



Cataia Ives, SA, SU, MO, TU

Friday, June 1, 2012

This is Sammy's first experience with kayaking the Schuylkill River. Sammy grew up in a fish nursery before being released to the upper reaches of the Schuylkill River, which begins in Schuylkill Haven.

I think the Schuylkill River is a valuable recreational resource but never heard of people kayaking the river before (other than for the Sojourn). I am a new resident of Pennsylvania, having just moved here from Tallahassee, Florida. What I have seen of the Schuylkill so far is mainly the 'orange water' caused by AMD or Acid Mine Drainage to the river from coal mining in Schuylkill County.

I am participating in the Sojourn because I love spending time in outdoors, especially on the water, and I have never made a kayak trip before. In addition, it seems like an adventure and a challenge, and I hope to meet others interested in experiencing the Schuylkill River as well.

Saturday, June 2, 2012

Yesterday was rainy all evening, and I felt really sorry for the people in wet tents who were camped out for the evening in Schuylkill Haven. Today the weather was beautiful but the river was so high we were unable to do the route that sojourners normally take from Schuylkill Haven to Port Clinton. I had invited friends to cheer me on at the chutes, a four foot drop where friends and family typically spray boaters with squirt guns. Alas, last night's rain made the river too high, and part of our journey was cancelled. We ended up putting in at Auburn instead, and Betsy and Allen Quant gave us training on different kayak techniques like ferrying. The water was very high and moving so quickly that one set of

boaters finished half a day's worth in forty five minutes. The afternoon was spent on our own time (Sammy wore his land shoes) pitching tents in Port Clinton.

Today it was a little difficult paddling against the current. Floating downstream is much easier. The other kayakers are really helpful though and even informed me that I was holding my paddle upside down!

Sunday, June 3, 2012

Sammy got some whitewater experience today! The morning began with a long but necessary safety talk on what to do in a number of situations- capsizing, eddies, obstacles, trees, etc. We all ate breakfast at the port Clinton Fire Co., and Sammy ate the most AMAZING pancakes ever. Then we launched at the put-in and paddled until noon. The water was rough today- but safety boats warned us about what areas to avoid. In the morning there was a stretch of pretty crazy rapids.

Lunch at a take out was followed by an afternoon of more paddling. The scariest part was a water break we took along the banks of the river. I crashed into a bunch of boats and indirectly caused one lady to lose her paddle and tip her canoe. I learned that spindly tree branches do not make good hand- holds. Also, while on the water today we saw a great blue heron, heard a peacock call and saw two fighter jets.

The best part of the experience so far has been meeting interesting people. This morning I met one sojourner who is only sixteen but has done the sojourn eight times! I also met people who came all the way from Canada, Delaware and NYC to participate in the experience. Sojourners are adventurous people and will do anything to help a sojourner in need.

Tonight we are camping at Jim Dietrich Park, Muhlenberg. I'm sleeping early to be ready for tomorrow!

Sunday, June 3, 2012

Today began at Jim Dietrich Park in Muhlenberg. It drizzled all night and I spent the night on the front porch of a house there. There Sammy stayed in my duffle bag all day because it was too rainy to attach him to the boat.

In the morning we passed through Kelly's Rapids, which are usually a pretty adventurous whitewater experience. But today they were pretty calm due to all the rains we've been having. On the

way down, we passed a lot of beautiful old railroad bridges. Lunch was in Reading at a riverfront park, and we had the opportunity to watch some people demonstrate "toy boats", whitewater kayaks that they use for doing flips and tricks. It drizzled for much of the afternoon, and we were all soaking wet and freezing by the time we got to camp. Dinner was amazing because it was hot food. And Betsy and Allen, who run the Sojourn, shuttled us to a nearby campsite for quick hot showers which never felt so good.

I met a lot of interesting people who love going on kayaking/rafting adventures. We compared our ideas about where we would like to travel next, the best kayaks for different purposes, and the night progressed into a round of trading life stories.

Sunday, June 4, 2012

Today is my last day of the sojourn, but not Sammy's! We left the mushy tent site in the morning and started downstream. The water was calm and the sky beautiful today-this leg is the calmest so far.

Sammy saw two blue herons, a bald eagle, several cormorants, and a ton of slugs that had come out because of the rain. Sammy also learned about devices for his swim next year- in Philly, there is a "fish ladder" that helps shad jump from one rung to the next to climb a dam. Also, I recently learned that there was a battle fought over shad fishing rights on the Schuylkill.

We pulled into Pottstown around 3 p.m. The river is much wider here. This is where the SRHA office (I.e. Warm showers) are located. I'm sad this will be my last day. I have met so many great people on this trip!! Linell will be continuing Sammy's story from here on to Philly. I'm writing from a pavilion where they are offering massages to tired paddlers.