

Coastbusters

The Cross Currents Newsletter for Mid-Atlantic Paddlers

January 2023

An Interview with Dale Williams

Rick Wiebush

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of interviews with well-known paddlers in which they talk about how they got into paddling, what their motivations are, and what some of their best experiences have been. The idea is to find out more about people you have heard a lot about but may not know very well. The interviews are edited for clarity and space.

Background

Dale Williams has been paddling and teaching for over 30 years. He holds the highest possible instructor certification from the American Canoe Association: Coastal Kayaking Open Water Instructor Trainer Educator. That means he trains the people who train people who want to become instructors. Rough water and surfing are his major areas of interest and he is well-known for his week-long courses at Tybee Island, GA and Matanzas Inlet in Florida, as well as his trips to international destinations. Dale founded the company Sea Kayak Georgia and now owns and operates Sea Kayaking USA, through which he is the U.S. importer for Nigel Dennis' SKUK kayaks. He lives on Tybee Island, GA with his wife, Debbie Kearney.

Initial Involvement

Rick: how did you first get involved in sea kayaking?

Dale: It was Debbie who introduced me to paddling, back in 1992. My sports at the time were skiing and paragliding but I was in a major life



transition, from military to civilian, married to single, foreign to domestic. With her influence my sport choices eventually transitioned as well.

I'd been stationed in Europe for 10 years but was headed to Colorado to open a paragliding school. I was out-processing from the Air Force in Charleston and stopped on my way there to have dinner with my old friend in Savannah. Dinner turned into a 10-day delay. While I was there, she introduced me to sea kayaking.

Rick: What was it about sea kayaking that got you hooked on it?

Dale: What hooked me? Everything about it, the graceful movement of the craft through its element, like a wing through air or a ski through snow, the way a sea kayak connects a person to the water. I liked the near silence, the unobtrusive access to wild places, and the waves. I loved the waves. I was introduced to sea kayaking at what was admittedly a profoundly romantic time for me, but I still find the whole experience to be, well, romantic.

Personal Motivations

Dale: ... the truth is that there are a variety of reasons like anybody else has. Maybe add a few because I do it for a living, and because I've done it so long, and because I've carried it so far, in terms of badge collection and level of teaching, and all of that, it makes it much more complicated. But I still like to get out and go paddling by myself as a way to clear my head or to narrow my focus or as a way to get exercise or just enjoy being out there. Most of the time, I would say that the majority of my paddling is alone. I mean I know there's a safety issue there, but there's no question that I really ratchet back my acceptable level of risk when I'm paddling alone, but if I didn't paddle alone, I'd paddle a quarter as much as I do.

... all those things that draw everybody else to it, still draw me to it. Seeing dolphins, paddling, and getting away from the city. I mean, the big thing about sea kayaking is that you can go into a wild place within moments where almost no one else goes except fellow sea kayakers.

Lately I've been taking up canoeing because I like the feel of the craft, and I like the way that it moves. I like learning new strokes, and I'm doing that on a blackwater river like a creek. I just came back with a smile on my face. So, all that same stuff still is a big draw for me.

Rick: I've been interviewing people for a different project, and one of the things that's striking me is that a lot of people paddle because it is a way that in one way or another, they get centered. People use

terms like a "Zen-like" quality. Not all the time, but there are these moments of real clarity, and the sense of being one with the boat and water.

Dale: Absolutely. There's a lot of language around that feeling. From a Buddhist, if you're using that sort of language, "satori" is the word that comes to mind. Most often it's that point of mindfulness where you're just there, and you're not thinking. So, you're reacting to the waves. When I'm surfing, just surfing on my own, and I feel like it's not working, it's because I'm thinking too much. When I can stop thinking, and just react to the waves, then I get this fantastic sensation of, "Yeah, that's okay." Let the force be with you, kind of feeling.

But the other one, the other language that it comes from is psychology. I was a psych major, early psych thesis, is one called peak experience. So, the difference (is between) cheap thrills and peak experience. Bungee jumping is cheap thrills. You didn't do anything to earn that. You're not preparing yourself for that situation.

There have been some moments - they're not as often in sea kayaking as they were in paragliding - but there are times where you think you've done all this to prepare yourself for this moment. Now, you really still need to focus on the physics of it, on the psychomotor skills. They're important to keep you safe and aware, but there's this other thing out there. There's this image, this view like there you are alone, surfing in the fog, on these glassy waves, and there's a dolphin surfing with you. Then the whole beauty of that is just overwhelming. It's a peak experience. It is seared into your memory forever.

So, you're always in search of those peak experiences. That's a very different thing from "satori", but still there's no room for all that wrestling with thoughts. There's no room for self-doubt. There's no room for mitigation or explanation, or "why did I do this?" It's just all of it, it's gone. Somehow, you're just in the moment.

Rick: Yeah. Somebody said to me, "And I just am."

Dale: Yes, absolutely. Yeah.

Professional Motivation

Dale: You do this (teaching/leading) partially because people learn how to face fears, and how to find success through that process of honesty and self-evaluation. You don't want that to turn into a horrible experience for them.

As an example, we had a guided trip in the early days when I had Sea Kayak Georgia. The guide missed the tide on the way back, and couldn't make it through the cuts, and had to wait for the next tide, which was after dark. So, she had radioed us.

My partner Steve Braden and I met them in the dark to help them get back through Jack's Cut (and across (open water) to alley 3 at Tybee. It was very dark that night. There were some good breaking waves at the cut, so one of the guys got capsized coming through,... I had a verbal system - where everybody has a number and you call out. When that number didn't call out, I realized we'd lost somebody in the break on the way back.

So, I went back, and I found him, and we got him. I got him back in his boat, and we paddled back across this time. Together, we made it, but it scared him badly. He was really frightened and shaken by that incident. He associated us, the company and

me, with that horrible experience in his life. So, sometimes it's worse to expose people to - well, definitely - worse to expose people to greater than their acceptable level of risk.

So the moral of that story is that we exposed that guy to something beyond his acceptable level of risk. No matter the outcome, if you do that, you can damage people. You can hurt people in a way that's not physical. As I began to learn and realize the possibility of damaging people *psychically* in the process. I've always been safety conscious, but there's a level of risk that you have to accept if you want to expose people to even their acceptable level, to an experience that has meaning to them.

What keeps me in it now? I would say some of that still does. When things turn out well... for the most part, we have managed to do a lot of rough water paddling and do so without hurting anybody.

When you do that, and you don't exceed their acceptable level of risk, or you expand that acceptable level, or you make them feel like they've accomplished something, and done so responsibly and safely, it can be a fantastic high. So, I still really enjoy managing those learning experiences.



Photo: Kathryn Lapolla

Most challenging experience: “I was terrified, and I thought he was dead”

Rick: Speaking of risk, for you personally, what's the most challenging, scariest situation that you've been in. Where? How did you deal with it?

Dale: It was an Aleutian (Islands) trip. It was going to be the four of us ... Stan Chladeck, Nigel Dennis, and Larry Koenig. I don't know if you've heard that name. Larry may be the only person, he and Arthur Hebert, to completely circumnavigate the Gulf of Mexico. Nigel wanted to go find and paddle the biggest tide races in the Aleutians, which it turns out three of the biggest were the Unalga race, the Baby Islands race and the Akutan race. Just based on the amount of flow, the constriction, the potential for standing waves, these were the biggest tide races that you could find in the Aleutians.

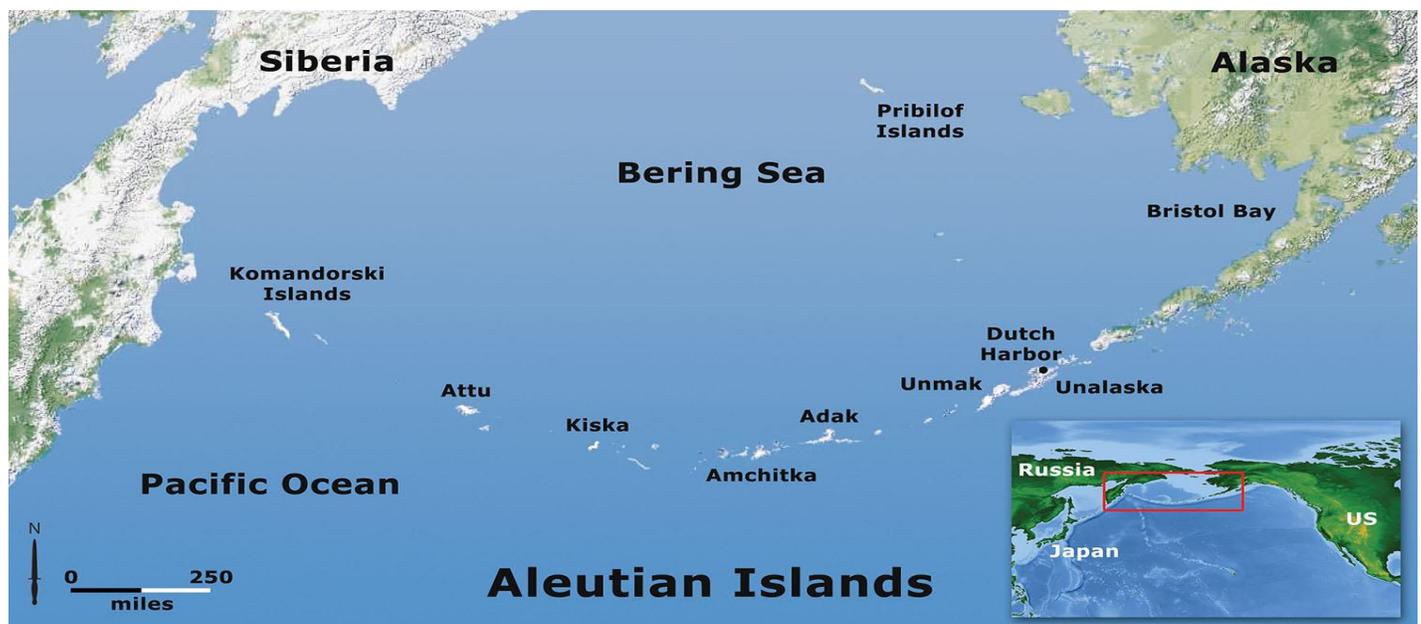
Note: It turned out that everyone else dropped out of the trip – some at the very last minute - for various reasons. It ended up being just Dale and a 25-year-old, fairly inexperienced guy Dale had recruited.

Dale: I'd already sent the boats out. I had my airfare booked. So, it ended up being just Richard Davis (later of Saltwood Paddles) and myself.

Now, at that point in time, I was a small business owner. I was pretty good at surfing sea kayaks and rough water paddling and teaching, but I was not an expeditioner. I mean coast of Georgia, that was it for me. Ten-day trip along the coast of Georgia. Never anything like the Aleutians. So, a completely different environment than in Georgia. I mean, so many differences.

So, Richard and I did that, and I'd say the first half of the trip, it was like we were tiptoeing through a minefield. We were so careful. We were afraid of our own shadows. We planned every crossing to be at the absolute minimum tidal flow. If it looked like the wind was going to blow more than 25 knots, we'd stay put. At some point, it just became like we'd been crying wolf to ourselves, and we just said, "To hell with this. We can paddle in these conditions. This place is no big mystery. We can do this."

But we found ourselves on the way back having very few places to take out. In these big bays that we would paddle into, ... we'd get to the top of the bay and find out that all this loose cut timber had floated up from the Pacific northwest on the Japanese current. All these lumber operations would lose logs as they're shipping them on barges. It was just the waste logs collected in these places along the Aleutians. We couldn't land. We couldn't land.



We found ourselves on one particular day, after waiting out a couple of days of lesser weather, just deciding that, "Ah, the hell with it. We're going to go through anyway."

So, then it was big. It was big stuff, and we paddled in it.

What should have been a day-long trip to get to a camping spot ...and then we couldn't land. So we paddled another couple or three hours around to another spot, and we couldn't get into that. Then we decided to go to another one. So, what should have been maybe a 15-mile day in really rough conditions,... We ended up in the end doing something like 45 miles, for lack of a place to pull out, and because after a while we got hypothermic. Didn't know it - dehydrated and hypothermic. That led to bad decision-making, which led us to attempt to cross the Unalga race at its maximum flood. So, by far the largest waves I'd ever surfed. Had to surf on that day, and there was nothing fun about any moment of that. It was sheer terror.

Rick: How big were the waves in that race?

Dale: They're big enough for me to be terrified. Terrified. The characteristic of the waves was so different from anything else that I'd ever paddled before or since was that instead of the wave breaking, it would *calve*. It was like if you've watched an avalanche come down hill, if you ever seen photography of avalanche, it doesn't roll over like a wave and break. It just separates. The whole slab will separate and come down a wave, and that's what these waves were doing as well.

And Richard was engulfed in one of those. So, I lost him in one of those waves. I was able to surf to the side of the race (which was maybe eight knots) and get out of the main break. Then I went looking along the side for Richard.

I was pretty certain that Richard was dead. I was going through all the things in my head. How I was going to explain this to his girlfriend and his parents, and our friends? Because I was the responsible guy at 50 (years old).

Then I got a call from him on the radio. This frantic call, and he had found his way back into a spot at Unalga and was setting up a tent. That was the first chance he had to get his hand on the radio, and he was calling me. I could barely respond to him without going over, but I turned around. It took me another hour, maybe an hour and a half, to get back to him from where I was at the time.

Here's the thing: part of the motivation for doing this was that's how you established yourself as a known paddler in those days - do expeditions. Little did I know that I would screw up that bad. That should have been my expedition to learn from Nigel or Stan., rather than leading a young, even less experienced person than myself.

My life has been very carefully arranged around avoiding circumstances like that ever again, but it did turn out fairly well. I am not sure how that affected Richard's life as a young 25-year-old. Yeah, that I don't know. We have to ask Richard.

The Best Trip

Rick: Last question. What's the best trip, the trip that you enjoyed the most in your life?

Dale: The experience that comes to mind was the Georgia coast last year, about this time last year.

Steve Braden's daughter, now turned 30, having heard all these stories from her father and me, wanted to paddle the Georgia coast. She's not a big kayaker herself and wanted that experience. So she went through some pretty intensive training for about 6 months, and it was still barely enough.

He (Steve) broke a vertebra and was in a body cast for 6 weeks right at the time the trip was going on. Well, Steve's the trip planner. He's the navigator. He's the guy who has all the routes planned. He coordinated with the tides, and it was all just already done. So, he just handed that to us, and when Steve wasn't going to go, then a large majority of the people dropped off the trip. But I had committed to this because Alison, she's like a daughter. The families are that close.

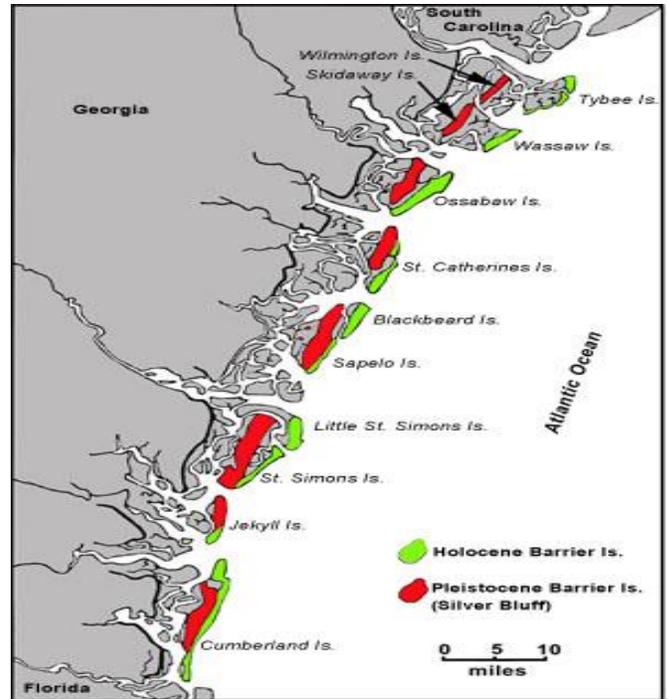
So, I thought, "We can't not go. We have to go". It got down to just Debbie, me and our close friend Mike Robinson for part of the trip and Allison, with her going through all those trials and tribulations and experiences, but with Debbie, Mike and I to help her out. We managed to do most of the coast. Some huge weather developed along the way and we had to break, but that was part of doing the coast, you have to evacuate because of these huge storms coming through. As soon as that passes, then you can get back on at the place that makes most sense.

Rick: What made it so good? Being able to give her that experience, or what made it so lasting for you?

Dale: Sharing that experience for her. Making that experience possible for her. But I mean, still lots of things were beautiful as well. We saw things on the coast I've never seen before, like a loon. A loon giving a mating call in the middle of the winter. We get loons here in the winter all the time, but never have I heard one. I saw huge flocks of white pelicans. They come down from like the Tetons or wherever, the upper west, upper Rockies, area. They come down to winter in Georgia and Florida, but they're very people shy. So, you don't see them

in the normal places on the Georgia coast. Only in the wildest places. We saw otters there. You almost never see otters in highly populated places, but we saw them on the coast ... and lots of wild things. It's just good, yeah.

It was a beautiful hardship (long miles) that she wanted to do, and that we helped her to accomplish.



Adapted from Hoyt, 1968.
Click on map for a larger view.

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A Sense of Place: The Tlingit People and Ecology of Klukwan, Alaska

Scott Ramsey



The Chilkat Valley in Southeast Alaska is home to Klukwan, an ancient village of Tlingit First Nations people, the Chilkat Tlingit. Located about 20 miles northeast of Haines, the area has been shaped by geological forces, glaciation, and the Chilkat River, and was chosen as a place to live by the original people due to the unique environment.

It is protected by rugged mountain ranges but has valley corridors that provided important trading routes. Three rivers come together near the village that provide transportation, important habitats for wildlife, and which are the basis for the traditional fishing economy. The area has sustained people for so long that the Tlingit phrase from which the name Klukwan is derived means “the village that has always been.”

This story is about the people and the place, and how the latter has helped shaped the lives and culture of the former. It has nothing to do with sea

kayaking, except that a Cross Currents group will be paddling in the area in the summer of 2023 and will have a chance to learn more about the Chilkat Tlingit and their environment.

Overview of The Tlingit Nation and Culture

The Tlingit people have occupied the coastal and mountainous inland areas of Southeast Alaska (think the panhandle) for thousands of years. There are about 20 Tlingit clans scattered throughout the area, one of which is the Chilkat.

The family and kinship system – which is central to the culture - is matrilineal, meaning that children are born into the mother’s line and inheritances are passed along in that line. The Tlingit have an animist philosophical tradition. That is, they believe that all things - including rocks, fish, rivers, mountains - are living and have a soul. They also believe that both humans and animals are



Traditional lands of the Tlingit

reincarnated. One result is that the “more-than-human” and the environment are treated with great respect. (Given this, it is somewhat surprising that the Tlingit also traditionally practiced hereditary slavery.)

In the late 1800’s and early 1900’s Tlingit culture generally and Klukwan specifically came under attack by the onslaught of white Europeans. Klukwan was more protected by natural landscape barriers (e.g., the mountains) than most villages, so it was one of the last to be contacted by white settlers. Spurred by the Alaska gold rush, miners, mining companies, speculators, settlers and, on their heels, the U.S. Army poured into the area. These entities, along with the government of the Territory of Alaska claimed lands that had been the territory of the Tlingit. In Klukwan, the Chilkat Tlingit had controlled some 2.5 million acres of land. By the end of the land “redistribution”, that area was reduced to 890 acres.

Government attempts to civilize the indigenous people followed many of the same practices in Alaska as in the rest of the U.S. Laws were passed that attempted to force the Tlingit to abandon traditional cultural practices. While concentrated and successful efforts to revive the culture have been ongoing for the past several decades,

significant damage had been inflicted on a long-standing, complex, and rich culture.

Overview of the Area

Multiple powerful natural forces have shaped the Chilkat Valley and Klukwan. Tectonic forces brought together multiple terranes from as far away as the South Pacific, creating the large mountain ranges that surround Haines and Klukwan. Glaciers that once covered this area to a depth of over 3,000 feet of ice during the Pleistocene Ice Age are still sculpting the land today, through glacial deposition and erosion. These extreme glacial forces, coupled with its northerly latitude, have shaped the Chilkat’s landscape, which has in turn helped to structure the ecology and impacted the way of life in this valley.

Cold, clean water from three glacial rivers that converge near Klukwan support all five types of North America’s wild Pacific Salmon. Salmon in turn, provide important nutrients to the river and the forest, as well as offer an important food source for numerous birds, including bald eagles, for ocean mammals such as Killer whales, and for land mammals such as brown bears. The Chilkat Tlingits still rely heavily on salmon for their subsistence needs and salmon represent an integral part of their culture. This collective reliance on the salmon helps illustrate the interconnectedness among the major forces that have shaped this land, its ecology, and its people.





Klukwan (shaded area) and its' topography

The Climate

Klukwan is located at latitude 59 degrees north of the equator, making the area relatively cold throughout the year. At this latitude there are roughly 18 hours of sunlight around the summer solstice and nearly 18 hours of darkness around the winter solstice. These extremes create short, intense growing seasons and relatively long, dark, and cold winters. Consequently, these constraints made winter food options limited and harvesting food in the summer critical. It's for this reason that so much importance was placed on smoking and drying salmon for winter reserves. These conditions also helped contribute to the need to establish trading routes in order to obtain warmer hides and pelts from the interior that were not as plentiful in this area.

The climate of Klukwan is also influenced by cold air flowing down from the tall mountains and glacial valleys that surround the village. Unlike the town of Haines, which is only 22 miles away, Klukwan receives little maritime influence. In

Haines, the ocean moderates temperatures and often produces moisture and winds. Klukwan's inland location means it is generally drier and less windy than Haines throughout the year, but warmer in the summer and colder in the winter. These conditions have promoted a unique micro-climate, resulting in different growth rates and harvesting times than those found closer to the ocean. These relatively warmer and drier conditions are some of the factors that helped to draw the Chilkat to this location.

The Geology

Plate tectonics refers to land masses that are floating on the surface of the earth, and which are moving in different directions and at different speeds. Much of southeast Alaska was influenced by the collision and rotation of the North American plate and the Pacific plate. The ground that makes up this area is from as far away as the South Pacific. Parts of Klukwan were once tropical coral reefs that got *moved* up to their present-day positions as the "jig saw puzzle of earth" was reshuffled. In

These tectonic processes created the area's mountain ranges, which provided formidable barriers and helped protect the Chilkat Tlingit from other tribes. But they also created one of the only accessible corridors to the interior, providing valuable trade routes for the Tlingit. Trading commodities from the coastal areas (fish, shellfish, mussels, seaweed, etc.) for goods from the interior was an important foundation of their economy.

Glaciation

Most of Southeast Alaska, including Haines and Klukwan, was covered in ice during the Wisconsin Ice Age, some 10-15,000 years ago. This period of glaciation shaped the Chilkat Valley, carving U-shaped valleys and covering the land with up to 3,000 feet of ice. Evidence of the extent of the glaciers can be seen in the jagged peaks that surround Klukwan. Those peaks were above the glaciers' erosive powers.

As the glaciers began to recede, they erode the mountains, eventually turning boulders into glacial flour or silt. Rivers carried this outwash from glaciers into the Chilkat Valley, filling it with over 700 feet of sediment. This sediment, although rich in minerals, is often lacking many important nutrients such as nitrogen, which is essential to plants. This fact helps explain why the Tlingit relied on fishing – and to a lesser extent on hunting and gathering – rather than on crop farming.



Hydrological Forces

There is a unique hydrological phenomenon – *warm river water in winter* – that has important implications for Klukwan and the Chilkat Tlingit.

Three rivers emerge from the mountains and converge at Klukwan: the Chilkat, the Tsirku and the Klehini rivers. Each of these glacial rivers is unique, contributing to the diversity of habitat in this area. For example, the relatively long Klehini spreads itself into many channels as it flows through much of the valley. Before it reaches the Chilkat however, it slows down and meanders through fields of willow, which is the preferred food of moose. Not surprisingly, once moose started showing up in the area in the 1940's they became an additional food source for the Tlingit in Klukwan.

The Tsirku is a relatively shorter river that spreads out over several miles as it approaches Klukwan and merges with the Chilkat River. As it spreads out, it gets shallower, slows down, and *drops* its sediments, creating an alluvial fan. Over half of this slowed surface water finds its way through the porous sediment into underwater aquifers. This water gets slightly heated by the earth through geothermal processes and eventually percolates back into the Chilkat River, below Klukwan.

This hydrological phenomenon is extremely important because *heated water keeps the Chilkat River from freezing, even in the winter*. This year-round water source offers drinking water as well as provides an ice-free corridor for a late Chum salmon run, which offers food for all the inhabitants and supports the world's largest congregation of bald eagles, occurring here in late fall.

Klukwan and Its Ecology

Klukwan is situated near the intersection of three rivers, the Tsirku, Klehini and Chilkat River, and sits at the base of the Takshanuk Mountains. These rivers provide fish, and the mountains supply berries, wild game, and other plant foods. Hence, because of its rich local resources, Klukwan was considered a plentiful basket.



Chilkat Tlingit fishing from longboats on the Chilkat River

Each of the glacially fed rivers has unique characteristics that appeal to the five species of Pacific Salmon. For example, Chum Salmon prefer to spawn in slow, deep eddies that are common along the Chilkat. In contrast, King Salmon generally select fast moving streams with larger cobble which are characteristic of the Klehini. And Sockeye Salmon favor lakes for their rearing which can be reached via the Tsirku River.

By providing nutrients to the forest and the river, as well as providing food for a variety of birds and animals, salmon play a critical role in the health of the entire ecosystem. As noted previously, they are also an important staple to the Tlingit diet, as well as an important trading commodity making them culturally significant.

The mountains behind Klukwan provide habitat for numerous game, including mountain goats, which are an important food as well as source of wool for the famous Chilkat Blankets. The mountains and land around Klukwan provide sustenance and medicine, as well as protection from the elements and potential enemies. The abundance of salmon

and wildlife, the availability of *sweet* water, and the protection from the elements provided by the topography are what drew the Chilkats to this locale and has helped to influence their culture.



Tlingit women in ceremonial Chilkat blankets. Photo: Pinterest

**Winning Photographs:
The Cross Currents 2022 Calendar Contest**

Rick Wiebush

Every year we hold a contest to select photos for inclusion in the following year's Cross Currents calendar. For the 2023 contest we received 78 great photos from 35 different photographers. They represented 17 states and four different countries. The photos were reviewed and voted on by a panel of judges who selected their favorites – and had a hard time doing it - during two rounds of judging.

Thank you to this year's judges: Rob Unger, Tami Riley, Laurie Collins, Linda Davis, John Sweeney and Gail daMota.

The following pages show the 13 winning photos (12 months + cover), the winning photographer, and where the photographer is from.



Grand Tetons, Wyoming. Photo: David Nord (MI)



Kruzoff Island, Alaska Photo: Lynne Basileo (FL)



Norway Photo: Kristoffer Vandbaak (Norway)



Everglades, Florida Photo: Gene Kieczkajlo (PA)



Cape Lehave, Nova Scotia Photo: Jeff Atkins (SC)



Cape Mears, Oregon Photo: Bill Vonnegut (OR)



Hudson River, Manhattan Photo: Rick Wiebush (MD)



Lake Erie Photo: Tony Pascuzzi (OH)



Nehalem Bay, Oregon Photo: Bill Vonnegut (OR)



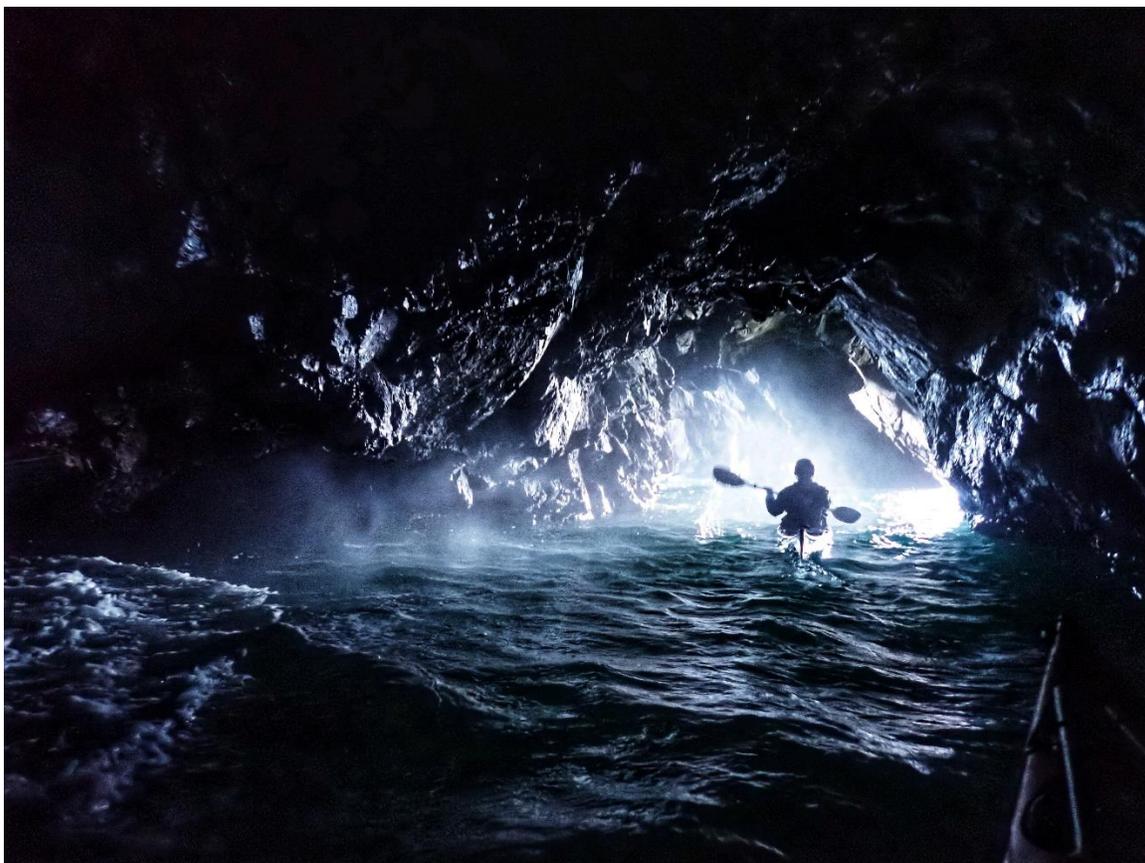
Sullivan's Falls, Maine Photo: Jimmy McArdle (MD)



Lake Jocassee, South Carolina Photo: Karen Tilley (NC)



Upper Potomac River, Maryland Photo: Ricardo Stewart (MD)



Mendocino, California Photo: Bill Vonnegut (OR)

Prey to the Crocodile

Val Plumwood

Ed. note: the following story took place in Kakadu National Park, in Northern Territory of Australia, about 100 miles south of Darwin. The author rented a canoe and was told that crocodiles do not attack canoes.

This appeared in the March 2021 issue of Coastbusters but it's so good it needs to be shared again.

As I pulled the canoe out into the main current, the rain and wind started up again. I had not gone more than five or ten minutes down the channel when, rounding a bend, I saw in midstream what looked like a floating stick, one I did not recall passing on my way up. As the current moved me toward it, the stick developed eyes. A crocodile! It did not look like a large one. I was close to it now but was not especially afraid; an encounter would add interest to the day. Although I was paddling to miss the crocodile, our paths were strangely convergent. I knew it would be close, but I was totally unprepared for the great blow when it struck the canoe. Again it struck, again and again, now from behind, shuddering the flimsy craft. As I paddled furiously, the blows continued. The unheard of was happening; the canoe was under attack! For the first time, it came to me fully that I was prey. I realized I had to get out of the canoe or risk being capsized

The bank now presented a high, steep face of slippery mud. The only obvious avenue of escape was a paper bark tree near the muddy bank wall. I made the split-second decision to leap into its lower branches and climb to safety. I steered to the tree and stood up to jump. At the same instant, the crocodile rushed up alongside the canoe, and its beautiful, flecked golden eyes looked straight into mine. Perhaps I could bluff it, drive it away, as I had read of British tiger hunters doing. I waved my arms and shouted, "Go away!" (We're British here.)

The golden eyes glinted with interest. I tensed for the jump and leapt. Before my foot even tripped the first branch, I had a blurred, incredulous vision of great toothed jaws bursting from the water. Then I was seized between the legs in a red-hot pincer grip and whirled into the suffocating wet darkness.



Our final thoughts during near-death experiences can tell us much about our frameworks of subjectivity. A framework capable of sustaining action and purpose must, I think, view the world "from the inside," structured to sustain the concept of a continuing, narrative self; we remake the world in that way as our own, investing it with meaning, reconceiving it as sane, survivable, amenable to hope and resolution. The lack of fit between this subject-centered version and reality comes into play in extreme moments. In its final, frantic attempts to



Saltie in Northern Territory. Photo: Patrick Fisher

protect itself from the knowledge that threatens the narrative framework, the mind can instantaneously fabricate terminal doubt of extravagant proportions: "This is not really happening. This is a nightmare from which I will soon awake." This desperate delusion split apart as I hit the water. In that flash, I glimpsed the world for the first time "from the outside," as a world no longer my own, an unrecognizable bleak landscape composed of raw necessity, indifferent to my life or death.

Death rolled: Twice!

Few of those who have experienced the crocodile's death roll have lived to describe it. It is, essentially, an experience beyond words of total terror. The crocodile's breathing and heart metabolism are not suited to prolonged struggle, so the roll is an intense burst of power designed to overcome the victim's resistance quickly. The crocodile then holds the feebly struggling prey underwater until it drowns.

The roll was a centrifuge of boiling blackness that lasted for an eternity, beyond endurance, but when I seemed all but finished, the rolling suddenly stopped. My feet touched bottom, my head broke the surface, and, coughing, I sucked at air, amazed to be alive. The crocodile still had me in its pincer grip between the legs. I had just begun to weep for the prospects of my mangled body when the crocodile pitched me suddenly into a second death roll.

When the whirling terror stopped again, I surfaced again, still in the crocodile's grip next to a stout branch of a large sandpaper fig growing in the water. I grabbed the branch, vowing to let the crocodile tear me apart rather than throw me again into that spinning, suffocating hell. For the first time I realized that the crocodile was growling, as if angry. I braced myself for another roll, but then its jaws simply relaxed; I was free. I gripped the branch and pulled away, dodging around the back of the fig tree to avoid the forbidding mud bank, and tried once more to climb into the paperbark tree.

As in the repetition of a nightmare, the horror of my first escape attempt was repeated. As I leapt into the same branch, the crocodile seized me again, this time around the upper left thigh, and pulled me under. Like the others, the third death roll stopped, and we came up next to the sandpaper fig branch again. I was growing weaker, but I could see the crocodile taking a long time to kill me this way. I prayed for a quick finish and decided to provoke it by attacking it with my hands. Feeling back behind me along the head, I encountered two lumps. Thinking I had the eye sockets, I jabbed my thumbs into them with all my might. They slid into warm, unresisting holes (which may have been the ears, or perhaps the nostrils), and the crocodile did not so much as flinch. In despair, I grabbed the branch again. And once again, after a time, I felt the crocodile jaws relax, and I pulled free.

I knew I had to break the pattern; up the slippery mud bank was the only way. I scabbled for a grip, then slid back toward the waiting jaws. The second time I almost made it before again sliding back, braking my slide by grabbing a tuft of grass. I hung

there, exhausted. I can't make it, I thought. It'll just have to come and get me. The grass tuft began to give way. Flailing to keep from sliding farther, I jammed my fingers into the mud. This was the clue I needed to survive. I used this method and the last of my strength to climb up the bank and reach the top. I was alive!

Alive, but dangerously mangled

Escaping the crocodile was not the end of my struggle to survive. I was alone, severely injured, and many miles from help. During the attack, the pain from the injuries had not fully registered. As I took my first urgent steps, I knew something was wrong with my leg. I did not wait to inspect the damage but took off away from the crocodile toward the ranger station.

After putting more distance between me and the crocodile, I stopped and realized for the first time how serious my wounds were. I did not remove my clothing to see the damage to the groin area inflicted by the first hold. What I could see was bad enough. The left thigh hung open, with bits of fat, tendon, and muscle showing, and a sick, numb feeling suffused my entire body. I tore up some clothing to bind the wounds and made a tourniquet for my bleeding thigh, then staggered on, still elated from my escape. I went some distance before realizing with a sinking heart that I had crossed the swamp above the ranger station in the canoe and could not get back without it. I would have to hope for a search party, but I could maximize my chances by moving downstream toward the swamp edge, almost two miles away.

I struggled on, through driving rain, shouting for mercy from the sky, apologizing to the angry crocodile, repenting to this place for my intrusion. I came to a flooded tributary and made a long upstream detour looking for a safe place to cross. My considerable bush experience served me well, keeping me on course (navigating was second nature). After several hours I began to black out and had to crawl the final distance to the swamp's edge. I lay there in the gathering dusk to await what would come. I did not expect a search

party until the following day, and I doubted I could last the night.

The rain and wind stopped with the onset of darkness, and it grew perfectly still. Dingoes howled, and clouds of mosquitoes whined around my body. I hoped to pass out soon, but consciousness persisted. There were loud swirling noises in the water, and I knew I was easy meat for another crocodile. After what seemed like a long time, I heard the distant sound of a motor and saw a light moving on the swamp's far side. Thinking it was a boat, I rose up on my elbow and called for help. I thought I heard a faint reply, but then the motor grew fainter and the lights went away. I was as devastated as any castaway who signals desperately to a passing ship and is not seen.

The lights had not come from a boat. Passing my trailer, the ranger noticed there was no light inside it. He had driven to the canoe launch site on a motorized trike and realized I had not returned. He had heard my faint call for help, and after some time, a rescue craft appeared.

As I began my 13-hour journey to Darwin Hospital, my rescuers discussed going upriver the next day to shoot a crocodile. I spoke strongly against this plan: I was the intruder, and no good purpose could be served by random revenge. The water around the spot where I had been lying was full of crocodiles. That spot was under six feet of water the next morning, flooded by the rains signaling the start of the wet season.

I worked in Darwin for several months over a three-year period (2014-2017). Every six months an Aboriginal child would be killed by a saltie at a local swimming hole. Although I connected with paddling clubs everywhere else in Australia, and although Darwin sits on an ocean, there was no club in Darwin. There were only two people with kayaks in a city of about 150,000 people. I suspect the lack of interest had to do with the presence of large numbers of salties - Editor

Gratitude

In the end I was found in time and survived against many odds. A similar combination of good fortune and human care enabled me to overcome a leg infection that threatened amputation or worse. I probably have Paddy Pallin's incredibly tough walking shorts to thank for the fact that the groin injuries were not as severe as the leg injuries. I am very lucky that I can still walk well and have lost few of my previous capacities.

The wonder of being alive after being held - quite literally in the jaws of death has never entirely left me. For the first year, the experience of existence as an unexpected blessing cast a golden glow over my life, despite the injuries and the pain. The glow has slowly faded, but some of that new gratitude for life endures, even if I remain unsure whom I should thank. The gift of gratitude came from the searing flash of near-death knowledge, a glimpse "from the outside" of the alien, incomprehensible world in which the narrative of self has ended.

Other animals are food, but we aren't?

It seems to me that in the human supremacist culture of the West there is a strong effort to deny that we humans are also animals positioned in the food chain. This denial that we ourselves are food for others is reflected in many aspects of our death and burial practices. The strong coffin, conventionally buried well below the level of soil fauna activity, and the slab over the grave to prevent any other thing from digging us up, keeps the Western human body from becoming food for other species. Horror movies and stories also reflect this deep-seated dread of becoming food for other forms of life: Horror is the wormy corpse, vampires sucking blood, and alien monsters eating humans. Horror and outrage usually greet stories of other species eating humans. Even being nibbled by leeches, sandflies, and mosquitoes can stir various levels of hysteria.

This concept of human identity positions humans outside and above the food chain, not as part of the feast in a chain of reciprocity but as external

manipulators and masters of it: Animals can be our food, but we can never be their food. The outrage we experience at the idea of a human being eaten is certainly not what we experience at the idea of animals as food. The idea of human prey threatens the dualistic vision of human mastery in which we humans manipulate nature from outside, as predators but never prey. We may daily consume other animals by the billions, but we ourselves cannot be food for worms and certainly not meat for crocodiles. This is one reason why we now treat so inhumanely the animals we make our food, for we cannot imagine ourselves similarly positioned as food. We act as if we live in a separate realm of culture in which we are never food, while other animals inhabit a different world of nature in which they are no more than food, and their lives can be utterly distorted in the service of this end.

Reflection has persuaded me that not just humans, but any creature can make the same claim to be more than just food

Before the encounter, it was as if I saw the whole universe as framed by my own narrative, as though the two were joined perfectly and seamlessly together. As my own narrative and the larger story were ripped apart, I glimpsed a shockingly indifferent world in which I had no more significance than any other edible being. The thought, "This can't be happening to me, I'm a human being, I am more than just food!" was one component of my terminal incredulity. It was a shocking reduction, from a complex human being to a mere piece of meat. Reflection has persuaded me that not just humans, but any creature can make the same claim to be more than just food. We are edible, but we are also much more than edible. Respectful, ecological eating must recognize both

of these things. I was a vegetarian at the time of my encounter with the crocodile and remain one today. This is not because I think predation itself is demonic and impure, but because I object to the reduction of animal lives in factory farming systems that treat them as living meat.

Large predators like lions and crocodiles present an important test for us. An ecosystem's ability to support large predators is a mark of its ecological integrity. Crocodiles and other creatures that can take human life also present a test of our acceptance of our ecological identity. When they're allowed to live freely, these creatures indicate our preparedness to coexist with the otherness of the earth, and to recognize ourselves in mutual, ecological terms, as part of the food chain, eaten as well as eater.

Thus the story of the crocodile encounter now has, for me, a significance quite the opposite of that conveyed in the master/monster narrative. It is a humbling and cautionary tale about our relationship with the earth, about the need to acknowledge our own animality and ecological vulnerability.

Ed note: Plumwood spent a month in the hospital and required multiple skin grafts. This article originally appeared in the journal Quadrant, 29(3).

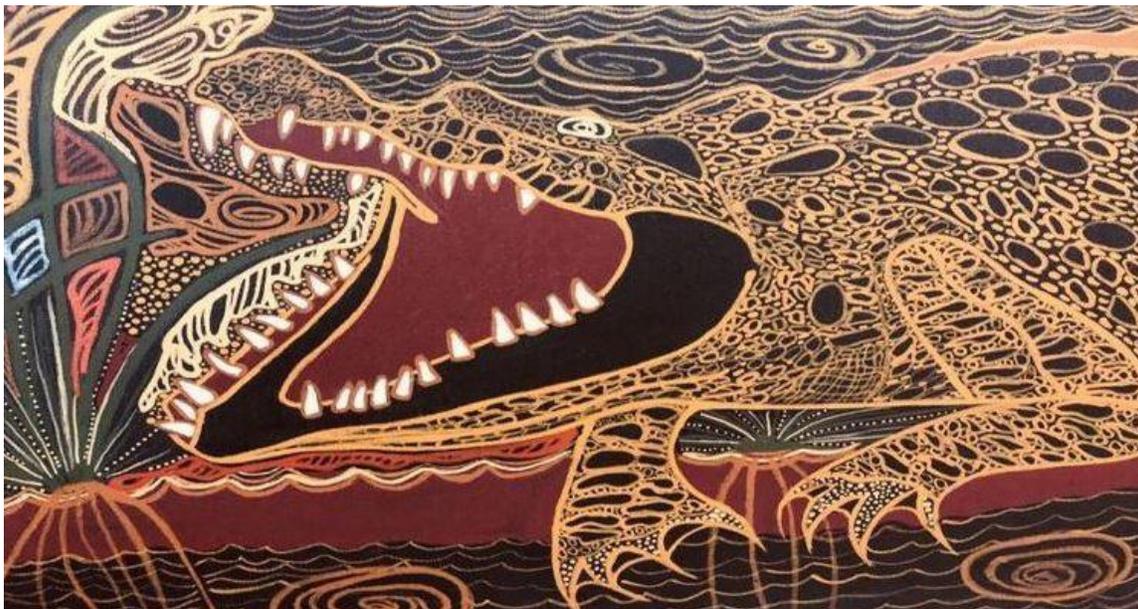
Saltwater Crocodiles

Are the largest reptile in the world. Adult males can grow to 20 feet and weigh as much as 2,000 pounds. They can live to be 60 – 80 years old.

They are found in northern Australia, Indonesia, SE Asia, Papua New Guinea, and into eastern India. There are an estimated 100,000 – 200,000 in tropical Australia. They hang out in brackish estuaries, river mouths, and the ocean in the dry season and move into fresher water in the wet.

They are carnivores, eating fish, crustaceans and small animals as well as large animals like water buffalo, sharks, anacondas and, occasionally, humans.

For more heart-warming stories of salties attacking human paddlers, see the November 2018 issue of Coastbusters.



Aboriginal art, Northern Territory. Courtesy of Readback Aboriginal Art

Mentoring: An Alternate Path to Instructor Certification

Ashley Brown, Rick Wiebush

There are various routes to becoming an ACA sea kayak instructor. The first step is the most common, but personal. It is falling in love with this sport! The second step is becoming competent, maybe paddling with a community group, friends, or solo, or maybe taking classes provided by an ACA Instructor. Once a paddler has decided they want to share their passion for paddling and become an instructor, the ACA has a structured path to follow. The criteria for Sea Kayak Instructor certification require (L3 and above) passing a skills assessment. Then the paddler moves into instructor certification courses. These are immersive workshops which, depending on the level of certification, may require up to 6 days to complete.

These workshops may take different forms. One approach involves a multi-day Instructor Development Workshop (IDW), during which, as part of a group of candidates, they learn and practice *teaching* skills. This is then followed by a subsequent a multi-day Instructor Certification Exam (ICE), during which – again, as part of a group of candidates - their teaching skills are assessed. An alternative approach combines the IDW and ICE segments into a single, continuous, and longer course, referred to as an Instructor Development Workshop (ICW).

Limitations and Barriers

Experience has shown that this model, while thorough, also has drawbacks. The first is *cost*. Since ICWs are multi-day events, the cost for a candidate can easily reach \$500 or more. Travel, housing and food add substantially to the cost. Moreover, if the structure involves both an IDW and a separate ICE, travel costs can be doubled.

The second barrier is *time*. At some of the higher certification levels (e.g., L3, L4, L5) an ICW or IDW/ICE may require four to six days. If the certification courses are being run at a venue distant from the candidate's home, participation can add another two days (or more) for travel. So under this model, people's vacation days can get eaten up pretty quickly.

A third constraint is the *availability* of certification courses in some areas, especially those that are less densely populated. It is an ACA requirement that any instructor certification course have a minimum of three participants. There may not be enough paddlers in a certain area that want to become instructors, or if there are, the candidates may not all be ready for the certification courses during the same general time frame. It is not unusual to hear an IT from the Midwest complain that although they offer instructor certification courses, they often have to cancel them because only one or two people want to – or are ready to – take them.

An Alternate Path

Recognizing these barriers, the ACA has developed an alternative to the process described above. That process is *mentoring*. The ACA describes it:

Alternatively, ITs and ITEs may mentor individual Instructor Candidates by co-teaching a minimum of three courses with a single candidate. All three courses must be at the desired level of certification and all aspects of an IDW and ICE must be appropriately covered and documented, using forms provided by the SEI Department. Only one instructor Candidate may be mentored during any one skills course.

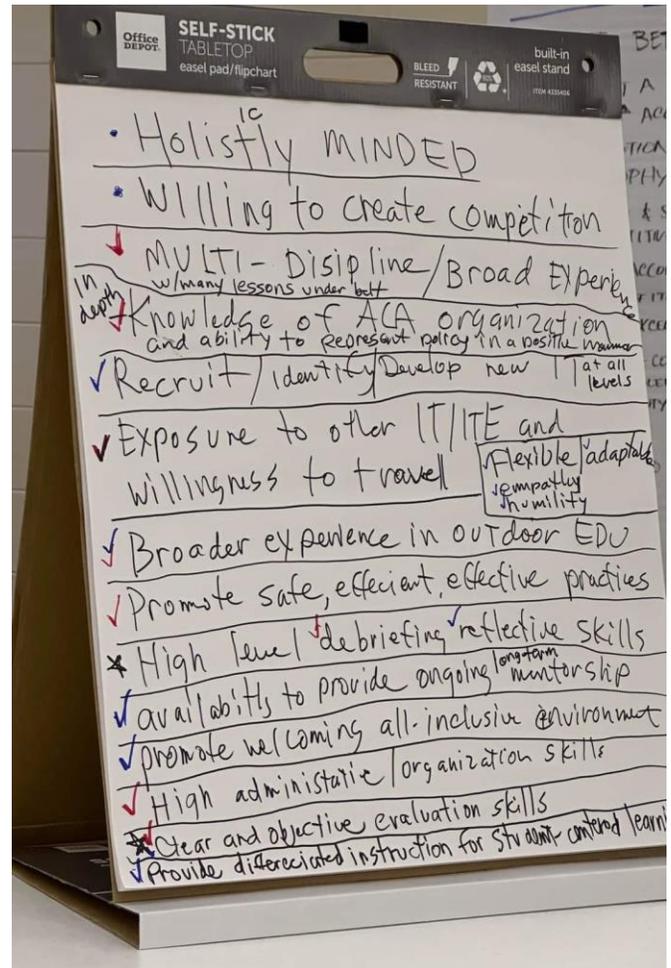
As an example, consider the IT who consistently works with an assistant who has the capability and interest to become an instructor, but not the resources (time, money) to attend an ICW. The IT would know this person's skills and judgment (including strengths and weaknesses) and recognize that they would make a good candidate. The two may develop a multi-step plan that would give the candidate a progressive level of responsibility for running the three classes, identify areas of weakness that need to be addressed, allow the IT to assess progress, and ultimately check off all the skills and judgment needed to be an instructor.

Pros

This alternative goes a long way to addressing some of the key barriers to certification. In order to work together teaching courses, the mentor (the IT) and the mentee (the candidate) likely would be from the same general area, thereby reducing travel costs and time. It also means that a candidate who is ready to proceed can do so without worrying that their certification course might be canceled due to an insufficient number of participants. Third, a candidate's costs for certification might be reduced if the IT takes the position that they will waive the cost of instructor training and assessment in return for having an unpaid assistant to help run the classes. (Note that this is an *option* and not necessarily universal practice.)

This mentoring path can be convenient for people who are already working together and know each other. Usually when people teach together, they are not assessing one another (at least not formally) but their leadership, judgment, and group management skills are apparent in the functioning of the class. If the IT is working with the candidate routinely, the IT is familiar with their skill level and rescue ability in the "real world" because they have been demonstrated in the context of actual classes rather than in the context of an ICW when situations that need to be dealt with are usually artificially constructed "scenarios".

Other positive elements associated with the mentoring path are that: 1) the IT has just one



Briefing. Photo: Marcel Bieg

instructor candidate to attend to in the assessment process and 2) that process takes place over an extended period of time. We both know from experience that it can be quite challenging to have to assess four or more candidates' viability as instructors when you have been working with them in a very concentrated and time-limited framework such as an ICW.

There is yet another argument for mentoring. In an ICW, candidates have very little time to work on new-to-them approaches to teaching and managing groups. If they learn something on the first or second day, they have little time to practice it and have it become ingrained. In contrast, the spread-out nature of a mentoring arrangement provides much more opportunity for practice, reflection, adjustments and the likelihood that newly-learned approaches will "stick".

Cons

The mentoring approach also has some potential downsides. First, since the progression is spread out, attaining certification will take longer than the traditional four to six-day ICW.

Second, the open-endedness might be frustrating for some unless there is a very clear plan that after an agreed-upon number of classes (at least three), a final assessment will be provided by the IT.

Ashley's approach has been to suggest a mentorship path only after seeing that the candidate has the required skill level to complete the certification within the three courses.

A third potential drawback is that because the candidate is a trusted contributor, there might be a tendency for the IT to not pay sufficient attention to them during the classes. For example, while surfing, if a rescue were necessary, Ashley would be paying more attention to the less-skilled student swimmer(s) than to the instructor candidate who is assisting. In contrast, during rescue "scenarios" in an ICW, she would be better able to attend to what the candidates are doing, without the same level of concern for the swimmer.

Finally, there is something to be said for being involved in instructor development and certification with other candidates. There is the sense of a joint venture, there are opportunities to learn from each other, and there is less pressure in one sense because there is no responsibility for "real" students. All that would be missed in the mentoring path.

Implications for diversity

In recent years, the ACA has placed a strong emphasis on promoting diversity, including among the ranks of instructors. As a result, it is reasonable to raise the question of the potential impact of the mentoring path on diversity. We think it has the potential to diversify the ranks of ACA instructors. Women, younger paddlers, and people with limited resources can benefit from an approach that does not require substantial outlays of money and time,

reduces the need for travel and associated costs, and depending on the arrangements, may not have to pay for training, and may even get paid to do it.

The following are generalizations but reflect reality. First, the paddling community is full of retired men with the financial means, and time, to travel for the purpose of instructor training via ICWs. In contrast, women, particularly women with children, tend not to travel to follow their hobbies at anywhere nearly the same rate as men. Instead, they tend to travel with their families, or for work.

Secondly, younger paddlers often don't have the resources, including their own boats and gear, to participate in an ICW. The mentorship model provides an opportunity for them to become instructors – and maybe even earn money - by training through local community recreation or college outdoor adventure programs that include a kayaking component.

To summarize, the mentoring model is a path to instructor certification that has enormous upside in terms of its flexibility, its potential to save people time and money, the greater access it provides to certification opportunities, and its potential to facilitate diversity.



Upcoming Events

Dates	Event	Location	Website
Feb 13 – 22	Key Largo to Key West	Key Largo , FL	Burnhamguides.com
March 5 - 11	The First Coast: Jacksonville Journeys	St. Mary's GA Jacksonville, FL	crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
May 19 - 21	Oceans 23	Southport, NC	chrisrezac.wixsite.com/kayakoceans
July 9 – 15	Alaska: People and Ecology of Place	Haines, AK	crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
July 12 - 16	Great Lakes Symposium	Grand Marais, MI	greatlakesseakayaksymposium.net
Sept. 20-21	Intermediate and Advanced Surf Camps	Cape Charles, VA	crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
Sept 22-24	Kiptopeke Symposium	Cape Charles, VA	crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
Sept 29 – Oct.1	Bay of Fundy Symposium	Lower Argyle, Nova Scotia	bofsks.com
Oct 5 - 8	Delmarva Paddlers Retreat	Lewes, DE	delmarvapaddlersretreat.org/
Oct. 19 - 21	Sea Kayak Georgia Symposium	Tybee Island, GA	seakayakgeorgia.com
Oct. 22 - 28	Explore The Georgia Barrier Islands	Savannah, GA	crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
Oct. 27 – 29	Autumn Gales Symposium	Stonington, CT	autumngales.com

Virginia's Northern Neck: A Plethora of Paddles

Rick Wiebush

The Landing

There we were. It wasn't a dark and stormy night, but it was a humid, sticky, blazing sun, 95 degree, hazy-air-on-the-creek day. In short, it was a Fourth of July weekend in Virginia's Northern Neck.

You know how, when a group of paddlers is trying to make a decision, three or four people get into debates over three different options for dealing with the situation, while the rest of the group is getting antsy, half-paddling around in circles or sitting, glazed over, the current slowly drifting them into the reeds? Well that's what it was like when we were trying to figure out how to land our boats at our destination - the winery. It was the second day of our trip to the Northern Neck.

Jacey Vineyards – a very nice place - sits on the water. Well, on a steepish hill up from the water. Our rental house was also directly on the water, complete with a two-foot wide sandy area from which to launch. Nice. The two places were separated by just seven miles of paddling. So the idea of paddling from the house to the winery for some lunch, supplemented with liquid refreshment, had been part of the plan from the beginning.

Pre-trip phone conversations with the owner revealed a strong mutual interest in the idea. Except: "oh wait, you're coming in *kayaks*?" He had a dock that extended 40 feet out into the creek, but it was about 10 feet above the water – not ideal for getting out of low-slung boats. Getting out directly on the shore wasn't advisable because it was suck muddy and steep. But, he assured us, he really wanted us to come so he would figure something out and create a landing spot for us at the shoreline.



Jacey's cove and hill. The website says: "we are one of few vineyards nationwide at which visitors can arrive by boat." They mean bigger boats. Photo: Courtesy Jacey Vineyards

That "landing spot" turned out to be a couple of wood pallets laying on the muddy bank. Which resulted in the extensive debate, head scratching, aimless drifting and, for some, a general irritation, when we arrived at the winery's new take-out. The general consensus however, was something along the lines of "how the fuck are we gonna do *this*?"

The answer was ugly, involving sacrifices to the mud, balancing acts on wooden slats, holding boats steady so people could get out on slippery, high-angle surfaces, fire-brigade type passing of boats, equipment, and people, and other adaptive strategies. Then lugging the boats 30 yards up a 45-degree angle hill. No problem.

But we made it, injury-free, and were now ready for lunch. The plan was to have a cook-out, so that morning we had dropped off a cooler filled with hamburger meat, brats, some fruit and salad stuff, etc. Ready for a picnic. We shuttled everything a



quarter mile over to the winery building. We went inside (ah... air conditioning!) and asked where we should set up to eat. Whereupon we were advised – after previously having had multiple phone calls and an onsite visit to go over the details – that bringing outside food inside wasn’t allowed. We were, however, more than welcome to use the outside grills and to eat outside at the umbrella-less picnic tables. Which seemed reasonable except for the fact that we were tired, hungry, muddy, wet, sticky, and the sun was directly overhead beating down with its 95-degree self.

We opted to skip lunch, and instead sit in the air conditioning for a couple of hours and drink wine. In spite of our troubles, everyone left reasonably happy. We also left a little early since we were advised that in celebration of the 4th, they would be having fireworks and “target practice” – at night; in the dark.

The Area

Virginia’s Northern Neck is one of three peninsulas (“necks”) on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. It’s bordered on the north by the Potomac River and on the south by the Rappahannock. It’s remote, it’s rural, it’s Trump country, it’s loaded with history, it has charming little towns, and it has a plethora of paddling options. In addition to the big rivers (Potomac, Great Wicomico, Rappahannock) and major points sticking out into the Bay (Windmill Point, Stingray Point), all of which can provide challenging conditions on windy days, it also has loads of creeks (e.g., Dividing, Indian, Dyer, Mill), and guts that reach deep into the inner reaches of the peninsula. In this area, you can find pretty much any type of paddling you want.

A large group from the Baltimore/DC area found what we wanted over this long Fourth of July weekend.



The big house; view from the put-in. Photo: Rick Wiebush

We rented two houses, one of which was a stunningly modern, huge estate that sat right on the water and from which we were able to launch directly into the Great Wicomico. A review of my paddling notes reminded me that it was also the scene of a great party on Saturday night (post winery) during which “two-thirds of the people were drunk”. At least that what my notes said.

We were about a half hour away from the town of Kilmarnock (pop. 1,500) which is the commercial center of the region, with a thriving downtown, a couple of hotels and grocery stores, and several restaurants.

During this long weekend, we were exploring the traditional lands of the Powhatan Confederacy, which numbered between 15,000 and 20,000 people when the British colonists arrived. The names of some of the individual tribes are familiar place names in the Northern Neck, including Pamunkey, Mattaponi, Chickahominy and Rappahannock. Those tribes are also federally recognized today.

The Paddling

In addition to our adventure at the winery (a trip which included paddling in and through the very cool Dameron Marsh Preserve), we did two other interesting paddles: a circumnavigation of Fleet’s Island on the Chesapeake and a crossing of the Potomac River, from Virginia to Maryland.

Circumnavigation of Fleet’s Island. When doing the circumnavigation of Fleet’s, one-third of the trip is on the Rappahannock and two-thirds is on the Chesapeake Bay. A small portion of it cuts through a wooded protected area that is reminiscent of paddling on Maryland and Virginia’s Eastern Shore. That inside section is interesting in that you must get the tides right in order to get through/under a bridge. If the tide is high, there is too much water and you can’t paddle under the bridge. If the tide is low, you can get under the bridge, but it’s too shallow to pass once you are on the other side. So mid-tide it is.



The beach on the north side of Fleets. Photo: Rick Wiebush

Most of the trip is on the north side of Fleet’s, on the exposed Chesapeake. We had almost no wind, but with 95-degree temperatures, wished we did. However, with a 10 + knot wind from any direction the Bay can get pretty choppy, especially around the extreme eastern tip of Fleet’s at Windmill Point. It’s only about six miles around, but with really nice beaches on the north side of the island, this was a nice little day trip. The put in is a public ramp that is next to the (private) Windmill Point Marina.



The inside section of Fleet's. Photo: Rick Wiebush

Potomac Crossing to Piney Pt., MD. This was a very different trip - open water the whole way and a nine nm round trip, crossing from Coles Pt. marina in Virginia to Piney Point in Maryland. The air was pretty still – and hot – once again, so it was flat the whole way. This area also can get pretty gnarly with any wind over 10 knots, but especially so if it's NW or SE, due to the fetch.

The chart shows a sunken German submarine about two-thirds of the way across. It turns out this was built by the Germans with an experimental synthetic rubber coating designed to thwart Allied sonar. It was turned over to the U.S at part of the surrender and taken to Portsmouth NH for research on the new coating. In 1949, it was towed to Piney Point and sunk with an experimental depth charge. It sunk in 20 seconds and ended resting on the bottom in 90 feet of water. It's not at all clear why Piney Point was chosen as the place to sink the sub.

On the Maryland side, you land at the Piney Point Lighthouse Park, Pier and Kayak Launch. That's the actual name. The lighthouse, built in 1835, is now a museum that is run by St. Mary's (MD) County. The park is a nice place to hang out and has a sandy beach that serves as an easy launch site.

Recommendation: Go

Paddlers from Maryland tend not to go to the Northern Neck very often. Before this trip, I had been there once in 20 + years of paddling. A big disincentive is that it takes 3.5 hours to get there and often much longer due to brutal weekend traffic on I-95 south of DC. But I'm really glad we did it. It's an interesting area with an unlimited number of places to paddle. I recommend putting it on your to-do list. One tip: if you want to go to Jacey's Vineyard – and you should – drive there.



Piney Point Light Photo: Rick Wiebush

Coastbusters Supplement:
Cross Currents 2023 Courses



The Boneyard, Georgia Barrier Islands Photo: Rick Wiebush

Day/Date	Course	Location	Instructors/Guides	Cost
I. Unconscious Competence Series				
May 21 – Aug. 26	UnCon I	Multiple	Rick Wiebush, Paula Hubbard, Laurie Collins	\$1,195 (12 days)
II. Individual Courses and Trips				
Wednesdays Mar 15 – Apr 26	Navigation for Paddlers (7 online sessions)	Your house + On water session Apr 29 Annapolis	Rick Wiebush, Paula Hubbard	\$295 (\$200 if no on-water session)
Sun – Sat Mar 5 – 11	The First Coast: Jacksonville Journeys	St. Mary's GA, Jacksonville, FL	Ashley Brown, Jeff Atkins, Rick Wiebush	\$695 + housing
Sat. Apr 29	On Water Navigation	Annapolis, MD	Paula Hubbard	\$125
Sat – Sun May 6 - 7	Pine Barrens Exploration, camping	Wading River, NJ	Rick Wiebush	\$175
Sat - Sun May 20 – 21	Intensive Intermediate Skills	Rocky Gorge Reservoir, Kent Narrows, MD	Denise Parisi, Shelly Wiechelt	\$225
Sat June 3	Intro to Kayaking	Spa Creek, Annapolis MD	Denise Parisi, Shelly Wiechelt	\$125
Thurs – Thurs June 1 -8	Outward Bound Staff Training (Private)	Lower Chesapeake Bay	Rick Wiebush	n/a
Sat – Sun June 17 - 18	Rescues, Rolling in Rough Water	Metompkin Inlet VA Eastern Shore	Mike Hamilton Greg Hollingsworth	\$225 + housing
Sat – Sun June 17 - 18	Paddle Smarter: Women's Weekend	Chestertown, MD	Paula Hubbard	\$225 + housing
Sat July 8	Intro to Kayaking	Spa Creek, Annapolis	Paula Hubbard	\$125
Sun – Sat July 9 - 15	Alaska: People and Ecology of Place	Haines, AK	Scott Ramsey, Rick Wiebush	\$1,395 + housing
Sat. July 15	Intro to Surf and Open Water, Pt I	Kent Island, MD	TBD	\$125
Sun July 24	Incident Management	Chestertown, MD	Paula Hubbard, Marilyn Cooper	\$125
Sat July 30 – Sun July 31	Intro to Surf and Open Water Pt II	Metompkin Inlet, VA Eastern Shore	TBD	\$225 + housing
Sat. Aug 5	Intro to Kayaking	Spa Creek, Annapolis	Denise Parisi , Shelly Wiechelt	\$125
Fri - Sun. Aug. 18 - 20	Introduction to Rocks and Ledges	Newport, RI	Rick Wiebush, Ken Fandetti	\$325 + housing
Sat – Sun Aug 19 - 20	Intensive Intermediate Skills	Rocky Gorge Reservoir, Laurel MD	Laurie Collins, Luci Hollingsworth	\$225
Weds - Thurs Sept. 20 - 21	Intermediate and Advanced Surf Camps	Cape Charles, VA	Dale Williams, Tom Noffsinger, Ashley Brown, Jeff Atkins	\$275 + housing
Fri – Sun Sept 22- 24	11th Annual Kiptopeke Symposium	Cape Charles, VA	Williams, Atkins, Brown, Noffsinger, Hamilton, Hubbard, etc	\$375 + housing
Fri – Sun Oct. 13 - 15	Ches. Bay and Intro to Kayak Camping	Onancock, VA	Rick Wiebush + TBD	\$295
Sun – Sat Oct 22 - 28	The Georgia Barrier Islands	Savannah, GA	Kathryn Lapolla, Rick Wiebush	\$695 + housing

The First Coast: Jacksonville
March 5 – 11



Cumberland Island, GA



Okefenokee Swamp

The NJ Pine Barrens
May 6 - 7



Wading River



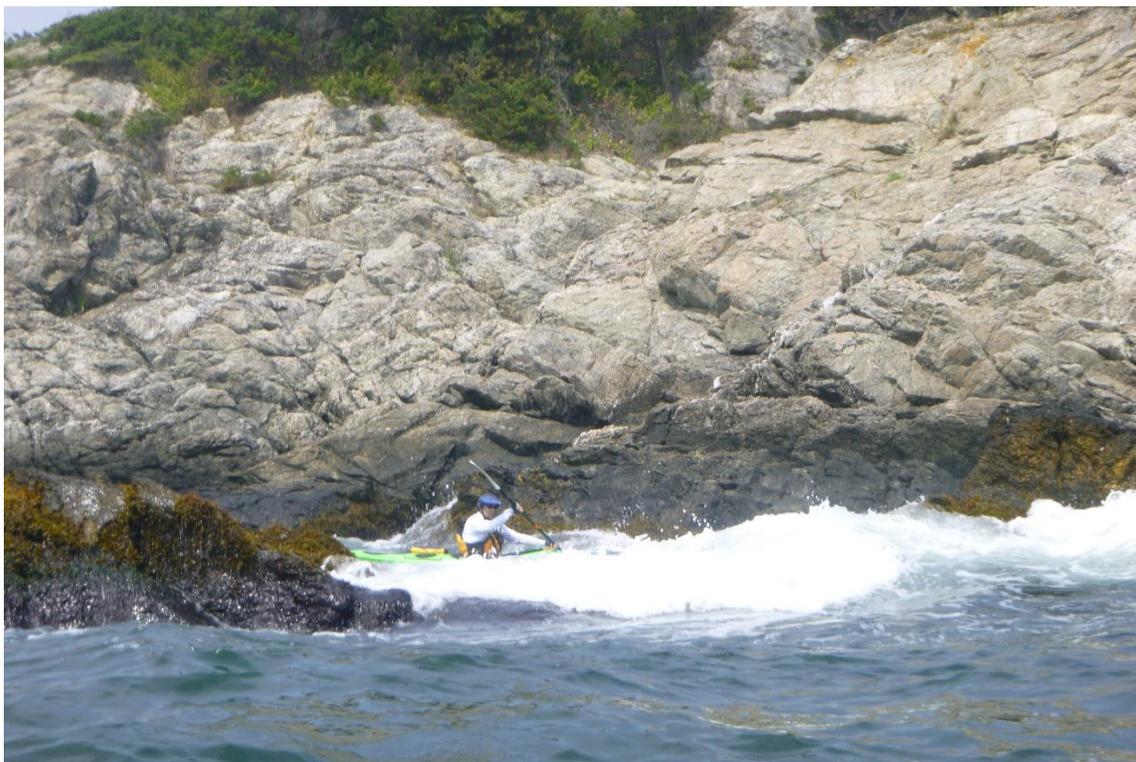
Campground

Haines, Alaska: People and Ecology of Place
July 9 - 15



Town of Haines

Rocks and Ledges in Rhode Island
August 18 - 20



*Surf Camps:
Intermediate and Advanced
Sept. 21 -22*



photo: Todd Bishop



The Georgia Barrier Islands
Oct. 22 – 28



Wassau Is



Ebenezer Creek



Jack's Cut

Contributors

Ashley Brown - is an ACA L5 instructor and L4 Instructor Trainer who teaches at the College of Charleston. She is also the Chair of ACA's Coastal Kayaking Committee and is a Wavepaddler.

Val Plumwood - was an Australian philosopher and ecofeminist known for her work on anthropocentrism. She held teaching positions at various institutions including North Carolina State University, The University of Wyoming, and the University of Sydney. She is the author of *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993) which is considered a classic, and *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (2002). She died in 2008 at the age of 69.

Scott Ramsey Ph.D. - is a faculty member in Prescott College's Sustainability Education Doctoral Program. He is a wilderness guide and an environmental educator who runs the Alaska Outdoor Science School in Haines, Alaska.

Rick Wiebush – runs *Cross Currents Sea Kayaking* and is the editor of *Coastbusters*. He is an ACA L3 IT and British Canoeing 4* Sea Leader. Rick lives in Baltimore.

Dale Williams – is an ACA L5 Instructor Trainer Educator. He owns and operates Sea Kayaking USA, through which he is the U.S. importer for Nigel Dennis' SKUK kayaks. He lives on Tybee Island, GA.

Coastbusters welcomes submissions of trip reports, incident descriptions and analyses, skills and “how-to” articles, boat and gear reviews, book and video reviews, and sea kayaking-related photographs. We are interested in receiving submissions from all paddlers. It just so happens that some of this month's contributors are instructors. That is not a requirement.

Articles should be limited to about 1,000 – 1,500 words and submitted in Word. Photos should be submitted in .jpg format. Please send your submissions to Rick Wiebush at rwiebush@gmail.com.

Coastbusters is a publication of *Cross Currents Sea Kayaking*