

# eddy out

february 2004

paddling events, safety awareness, and environmentalism



## Chota How-to: Where's the Water?

by Kirk Eddlemon

There are many people these days that are getting into whitewater that do not have obvious resources for learning how to figure out where to go and what is running, so I will try to lay down some general methods that I use on a regular basis to decide where to go. There are many intricacies of every stream and region and information resource that must be considered in unison to analyze whether a particular stream will be worth the trip. The first line of business is to decide where you are interested in paddling. This involves reading guides on the internet and in books. Here is a list of resources that have accurate information on whitewater runs in the area

*Southeastern Whitewater* by Monte Smith and *Whitewater Southern Home Companion* volumes 1 and 2 by William Neally provide detailed and sometimes illustrated descriptions, as well as a plethora of other facts about the logistics of the trip. These have a little more than most other books. They are also written by one person,

which once you learn their rating style, is much more helpful than other multi-authored books, which usually have less information and consistency from one description to the next.

[www.americanwhitewater.org/rivers/](http://www.americanwhitewater.org/rivers/) This is the best resource for general information ever. First of all, it is created and constantly updated by whitewater paddlers and has almost every run you have ever heard of listed on it with pictures, logistics and descriptions, level recommendations and many other facts. Take any one fact with a grain of salt, but most discrepancies can be easily clarified.

With these resources you can figure out what you are interested in paddling in the region and grow beyond your buddies' familiar runs. You can expand your paddling horizons. Just remember that all the information you acquire with these resources is subject to change by mother nature and is subjective. Always use your best judgement. Stay tuned to next month's newsletter when we discuss the various approaches of getting information on streamflow and rainfall.

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The river opened and it was there. It was grey-green, very clear, with a certain milkiness too; it looked as though it would turn white and foam at rocks more easily than other water.

— James Dickey,  
*Deliverance*



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On the Cover: Aaron Hisock and Carl Keaney talk at Lunch Stop rapid on Big South Fork.

# A Letter From The President

Howdy,

Last year was a great for Chota with club trips throughout the southeast, West Virginia, Maryland and one of the most financially successful Canoe/Kayak schools yet. Renee, the 2003 Executive Committee and all of our many volunteers are owed a big thanks for all the time, effort and energy put into all of the clubs activities last year. 2004 looks to be just as promising with lots of trips being planned and new activities in the works that will hopefully get more people introduced to the sport of whitewater paddling.

With all that is going on, we really need you to volunteer your time as many of the planned events won't happen if we don't have enough people. Your club is at a pivotal time in that we need more folks to come out to meetings and take part in where the club is going. Its your club and if you care, please volunteer to lead a trip, help out in our many schools, pitch in on con-

servation efforts or ask local merchants for auction items. Whatever your passion is, there is a place for you in 2004.

Since my name is probably not familiar to some receiving this newsletter, I wanted to add that I am really looking forward to helping out with the club this year as President and being a part of the long-standing tradition of Chota. I first joined the club in 1999 and am convinced it is one of the best paddling clubs in the Southeast. My two goals for this year are to continue to improve our existing programs and try out a few new ideas; however, I can't do it without you and your feedback. If you have ideas, opinions or just general comments, please contact me and lets talk about them. Its your club and if you don't speak up then both you and the club misses out!

See you on the river,

Trey Coleman  
roscoepwavetrain@yahoo.com

## Our New Look

Greetings Chotoids. I've just assumed editorship from Delia Raymer, who did a great job for the past year. I've redesigned the newsletter and christened it with a title: *Eddy Out*. I hope it helps you "catch an eddy" and keep up with the Chota activities and members.

I asked for plenty of material for this issue and I got it! The trip reports from Carl Keaney and Kirk Eddleman are terrific, including a daring first descent by Kirk and

Andrew of Conesauga Creek. The safety article that Laura Raymer suggested we reprint is a "must read" for cold water paddlers. And I included all the calendar items for February I could fit in. E-mail me at tduren@fireflygraphics.com with your stories, articles, quotes, and news. Use the subject line "Chota Newsletter" and let me know what you think of the new version of the newsletter. See you on the river!

Todd Duren  
tduren@fireflygraphics.com

# Calendar

## FEBRUARY

**February 8** deadline for March 5-7 Polar Bear Weekend reservations. \$10 deposit per person. Contact Kirk Edelman: bankfull1@yahoo.com (865) 522-9534

**February 6** ETWC Roll Practice, Oak Ridge Civic Center pool from 8:30 to 10:00 pm. \$3 per boat.

**February 12** Chota monthly meeting. Visitors welcome. Business at 6:30, General at 7 or 7:30. Stephano's Pizza, 7213 Kingston Pike.

**February 13** ETWC Roll Practice, Oak Ridge Civic Center pool from 8:30 to 10:00 pm. \$3 per boat

**February 14** leader's choice plateau Class III-IV. David Luinstra 931-863-3592

**February 14-15** Paddle trip to Town Creek, AL Class II-III (V) and Little River Canyon, AL Class II-V Doug Klaras 865-983-3753

**February 19-22** Memphis Whitewater Creek Week at Pickett State Park. E-mail drsonny@aol.com for details.

**February 20** ETWC Roll Practice, Oak Ridge Civic Center pool from 8:30 to 10:00 pm. \$3 per boat

**February 20, 21** UT Canoe and Hiking Club Outdoor Festival contact Brian Watson bwatson@utk.edu

**February 21** BSF Confluence to Leatherwood. Class III-IV. Todd Duren 865-525-8296

**February 27** ETWC roll practice, Oak Ridge Civic Center pool 8:30-10:00 pm. \$3 per boat.

**February 27-28** National Paddling Film Festival, Lexington, Kentucky, <http://www.surfbwa.org/npff/>

## MARCH

**March 11** Chota monthly meeting. Location TBA. Visitors welcome. Business at 6:30, General at 7 or 7:30.

### Canoe & Kayak School

Doug Klaras  
865-983-3753  
footer40mph@msn.com

### Canoe & Kayak School Elect

Jason Purcell

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Todd Duren paddles into Diaper Wiper (Meat Grinder) just below Baby Falls on the Tellico as Carl Keaney and Kirk Eddlemon watch from the eddies. Level was 2' at Leatherwood Ford. Photo by Doug Klaras.

**We slowly pick our way through the class II creek constantly bending around blind corners and extremely alert for strainers.**

## Trip Report

### Piney Creek

Carl Keaney

Date: December 14

Level: 2.5' on the takeout bridge gauge.

Paddlers: Kirk Eddlemon, Keith Kugley, David Bachor and Carl Keaney

Good rain, good cloudy rainy weather! We loaded up the car and Kirk and I headed south along the plateau, looking for runnable whitewater. Kirk set up a meeting at the McDonalds near Rockwood. There we met up with Keith and David. Four K1 paddlers grabbed a quick breakfast. There were a bunch of people huddled around the TV in there and something about a bearded old guy caught in a hole. Strange news.

Back on the road we stop first to check the level at a bridge for Whites Creek. Looked good from the road but after discussion it is determined to be near minimum for a good run. We continue to travel further south along Walden Ridge with the Cumberland Escarpment immediately to our left. We go through Spring City and head up Shut-In Gap Road. Arriving at a bridge near the takeout for the Piney River we find the level at 2.5' and presumed to be holding or even rising. This turns out to be right on the money and it is 2.5' solid when we get out. Probably peaked a bit higher while we were on the run.

We agree that this will be today's run and turnaround to drive back to the small park that is the takeout. Leaving one vehicle behind we pile into Kirk's car and head up to the putin. The land all around here is

completely clear-cut and not very attractive. This will serve as an awesome contrast to the scene that unfolds as we start down the river.

There are known to be some large log jams on the Piney just below the traditional putin so we opt to putin on Moccasin creek which joins the Piney conveniently right above the start of the good whitewater and right below the log jams. We park at the putin and gear-up for the run. There are some deer parts scattered around the area where we park. Moccasin creek flows under the gravel road via three cylindrical steel culverts and doesn't look like much more than a drainage ditch as we slide the boats in and wait for all to make any last gear adjustments. It is completely overcast—a uniform windless grey. There is lots of water on the road and clearly still trickling into the creek from recently abated rain.

We slowly pick our way through the class II creek constantly bending around blind corners and extremely alert for strainers. The time on Moccasin is brief and in mere minutes we arrive at the confluence with the Piney River. The water volume picks up considerably and I am just noticing that we are deep in a dense forest—no sign of the clear-cut for miles around as we drove in. We are already in a gorge of sorts. The water is a very strange color—a green with some kind of light mineral sediment giving it a milky appearance.

We come to a horizon line and all pull over to shore. Keith jumps out to check the drop for strainers and gives the go-ahead. It is a 7-foot waterfall called Guardian falls I think. A fun drop

### Got Old Gear?

Consider donating your old gear to Chota's new attempt to build and provide a small fleet of whitewater boats and gear. We have some gear already, but could use more. We need a boat, paddles, pfd's, skirts, and helmets, as well as old spray tops or dry tops, pants, etc. If you think you might have something that Chota could use, please contact Kirk Eddlemon via e-mail at [bankfull1@yahoo.com](mailto:bankfull1@yahoo.com), or call at (865) 522-9534.

with no consequences. Slowly the pace picks up and we start picking our way through large boulders. The gorge is getting deeper and the walls are coming in toward the streambed. We proceed carefully as there is some more difficult stuff known to be coming up. I was a bit nervous on this run as it is rated rather near the top of the list in Monty Smith's Southeastern Whitewater. Gradient is around 100 feet/mile. But, it isn't very demanding so far and this level isn't really pushy yet.

Kirk told me that there was a rapid on this run that I'd probably think was my favorite after we hit it. I was skeptical. Keith pulls over to a beach on river right and all follow suite. We are scouting Signal Falls. The monolithic riverbed forms a sluice that channels the water down a culvert shaped slide heading toward a large boulder on the left. Right at the point where the sluice-way encounters the boulder there appears to be a large curling wave pushing sharply right. After that it is hard to see what happens and there is very shallow water flowing toward a large uniform horizon line. Kirk says to just brace into the curler and let it typewriter me all the way right then realign facing downstream and ride the slide straight over the horizon line. OK. I go second to last and the ride is fast, slippery and wild. I slam into the curler and get shot right then slowed down on the shallow section only to pick up speed rapidly and launch off a six foot ledge into a large pool. I felt like a skipped rock when I hit the water in the bottom pool. What a ride! And there is a perfect place to get out on river right below the last drop. Just walk back up on the right and run it again. Kirk was right. He ran it three times, two for me. On my

second run I just punched the curler and not having lost any speed in the right shift, rocketed down the slide and launched way out off the last drop!

Almost immediately below Signal we take out on river right again to scout NoMistake. There is a large tree in the outflow from the first drop and it is up against an undercut boulder. This drop is blocked in tight on both left and right and the boil line is a fairly good distance away—sticky, very sticky. It warrants a good look before running. Flipping against the strainer would be a mistake and so we opted to portage this section. We walk down about 50' on the right and scout the second part of this drop. To run, we'll be putting in below the log and working back up stream into the eddy behind the undercut boulder stabilizing the log. (Have I mentioned that everywhere I look is pristine and awesome wilderness?). From that eddy the water flows toward the left above a sieve of boulders that must be avoided. Kirk was positioned on a midstream boulder right below the sieve with rope in hand. Keith ran first and is on the rocks below the bottom of the drop. There's a possible pin spot right at the bottom left. I leave the boulder eddy and head left above the sieve and hit another eddy right above the final chute. I peel out counterclockwise into the fast moving current and slide past the pin spot and through the hole at the bottom, eddying out on river left below a rock cornice overhanging the river at the base of the drop. Kirk rides the chute and intentionally stalls in the hole at the bottom, instantly spinning and playing in the sweet spot until we all head on down.

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**After that it is hard to see what happens and there is very shallow water flowing toward a large uniform horizon line.**

## Chota in Your Mailbox

Can't wait till the next newsletter to find out what's going on with Chota? Want more email? Join the Chota listserve and get updates about happenings with the club (trips, classes and meeting info) as well as information about conservation issues impacting the paddling community. Joining is easy and free, check out the following to get on the list: <http://www.kornnet.org/mailman/listinfo/chotalist>

# Safety First

## Shocking News About Cold Water Paddling (Part 1)

George Ruta

As the weather cools and we start dreaming of tropical vacations for this winter, there is still lots of great paddling up north. With summer crowds gone we have the opportunity to enjoy our time on the water in a more quiet and intimate manner. In addition to great delights, fall and winter paddling also provides greater dangers, particularly for those unprepared for up close and personal contact with chilling waters. Cold water and its effects are involved in virtually all kayaking and recreational boating deaths. For example, between 1985 and 1995, of the 182 deaths in the waters of the Pacific Northwest, only 2 occurred above 70°, with 133 involving water between 40-60°. This article will review some information which helps explain what makes cold water exposure so potentially risky, review some strategies to minimize that risk, and raise a few hairs with some stories of tragic, and mostly preventable, cold water deaths.

### Some stories and some statistics

- An 18 year old canoeist capsized into 500 lake water, and sank to the bottom before a rescuer towing the canoe could rescue him. He was wearing jeans, a shirt and no PFD.
- Nine elite marines, water survival instructors, capsized in 36° water wearing sweatsuits and no PFDs. None of

them survived the attempted 100 yard swim to shore.

- Sixteen Danish fishermen jumped into the icy waters of the North Sea when their trawler sank in a storm. They were in the water for a 2-3 hours before being rescued. They walked across the deck of the rescue vessel and went down into the galley to warm up. Each and every one collapsed and died in the galley.

- An average adult person has a 50/50 chance of surviving a 50 yard swim in 50° F. water.

- A 50 year old person in 50° F water has a 50/50 chance of surviving for 50 minutes.

### What does it all mean?

Cold water can kill in three ways. The canoeist probably suffered cold shock resulting in ineffective breathing, rapid onset of panic, confusion, and ineffective swimming, struggling briefly at the surface and then sinking. The marines may have managed the initial cold shock, but the cold water rendered their extremities neuromuscularly dysfunctional within several minutes, causing death by drowning. The fishermen were a more classic case of severe hypothermia, with body chemistry dysfunction causing cardiovascular collapse and death.

The vast majority of kayaking deaths in cold water occur well before body core temperature has fallen to the point of being dangerous. Even an unclothed person in 34° water will maintain core temperature for at least

**An average adult person has a 50/50 chance of surviving a 50 yard swim in 50° F. water.**

### Chota Meetings

Chota meets on the second Thursday of each month in locations announced on the website and in Eddy Out. Officers at 6:30, General members at 7:30. Visitors are always welcome.

20–30 minutes, so in this article I will concentrate on understanding and preventing cold shock and drowning.

## **Cold Shock**

Cold shock occurs when rapid cooling of the skin triggers a cluster of heart and breathing responses. The cardiac responses include an increase in heart rate of 40–50%, and an increase in cardiac output of 60–100%, which combined with vasoconstriction of the extremities results in an average blood pressure increase to 175/93. Although a substantial strain on the heart, these changes are not likely to be a problem for a healthy, fit person but may be dangerous for those with underlying heart disease or hypertension (There have been cases of apparently near instant cardiac arrest on cold water immersion).

The respiratory effects of cold shock have been estimated to account for a third of cold water deaths, including many extremely fit and healthy people. Review of reports of kayaking deaths by Charles Sutherland and others suggests to me that a much higher percentage of paddlecraft deaths are caused by cold shock. This has not been a favored topic of medical research, but study of work done by Dr. Michael Tipton and others makes it easy to understand the high level of risk that cold waters bring to the unprepared in our sport

## **Gasp!!**

Sudden immersion in cold water results in an involuntary (that means you can not stop it, and yes, that means all of us) gasp, followed by 1–3 minutes of involuntary (yes, that still means all of us) hyperventilation. Specific data are: 2.0 liter gasp in 82° water and 3.0 liter gasp in 50° water (i.e. nearly your entire lung

volume), and in 50° water a 600–1,000 percent increase in ventilation (air in and out) in the first minute. This hyperventilation results in a profound lowering of blood carbon dioxide levels and raising of blood pH levels, which causes a large risk of ventricular fibrillation (“cardiac arrest”), muscular tetany (cramps), and cerebral vasoconstriction which starves the brain of oxygen, causing disorientation and confusion.

These effects, coupled with changes in lung mechanics caused by the pressure of water on the abdomen and chest result in subjective feelings of inability to breathe and panic typically lasting 1–3 minutes. Most importantly for survival of a capsized kayaker is a sharp reduction of maximal breath holding, for example—in one study from a mean of 45 seconds pre-immersion to a mean of 9.5 seconds on immersion in 41° water, with one subject averaging less than one second breath holding upon immersion. It is easy to see how these effects of gasp, hyperventilation, and impaired breathholding would result in prompt catastrophe upon a fall into choppy water or a capsized.

How cold is cold water? Not, apparently, all that cold. The maximal hyperventilation response is reached at 50°, and near maximal gasp was reached at 52°. These are summertime water temperatures in some of the Northeast, and in most of it by November. This information is not meant to scare people away from cold water paddling, but certainly to caution them. Wonderful experiences may be had paddling in these conditions, but if we wish not to become Coast Guard statistics we must understand the risks and take measures to protect ourselves.

See part 2 in the next issue

**Most importantly for survival of a capsized kayaker is a sharp reduction of maximal breath holding...**

## **Chota’s Purpose**

To provide community paddle sport activities, safety awareness and techniques while being environmentally responsible.

# First Descent

## Conasauga Creek

Kirk Eddleman

I had been eyeing this creek for some time, tucked away but just outside Tellico Plains. I guess when it rains a lot people take their kayaks up to Citico Creek, North River, Santeetlah and the Cheoah. They overlook this small stream and it's steep push through the last stand of the Unaka's before spilling into the Great Valley.

Putting the logistics together is almost as fun as paddling the creek. I noticed the creek in my waterfall book. It has a pretty picture of a not-very-runnable 35-foot cascade, but a good-sized stream. It has a 10.5 square mile drainage of mostly flat rolling hills, so it runs well after 1.5+ inches of rain. Tellico at 4 feet and rising is a good indicator. There is a gauge 1.3 miles downstream of the whitewater on the river left side of a bridge in Rural Retreat, TN, which is about five miles out of Tellico Plains. It can be run down to eight inches. Our run was at five, but what the heck!

Before going I constructed a detailed gradient profile. The gorge is 1.7 miles long, with an average gradient of 208 ft/mile and a half mile at 304 ft/mile. I hiked in to see the falls one day, and based on what I saw, decided it would be worth it to come back and hike the entire stream. Laura Raymer and Carl Keaney accompanied me on a most splendid scout which confirmed that this would be a high quality run. There was some wood to be dealt with, but surprisingly little. We took many pictures, organized them into a virtual tour of the streambed and waited.

Tuesday, January 6th, the opportunity came, and Andrew Schneider and I headed down to the gauge to check the level. Five inches was going to be really scrapey, but doable. We excitedly headed to the putin. It was fun leading Andrew down because he had no idea what was coming at each drop. Though the run only took us thirty minutes it has a lot on it.

The first quarter mile drops at 300 ft/mile through Class 3-3+(4 at higher levels) creek rapids with lots of boofs and some mentionable undercuts. Then it slows down a little to 170 ft/mile. Next comes the portage of 35-foot Conasauga Falls. Do a google search on the internet for a picture. We portaged, and Andrew ran the last tier of it which necessitated surfing the hole of the twenty footer above to keep from getting blown over head first off an eight footer on to rocks only to then finish on the left off of the ledge on a more padded rocky landing. I decided to pass.

Below here is where the few big drops are. I called it Ogle's and Andrew called it Shoots and Ladders, and it was awesome. It is a 6 foot drop into a 10 foot slide, a 10 foot slide and a 15 foot slide. It was easy and fun at the same time. The gorge is prettiest at the bottom of this rapid. We then finished the last part, which consist of 3-5 foot ledge drops and plenty of horizon lines. The second rapid after the slides should be run carefully, as there are pins and undercuts everywhere. The stream fights and kicks all the way to the valley, where 1.3 miles of flat but scenic water and one beaver dam portage puts you at the takeout. An earlier takeout may be available

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in the future after contact with local landowners is made.

I would rate this run a solid 3-4(5+). It is not overly difficult for a strong Class 4 boater, but definitely upper end for a Class 3 boater. There are some dangerous spots and some strainers, though all is runnable. The first half mile is by far the hardest with continuous class 3-4 creek moves

with a pushy pace. An easier run could be afforded by putting in via the 1 mile hiking trail to the base of the falls, though there are still spots to be very cautious.

This is one of the best runs in the Tellico region with a blend of Citico Creek and Bald River. What a great day. Contact me for more information if you are interested.

continued from page 5

The next rapid to scout is Hungry Jack and there is a large pool above it; one of few flat sections on the run. We beach and get out on the left. At first this doesn't look too appetizing. The river drips around 20' over a slide around 100 feet long. The water sloshes back and forth through a sketchy sluiceway and a good portion shoots right under a large boulder hanging out over the final hole. If you don't stay left you will slam into the boulder. It isn't like going into a terminal undercut but it would be unpleasant to be sure. There's also a curler at the top that could put you on the trajectory you most want to avoid.

Well, I think about it and decide to run. We take turns with the rope at the bottom. All runs upright and keeping left. Keith runs a second time. We assemble in the pool below.

The big drops are now behind us but the canyon is starting to close in and there are waterfalls dropping in all around. There are massive old pine trees on the banks. I look over and see a beach of round soccer ball size boulders all with the same pattern

of brown and green coloring. We are bouncing and weaving down countless class III rapids and there are awesome sights everywhere you look; 200 to 300 foot rock walls; overhanging amphitheater coves; rock walls split by waterfalls. It doesn't let up. Turn anywhere and all is perfection.

We are spread out now with about 200 feet between each. No one is talking. No one else is here. We are alone in an enchanted river canyon wonderland in the middle of a large clear-cut wasteland and I am drinking in all the awesome uncontestable beauty that I can.

Suddenly I look down river and there is a huge wave in the middle of a long stretch of III that is pinched between an overhanging boulder and a rock wall. What is behind the wave? I am shooting toward it and cresting it and it is clear below, no holes, no rocks. What a ride—and it just keeps on and on. Yes! I spin in the midst of big waves and continuous rapids and wherever my eye comes to rest is postcard picture perfection. It hurts to take out from a run like this.

When are we going back?

**Yes! I spin in the midst of big waves and continuous rapids and wherever my eye comes to rest is postcard picture perfection.**

Let's take the boat to Bermuda,  
Let's take a plane to Saint Paul,  
Let's grab a kayak,  
to Quimsy or Nayak,  
Let's get away from it all.

—Frank Sinatra

## Her Blessing

I believe the river knows me.  
She knows when I am quiet enough  
to hear the truth she wants to speak.

Floating over the riverbed with her,  
I am at one with her movement;  
I remember my connection to all  
things.

In a place of calm within her  
I become still enough to see  
icicles forming on shaded rock.

There is no time here;  
Only the rhythm of breath  
and the crispness of winter air.

The river holds me like a mother,  
bringing me back to who I am;  
opening up my spirit,

To feel the blessing in this wisdom;  
that I have everything I need.  
This moment; everything I need.

Jill Wells paddles a quiet stretch  
in a touring kayak. Let us hear  
from all you touring paddlers out  
there! Send in your pictures and  
trip reports and let us know what  
you're up to.



## Winter Roll Practice

Keep your paddling skills sharp  
through the winter with pool practice.  
It's a great way to stay in shape and in  
touch with the sport if you're laying  
off for the winter. For cold weather  
paddlers it's a good way to hone your  
skills for river running.

**Maryville College** has roll sessions  
on Wednesday nights at 8:30 in the  
Cooper Athletic Center Pool. \$3 per  
person. Spring break is March 17—no  
roll session that night. Last roll session  
for the season is May 5.

**East Tennessee Whitewater Club**  
offers roll practice during the winter  
each Friday at the Oak Ridge Civic  
Center pool, 8:30–10 p.m. The Pool is  
on the Oak Ridge Turnpike next to the  
library. Carry your boat around to the  
back of the pool building and come  
through the glass doors. Boats must be  
rinsed off before entering the pool. The  
cost is \$3 per boat.

Insert Membership  
form here.



Chota Canoe Club  
P.O. Box 8270 University Station  
Knoxville, TN 37996

PRST STD  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Knoxville, TN  
Permit no. 86

**Deadline for March issue** is Sunday, February 15. Email photos, articles, announcements, and trip reports to Todd Duren: [tduren@fieglygraphics.com](mailto:tduren@fieglygraphics.com). Include subject line "Chota Newsletter."