

# Extreme canoeing a big challenge

It's summertime.  
It's hot.

...the perfect time to get off your tushie and try something new; and have I got a great suggestion

Have you heard about extreme canoeing?

No?

Well, it's only the latest craze among the outdoor set – a combination of paddling, swimming, wading, hiking, climbing and bug-slapping, mixed in with a little fear.

My friend, Elmer Eddy, invited me to try extreme canoeing with him on a particularly grueling section of the upper White Oak River.

"It will be great," he said. "Hardly anyone ever goes there."

Always up for a new physical challenge, I accepted Elmer's offer. I mean, the guy's 81-years-old; how hard could it be?

Last week, Elmer and I hauled his canoe to the Emmet's Lane Bridge, north of Maysville, with the intent of floating around six miles to the Gibson Bridge. We left at 7:30 a.m. We expected to be off the water by 1 p.m.

We were wrong.

One of the most important fac-

number of cross-stream obstacles you can arrange for during your trip.

Elmer, a veteran of the sport, apparently wanted my first experience to be memorable.

After launching the canoe into the tranquil waters under the Emmets Lane Bridge, we were overjoyed to discover a series of impenetrable blowdowns around the first bend.

Extreme canoeing requires lots of balance, especially when you're dragging your boat over a four-foot high tree trunk and trying to stay dry at the same time.

Don't worry about staying dry though, you'll give up that pipe dream soon enough.

After your first few blowdowns, you'll start to appreciate the many kinds of obstructions that a fallen tree can assume.

## On and Off the Field

By Jamie Cameron

There are trees you can climb over. There are trees you can float under if you lie flat in the canoe. There are some trees with two trunks that you have to wedge the canoe in between to get through.

I like the ones that you think you can get under, but end up being too low and pin you against the gunwales and the tree. Cuts and bruises are very important in this sport and these blowdowns are your best chance to collect some dandies.

Did I mention that Elmer is 81?

Spiders.

Spiders are another necessity for a proper extreme canoeing experience.

Personally, I hate the hairy little things, but Elmer assured me that it was imperative that we collect some on our trip.

Collecting spiders in a canoe is not as hard as you might think. In fact, it is probably the easiest part

After crashing through a few low-hanging branches, you will soon have enough spiders onboard to shoot the sequel to Arachnophobia.

There is an incredible diversity of spiders living on, over and in the White Oak, and I have now seen them all.

Did I mention that I absolutely abhor spiders?

Sticks are another item one must collect if one fancies himself an extreme canoeist. These are gathered in much the same fashion as the spiders and it won't take you long to transform your canoe into a floating, spider-filled thicket.

On our trip, Elmer made sure we did everything right so I wouldn't miss out. As the day wore on and the sun rose higher in the sky, giant biting flies started to buzz the canoe, adding to the excitement of

lodging spiders and climbing logs.

Sometimes, the open space between blowdowns was shorter than the canoe, and that makes wading/swimming a viable option.

Wading the inky black waters of the White Oak River offers another form of entertainment to the extreme canoeist – sunken logs.

These are excellent for collecting more of those cuts and bruises that I told you about before.

Let me tell you, when the Gibson Bridge came into view at around 5 p.m., I was quite disappointed that our adventure was over.

After pulling the spider barge ashore for the last time, Elmer and I turned it over, to set all of our little hairy friends free.

I was a bit dizzy, and perhaps a little pukey, but Elmer says it's just because it was my first time.

Elmer is 81.

I'm sure that a lot of you will be making your own extreme canoeing plans after reading this and I wish you all the best in your new hobby.

Don't forget to bring the bug spray, an extra paddle, sun tan lotion, mosquito netting, first-aid kit, cell phone, GPS, and a red shirt.

Because, in all seriousness, Elmer, I can't wait to go again.