

Easter in the Doe Gorge

Event Date: 04/07/2012

River/Location: Doe

Trip Skill: Advanced

Easter on the Doe Gorge or Revenge of the Paddle Snake or Visit to Goat Beach

On Saturday 4/7, a group of 7 paddlers took Rich Rulen's advice ("I know nothing about the Doe Gorge except the location of the takeout") and headed out to see what the Doe Gorge was all about. We had heard of its tendency to have a lot of wood, and to never trust a blind drop, which is good advice for any class IV creek. The Ohio contingent was led by Michael Duval, and included David Herron from Cincinnati and Jeff Cramer from Akron. The Carolina contingent included Brian McPherson, Jeff Dennie, Paul Scrutton, and Kent French. Michael had paddled the Doe Gorge a few years ago, but this was going to be a PFD for the other six of us.

We grabbed our first helping of river karma by shuttling another boater up to the put-in. That probably saved us 30 minutes of trying to find Bear Cage Road, which was tucked away as an almost U-turn to the left. The best way to find this road is to turn left exactly 6 miles from the Doe River bridge at the takeout.

As we began the run, the river gave us a feeling of being on the Nantahala. After $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, however, we got to a section of class III boogie water. What a great way to kick off a river. Bear Cage rapid at this level forced paddlers to pull their boats over the edge of a river-wide log on river left, drop into a small eddy, and catch the curling wave to drop into the bottom pool. Everyone that ran it came through cleanly, though the portage was not a bad idea. Getting trashed in the first rapid with an unclear line is not the way to start your day.

The AW site has 6 named rapids. Between most of these rapids, we found plenty of class III boogie water, plus some that would qualify as class IV due to the length of the rapid. I would NOT like to swim very long on this river....rapids are shallow, and the boogie water is fast-moving.

Toaster Slot at this level was kickin', but the slot itself sort of disappears with the higher water. The paddle snake managed to grab a paddle, which was quickly found in the pool below the rapid. This would be an omen for things to come. Bodysnatcher, on the other hand, has only one line (that we could figure out), and you WILL run this rapid. The portage would be epic, with cliffs on both sides of the river. Now that we've run it, we can say that its bark is worse than its bite. It's actually a fun run, including two boofs, a screaming S-turn, and a 5-foot ledge that requires a good boof to avoid the hole at the end. The best view ever was looking upriver

from the bottom, thinking "how did we get through that mess of rocks"? Overall, the rapid has about 20-30 foot of vertical drop.

Body Snatcher on the Doe River TN



After running such a great rapid, Brian decided that he would be getting out of his boat at the next beach. The beach, however, was patrolled by a goat. Though it appeared that he would just be visiting the petting zoo, Brian discovered that the goat was pretty protective of his territory. We all decided that shore leave was a BA-A-A-AD idea. The only damage, however, was to Brian's reputation.

Once we got through Bodysnatcher, Michael told us that the rest of the river was just run-out. I can't remember how many times David and I asked each other if we'd gotten to the run-out yet, having just run another class III rapid. In addition to the un-named rapids, Diagonal Ledges reminded me of Land of Holes on the Cheoah, Flagpole was vaguely similar to Triple Drop on Wilsons, and Schooner's Folly reminded me of CHAOS. Three people, three boats in the hole at the same time. Though it's not a bad swim (it's only 3 foot deep), you can't get out by yourself. It reminds me of a pothole. Now that we know better, you should run this river-left ledge by boofing the edge of the hole either left or right, or bouncing down the rock slide on river right to avoid the (w)hole thing. The paddle snake absconded with two paddles in this drop, which river karma allowed us to find about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile down the river. One paddle was able to be relayed back up to its owner on the shore. The other paddle was reunited to its owner after running a class III rapid with the only breakdown we had with us.

The level was around 750 cfs, which AW says is a primo level, and I think the entire group would agree with that assessment after the run. The notorious wood did not cause any problems. We had to portage a few logs, but all the rapids had clean lines. It was a great day on a great river, and we'd all go back for a second helping in the future.

Taken from Carolina Canoe Club Web Site

Additional Pictures of the Southern Rivers Trip by Michael Duvall



Dave Herron at Kayakers Ledge on the French Broad NC.



Michael Duvall running Elbow on the Little River TN.



Jeff Cramer after running the Sinks of the Little River, TN