

***Sand and Blalock Islands, Upper Columbia*** October 11, 2008; Pat and Marissa

Paterson is at the intersection of Hwy 14 and 221, across from Irrigon, OR. There are two launches to access the Columbia from the Washington side here; the first is to go south toward the river from the intersection. The second is 1.2 miles west from the intersection, down a gravel road to a small parking area just beyond the railroad tracks (additional parking is available above the rr tracks). River levels fluctuate here; today the launch was up to the end of the road, giving us very easy access. It is approximately 45 minutes driving from Richland.

We put the boats in about 10:40a, and headed east on the north shore. Winds looked greater than the predicted 7mph, and more NNE than the predicted NNW. Plenty of sunshine and temps in the lower 60s.

Paddling in the protected lee, we went upstream about a mile just past Monument Island, until we could see both '53' and '55' channel markers. As we headed southeast the winds were off the port bow, mostly small and rocky, with the occasional one breaking over our boats. Before reaching '53' channel marker, we turned downriver to enjoy the following wind and waves. This was great experience for Marissa as the waves were enough to bounce the boats some, making directional control interesting, but not large enough to be too difficult. These weren't quite big enough to get much of a run with any of them, but great for boat handling skill building.

We maintained this course down to and past Big Blalock Island, then on to Sand Island. As we neared Sand Island on it's south side, there were several pelicans along its shore. Behind them in the bushes were two small white-tailed deer. A heron rookery was visible on the island.

We turned back easterly and crossed toward the river's south shore, turning back upriver to go just behind Long Walk Island. We were protected from the winds here and followed the island's shore nearly up to it's northern end. There was a small beach-area at the island's southern end, but I hoped to get to it's other end before stopping. Unfortunately there wasn't another good place to pull out and we stopped in the small slough on the right just before returning to the main river. We stretched by laying out extended on our boats.

The return crossing was initially against a good head-wind, but as we turned west toward our launch we again had side winds that were fun to play in. Pat did a couple of rolls and a successful balance brace in the waves. Total travel about 7.5nm. Landed about 1:30.



Rookery and Pelicans on Sand Island