

Gators & Freighters Day 14:

Oh the Joy! We Reach the Gulf Coast at Southeast Pass! Rivergator Completed!



Lower Mississippi River Dispatch No 218

Posted Thursday, Nov 5, 2015 - Southeast Pass Island (-13 Below Head of Passes)

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

*5-year project started in 2011. 1 million words describing the Middle & Lower Mississippi River.*

*Written for paddlers and any others seeking the “wilderness within”*

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Day 14 - Mouth of Baptiste Collette Bayou (East Bank/LBD 11) to Southeast Pass Island (-13 Below Head of Passes) 24 miles in gentle SE (headwind 5-10mph), sunny and hot (for November, in the 80s)



Oh the Joy! We Reach the Gulf Coast at Southeast Pass! After two weeks of hard paddling, winds, storms, storks, beaches, batture, wetlands, petrochemical giants, fishermen, freighters, and a few river-gators, the nine voyageurs canoe past mile -O- the legendary Head of Passes, and enter the Pass La Outre. Six miles downstream we cut into the peaceful, Southeast Pass which is lined by tall canes and grasses. A few scattered willows gives way entirely to cane, marshy grasses and floating vegetation. Seven more miles we paddle on into sunset, and -- Hallelujah! -- there she blows! We cut through a final channel of cane -- and the horizon breaks wide open and a cacophony of shorebirds fills the air! My eyes fill with tears at the sight. To the south-southeast we are greeted by the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico. After 14 days of paddling we reach the end of the river! The horizon is broken by dozens of oil derricks, rigs and support boats. But the fish and birds are amazing. And the wing-shaped Southeast Island becomes our last camp of the expedition. We give our thanks to all of those who helped us reach our destination: Marylee Orr, Mary Ann Sternberg, Mike Beck, and especially Robert Landreneau (the grizzled Cajun paddler who helped us in the journey from Baton Rouge to New Orleans).

*Baptiste Collette Bayou to Southeast Pass Island
Photo-Essay by "Driftwood" John Ruskey*



Lunch tour of Pilottown (East Bank/LBD 1.9)



*The Grasshopper 30-foot voyageur canoe passes Mile -0- and one last freighter
before descending into the Pass La Outre.*



A couple of shrimp boats pulled up into the caney marshes for the night along SE Pass.



Miles and miles of marshes line the Southeast Pass.



We round one last island of caney marshe islands, and...



Oh the Joy! Open waters! The Southeast Pass becomes salty and the sweet muddy river gives way to ocean waves and open horizon.



The exhausted crew disembarks on the sandy shell-covered beaches of Southeast Pass Island.



Our two cypress strip voyageur canoes the 30' Grasshopper and 24' Cricket enjoy a well-deserved rest atop a caney landing on the north end of Southeast

Pass Island.

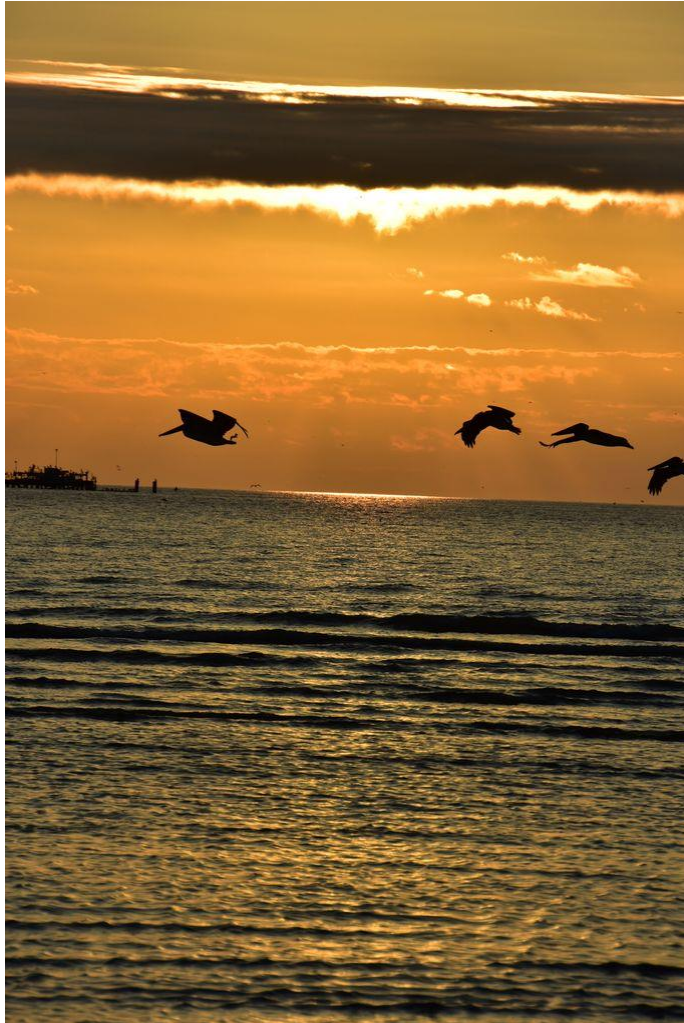


Evidence of morning cleaning by blue crab on Southwest Pass Island.



Sensitive water ripples and creative cane pulp collections along the northern

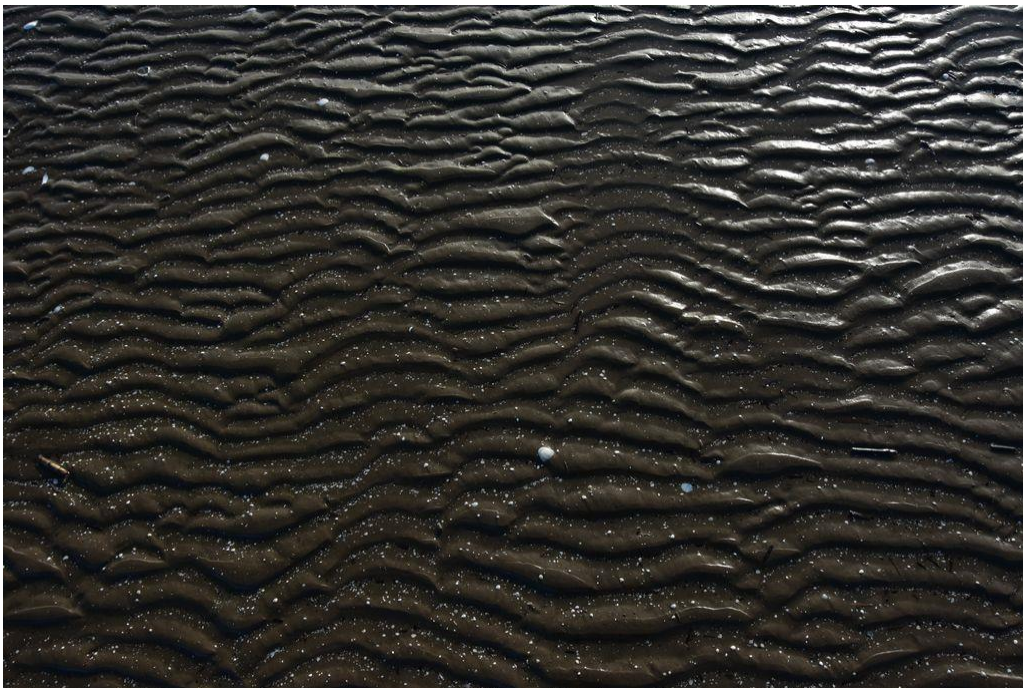
extremity of Southwest Pass Island.



Long lines of brown pelicans, white pelicans, cormorants, anhingas, oystercatchers, terns, shearwaters and seagulls, thousands and thousands of shorebirds flocking and feeding, congregating near our camp at the northern extremity of Southwest Pass Island.



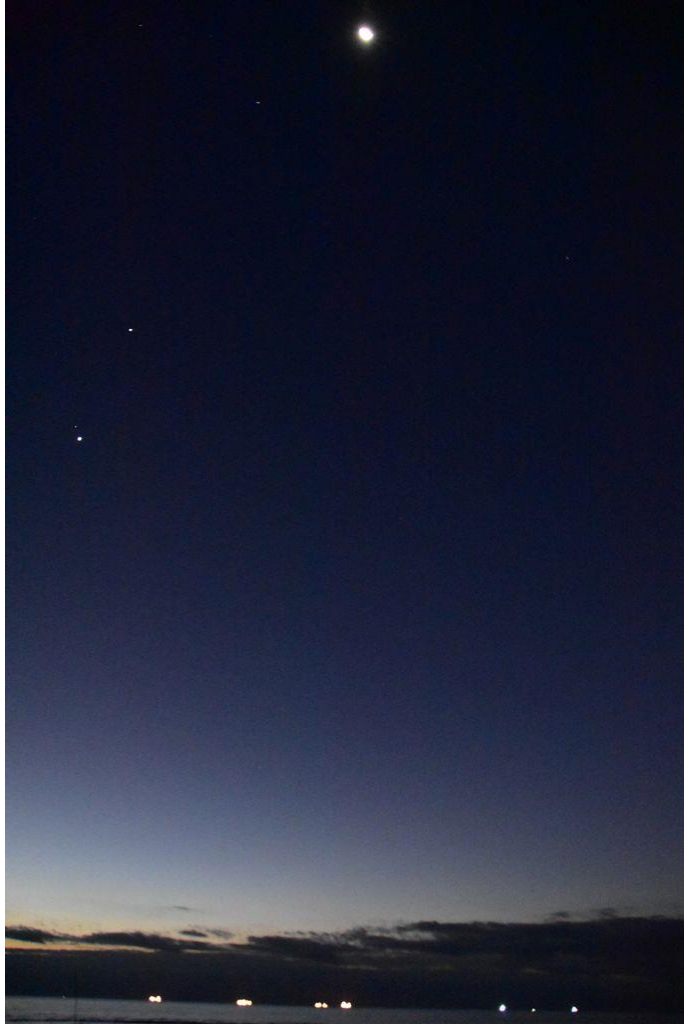
Morning's greeting on Southeast Pass Island by flocks of red-winged blackbirds.



Ripple lines at low tide Southeast Pass Island.



The elation of making camp on Southwest Pass Island pervades the crew. The Rivergator Expedition is completed, the trail now explored all the way down the Lower Mississippi to the Gulf. Writing and photos to be added to website by the end of the year.



Our view over the great belly of the ocean includes a glowing city of oil rigs, derricks and supply ships -- and accentuates the need for the Rivergator water trail -- for the appreciation of the wild qualities of the Birdsfoot Mississippi Delta.



The Rivergator: Paddler's Guide to the Lower Mississippi River, now fully explored, five years in the making, describing the "longest free-flowing water trail in the continental United States."

Note: in the upcoming days Mark River will continue his journal, filling in the gaps in the story -- along with guest perspectives from writer Mary Ann Sternberg and Paul Orr, the Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper.

For more photos of the Lower Miss and more reading, go to www.rivergator.org

The Lower Mississippi River Dispatch

is a service of the Lower Mississippi River Foundation