

Katarapko Creek, 18-20 November 2016

As most of us were retired we met at noon on a Friday on the Katarapko designated campsites on the western side of the Katarapko Creek. David and Trace didn't make it – they had mechanical problems on the road and returned to Adelaide. They missed a good weekend with lovely weather, some firsts and a few surprises.

The river was probably a good 2m higher than normal, there was water everywhere and half the campsites were underwater. We settled on site #19. While most of us setup our meager tent and deckchair, we watched in awe as Chris assembled his upstairs tent above the trailer, a canopy with a full kitchen and a half shelter at the back of his vehicle. He even provided a port-a-loo then passed out beer, food and almost anything we could desire! This was definitely a 'standing camp'.



Chris leaning on a BBQ pit



Paddling over a campsite parking bay

That afternoon we tested the currents by only having to paddle 400m downstream before finding a channel with a good flow into an open swamp of Katarapko Is with views ahead of the distant hill suburbs of Loxton. This area is not one we would normally be privy to and it was pretty and peaceful. We found an old cement causeway running north-south that we passed through, then later clambered over, to get back to the Katarapko Creek some 3 km downstream from where we have departed the creek.

Saturday was hotter but we got away at 8am upstream to the beginning of the Splash with no real plan of how far we planned to travel. Here the current wasn't so strong and many bends we could just short-cut across and in fact the channel was lost to us at times. 7.5 km up the Splash we met our first new bridge/regulator (1.5 km before the horseshoe). This one was easy to pass as the creek was far wider than the structure. About 4.5 km further on (now on the Eckert, east of the horseshoe) we scrapped around another new bridge/regulator and in the small shady numerous channels we got off the route and found a 3rd regulator where we turned around to backtrack to the Eckert proper. Then to top things off the last regular was under construction just at the creek meeting the Murray. This will be a sizable one but at the moment cordoned off with rows of flags and rusty pylons in place to move the water aside to erect the regulator. We, of course, paddled right through this and dragged our kayaks over the temporary construction road which the water-flow was washing away –

even more so with our footprints leaving great holes in the mud. Unfortunately there was a workman there checking on things and as we made ourselves comfortable for a lunch stop he asked us to move on as it was a construction site and we shouldn't be there. This 20 km had taken us 5hr 15 min at a leisurely pace.



Regulator under construction at Eckert Ck/Murray junction



Campsite with Chris's set up

The return trip to camp 19 was with the flow and we did the 15 km in 2.15hrs. The great surprise here was at Lock 4. We girls relaxed on the grassy slope while the menfolk trotted off to talk to the lockmaster. There was no one around and they noted no one was using the lock chamber. The river upstream was the same as the level downstream! We simply paddled over the lock at the segment immediately adjacent to the lock chamber. Not a bump or drop! And again at the Katarapko weir: we breezed over it without noticing! So very easy.

Sunday morning after packing up 3 went for a short paddle upstream and took a different channel into the swamp on the eastern side of the Katarapko. It would be a lovely place to explore at the next flood of this area. All in all a great weekend. Perhaps the only hardship was the flies, ants and mosquitos that plagued us in camp but on the water it was very comfortable.

Thank you to Charlie and Marina and also to Chris for the luxuries he provided.

Lee