

## Linda and Gary De Kock

### Paddling with Gators: Canoeing the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

With John and LaNae Abnet



In February, Gary, Linda, John, and LaNae traveled by canoe through the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge on the border of Florida and Georgia, home to countless species of birds, fish, mammals, and reptiles. They camped on “chickies” (platforms in the swamp) and on one island along the way. They will share their adventures and misadventures! Both couples are known for their encounters with law enforcement. And this trip was no exception!

With 13 canoes and kayaks, Gary De Kock has always known that there is no such thing as “too many boats”! He led the first club kayak trip to Grand Island (Lake Superior) in 1988. In 2014, he and his wife, Linda, paddled a tandem kayak from source to sea on the Mississippi River (2291 miles). Gary is a board member of the Quiet Water Society, which annually presents the Verlen Kruger Award to someone whose passion for water inspires the next generation of paddlers.

With a love for big rivers, Linda De Kock and her husband, Gary, canoed the Missouri River (2,341 miles) from Three Forks, Montana to St. Louis in 2018. The voyage lasted 86 days, and each day brought new challenges. The trip was used to raise funds for communities that lack



safe water and adequate sanitation. Linda will be found regularly paddling the St. Mary's River near Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario as soon as the ice melts.