

Big Time Fun in Colorado

By John Kobak

Twenty-eight Keel Haulers from four States found their way to CO, our biggest trip in years. See the chart on the next page for summary of rivers, water levels and paddlers full names. The group paddled, over 1500 miles of CO rivers.



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Great weather, hot days, cool nights and windy scattered showers daily in the Buena Vista area. The water was a cool 50 to 60°F.

This is a tale of three trips. The first group rolled into Mountain Park NF Campground on the Cache de la Poudre River (Poudre). Sunday morning after a 20 hour drive from OH. If you have never been in this canyon, I feel it is one of the prettiest places you could ever find. Although the road parallels the river it is unobtrusive and the steep canyon walls are spectacular.



Ron Tomallo - Poudre

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To warm up, the twelve of us paddled from the campground down to the Narrows. This easy 4-

mi. portion whetted everyone's appetite for the paddling to come and got people used to the 6500' altitude.

Our hot dog paddlers, **Brent, Dave, Paul and Duke** wanted more and also had fun on the Middle Narrows, a Class IV half-mile run.

Most of the paddling for the entire two-week trip was the half day variety, with time left for hiking, bicycling and motor cycle off-road riding. **Ron & Shelly** had brought their cycles; **Shelly** had a few thrills and spills. That night **Chuck, Judi and Kristen** rolled in. They had come via TX and NM, where they had visited Carlsbad Caverns, **Rita Tessmann** (old khcc member) and Mesa Verde NP.

The advanced group of four drove up to try the Spencer Hts section of the Poudre, above and below the big falls 25 miles upstream. The remaining 13 paddlers ran either 8 or 13 mi. down to the campground.



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Erin at Poudre Falls

Judi and Kristen got their first taste of Colorado whitewater in their Shredder Raft. The water level was around 3' on the paddlers' gauge which made the four days challenging but not terrifying. On Tue we tackled the tougher

Mishawaka / PineVu section while the hot doggers spent the day scouting and running the Lower Big South which is a steep isolated section of the Poudre above Spencer Hts. A few walked and a few swam in Pine Vu, names withheld by request of participants. The group was really doing quite well considering it was a CO first for a few.



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Trip Leader on Poudre

Elliott, Bill, Cathy and I did our 25 mi. bicycle from Poudre Falls down to our campground. **Ron** had hauled us to the top with his cycle trailer.

The campground has hot showers but I brought my Sun Shower in honor of **Chuck Singer** who invented the Sun Shower at the same campsite 25 years ago. His was a little more crude then. A 15-gal black garbage bag filled with water which he tied to a tree branch, he then poked a small hole in the bag for his hot shower.

If the Poudre was a little higher we may have stayed longer, however people were anxious to try some other rivers before their one-week trip ended. So on Wed morning we repeated the 13 mi. White Mile section down to the campground and left for Golden CO. The renegade group headed back to repeat the Big South so **Brent** could get some good videos for his next production.



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Mike Duvall - Clear Crk

We camped overnight in a NF campground above Black Hawk gambling casino. Clear Creek was running about 500 cfs and is lots of fun. It ends in downtown Golden at a whitewater park. Just before the takeout there is a diversion dam that most paddlers carry. We ran it last year with no problem; however, this year when **Elliott** ran it he got stuck in the backwash of the dam, rolled out, washed over a few rocks upside down and then successfully rolled up. He takes a lickin but keeps on tickin. The **Ratt** can't say that **Elliott** bails any longer. It looked so bad that only **Ron** decided to attempt it. He made it look easy.



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BLM Campground

Chuck had banged his shoulder on the Poudre so decided to give it a rest. **Chuck, Judi** and **Kristen** went off to hike at Rocky Mountain NP. **Chuck's** paddling was completed when his bad luck continued. He banged his elbow while sliding down a snow bank; also **Judi** had to put **Kristen** on a plane back to Cleveland. **Chuck & Judi** continued westward to Moab, UT and then to the Grand Canyon for a backpack trip.

After Clear Creek we all drove to the Buena Vista area. We camped at a free BLM campground, very remote and quiet. **Santo** and **Kris** arrived from St. Louis.

The hotdoggers decided on a 5pm run of Pine Creek Rapid and the Numbers. Didn't see them again until dark. We heard that Both **Daves** got stuck in the big hole after Pine Creek, but worked free. I guess they didn't quite scout downstream far enough.

Friday's trip on Brown's canyon was our biggest, fifteen paddlers. The Arkansas was a low 1000 cfs, but it was lots of fun. A few flips at Zoom Flume but everyone made it through Sidell's Suck hole as I recall. That night **Boris** and **Rex** arrived from MI.

The next day our renegade group headed up to Aspen where they ran Crystal River including the Meatgrinder and the Narrows. We need to hear from **Brent** for his report.



Paul Lang in Meatgrinder

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Our group ran the Numbers on Sat. which had come up to 1350 cfs. Some did it twice. **Shelly** made it as far as #5 where she decided she had had enough excitement for the day.

On Sunday the Royal Gorge provided the most interesting stories for the 12 paddlers. Most scouted Sunshine, the rapid that usually provides all the excitement. It's a little easier these days since the military inadvertently moved a rock while removing a pinned raft. I guess I made it look too easy hitting the right side eddy above the final drop. First, **Bob** didn't drive hard enough out of the eddy and got sucked to the shore upstream of a large rock, it flipped him over and he washed through the hole to roll successfully below. **Cathy** flipped on the eddy line and bailed, her boat and paddle came down quickly to the eddy below. However, Cathy was no where in sight. I could see her head bobbing up and down in the hydraulic for a long time. It seems she thought she could swim out of the end but finally gave up and headed downstream where she was quickly rescued.



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Shelly at Sunshine

The real excitement came at the next drop which no one scouted, Sledgehammer. A few of us ran left and right of the large center hole which I guess wasn't too obvious. First **Kris** got stopped and sucked back in while **Ron** followed. He pushed her out of the hole while unbeknownst to him **Shelly** dropped in with him. After knocking around for a while **Shelly** went into the undercut on the far right and said it was really dark in there, that's when she bailed out. After a half-dozen or more windowshades, **Ron** finally came

up for good and saw rafts going by almost over his head since it was sooo deep. Now **Ron** would have liked to bail out but was being tossed around so much that he couldn't reach his skirt. What luck, he finally ended out and paddled over with a smile indicating he just went in to rescue **Kris**. When **Boris** came by he flipped, rolled and headed toward the big undercut also, luckily he only went part way under and came out unscathed.



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Elliott Drysdale - Clear Crk

We ate lunch under the 1000' high suspension bridge where **Rex** mentioned *we better keep our helmets on in case someone threw something off the bridge*. I laughed then looked down on the rocks where I saw coins and even a golf ball, *lets make it a short lunch*.

It was time to say goodbye to **Ron & Shelly**; however, **Rich Priem** and his sister, **Betsy Chisholm** & family were due to arrive that night. The group planned to run the Gunnison Gorge an easy Class III run immediately downstream of the Black Canyon, on Monday. Most of the group left to go directly there. **Santo** agreed to setup the shuttle early so that when the rest of the group arrived at 11AM they could do the 1 mi. walk down to the river and complete the run early enough to get back to Buena Vista.

Well first of all, no **Rich & Betsy**, they called to say that they were coming a day later. **Then Bill, Cathy, Elliott** and I got up at 6am

and drove 4 hrs to the Gunnison. We discovered that the last 7 mi. of the road to the putin took almost an hour. It was a class 4 road with a few class 5's thrown in that we had to scout. **Cathy's** 4-wheel drive truck had no problems but **Elliott's** van was challenged. We got to the put-in at 11:30 AM, but found no one else was there. We discussed how we could still do the river when I realized that I promised to meet the Priem's back in BV tonight. The shuttle and river trip would take at least another 7 hours, there was no way to do both and make it back to camp. **Elliott** and I volunteered to shuttle **Cathy's** truck to the takeout, however on our way up the dirt road we met **Santo** and the group, they were running a little late., about 4 hours as I saw it. **Paul** had already opted out and was going to shuttle **Santo's** van. **Elliott** decided he would like to paddle and my only choice was to drive back to BV; Yes 8 hours of driving and no paddling. The joys of a trip leader.



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Shredding Zoom Flume

Rich, Tracey, Betsy, Jim and their boys, **Cory and Jamie**, arrived as planned. [Read about Cory in Denver Post](#). **Judi** had left her Shedder raft and **Erin** had left her Corsica S for their use. We would warm up on the Fractions which is immediately downstream of the Numbers. **Tracey** and I paddled the Shredder while **Betsy & Rich** paddled their kayaks. I had never paddled a Shredder before and had a time

trying to figure out how to stay in and reach the water with the short paddles that **Judi** provided. Much to my delight a 6" longer canoe paddle from a commercial raft trip floated by. I now was in business with the correct length paddle.

After a fun run we decided to tackle Brown's canyon on Wed. The flow had come up from 1000cfs on last Fri.'s run to 1700cfs. This actually seemed to make the run easier. **Bill & Cathy** paddled with us while **Elliott and Bob** decided to run the Numbers a few times. **Rich** had the most fun, getting recirculated in Sidell's suckhole before swimming free.

The main part of the group stayed in Western CO to run the Upper Animas. You will have to read **Paul Lang's** story to find out how much fun they had.

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Betsy, Cory, Tracey, Rich, Jamie

Betsy's family rafted Browns canyon again with **Rich & Tracey** while we finished up our trip running the Numbers several times.

This year's trip was really fun, I wondered why it was so different then the last two years. Then I realized it was all the people. The large group with their varied interests had lots of fun together. They enjoyed the discovery of new rivers, hikes, bike rides and great cookouts and campfires. This is a fun trip that no one should miss.

2001 Colorado Trip Participants Lots of paddling by everyone

Date	6/17	6/18	6/19	6/20	6/21	6/22	6/23	6/24	6/25	6/26	6/27	6/28	6/29
Day	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F
River Section	Above Narrows/+middle Nar	Grandpa's Gorge Spencer Heights	Mishawaka/PineVu Big South	White Mile/GrandPa Big South	Clear Creek-Lower Pine Creek Can/Numbers	Brown's Canyon	Numbers (1-6)	Crystal, Meatgrinder & Narrows Royal Gorge	Gunnison Gorge/ U-Uncompagne n.	Fractions/ Frog Upper Animas	Brown's Canyon/ N - Numbers Animas - Durango	Numbers (1-6) Brown's Canyon	Numbers (1-6) Roaring Fork
Water Level - CFS	650	640	585	630	500	1000	1350	1600	650	1400 800	1700 1500	1300	1200 500
Paddler's Gauge	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.9	2	2.0	2.6	2.8		2.8	3.3	2.6	2.4
River Miles	4	8 5	8 6	13 8	6 6	13	6	9	13	7 27	13 5	6 13	6 5
Name													
Aalbersberg, Kris						X	X	X	X		X		
Albright, Santo						X	X	X	X	X	X		
Bethea, Erin	X	X	X		X	X							
Broer, Dave	X+	X	X	X	X	X	X		U	X	X		
Chisholm, Betsy & Jim										X	X	X	
Cleary, Judi & Kristen		r2	r2	r2									
Dalrymple, Rex							X	X	X	X	X		X
Drysdale, Elliott	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		N	X	X
Duke, David	X+	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	U	X	X		
Duvall, Mike	X	X	X	X	X	X					X		
Glick, Boris							X	X	X	X	X		X
Kobak, John	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		r	r	X	X
Lang, Paul & JoAnn	X+	X	X	X				X		X	X		
Laubaugh, Brent	X+	X	X	X	X	X	X		U	X	X		
Miller, Kelly	X	X	X			X							
Miller, Bill		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
Needham, Cathy		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		
Nicholson, Bob	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		N	X	
Priem, Rich & Tracey										x/r	x/r	r2	
Schmidt, Shelley	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Singer, Chuck		X	X	X									
Tomallo, Ron	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Total Paddling	12	13 4	13 3	11 4	8 3	15	11	3	12	11	4 7	8 8	4 6

x- Paddled, r -rafted