

TRIP REPORT
ROCK GORGE OF THE CHATTOOGA RIVER
4 July 2010

Eight hardy adventure-prone water hikers stuck their toes in the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River this Glorious Fourth of July. Blue skies, hot temperature and a gentle breeze contributed to their enthusiasm. Our aim was to wade the river through the rarely visited Rock Gorge. Hiking on dry ground was not an option; the only way to see the spectacular scenery of the Rock Gorge is by wading the river.

The river accommodated us with frequent deep pools for swimming. Mostly we just splashed along in the shallow water, now near the banks, now in the center of the stream. Lunchtime found us on a flat rock above a rockbound pool fed by a cascade.

Several picked their own routes as we crisscrossed through the Rock Gorge. Often, swimming was the only option. Some of the swimming was intentional, some involuntary. Having observed the performance of these wading birds, I have decided it is time to open a unit of the American Association of Cold Water Swimmers in western North Carolina. As one of the founding members, I am ready to recommend several of our group for membership in AACWS.

As we plodded upstream progress was slow due to the large volume of water we displaced. Nevertheless, everyone had a constructive attitude, amplified by the knowledge there was no escape except by forging ahead. Near the end our group crossed the river on a narrow rock bar in swift water in order to climb the face of a small waterfall.

Finishing the river, we donned dry shoes for the hike out on the Foothills Trail.

For the record, I have revised the mileages as follows:

Wading in river: 2.6 miles (excludes weaving around), ascent 200;
Hiking on graded trail: 4.5 miles; ascent 500.

Anyone going on any future edition of this trip must understand that the mileages and altitude gains are deceptive. This is a strenuous trip. Our experts are of the opinion that one mile of wading on this trip is equal to four miles on a graded trail. At the end of the day, the Fourth of July fireworks were provided by our stone bruises and overtaxed thigh muscles.

Saw one Osprey, and one human being while in the river.

Ted Snyder. 5 July 2010.

