

Wooden Canoe Heritage Association

THREE RIVERS CHAPTER

Issue 159
April 2025

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Next Outing: Moraine Paddle

Date: Wednesday, April 30

Time: 10 a.m. paddle, noon lunch
(Arrive early!)

Location: Moraine State Park,
Cabin #11. Get off I-79 at the
Portersville exit.

PA Launch Permit: required

RSVP: captainoss@yahoo.com

As in previous years, Fred and Aleta have reserved a cabin at Moraine State Park north of Pittsburgh for our first on-water outing of the year. Join us and welcome an Appalachian Spring that's been a long time coming!

Fred says, "Arrive early. Dogs are permitted. Launch permits are required. If we aren't there, we'll be in Portersville having breakfast at Brown's restaurant. WCHA road signs will be posted to the cabin area on the north shore."

As usual, hamburgers, hot dogs, and soft drinks will be provided. A side dish offering will be appreciated.

Fred reminds us that paddling Moraine requires a PA boat launch permit. **Get one ahead of time:**

<https://www.pa.gov/services/fish-and-boat/buy-launch-permit.html>



Chapter members mill about waiting for their turn to launch from Cabin 11's dock last year.

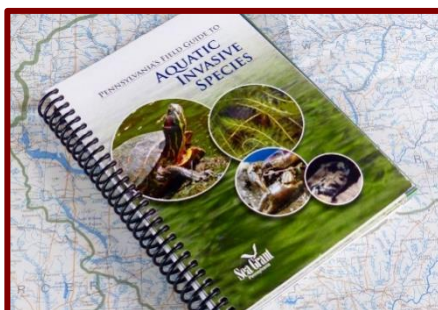
Aquatic Invasive Species Guides Available

Know your water weeds! We still have available some of these informative booklets, produced by PA Sea Grant and presented at our January meeting. They're colorful. They're waterproof. They come in two flavors: Pennsylvania and Ohio. And ... they're free! I'll be bringing

them to Moraine. If you can't get there and want one mailed to you, let me know.

And . . . A Plug for Pennsylvania Sea Grant

Pennsylvania Sea Grant is supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Pennsylvania State University. Pennsylvania Sea Grant's mission is to enhance the use and conservation of Pennsylvania's coastal, marine, and Great Lakes resources to create a healthy environment, resilient and inclusive communities, and a strong and sustainable economy.



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The work happens in watersheds within the Great Lakes and Mid-Atlantic regions, led by staff in Erie, Harrisburg, and Philadelphia. They partner with decision-makers, academic institutions, other Sea Grant programs, and individuals and organizations to build bridges between science and people.

Explore their website at <https://seagrants.psu.edu/>. There is lots of interesting information about their research, outreach (including recordings of past forums on many topics), and educational efforts. They also have a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/PennsylvaniaSeaGrant> where you can find upcoming events. ⚡

March 22 Meeting: Screen-Printing Workshop at Ann and Tony's

What's more fun than paddling on a rainy Saturday? Making custom screen-printed T shirts, that's what. A dozen of us gathered at Tony and Ann's house on Saturday, March 22,



A small turnout for T-shirt printing, round 1. Round 2 at Assembly!

loaded with shirts and bags waiting to be silk screened with custom Three Rivers Chapter artwork designed by Scott Johnson. Tony produced the screens, and chapter members set up a production line that produced a dozen great-looking shirts. Huge thanks to Ann and Tony for hosting this group and the activity. If you missed it, don't worry. Craig Johnson is working on bringing the whole activity to Assembly this year. Stay tuned! ⚡



Millie seems happy with her shirt.

Make Your Own Traditional Wood and Leather Scoop Bailer

by Dave Arisumi

One vital item that should be on a canoe is a bailer. I often neglect bringing one on a paddle. I was getting our canoe ready last spring, and I was looking for the plastic orange juice jug bailer

that I have used for 20 years. I searched around the garage, but I could not find it. After not being able to find an empty CLOROX bottle, which is the go-to homemade bailer, I found an inexpensive plastic bailer online. The choices for bailing devices ranged from various plastic hand bailers, bailing sacks, buckets, and hand pumps. However, after ordering, I started wondering whether there were possible alternatives. Down the rabbit

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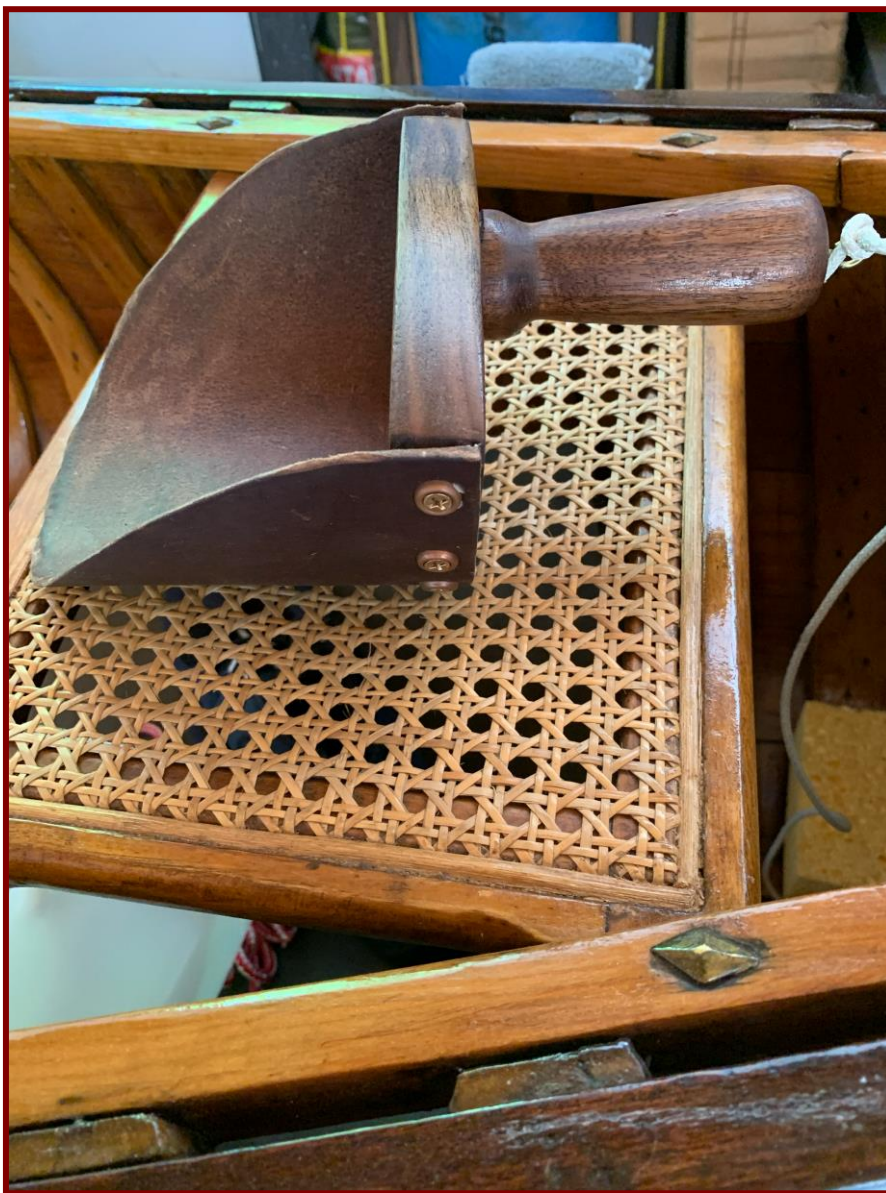
hole of a Google search and checking back issues of *WoodenBoat* magazine, I found a traditional wood and leather scoop bailer article written by Ben Fuller from *Small Boats Monthly* (May 2015, available online). It was based on bailers used on small boats on the Delaware River. One major advantage of leather is that it would not scratch the finish and could get into curved areas of the boats. The article was complete with plans and instructions with illustrations.

The parts list is simple, including 1-inch-thick hardwood, wood for a handle, and a piece of leather. I had a small scrap of walnut board and a piece of walnut firewood to shape into a handle. I found a piece of 6 x12-in. and 4-mm (about 0.16-in.) thick leather for about \$12 on Amazon. I cut the end piece of wood to the shape on the plans and drilled a 3/4-in. hole with an 80-degree angle for the handle.

The Handle

The handle was the most time-consuming because I do not own a lathe. I started with a piece of firewood and split it to the rough size of 1 1/2-in. thick and about 5 in. in length.

It was rounded like the process used in shaping the shaft of a canoe paddle, starting with a



David's walnut bailer. We wonder when he will get to test it out!

square slightly larger than the final diameter and shaving down the corners to hexagonal and then 16-sided shape.

From there it is final rounding with a rasp, and sanding to the final tapered cylindrical shape. The end going into the hole is $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. diameter and cut to fit a wedge. The part of the handle is fitted to sit flush against the end piece because of the 80-degree tilt of the hole.

The Scoop

The leather is cut according to the template on the plan. I made a leather treatment using beeswax and olive oil, which is rubbed into the leather.

The wood was finished with a mix of mineral spirits, tung oil, and spar varnish. The leather was pre-drilled to make it easier to attach bronze screws and finish washers, which I had from a previous project, although brass or copper tacks were recommended.

“The best bilge pump is a scared man and a bucket.”

According to the article, the bailer scoop holds about 3 cups and can remove an estimated 25 gallons per minute. Now, a bleach bottle and other bailers might hold more, but quickly scooping with this wood and leather bailer could remove a fair amount of water. I came across an estimate that a canoe can hold 100 gallons of water, with a weight of 800 pounds. A bucket can hold 1 to 5

gallons, but that would be 8 to 40 pounds of water to throw over the side—repeatedly. Bailing out a water-filled canoe would be a daunting task no matter how large the bailer. In most canoe capsizing events, the first goal would be emptying most of the water by lifting the upside-down canoe and then flipping upright or rocking the water out of an upright canoe and then trying to bail out most of the remaining water before trying to get back in the canoe.

In his *WoodenBoat* May/June 2016 magazine article about bailers and bilge pumps, Jan Adkins had the quote “The best bilge pump is a scared man and a bucket.”

The last time I did an actual capsize-and-rescue drill was more than 50 years ago. My only capsize was about 20 feet from shore in 2 feet of water. I blamed my sister’s terrier for upsetting the balance of the canoe, although the Bell canoe was tippy.

In my opinion the wood and leather bailer nicely complements a wooden canoe. Overall, it was a nice weekend project. The leather was the only item that I needed to purchase. It was a new experience working with leather. Hopefully, I won’t need to test the bailer. ✦

Sources

Fuller, Ben. “Making a Wood and Leather Scoop Bailer.” *Small Boats Magazine*. May 2015. (online article)

Adkins, Jan. “Bailers and Pumps.” *WoodenBoat Magazine*. May/June 2016. Issue 250.

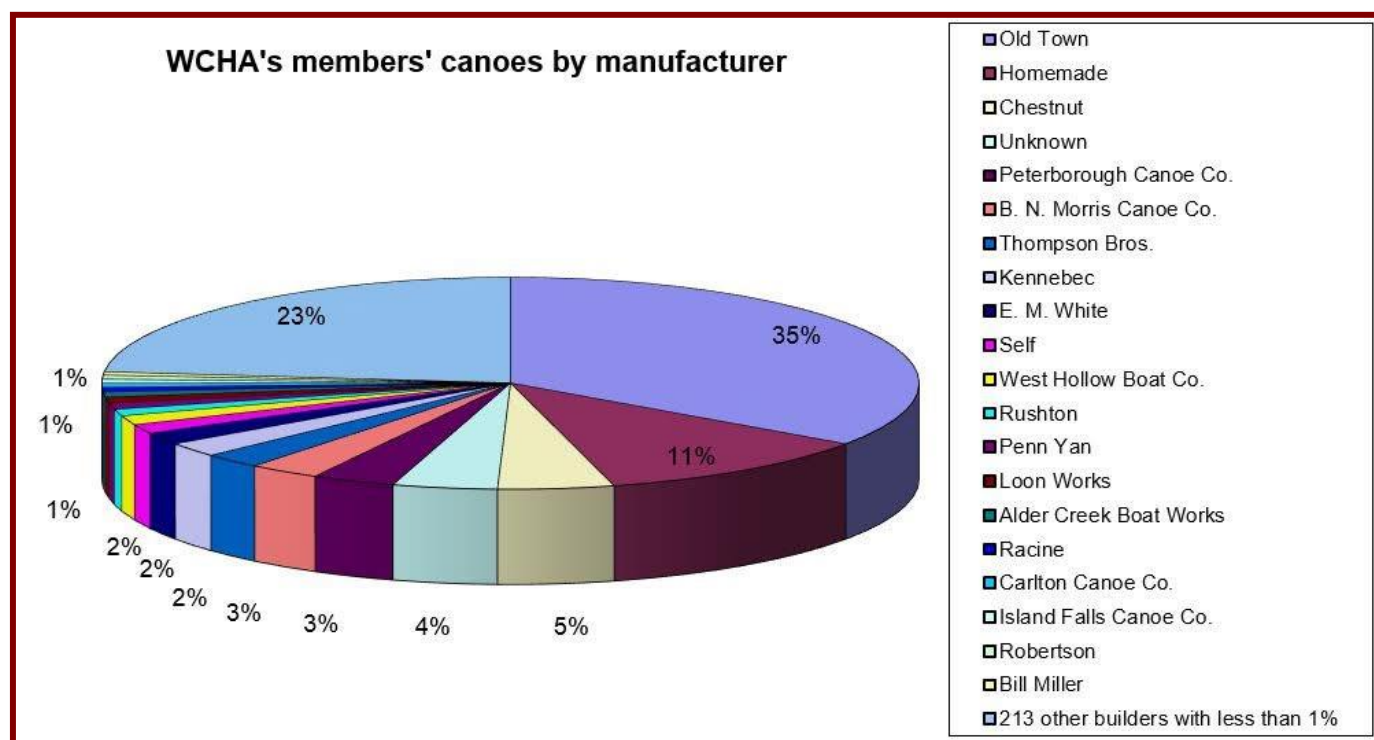
Miscellany

2025 Schedule of Events

In addition to this schedule, potential events include outings to Tidioute, Crooked Creek, and Blennerhasset Island. Details will follow as each date draws nearer.

- ✦ **Wednesday, April 30:**
Paddle and potluck picnic—Gather at Moraine State Park, hosted by Fred Capenos and Lee Grubish. *See details on p. 1.*
- ✦ **May 17–18: Camping and paddling—**Spend some time at Big Run State Park, hosted by Mark and Ruth Zalonis.
- ✦ **May 30–June 1 (NEW DATE): Annual Western Pennsylvania Solo Rendezvous** at Coopers Lake.
- ✦ **June 27: Fill Andy’s canoe—**Come to Cadiz to fill the canvas of one of the canoes of our dear departed paddling friend, Andy.
- ✦ **July 15–20: WCHA Annual Assembly—**Learn about motorized canoes at Paul Smiths College.
- ✦ **August 16: Paddle—**Salt Fork Lake, hosted by Craig Johnson.
- ✦ **September 6–8: Weekend exploration—**We will again gather at Chautauqua, N.Y., hosted by Brad Fisher.
- ✦ **September (date TBD): Annual meeting—**Plan to attend at Sylvan Canoe Club.
- ✦ **October 11–12: Mini-Assembly** at Gifford Pinchot State Park near Harrisburg, Pa.
- ✦ **November (date TBD): Planning Meeting—**Waterfront Hall in Wheeling, W. Va. . ✦

Interesting Factoid



Bud Glendenning found this fascinating report on what types of canoes we own as members of WCHA. Is your boat in there?

Chapter Information

Head: Brad Fisher

Treasurer: Fred Capenos

At large: Bob Ball, Craig Johnson, Scott Johnson, Jackie Hutyera

Newsletter: Ann Mertz

Librarian: Mark Zalonis

National WCHA

<http://www.wcha.org/>