

Coastbusters

The Cross Currents Newsletter for Mid-Atlantic Paddlers

September 2018

Suffering in Hatteras

Randi Kruger

When Lee Toler suggested Dawn Stewart, Rob SanLuis and I circumnavigate Hatteras Island last year, I thought it sounded great. We would put in 15 to 25 miles a day, and tick off the estimated 115 miles needed to circle the island in six days of paddling. Lee had the whole thing planned out. All we needed to do was paddle, and take care of ourselves, food and shelter-wise.

Dawn and Lee are very experienced expedition paddlers. Rob has run many marathons, triathlons, and done century rides. Me? Not so much. And, I'm apparently not the sharpest tool in the shed. I've camped out of my boat many times. I've paddled five and six days in a row, camping along the way. But this time would be different. Yet I felt comfortable and confident as we packed and launched. Little did I know!

My first lesson in suffering was at lunch the very first day. Have you ever tried to land a fully loaded sea kayak in dumping shore break? Me neither.



Bigly surf break. Photo: Randi Kruger

After that, we decided we would lunch on the water for the rest of the ocean side of the trip. Too risky just to eat lunch. Lee also developed a launch and land strategy. He would shove us off, and catch us on the way in. From then on he was first on the beach and last to leave.

My next lesson in suffering was: Is there anything that sucks more than paddling 20 miles and then carrying loaded boats up the shore and away from the beach? Answer: no, there is not!

Paddling the second day I realized the NDK Latitude is not a good beast of burden. It is so fun, so playful, so surfable! What it's *not* is a boat you would use to grind out 115 miles. FML. Have you ever needed to tow someone and they complained that they really didn't need it? And yet they were creeping slowly back to the launch while you paddled in circles? Yes, that second day I was the snail; around mile 20, Lee and Rob towed me for about 20 minutes while I snacked and rested. The sun was outrunning us. I gratefully accepted the tow, otherwise I'm pretty sure "stash the body, split the gear," would have come into effect.

By mile 27 it was all I could do to land. First in was Lee, masterful as always. Bring in the clowns!

I watched Rob take an epic whupping, the kind of window shading that leaves an indelible memory. His loaded boat weighed close to 130 pounds and it rolled over and over on him before it was safe enough for Lee to drag him out of the break.

I'm looking at Dawn; she's looking at me. Sigh, I guess it's my turn in the box. As I jumped out of my boat on the (correct) ocean side, a wave grabbed it and the boat ran over me, knocking me down. It was like I'd been hit by a car, an angry wet car. I got up coughing, "I think I've broken my ankle. Shoot me now."

We still had to portage up the beach. At that point Lee suggested we carry the boats an additional 40 yards and stash them behind some dunes. MUTINY!! Dawn growls "Eff it, if somebody steals them, they can have 'em." If someone had called me an Uber, I'd have limped over, climbed in, and yelled "Adios suckers!"

Rob is relentlessly cheerful but even he began to suffer. His heels were a mess from the constant grinding of the sand. He was so bad off that he gratefully accepted the loan of my spare pair of socks. He said "how bad must it be that I'd wear hot pink socks?!"



and we were suddenly, safely, on the other side. We had "turned the corner."

We landed for a break on the beach, and truthfully, much of my suffering ended there, near the inlet. The next three days were a joy of tail winds and following seas. Lee said it was the first trip he'd been on where the slow paddlers got faster in the second half. He was looking at me.

Ah, it was sheer bliss. The euphoria of knowing I am going to finish; this was my reward.

We laugh about it now, all the self-imposed misery erased by achievement. The blisters on our hands, everyone's feet, the incredibly tight schedule, the question of locating our camp spots, the fearful launches and landings, it all adds up. It was incremental suffering, one dose after another.

But I would do it again, given the chance. Remember, I said I was "not the sharpest tool in the shed?"

Photo: Dawn, Randi, Rob, Lee (selfie)

Day 3 started with more dumping shore break. I managed to break out, through the face of a big dumper, unscathed. I should have been riding high, but mentally, I was very low. We were on an even tighter schedule this day. We had to make it to Hatteras Inlet on the flooding tide. This was on everyone's mind. We were only at the halfway mark and Lee was eyeballing me like a disapproving dad.

Hatteras Inlet is reputed to be one of the most dangerous on the East Coast. It did indeed look like a war zone as we approached it. Everyone sat up straight, and prepared for battle. Lee picked a line

<i>In This Issue</i>	
<i>Suffering in Hatteras</i> – Randi Kruger	1
<i>Paddling Southwest Ireland</i> – Whitney Sanford ...	3
<i>Photos of the Month</i>	6
<i>Skills: Clear the Decks!</i> – Tom Noffsinger	9
<i>Manhattan Madness</i> – Rick Wiebush	11
<i>Upcoming Events</i>	13
<i>The Sassafras Incident</i> – Paula Hubbard	14
<i>Our Back Yard: Mattaponi</i> – Mark Baskeyfield....	15

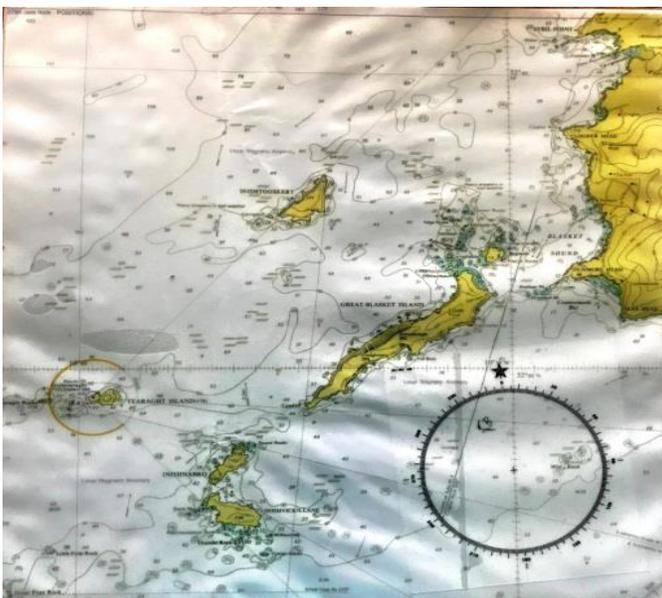
Paddling the Dingle Peninsula in Southwest Ireland

Whitney Sanford

Caves, puffins, and clapotis...the Dingle Peninsula in southwest Ireland is a kayaker's dream; a bucket list destination for many. In an uncharacteristically warm and sunny July, our group of eleven explored arches, islands, and headlands in Dingle's coastal waters by day and frequented pubs by night.

With an all-star team of Dale Williams and Debbie Kearney of Tybee Island, Georgia and Nigel Dennis and Eila Wilkinson of Holyhead, Wales, how could our trip not be great?

On our first day, we launched for a shake-down paddle along the coast. We shared our launch with a group of Irish children taking swimming lessons. Clad in wet-suits, groups of children jumped off the pier to tread water, a good exercise for those living close to cold water. (I felt very warm in my dry suit.) Seeing the children and the boats around the harbor reminded me how much Ireland's history, culture, and economy is tied to the sea. I learned more about Ireland's marine heritage when we paddled to the Blasket Islands later that week.



The Blasket Islands

For many visitors to the Dingle Peninsula, visiting the Blasket Islands is a highlight. Arriving by kayak made it even better. After surveying the tidal flow, we set our ferry angle and paddled the 45 minutes to Beginish Island, then to Great Blasket itself.

Just offshore, seals were swimming around the rocks, popping up around us like Whac-A-Mole; sometimes they surprised us, and sometimes we surprised them. After visiting the seals, we landed on the sandy beach of Great Blasket. The blue water was so clear, so Caribbean-like that I finally gave into temptation and went for a swim—in my dry suit.

From the beach, we climbed up a steep path to a group of stone buildings.



Settlement on Great Blasket Photo: Whitney Sanford

We heard rumors of coffee, and they were true! One building held a much welcome coffee and snack shop, which we all appreciated. A smaller unpainted building housed a weaver who spun her own wool and knitted scarves and hats. She lives on the island through the summer, until fall storms halt the ferry service. I bought a hat made from the wool of a Jacob sheep, a four-horned sheep that called Bezelbub to mind.



Jacob Sheep: Photo: Whitney Sanford

Great Blasket has no permanent residents now, but until 1953, islanders fished and farmed the island. Only ruins remain of their homes, but I can only imagine how difficult it was to eke out a living on that rocky soil.

The Blasket Islanders: Warm, But Tough

“The islanders were warm, welcoming and hospitable people with a high moral code based on their own superstitions and traditions as much as the teachings of the church, but they were also liberal, playful, earthy and mortal. They practised a form of rough justice that could be brutal at times.

Women were generally not allowed to speak up and at least one was abducted against her will to be married to an older man. They were feisty, resisting assaults on their liberty by throwing rocks to sink landing boats or – on one memorable occasion – driving away a bailiff by shoving a pair of shears up his rear end.”

- Cole Moreton

The Blaskets consist of six islands. One of the smaller Blaskets—Tearaght—loomed in the distance, almost taunting us. When Eila planted the seed of paddling beyond Great Blasket to Tearaght, I couldn’t resist. It would be a big day, but it also a big adventure.

We were on the water crossing to Beginish by 9 am, early for us. We passed the seals and paddled along the outer coast of Great Blasket, exploring caves and arches along the way. After several hours, we crossed from Great Blasket to Inishbro, where the caves, arches, and cliffs became even more spectacular. One cave looked like a cathedral. The tall cliffs, the swell of the ocean, and the birds—the experience was overwhelming at times, it was that beautiful.



Tearaght Arch. Photo: Whitney Sanford

The crossing from Inishbro to Inishvickillane involved a channel where the current, oddly, consistently runs in a westerly direction. A small landing served a lunch spot while a baby seal provided our lunchtime entertainment. Fortunately, the wind and tide remained favorable for the hour-long crossing to Tearaght.

We had seen puffins earlier, but nothing could have prepared us for the avian show on our crossing to Tearaght. Puffins and gannets flitted overhead and dove around us. It reminded me of being in a butterfly garden—but with puffins!

Reaching Tearaght felt like a real accomplishment. The island rises sharply from the sea—there were no easy natural landing spots.



Buildings on (almost) inaccessible Tearaght Photo: Whitney Sanford

The lighthouse on the island is the westernmost building in Europe and sits 84 meters high. Tearaght also boasts the steepest railway in Europe. I'm still not sure why it was built in the first place.

Our return paddle was a slog and we certainly earned our Guinness that day!

The following morning, our final day in Dingle, our luck changed. Clear skies gave way to wind and clouds, more characteristic of Ireland's weather. We had been remarkably lucky. Dale warned us that Dingle's steep cliffs make it a committed paddle; heavy weather could have kept us off the water for days. Our group has trained in rough water skills, navigation, and tides, so we could play in the swell, rocks, and clapotis. But we also know our limits.

So, on our last day, we played around rocks, caves, and arches near the entrance to Dingle Harbor. We rode swells through arches and explored deep caves. Paddling back to the harbor, a fierce headwind reminded us how lucky we had been.

I loved the paddling, but there was so much more—traditional music in pubs, Guinness, and walking along cliffs. What made the trip great, though, was the people, the smiles, and the laughter. Some old friends, some new. That's why I'm already planning my return.



Exploring Dingle's caves. Photo: Whitney Sanford

Photos of the Month



Haystacked in the Pacific!

Photo: Bill Vonnegut

Photos of the Month



Abandoned in the Atlantic!

Photo: R. Dennis Green

Photos of the Month



Stylin' on Deck!

Photo: Rick Wiebush

Skills: Clear The Deck

Tom Noffsinger

There's an old naval expression, "Clear the Decks," that urges seamen to stow gear, leave the deck of the ship and prepare for battle. That same mentality applies to sea kayakers, particularly as you start paddling in rougher conditions. You're not preparing for exchanging cannon fire, but if you have lots of gear on your deck, you may be in for a different kind of battle altogether.

I'm a big advocate of having as little gear on the deck of my boat as possible when on an open water paddle, or even when teaching or leading trips on flat water. The reasons are simple – safety and efficiency. The more items I have on my deck, the more there is to get in the way.

Bilge pumps, paddle floats, deck bags, water bottles, camera cases and all the other stuff that some paddlers carry on their deck can snag lines when towing, get in the way of having someone climb on the back deck for a rescue or may snag a PFD during a layback roll. The biggest issue seems to be interference with t-rescues, specifically people trying to get up on their back decks.



Everything but the kitchen sink

Frequently when I see people practicing t-rescues, they either:

- cannot get up on the deck at all due to the clutter or,
- they remove the items and hold them in their hands while trying to get up on the back deck (!) or,
- they remove the items and throw them into the cockpit, only to have to remove them again in order for the paddler to re-enter the cockpit or,
- if they do get up on the cluttered rear deck, they have a hard time sliding their bodies around to get into the cockpit because a PFD strap gets caught on the pump, or something else is digging into their chest or side.
- If you ever have to do a t-rescue in a serious situation, you do not want any extra steps or have gear flying around (whether you are the swimmer or the rescuer).

Things like pumps and paddle floats also are the first to go when waves start breaking over the bow or when someone capsizes.

When things get dicey, that's when you need to focus attention on the water, bracing, your paddling buddies, and effectively maneuvering the boat. The last thing you want distracting you is having to chase down gear that has washed off the deck.

With a little planning, you can keep your deck very clear. On an open water crossing, I may have a chart (in a chart case clipped to the deck line and under

the bungee), a contact tow securely fastened to the deck line, and a spare paddle under the bungees in the stern. That's it. Everything else can be strategically placed, so it's there when you need it, and out of the way when you don't.

Pumps, sponges and paddle floats can be stored securely alongside or behind the seat (see photo), or under your deck.



Paddle float behind the seat

You may need to fashion a mini-cell "holder" and glue it to the underside of your deck (see photo), cut down the pump height, or rig some bungee in a zigzag under the deck, but you can get it all there. After all, the only time you will need those items is likely when the spray skirt is already off the boat.



Under deck mini-cell pump holder.

Note: this article originally appeared in "Kayak Tom", Tom Noffsinger's website.

Water bottles can be stored in the day hatch, or better yet, use a hydration bladder on your PFD or stored behind the seat with the tube running up through your skirt tunnel. Hydration bladders let you drink more often without stopping to fuss with a water bottle, and in the case of a PFD-mounted option, you have water even if you don't have your boat for some reason.

Snacks go in a PFD pocket, along with your radio and camera. If your pocket isn't big enough, consider clipping the radio to your PFD, similarly to how you might clip it to a belt (make sure the antenna won't put your eye out!). Having the radio on your person is much better than watching this critical rescue device sink if you go over or float away if you get separated from your kayak.

For me, extra paddles go on the stern, under the bungees, with the power face facing up. I know the arguments of keeping them on the front deck (e.g., easier to reach). I've had paddles come loose from there too many times in the surf, but it has happened rarely when I've stowed them on the stern deck. There are devices (leggings, extra bungee loops) that help keep them more secure on the front deck, but that's more complication in my mind. I've never had to recover a split paddle and roll up, and I'd argue that if I'm good enough to pull out half a paddle, get it oriented and roll up with it, I can probably practice enough to recover it just as well from the stern as from the bow.

The exception to this rear deck preference is if I have a Greenland paddle—because of its length, I can put far more of it under the multiple bungees on the front deck and it is more secure there.

The next time you go paddling, give your boat a once-over before you launch and look for ways to de-clutter your deck, rather than adding to it. This can be a great conversation with your paddling partners, too – talk about how and where you store your gear. Instead of talking about the cool new piece of kit, brag about where you store it out of the way!



Manhattan Madness

Rick Wiebush

“We are flying up this river!” somebody hollered as we cranked along with the current up the East River toward the end of our Manhattan circumnavigation on July 14. And it turned out we *were* flying – just 65 minutes to cover the six nautical miles from our little quick-break beach under the Brooklyn Bridge to our take out point at Hallett’s Cove next to the infamous Hell’s Gate. Those were 11 minute miles and a wonderful way to wrap up our 27-mile circumnavigation!

Yes, we were all pretty tired, but the seven hours on the water with just two breaks was way worth it. Most of our local paddling environments all feel mostly horizontal – not just the broad expanses of the Chesapeake Bay or Atlantic Ocean, but also the

the flatness of the land, and our far-as-the-eye-can-see salt marshes and barely-visible-above-the-horizon sandy islands. But Manhattan is a paddle that offers some impressive *vertical* dimensions: from the multitude of elaborate bridges stretching above our boats across the East and Harlem Rivers, to the soaring George Washington Bridge, and the stunning, huddled skyscrapers stretching upward from downtown streets. This is a very different kind of paddle in part because you’re always looking up!

In addition to the visual stimuli, there is the whole detailed planning aspect of the trip that makes it a fun challenge. You have to pick the right put in and you have to time the currents properly. If you do, the boost you get from the 2 -3 knot current will

make the 27 miles seem more like 18. But if you don't get it right, you're screwed because no one can paddle against those currents for very long. You simply won't make it.



Planning Problems

Planning this year's trip ran into a series of unanticipated obstacles, and it felt like each "solution" was undermined by yet another new challenge. From a planning perspective it was Manhattan Madness.

The initial plan was to put in at the Red Hook section of Brooklyn on June 17. The put in was great. The timings were right. But we subsequently learned we might not be able to make it around due to reconstruction of a bridge. The Spuyten Duyvil Amtrak bridge at the northern tip of Manhattan was due to be dismantled that week. The Coast Guard was closing the Harlem River in that area while the work was going on. The contractor informed us that there was a chance they'd be done by that Saturday, but they couldn't guarantee it since bad weather could make the work spill over into the weekend of the 17th. Given that level of uncertainty, there was no way we could "plan" the trip for that date. It was back to the drawing board.

July 14 was the next available date when the tides would work for a departure from Red Hook, so we decided to shoot for that. But wait – not so fast. When I told a Brooklyn friend the new plan, he

emailed me to advise that there was "some type of event" going on in Red Hook that date that "could affect our plans".

Following the link he provided, his warning proved to be understated. It turned out there was indeed an "event" – namely a Grand Prix race that was closing half the streets in Brooklyn! I called to get more information and spoke to a guy by the name of Tony. He said – I am not making this up - "hey pal, don't even fu*kin' think about trying to drive into Red Hook that weekend". Given that level of certainty, it was again back to the drawing board.

Luckily, there was another possible put in in Queens and it turned out that we could still make it happen for July 14 by putting in there. But the timings were such that we would have to push it, limiting ourselves to two 20 minute breaks during the 27-mile trip. Not ideal, but this was getting frustrating! We decided to go for it.

After getting on the water that morning, things went well for about 12 minutes. Then, to our horror, we saw a string of power boats inching their way north through Hell's Gate. It looked like they were slogging *against* the current. But if the timings were right, it should have been slack and they shouldn't be struggling like that! How could I have made such a mistake?

Well, what we were seeing was a totally-unknownst-to-us event: swimmers who were also circumnavigating, and who were being escorted by power boats! The boats weren't struggling against the current; they were just keeping pace with their swimmers. Phew! The timings were right!

This surprise event had no impact on us (nor we on it), and actually added an interesting dimension to the trip. Although we outpaced individual swimmers, their group was so spread out that we accompanied one or more of them up the Harlem River and the whole way down the Hudson. It was pretty cool to be one of two very different groups of people taking up the same (successful) circumnavigation challenge on the same day.



Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Location	Sponsor	Website
Sept 15-16	ACA L1/2 Instructor Symposium	Rock Hill, SC	ACA	Americancanoe.org
Sept. 21 - 23	Kiptopeke Symposium	Cape Charles, VA	Cross Currents	crosscurrentsseakayaking.com/symposium
Oct. 4 - 7	Delmarva Paddlers Retreat	Lewes, DE	Qajaq, USA	Delmarvapaddlersretreat.org
Oct. 12 - 14	Low Country Gathering	Charleston, SC	Cross Currents	Crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
Oct 14 - 18	Sea Kayak Georgia Symposium	Tybee Island, GA	Sea Kayak Georgia	Seakayakgeorgia.com
Oct 26 - 28	Midcoast Sea Kayak Rendezvous	Boothbay Harbor, ME	Seacliff Kayakers	Seacliffkayakers.com
Nov. 2- 4	Autumn Gales	Stonington, CT	Kayak Waveology	Kayakwaveology.com

“There We Were”: The Sassafras Incident

Paula Hubbard

She was upside down in her boat and things didn't look right: no swimmer, no set up for a roll, no tapping the hull for help - just some banging around and confused bouncing of the boat. Uh-oh! We were in a class on the Sassafras River on the Maryland Eastern Shore and things were starting to go downhill.

One of the most frightening things for a kayak instructor or trip leader is to have a student capsize and become trapped in his or her boat. Recently that happened to me. The paddler was not a beginner, she was using her own equipment, and had done wet exits previously; there were no indicators to suggest that we might have a problem. We were getting ready to practice assisted rescues and Denise, one of the assistants in the class, was working with her.

According to Denise, this is what happened:

“I was positioned at the bow of the student's boat preparing to demonstrate a bow rescue. The student mentioned that she wanted to attempt a skill that she was unable to adequately describe and did not know what it was called.

Before we could discuss it further, the student was upside down. This pretty clearly was not the skill she was interested in practicing. But she didn't come out of her boat. Recognizing that we had a problem, I attempted to right her boat, but was unable to do so from my position at her bow. I maneuvered alongside her boat grabbing deck-lines to pull her up a bit and help her get some air. I got her head out of the water and asked if she knew how to wet exit - she replied “yes”, but said she could not pull her skirt. (She later said that it felt like her right arm was trapped under the boat and that she couldn't reach the grab loop with her left hand.)

I was still in front of the cockpit and it was difficult to maintain my hold from this angle. So I slid along her boat to get to the cockpit to do a Hand if God rescue. I pushed down on the near side of her boat and grabbed the far combing to pull her upright. Her position in the boat (butt out of the seat) and the fact that she was trying to keep her head above water prevented me from completing the HOG. But I was able to hold her boat on enough of an angle to allow her to continue breathing. Then Paula pulled into position with her bow.”

While Denise was attempting the HOG, I quickly went to the other side of the student's boat and had her grab

my bow. Fortunately, she was able to hear and follow instructions. After a moment to relax, Denise and I got her boat upright. At that point we were stable, everyone breathing air, and everything was OK.

The entire incident probably took less than a minute, but felt like forever.

What causes spray skirt entrapment? In this case the spray skirt was very tight, the paddler was out of position and twisted, she couldn't get into the tuck position, and she couldn't release the skirt. Other causes might be an inaccessible grab loop or panic on the paddler's part.

As trip leaders and instructors, we need to be aware of and plan for the potential problems associated with wearing spray skirts. We sometimes take for granted that people who wear a skirt are comfortable with wet exits and have practiced them. But that's not necessarily the case. For newer paddlers on flat water, the plan may be to not even wear spray skirts. I would rather deal with water splashing into the cockpit than entrapment and a panicking paddler.

The Hand of God rescue can be difficult for some because of boat design and/or weight differences. In this case, it was hard to get the boat upright because the student was lifting her head and struggling.

One option may be to try to remove the skirt so that the paddler can just fall out of the boat. Other members of the group might be able to assist with a bow rescue, or by helping get the skirt off. A knife to cut the skirt would be a last resort; you can cause serious injury if you cut through a skirt and into the paddler's legs.

Prevention of entrapment should be a very high priority. Many newer paddlers don't seem to like to practice wet exits. For many it's an uncomfortable experience, but the ability to capsize, remain calm, go through the steps to remove the spray skirt and get out of the kayak is a critical skill. And remember, doing something once isn't mastering the skill. Any time you get new equipment, go practice... new boat, practice wet exits, new skirt, practice... beginning of the season, practice... during rescue practices, do a real wet exit, and don't just jump out of your boat.

In Our Backyard: Mattaponi Creek and the Upper Patuxent*Mark Baskeyfield*

Fifteen adventurers started off one early July morning on Maryland's Patuxent River from an area called Selby's Landing in Patuxent River Park. This is adjacent to the Jug Bay Natural Area and is located just south east of Upper Marlboro, Maryland. The endgame of this outing was to explore Mattaponi Creek and the Upper Patuxent River.

The group departed Selby's landing, headed south and east a few miles, and then veered up into Mattaponi Creek (named after long-forgotten local native Mattaponi Indians that inhabited and explored this area in the early 1600's). Lots of flowering plants were blooming, including water lilies and water hibiscus - known locally as Marsh Mallow.



Marsh Mallow. Photo: Mark Baskeyfield

Perhaps the best thing in “peak bloom” was the wild rice that has taken over these marshy wetland areas. The rice was planted many years ago by Maryland Fish and Game authorities to encourage birdlife and water fowl.

The group kept paddling well past a wooden bridge (see photo) into areas only reachable by kayak – and only during high tide periods. Yes, even though this area is miles away from the Chesapeake Bay, the navigable waters are influenced by the tides.

The distant end of the meandering Mattaponi is slowed considerably by thick marsh grasses, fuzzy brown cattails, blooming algae, rice fields, as well as beaver dams. These industrious river rodents find these remote areas perfect for damming and rearing young.

With exploration of Mattaponi Creek complete, the group circumnavigated a small island topped by a craggy tree with an abandoned Osprey nest. Heading back north up the main Patuxent River channel, we again passed the put-in at Selby’s, and entered Jug Bay proper with its’ 350 acres of shallow water that in most places is only a foot deep.

Along the way snowy white egrets, ospreys still with their young, American bald eagles, great blue herons, kingfishers, and flocks of red-winged blackbirds were spotted. (Over 250 bird species have been spotted in the Jug Bay area and 100 of those are nesting birds.) Additionally, there were schools of jumping fish and the occasional splashing carp, catfish and bass that were leaping to devour bugs on the calm warm waters.



Wooden bridge with glowing wild rice. Photo: Mark Baskeyfield.

After what seemed like a long, hot paddle, the lunch destination - Mt. Calvert House - was in view. The group soon landed at the estate, enjoyed sack lunches and cool beverages in the shade, then took time to stretch cramped legs and explore this well-preserved stately mansion.



Calvert House. Photos: Mark Baskeyfield.

Mount Calvert is a significant historical and archaeological site in Prince George's County. Archaeological evidence shows that American Indians were present from about 1000 BC through 1600 AD. Early hunters and gathers visited the Upper Patuxent River to harvest the river's natural resources. Later, Woodland Indians farmed the land and lived in permanent villages along the river until the 1600's when European settlers arrived.

Between the 1780s and 1860s, Mount Calvert was a tobacco plantation that depended on slave labor. By the mid-1800s, fifty-one enslaved African-Americans lived and worked on-site.

After lunch the group pushed their kayaks back into the water and headed even further up river to where it branches into smaller shaded waters called the Western Branch. In addition to sassafras, oak, maple and other scrub brush and trees, we noted many native Paw Paw trees complete with fruit flourishing in these shaded moist areas.

(Pawpaw fruits are the largest edible fruit indigenous to the United States. Pawpaw fruits have a sweet, custardish flavor somewhat similar to banana, mango, and cantaloupe, and are commonly eaten raw, but are also used to make ice cream and baked desserts. Source: Wikipedia)

The group took some time to paddle further upstream until fallen trees and debris completely blocked the narrow, dark passage. By now the tides had turned and the river's currents could be felt against the boats. We headed back, having successfully explored the Mattaponi and the upper edges of the Patuxent's Western Branch – a paddling paradise less than an hour from Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

If you go:

Trip Length: Approximately 10 - 12 NM
Launch Point: Selby's Landing
State/County: MD/Prince George's
Water Body: Patuxent River/Jug Bay
Address: 16000 Croom Airport Road
 Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
Ramps: Concrete and soft launches
Port-a-Potties: Yes
Launch Fee: No
Parking: 25 vehicles



Heading south on the West Branch towards Selby's Landing. Photo Mark Baskeyfield.

Contributors

Mark Baskeyfield lives in Maryland and has paddled just about EVERYWHERE

R. Dennis Green lives in NoVa, is an avid rough water paddler, and an outstanding photographer.

Paula Hubbard lives on Maryland's Eastern Shore and is an ACA L4 instructor.

Randi Kruger is an L4 instructor who lives in the DC area and runs Capital City Kayak.

Tom Noffsinger is an ACA L5 instructor, a sea kayak surfing aficionado, and is transitioning to life on a boat moored in Portsmouth, VA.

Whitney Sanford is an L4 instructor and Religion Professor at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

Bill Vonnegut runs Pacific Coastal Kayak, is an L5 instructor, and lives in the San Francisco Bay area.

Rick Wiebush runs Cross Currents Sea Kayaking. He lives in Baltimore and is an ACA L3 IT.

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 most of this month's contributors are instructors. That is not a requirement.

Articles should be limited to about 750 – 1,000 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