: _____

Estimated Miles: _____ Comments: _____

Date: _____ River: _____ Put in: _____ Take Out: _____

Estimated Miles: _____ Comments: _____

Date: _____ River: _____ Put in: _____ Take Out: _____

Estimated Miles: _____ Comments: _____

Date: _____ River: _____ Put in: _____ Take Out: _____

Estimated Miles: _____ Comments: _____

Date: _____ River: _____ Put in: _____ Take Out: _____

Estimated Miles: _____ Comments: _____

Date: _____ River: _____ Put in: _____ Take Out: _____

Estimated Miles: _____ Comments: _____

Date: _____ River: _____ Put in: _____ Take Out: _____

Estimated Miles: _____ Comments: _____

Alamo City Rivermen Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Home Telephone: _____

Business Telephone: _____

The Alamo City Rivermen try to keep their activities safe, but risk is inherent in water sports. We cannot and do not guarantee safety. The Alamo City Rivermen disclaim liability for accidental injury or death in any sponsored event. As a condition of membership and participation in club sponsored events, I release, acquit, and forever discharge the Alamo City Rivermen and its officers, agents, and members from all liability arising out of or relating to a sponsored event, even if negligence of the club or its officers, agents, or members is a cause, and even if I die or am injured This release includes not only actual paddle trips but also all other club events and driving or riding to and from club events.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Signature: _____

Membership dues are the same for an individual or a family. As a member of the Alamo City Rivermen, you are automatically entitled to our monthly newsletter and subscription to our email list. Details on these benefits are available in our newsletter.

I prefer to receive the newsletter: (Please circle the one you choose)

Dues if newsletter sent by email \$15.00

Dues if newsletter sent USPS \$20.00

(Note: Newsletter copying and mailing has been our biggest expense; using email frees up money for other activities, including our website.)

Mail this completed form, together with a check, to:

Alamo City Rivermen Canoe Club
P.O. Box 171194
San Antonio, Texas 78217