

Terradise to Cincinnati Expedition

Hyatts Road to Worthington, Route 161 – 9.7 miles

August 5, 2007 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM

Finally! Some rain! This has been a dry summer, with just enough rain to keep things green, but nothing to spare for unnecessary things like rivers. The water below Delaware Reservoir is totally controlled by the Army Corps of Engineers, in order to keep the recreational and water quality levels at the optimum throughout the summer months. Come fall, they “bring down” the levels to make room for winter and spring runoff, but a call to the dam office (note spelling is correct) brought a gruff reply that they don’t do planned releases for recreational purposes anymore. So imagine my delight when the morning skies promised the rain that my check of the intellicast.com radar showed was coming to central Ohio. I knew that a flash flood on this section of the river was a dimly remote chance, given the Corps foresight in controlling this river since the late 1940’s. Besides, I would be thankful for any rise in the river, given my experience on the last leg. Growing up on this river, I have a healthy respect for floods, and assured myself that I could sense the rising waters and get off the river on Route 315 at any point.

This is state fair time, so my wife Karen had been spending the week with her fair entries (her 52nd year of doing so!) and I drove up separately on Saturday to spend the day at the fair and marvel at her style show entries and blue ribbons on baked goods. We stayed at our daughter’s in Urbana Saturday night and rose early to make it to Columbus in time for the pork recipe entry. This got me to my son’s house at 8 AM to pick up the truck which I had left overnight in Columbus. I headed up State Route 315 and took a detour over to the Meijer store on Powell Road at 23 to pick up some granola bars and some cheap water (I keep forgetting to pack tap water in bottles).



I was back at Hyatts Road by 9:15 AM and on the river at 9:30. The first thing I saw was a man fishing. I hesitate to tell these fishermen of all the fish that jump along side, over and on occasion into my boat. The dripping paddles evidently look like insects to them. The best place for the big carp is just ABOVE the ripples, not below as in popular folk fishing lore. I saw MANY carp, some almost 3 feet long and big enough to jar the boat when they mistakenly turned the wrong direction. Not good eating, but

what fun to hook! I have to admit they scared me many times with their sudden movements.

50 yards down the river, the rain decided to start. I decided that wet was not a good way to start the trip, so I parked under a friendly sycamore and it’s umbrella like leaves. After

a while, I noticed some ripe wild grapes above my head, glistening with dew from the fresh rain. Now this was way too tempting, so I delighted myself eating grapes while standing in 3 inches of river, and watching the rain spackle the river with endless drops. Ah! the noble savage and his Garden of Eden!

After 10 minutes the rain let up, and I headed on down river. The bed of the river here is mud, with gravel bars easily navigated. I spent most of this leg IN the kayak, and actually looked forward to the occasional heavy rains as a way to get out and stretch.

The Home Road Bridge appeared just in time for the heaviest rain – a 30 minute soaker that I spent cozy and dry under the bridge.



I watched for signs of the water rising, but could only detect about ½ inch. As soon as the rain let up enough to be able to “read” the river, I took off again and headed for Columbus.

This was a most enjoyable trip, even though I was pretty wet the whole trip, my wool cowboy hat kept my head and eyeglasses dry, along with the towel I had stuffed into it.

The river was gradually rising, (only a couple of inches total) and the ripples that formerly meant exiting the kayak were now navigable. I passed some beautiful new homes along Route 315 and took in a freshet waterfall on the limestone cliffs on the east side of the river. These cliffs contain a layer of flint, which prompted visions of Native Americans harvesting this treasure for hunting and trading.

Soon, I reached the Powell Road bridge, and the river stretched on for long segments with no ripples. Highbanks Metropolitan Park is on the east bank of the river from Powell Road to Mount Air, and is the exposure of Devonian Shales which overlie the Columbus Limestone in the bed of the river. This exposure is thick with concretions, formed in the soft shale when an impurity caused a chemical change which grew into spherical or ovoid shapes. When these are eroded out of the bank, they roll down to the

river and sometimes split open. One particular large specimen lies in the middle of the river, split in half to allow curious boaters a chance to examine its innards.



Highbanks (note concretion boulder in middle of river)

Near here, the Delaware/Franklin County line is marked by high tension lines at the outflow from the sewage treatment plant. The water coming out is clean, but leaves the distinct odor of treated sewage in the river for over a mile downstream. But miasma is no longer thought of as a cause of disease, so I breathed shallowly and paddled on.

Soon the sound of traffic indicated I was approaching the I-270 bridges. Here, the highway engineers re-routed the Olentangy River back in the 1960's, behind my back as I was attending Ohio State University. I could see the old course, now blocked by trees, and entered the long straight stretches interrupted by artificial rapids introduced by the placement of rip-rap in a straight line across the river. The banks are also artificial, with rip-rap now starting to be hidden by 40 year growth of brush and trees.

I was really traveling fast now, almost too fast to pick up the two new softballs and other detritus floating along in this now urban river. A long straight stretch brought me to the State Route 161 Bridge, and the ball park for Worthington High School. There is an easy landing just north of the bridge, and along the bike path which stretches from Mount Air along the river down to Frank Road.

I decided to call a cab, and was surprised when they showed up in a few minutes and gave me a “Special Trip” fare back up to Hyatts Road and my waiting truck. I quickly returned to Worthington, packed up the kayak and treated myself to a Donato’s Pizza and headed south to Cincinnati, secure in the knowledge that the next leg of this expedition would take me to the confluence of the Olentangy and the Scioto, making me only one river removed from the Ohio and Cincinnati.