

Terradise to Cincinnati Expedition

Circleville to Mouth of Kinnikinnick Creek – Scioto River

September 13, 2009

8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

16.75 miles, 7.5 hours

Two weeks after our last adventure, the canoe and kayak were still securely lashed together atop the pickup truck. I had a choice; unload the canoe and kayak put them back in storage and wait or plan another trip. The solution was simple. I called Jed and said we were ready to go again and he agreed that September 13 was a great day to make the trip.

Since this leg from Circleville to Chillicothe totaled 30 miles I figured we needed a full day to make the trip so we planned to leave 7:30 AM. Of course, reality sets in and with schedules and so forth we decided to cut the trip in half and get out at the Kellenberger Road bridge, about two thirds of the way along.

I left Cincinnati about 6 AM and got a call from my son Jed around seven saying they were on their way to get paddles from their cottage at Hoover Reservoir on the Big Walnut Creek. "They" being Jed and his friend Ryan. Taking I-71 and US 35 and then US 22 I arrived at Circleville about 7:30 AM. The river was totally fogged in so I made a pit stop at the local Hardee's. When I returned to the Scioto River access just off Route US 22 fog had started to break up. I unloaded the canoe and the Ocean Kayak, and while I was doing so, an ODNR wildlife agent stopped by and we chatted a while. He informed me that I could easily make Chillicothe in the 8 hours I had allotted and probably within five hours. Then he did admit that when he makes that trip it's with a motor. He reminded me to park in the lot and I told him that I would be parking at the end of the trip and inquired about the access at Kellenberger Road bridge. He said it was fairly difficult and I might want to look for a place further down the River.

I immediately left and scouted the last remaining dam on the Olentangy-Scioto Rivers. The old Ohio-Erie Canal at Circleville had paralleled the river along here and there was a boat basin with a wooden wicket dam which provided water for the canal. The dam had long since been washed away and decomposed except for the pilings, spaced every 6 feet or so. From my view atop the water inlet, composed of huge sandstone blocks, the best pass-through appeared to be the second set of pilings on river right.



Just across the road from Canal Park, There were hundreds of acres of prairie grasses (probably big bluestem, neglected to get close to identify) just west of the River along here. This is obviously an attempt to reclaim the riverine corridor and prevent soil loss and fertilizer runoff from the adjacent farmland. (applause). I believe this is part of the Darby Plains Restoration. (For more info, visit http://www.metroparks.net/CmsData/Site/Documents/Prairies_2004.pdf)

I drove down to Kellenberger Road bridge and determined that it was not a good access or egress point from the river as it would be a long walk all in the canoe and kayak back to the parking area about a half-mile from the start of the bridge. The bridges across the Scioto in this area in are much longer than than just river width, to allow floods to pass. Just as I was looking at the River from the bridge Jed called and said he was very close. I had him come down Orr Road, and we went on down the river and near the mouth of Kinnikinnick Creek, at the corner of Crouse Chapel Road and Orr Road. After scouting up a couple of possible take-out spots, we parked the truck near the railroad underpass which is right at the corner of US 23 and headed back up in Jed's car to the start point at Circleville.



Leaving Circleville River Access off US Route 22

At 8:30 AM, we were on our way! The water level was too low for my taste. We could have used another foot or two to help us through the long pools of slack water. But it was a beautiful day, a 9/11 kind of day, and a lack of jets in the sky reminded me of that morning.

Jed and Ryan seemed intent on taking the most difficult routes over the rapids, and I don't blame them as this river is pretty boring for someone used to white water rafting. We soon passed the above mentioned last dam, and were into a long long stretch out of touch with roads, houses, and other signs of civilization. One of the great things about traveling River this way is that it looks very much like it did before the pioneers broke the plain. The trees along the riverine corridor block all views of farmland and even in Columbus, you have the feeling you are in wilderness.



The Drifter and I

The banks of the river are usually covered with Sycamore and silver maple and their roots dip into the river like so many soda straws. Occasionally, when the farmer has plowed too close to the river, the river fights back. 10 to 25 foot banks of soil and gravel are exposed and the cliff swallows make good use for nesting. Whatever the farmer gained by plowing close to the river has been lost in erosion. Short-term gain equals long-term loss.

By 1 PM we were beginning to wonder if the Kellenberger Road bridge actually existed. The sun was now high overhead and no shade was available. Suddenly I saw an airplane take a nosedive and recover very close to the ground. I didn't hear a crash, and in a few minutes, it became obvious why. The planes were radio-controlled models and the owners were having a dogfight. As they landed to refuel I spotted the Kellenberger Road bridge at 13.29 river miles. Since I was ahead of Jed and Ryan by about five or 10 minutes I decided to pause and wait for them to decide whether to get out here. There was a trail but my recollection was that it was a half-mile walk back to the access to the road. We decided to continue on as it couldn't be more the mile further.

After one more long stretch the river took bend to the left and we saw a bald eagle soaring. I got a good movie of it. The river turned to the right and we started seeing the houses that we have scouted at the end of our journey. We didn't see a really good place to get out so we went on down to near the mouth of Kinnikinnick Creek. I took a hike in the woods to try to find the road. Jed sooned joined me and we found it was really too far to carry the kayak and canoe. When Jed and I got back to the takeout spot from that little hike, Ryan had already left with the canoe and was taking it out at a spot up river. Jed agreed to go hike back to the truck and bring it to where Ryan was. We were out of the river by 4:30 PM and took some time to lash the canoe and kayak together and hoist them up on top of the truck.



Takeout was just upriver from this mobile home along Orr Road

I dropped Jed and Ryan off at the Circleville access, got our stuff sorted out, and left for Cincinnati by way of Chillicothe. I wanted to scout take-out places in Chillicothe but didn't find them. I headed west on US 50 and was home by eight o'clock.

We had covered almost 17 of the 30 miles and I will go back in a few weeks and finish the trip to Chillicothe just 12 miles away.