

Terradise to Cincinnati Expedition

August 8, 2007 – Route 161 Worthington to Confluence with Scioto River - 9.69 miles

Having forgotten and left my paddles at the Worthington High School access to the river, I decided to make an unplanned trip to Columbus to check on them and finish this leg to the Confluence.

An early morning appointment at a client in the Eastgate area of Cincinnati didn't take very long, so I was in Worthington by 10 AM and left the kayak near the paddles, which were still there, hidden in the brush. This time I remembered to bring my bicycle, so I did a quick re-check of the equipment to be left in Worthington, and headed to Confluence Park to leave the truck and use the Olentangy-Scioto Bike Path to get back to Worthington. The bike path allows some excellent river scouting opportunities, and within another 1 ½ hours I was back in Worthington.

I unlocked the kayak, locked the bike to some honeysuckle bushes, re-checked the equipment – two paddles, three water bottles, 4 Quaker Granola Snack bars, floatable cushion, life jacket, camera, cell phone, wallet and keys to the bicycle lock – and put in.

The river was down the 6 inches it had risen in the rains on Sunday, so I spent a little time walking the ripples. There are 6 dams between Worthington and Confluence, and the first one is just a few hundred yards downstream from State Route 161. It is about 2 feet high, and the best (only?) portage is on river left. At this water level, there is no danger of washing over the dam, but care must be taken to avoid slipping on the mossy dam crest.

Antrim Park Lake is off to the right here, invisible past the fully leafed-out trees. I have often wondered what the purpose of the lake was. It probably was a gravel pit, and now is filled with blue water. This might indicate copper sulfate added to combat algae, or it could be that the pit has a limestone floor, causing the water to take on a blue luster.

As the river bends back toward State Route 315 (The Olentangy Expressway), there is a large sign indicating a “Dangerous Dam” ahead. This is Broadmeadows Park Dam, easily visible from the expressway. Once again, I chose to portage river left, and this dam was about 2 feet high, affording an easy portage. Under construction here is a bridge just south of the dam, an extension or access to the bike trail.



Como Dam

It seemed like an eternity before the Henderson Road Bridge appeared, and another long reach to the North Broadway Bridge. Just south of here is Como Dam a low level dam best portaged to the right, unless you just love to be immersed in poison ivy. The little path around the right side is easy and I was soon back on the river after snapping a couple of pictures.

Then the Union Cemetery Dam, a small dam near the OSU Olentangy Wetlands Project appears – again at this stage not a problem. I pulled up to the right end of the dam and hopped out and guided the kayak over the 16 inch dam. The river makes a bend to the right below this dam, and then the Dodridge Road Dam appears. This dam is a little higher – 5 feet, and requires a portage on the left, over a section of flat concrete which serves to anchor the east end of the dam. A fisherman standing in the river made a good gauge of the water depth, and I passed behind him as he casted out to the dam outwash.

Next big landmark is Ohio State University, my alma mater (1967, 40 years ago). I was in the Marching Band, and at that time, this river served as a punishment for those band members who made errors while marching during halftime. I managed to escape “the river” my first 2 years, but a miscue now forgotten got me tossed in the river at the end of the Monday rehearsal. Little did my fellow squad members realize that, like B’rer Rabbit, I grew up in that river and welcomed the “baptism”. I sang the “ramp” – the Buckeye Battle Cry - as I passed the spot.

The Fifth Avenue Dam – at 5 feet the largest on the Olentangy – backs up a lot of water, and completely removes any current. By this time, the temperature was hovering around 98 degrees, and the width of the river precluded any shade, so I was starting to get pretty exhausted. I was a little perturbed that there was no good landing spot above the dam, but finally found a path through the weeds and pulled the kayak out and dragged it along the bike path. A passing cyclist looked a little puzzled as he swerved around the kayak making its way along behind me.

I put back in below the dam and under the Fifth Avenue Bridge. Here the Olentangy Expressway doesn't cross the river – it travels down the river. The close proximity of Olentangy River Road and all the commercial development in this area meant that the engineers faced a dilemma – and solved it by running the expressway right down the river. I appreciated the shade, but the river at this point is about the least attractive of the entire length traversed so far.

Added to that, OSU evidently dumps the effluent from its sewage plants under water here, as a plume of treated but smelly water erupts and makes breathing a less than desirable activity. Of course it could be from another source.

Many more bridges awaited me – King Avenue, Goodale Road, I-670, railroad bridges and finally, Dublin Road (US 33) and the bicycle path bridge. Then I was there! The end of the Olentangy River and the dream of a lifetime realized. I had paddled from Terradise to Columbus!



The Confluence

I took a quick picture of downtown Columbus, and dragged the kayak up the gravel lane to the parking lot and my waiting truck. I was so exhausted, that even though I was due in Cincinnati by 6:15 PM for a big band gig with Eddie Love, I decided to park myself under a shade tree and relax and cool off for a few minutes.

The bicycle will have to wait in the honeysuckle until Saturday when I will be in Marion for the Carl and Esther Rieger Memorial Service.

Next:

The Scioto River

Confluence to Frank Road – 4.5 miles

or

Confluence to London-Groveport Road – 12.31 miles