

Gators & Freighters Day 8, 9, 10, 11:
Algiers Point to Will's Point (Jesuit Bend)

Lower Mississippi River Dispatch No 217



Stilt in Mardis Gras Pass, Bohemia National Wildlife Refuge

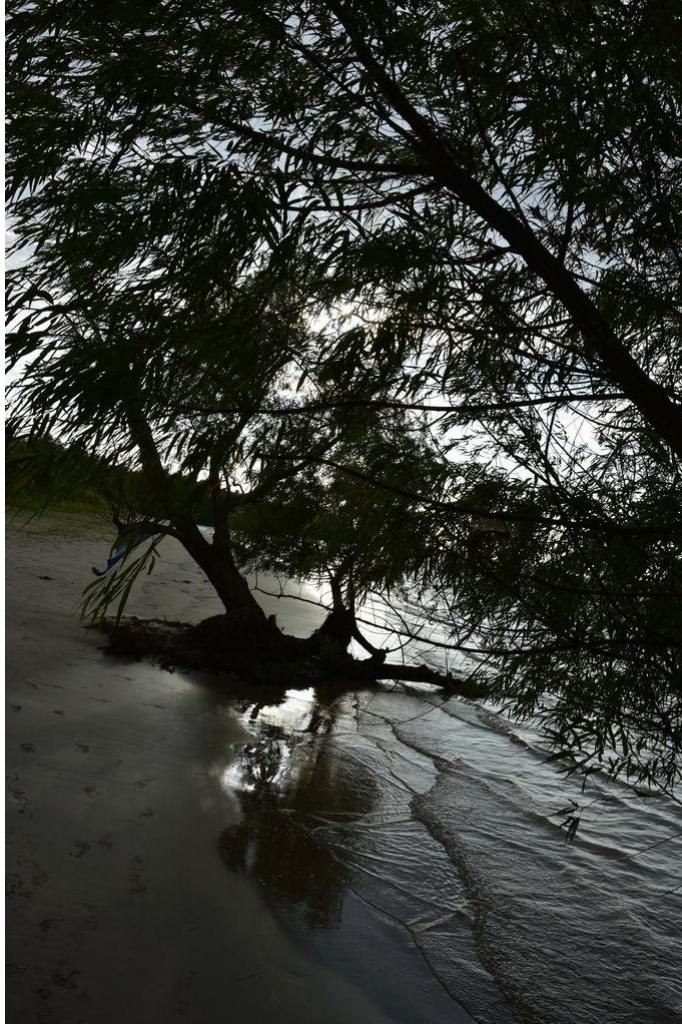
Posted Monday, Nov 2, 2015 from the friendly La Caffè Casa -- Point Sulphur,
LA (West Bank, RBD43)

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For the completion of the [www.rivergator.org](http://www.rivergator.org)

*1 million words describing the Middle & Lower Mississippi River.  
Written for paddlers and any others seeking the "wilderness within"*

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Intro: After hunkering down on beautiful Bohemia Beach for two windy, stormy days, the paddlers continue on downstream with open Gulf waters approaching within a couple miles on either bank. Mark River catches us up to date from 4 days previous. Photos from Bohemia by "Driftwood" Johnnie Ruskey. Shout out to my good friend Paul Cooley who emailed this beautiful thought: "Like bicycling in the city, there's something magical about moving under natural power in the midst of all the bustle and commerce. I seem to recall a poem by Gary Snyder about the wilderness just beneath the concrete of New York City, (or maybe it was one of his essays in "Practice of the Wild.") The forces which move us through our day, and moves the river through the landscape, are vastly older and more lasting than the artifacts we scatter around us..." Thanks brer Paul!



On Bohemia Beach

Water, Wind, Willows, and Wildlife by Mark River

(photos by John Ruskey)

Day 8 - Algiers Point (West Bank - RBD95) to Will's Point (Jesuit Bend - East Bank - LBD68) - 27 miles

Thousands of mosquitoes cover the inside of my fly, but I smile knowing I'm protected. I managed to answer to nature four times, not letting one of the antagonist in. I realized through natural studies along the Mississippi River that mosquitoes are attracted to carbon dioxide and light, so I exit my tent in the darkness, and re-enter with efficiency. I finally hear the splash! from the beavers, as they protest our occupancy. The bart owl sings its song from the deciduous forest, while tow boats and freighters rule the night.

We wake early in the morning. Our goal is to be on the water by 9am, so we could do over thirty miles. The crew responds understanding the urgency needed to accomplish our goal. We eat a hearty breakfast of oats, bacon, eggs, fruit, and granola cereals and set a float.



Footsteps in the sand, Bohemia Beach

We launch towards 35 Mile Point and immediately spot a bald eagle halfway up the electrical tower. That's a great sign. If the eagle is on your side, then fly like the wind. I'm exhausted with marine vessels. Freighters, ocean-liners, supply boats, petrochemical freighters, and barges. Weaving in and out of the channel every 5 minutes. So much activity! I haven't even seen my first deer! Revetment everywhere!

I calm down, as we stop at the Spillway and have an early lunch. It's only 10:30am, but once we leave here there won't be a suitable spot to land before dark. We continue on to the 26 Mile Point, under the 310 Bridge, headed to the Fairview Crossing. We come upon the Kenner Bend Anchorage and there are more ocean-liners anchored at the bend. One from Hong Kong had the invasive species, Zebra Mussels on its stern!



Egret and Gator, Bohemia NWR

The pressure is is starting to build. We realize we won't have time to cook at camp, so we have dinner delivered to us by no other but, Momma Stau, the mother of one of the crew, Wolfie. In order to reach her, we had to make it to park that the Tulane University students call "The Fly." The Huey P. Long Bridge is in-view, but still miles away, as we come around Kenner Bend, then Avondale Bend, then Carrollton Bend, and finally, The Fly. We briefly greet our love ones, grab the food , and continue on, as the sun was fading fast.

The sight of New Orleans from the canoe blew my mind, as we come around Gouldsboro Bend, under the Crescent City Connection, to Algiers Point, across from the French Quarter. A polite towboat pilot suggested we pull the canoes up more. The moon rises from the west looking like an extra large pizza. To my left, downtown New Orleans, and to my right, the sherbet moon!

After a great dinner, the crew takes a walk to the levee. Smiles spread throughout the group, as we see a sign, just over the levee, that reads, "Old Point Bar". After a 37 mile day, you can't ask for anything better.

Day 9: Wells Point to Point a la Hache - 22 miles

Day 10:Bohemia Beach (Storm Camp)

Day 11: Bohemia Beach (Storm Camp)



River-Rats resting and recharging devices at La Caffè Casa in Port Sulphur

The next 40 miles after the English Turn Bend is the most difficult section of river I have faced. They have names for the so-called bends throughout this stretch, but it seemed like a straight infinite waterway and a mirage at the same moment. You can see the industries, freighters, towboats, and work boats from miles away, but they are much further than you think. It's hard on your mentally when the goal is in site, but can't seem to paddle it down. You can't tell if they are moving or docked. The landscape moves slightly to the right and left, changing your perception constantly, all while the traffic is bustling up and down the river.

If the wind is at your face , you have a long day in front of you. Towboats and freighters causing swells 5to 7 feet. The wind makes 10 miles of paddling feel like 30 miles. Numerous work boats, the kind that turn the ocean-lines 180 degrees, are roaring up and down the channel. Your face feels like leather as the high winds rip and whip your facial skin. Your body aches from the undulating swells. Sometimes you feel weightless, other times, stuck in cement.

Your mentality is fluctuating like a sine curve. You start questioning yourself and the crew. You wonder why we do this. The staff on the freighters come out to greet us for a picture. iPhone's, iPad's, and cameras pointed at you from every sea-going vessel. You wonder what the caption might be, " #hashtag CrazyAmericans." Instead, try #Rivergator.

The landscape starts to flatten, while the willows seem to become stockier and bushy like mango trees. Their roots go from "hula skirts" to "old man beards" at their trunks. The river becomes wider and more ocean-like. Water hyacinth is washed upon the beaches. The trees are smaller, making the wind more prevalent. I see willows and sycamores, but no cottonwoods. On the map, both sides of the river are marsh lands. On the east bank, the levee ends, and so do the roads.



Frigate Bird over Bohemia NWR

Ospreys appeared once we left New Orleans. Flying high in the air with its competitor, the bald eagle, in weightless elliptical patterns. They follow each other around trying to steal prey. This was the first time I've ever seen them share the same air-space, without fighting. Food must be plentiful around here. I also saw eagles fishing like seagulls, making multiple dives, while being in the presence of humans. Sand pipers, anhingas, egrets, herons, roseate spoonbills, ibis, seagulls, least terns,

pelicans, and frigate birds are numerous. The seagulls follow the wake the ocean-liners and freighters create to catch confused fish. Turkey vultures watch the eagles and ospreys, to get their scrapes. Wild pig tracts litter the beaches. I figure out the reason for not seeing many deer. The revetment rock which lines both sides of the river is hard on their legs. They could break them easily if caught in between. We even found river shrimp washed ashore by the surf.

Storms and high winds are in the forecast, so we hunker down. With extra time on our hands, we design a amusement park on the beach with trash found in the surrounding forest. Barge ropes used to make swings, tight wires, and hanging tables. We also use this extra time for writing, personal exploration, and to rest our aching muscles. We cleaned our canoes thoroughly and collected rain water. We were down to 5 gallons, but we collected 25 gallons! Rain water is the best drinking water and this expedition is all about freshwater.

Humans are only here temporarily, but the Mississippi River will be here forever.

When the wind shifts from time to time, we could smell the saltwater in the air. We have worked hard, been patient, and we are ready for the prize of making it to the Gulf of Mexico.

- *Mark River*



Re-Packing at Port Sulphur for the journey downstream to the Gulf, now 2 days away

For photos and more reading, go to www.rivergator.org

The Lower Mississippi River Dispatch

is a service of the Lower Mississippi River Foundation