

Coastbusters

The Cross Currents Newsletter for Mid-Atlantic Paddlers

November 2020

Georgia's Barrier Islands and the Low Country

Laurie Collins

Trips out to Georgia's barrier islands are always tidal dependent. With a 7 to 10-foot tidal range, you have to plan things carefully to get a big boost going out with the ebb and riding the flood back. Get the tides wrong and you either don't get to where you want to go, or if you do get there, getting back is almost impossible.

Cross Currents just finished two weeks in the dynamic and spectacularly varied setting of

Georgia's low country. Two different groups each spent a week paddling in the surf, open ocean, marshes, and creeks of coastal Georgia. A really special treat was that we had the advantage of having with us Kathryn Lapolla, a great local guide who knows the flora, fauna and history of the area inside and out. Both groups enjoyed alternately invigorating and relaxing – and always interesting – paddling venues.

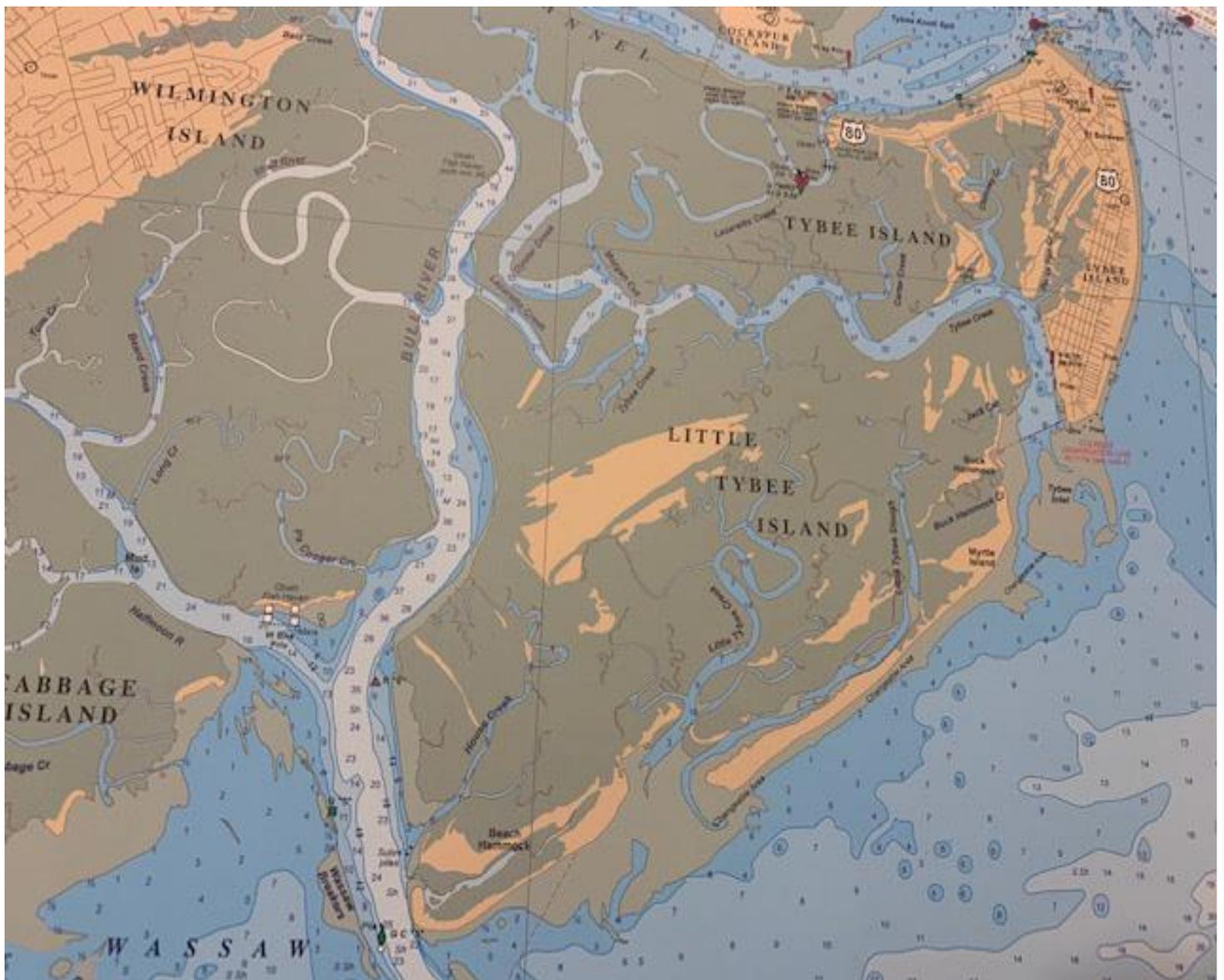


Riding the ebb out to Wassaw Island. Photo; Laurie Collins

The Barrier Islands

Georgia's barrier islands stretch the length of the state (over 100 miles), from Tybee and Little Tybee near Savannah in the north, down to Cumberland Island at the Georgia-Florida border in the south.

Those in the northern portion of the chain (Little Tybee, Wassaw, Ossabaw, Sapelo and others) are protected and totally undeveloped. On these late October trips, we explored Little Tybee, Williamson, and the north and south ends of Wassaw.



The remains of cedar, oak, palmetto, and pine trees rise out of the sand on Wassaw Island's "boneyard beach."



Photo: Laurie Collins



Photo: Rick Wiebush

Although the conditions weren't great (surf and winds way too big some days and totally flat others), we did manage to get in some good sessions with decent rides. Dale Williams (surfing below) joined us.



Photo: Rick Wiebush



Photo: Kathryn Lapolla



The second group on a gigantic oyster shell hill created by wind and tide. Photo: Rick Wiebush



The trips out to the islands (up to 18nm round trip) made for long days. Photo: Bonnie Gease

The Salt Marshes

The ocean is the front side of the barrier islands. The backside consists of marshes that stretch for miles, interrupted only by serpentine tidal creeks, some quite wide, others you have to squeeze through, like Jack's Cut (shown below).

What's cool is that you can include ocean and salt marsh in the same day's paddle.

Back in the marshes, shore birds stand quiet sentry or wheel overhead; dolphins cruise, dive, and leap periodically.



Photo: Rick Wiebush



Photo: Kathryn Lapolla



Photo: Rick Wiebush

Ebenezer Creek

Ebenezer Creek is a tributary of the Savannah River located about 20 miles north of Savannah. It's a designated "Wild and Scenic" river; a black water river swamp, lined with towering bald cypress and virgin tupelo trees. It is a bottomland forest in which the "knees" of the cypress reach 10 – 12 feet in height, dwarfing the one-foot knees seen in

places like the Pocomoke River or Okefenokee Swamp. It inspires awe and reverence, fixing humans' place in nature. But it also offers some playfulness since the flooded forest allows you to paddle amongst the trees that are hundreds of years old.

It is an absolutely stunning place.



Photo: Rick Wiebush



The cypress trees are all hollow. Photo: Wendy Adams



Paddling in the cypress maze. Photo: Kathryn Lapolla

Finishing off the two weeks with a full moon paddle on the Moon River (yes, *that* Moon River) on Halloween



Photo: Kathryn Lapolla

In This Issue

Georgia Barrier Islands and the Low Country – <i>Laurie Collins</i>	1
A Death at Opeongo Lake – <i>Glenn Wallace</i>	6
Thunderstorm Prediction and Monitoring – <i>Mark Thornton</i>	12
Photos of the Month	16
Respect and Reconciliation – <i>Rick Wiebush</i>	19
Incident at Metompkin Inlet: The Hole Story – <i>Ray O</i>	24
Contributors	29

A Death at Opeongo Lake

Glenn Wallace

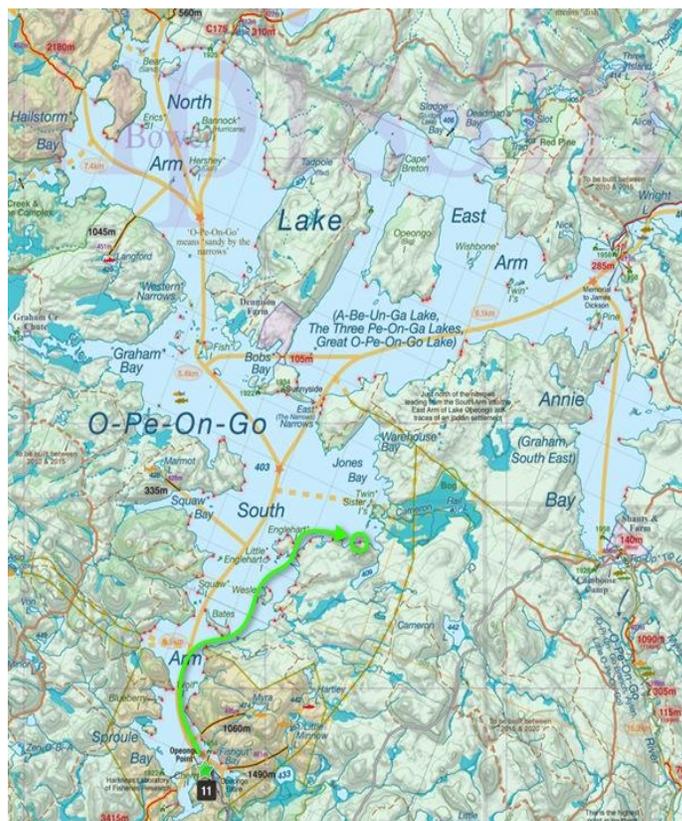
On Saturday October 10, I was involved in an incident that I believe should be shared as a learning experience for all. Krista Petrie-Wallace and I were planning to spend a relaxing (Canadian) Thanksgiving weekend camping in Algonquin Provincial Park in northeast Ontario. We were to sea kayak into the East Arm of Opeongo Lake and enjoy a three-day excursion into the Park.

We launched in early afternoon and had paddled uneventfully to the head of the South Arm. We then began to work our way across the most exposed section of the lake, where all three “arms” converge.

Opeongo Lake is the largest in the Park and has a reputation for rough waters in windy conditions. The wind was a steady 25 km/h (15.5 mph) with gusts that were significantly higher. About 2:20 PM Krista commented that she thought she saw an overturned canoe and two upright canoes in the distance to our east. It was difficult to tell due to the distance and two-foot wind swell. After a quick conversation it was agreed she would continue on with the other paddler in our group and I would break off to investigate. Little did I realize this would be the start of a 2.5-hour stretch of nearly constant maximum paddling effort for me.

This is trouble!

The three canoes were about 1 km (.6 mi.) from our location, near the entrance to Jones Bay. Paddling



hard I covered the distance in minutes and approached the scene. As I closed the distance I could see six people in two upright canoes and three people swimming alongside the third canoe.

Upon arriving to the group I immediately could see a catastrophe was unfolding. My immediate assessment revealed:

- none of the three people in the water could swim with any competence, although they (and all in the group) were wearing PFDs;

- none of the three people in the water were dressed for cold water immersion
- none of the nine people involved had the skills to affect a rescue
- they didn't speak English very well
- there were no other people, boats, etc. anywhere near to help me.

I knew that if the three people were not pulled from the water in a timely fashion they would all die. At this point the shore was about 200 meters away, but the strong wind was pushing the swimmers *out* into the middle of Jones Bay.

I told the six people in two canoes to paddle to the northern point of Jones Bay, start a fire, and prepare dry clothes for the three people in the water. I also asked if the two strongest paddlers in the group could return in one of the canoes to help me. Having a second craft would open up additional rescue possibilities.

Getting two of the swimmers

I got the weakest swimmer of the group (she could not swim at all nor kick her legs to assist) hanging onto the stern of my boat and headed for shore. After 20 minutes of maximum effort, I had battled through the wind and towed her to shore. I told those waiting on shore to get her into dry clothes immediately.

As I started out for the second swimmer, the canoe I had asked to assist me suddenly blew by. The two paddlers were completely unable to control the boat and immediately blew eastward deeper into the bay, removing the possibility of any help for me. Those two paddlers were eventually blown by the wind onto the eastern shore of the bay and remained on shore until rescued later in the day.

The second swimmer had been able to kick his legs aggressively, allowing him to hold his position against the wind. I returned for him, got him holding my kayak, and paddled the 200 meters back to shore as quickly as possible. This person was

able to help significantly by kicking his legs aggressively as I towed him.

At this point six people (including two swimmers) are on the northern point that marks the beginning of Jones Bay and another two people are in the boat that has blown onto the eastern shore of Jones Bay. The third swimmer is still in the water and has been immersed for about an hour at this point.

Foiled by the wind

The third swimmer had been unable to hold his position and is now 500 – 600 meters from shore. I race out to get him, locate him, and get him on the back of my kayak. By this point we are in the middle of Jones Bay, the wind has picked up even more, and the waves are 2-4 feet high. I paddle as hard as I can toward the northern shore of Jones Bay where I have taken the others.

After 20 minutes I realized that it was physically impossible to pull him directly into the wind. I shifted to Plan B, which was to try to run with the wind and hopefully make the eastern shore. It was further in distance (over 1 km), but I was hoping the strong wind/waves would help drive me. After another 20 minutes of maximal paddling it was clear I was not making progress. The inactive swimmer hanging from the back of the boat was making any meaningful forward progress nearly impossible. I realized the only way to potentially save the third swimmer was to get a motor boat.



Lake Opeongo. Stock photo

Looking for help

I told him I'd be back and he bailed off my boat. I figured I could paddle the 7 km back to the launch in about 40 minutes, where help could be raised and motor boats activated. I was also holding out hope that I might see one of the Algonquin Outfitters water taxi boats in the interim and wave it down.

I'd traveled about one-quarter of the way south toward the put in when I saw an occupied campsite on an island. A couple was standing on the beach looking out into Jones Bay. I quickly told them of the dire situation unfolding and asked if they had any emergency communication device. They did – a Garmin inReach. They were not that familiar with its use, but I told them to press SOS immediately. I didn't stop long enough to see if they were successful, but rather kept paddling south as hard as possible. I would find out later the SOS worked at 4:20 PM and emergency services began to converge on Opeongo Lake.

Just a few minutes later (around 4:25 PM) I saw the water taxi and was able to wave him over. After I briefed him on the situation he was able to contact a second water taxi nearby and within a few minutes both boats were roaring off into Jones Bay to locate the third swimmer.

Too late!

I turned my kayak around and headed back out into Jones Bay to assist. Jones Bay is literally 4 square kilometers of water – 2 km wide at its mouth, 2 km deep. By the time I arrived 20 minutes later they were still searching. Within a few minutes of reaching the middle of Jones Bay I located the third swimmer. It was immediately obvious the situation was now exceptionally critical. With the boats nearly a kilometer away searching the eastern reaches of the Bay, I paddled toward them as fast as could. I had closed about half the distance when the boats spotted me, realized why I was paddling toward them, and came to me. I immediately boarded the larger of the two boats, pulled my sea

kayak on board, and jumped to the front of the boat to act as primary spotter. Both boats began a high speed grid search of the area I had last seen the third swimmer.



Lake Opeongo water taxi. Photo: Algonquin Outfitters

At this point, I vaguely remember seeing my wife Krista's red sea kayak enter the scene. She had reached our campsite and returned as quickly as possible knowing my extended absence meant real trouble.

Around 4:45 PM I spotted the third swimmer (unresponsive) and pulled him into the boat. The boat operators had told me previously that the emergency SOS had the ambulance on its way. Given the condition of the third swimmer, I felt his only chance of survival was to get to the launch as quickly as possible and into the care of medical professionals. The water taxi was a very large metal boat with a 225 horsepower engine – both meant for high speed work in rough water. We ran the 10 minutes back to the launch under full power. I was unable to administer any first aid during this journey as the ride was extremely rough.

Upon landing at the docks someone (I'm not certain who) jumped into the boat and began to administer CPR on the third swimmer. There were probably 50 – 100 people scattered throughout the grounds of Opeongo Outfitters. I canvassed them to see if any

were doctors, nurses, or medical professionals – none were. Shortly after this the ambulance arrived.

The next phase was to ensure the safe rescue of the other eight people. When Krista had returned she had distributed emergency blankets, etc. to the six people on the northern shore and the two people who had got blown over to the eastern shore. With a flotilla of boats now in action all eight people were safely returned to the launch.

Unfortunately, we later learned that the third swimmer did not make it. Our condolences to the family members of the deceased.

Lessons learned

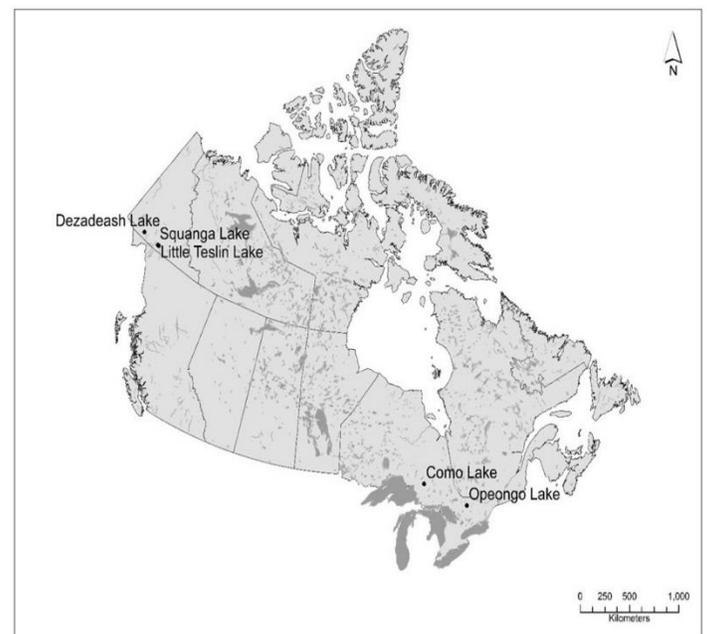
I'm certain this event will spark much conversation around safe backcountry travel. The sad part is that this tragedy was entirely preventable.

Here are some points to consider:

- Cold water kills. Even in southern latitudes, most of the Canadian boating season corresponds with water temperatures that can kill you if unprepared.
- Wear high visibility clothing when partaking in outdoor activities. The victim was wearing a black jacket and dark blue PFD. This made it very difficult to spot him from both my kayak and the boat.
- Learn how to swim. Being able to swim 200m with a PFD on could have saved a life.
- If you travel in the backcountry, buy a satellite-enabled beacon like the Garmin inReach. If you own one, know how to use it, especially how to send an SOS. Activation enabled emergency services quite quickly in this situation.
- Learn canoeing, kayaking and rescue skills before backcountry travelling. Take a course.
- Outfitters should screen or have mandatory orientation on cold water conditions in spring and fall, and possibly deny rentals based on experience or improper clothing.

- Paddle Canada/ORCKA and other organizations need to develop paddling courses and/or educational safety materials that new Canadians can understand (i.e. available in different languages).
- This ultimately was a team effort. The two water taxi operators did a great job and deserve kudos. One of the outfitter's staff members later helped tremendously in rescuing the stranded survivors. The ambulance team could not have been more responsive.

If anything good can come from this tragedy is that the outdoor community needs to start a conversation about how the users of our parks and backcountry spaces are changing and how many of these users don't have the swimming skills, paddling skills, and water safety knowledge to be in the backcountry. The outdoor community needs to address how we can encourage these citizens to continue to explore our wilderness areas but in a safe manner. We need to do better. Let's start this ball rolling.



Location of Opeongo Lake. Stock photo.

Thunderstorm Prediction and Monitoring

Mark Thornton

Introduction

Thunderstorms and sailboat racing (or paddling) don't mix. Sometimes the rain from a thunderstorm results in a prolonged period of light and variable winds, or perhaps no wind at all. At other times, a storm wreaks havoc by producing incredibly strong winds, blinding rain, and steep waves. Neither version promotes finishing a race in a fast or safe manner. Sailors competing in the final race of the Jamestown Yacht Club's (JYC) Summer Series experienced the "furious winds" version of a thunderstorm when a cold front rolled over Narragansett Bay (Rhode Island) on Tuesday, August 25, 2020. Before we delve into the details of that storm, let's cover a couple of thunderstorm basics.

A Little Background

During their mature phase, all thunderstorms have an updraft and downdraft (Figure 1). The updraft sustains the storm by delivering warm, moist air to its upper levels. The speed of an updraft – a measure of the storm's strength – is determined by the temperature difference between the warmer air inside the updraft and the cooler air surrounding it. It is not uncommon for an updraft to reach 100 mph. The larger the temperature difference, the faster the air ascends within the updraft.

A storm's downdraft is the descending flow of rain-cooled air. In contrast to an updraft, air within a downdraft is colder and denser than the surrounding air. Downdrafts form when precipitation particles such as water droplets, ice crystals, and hail become

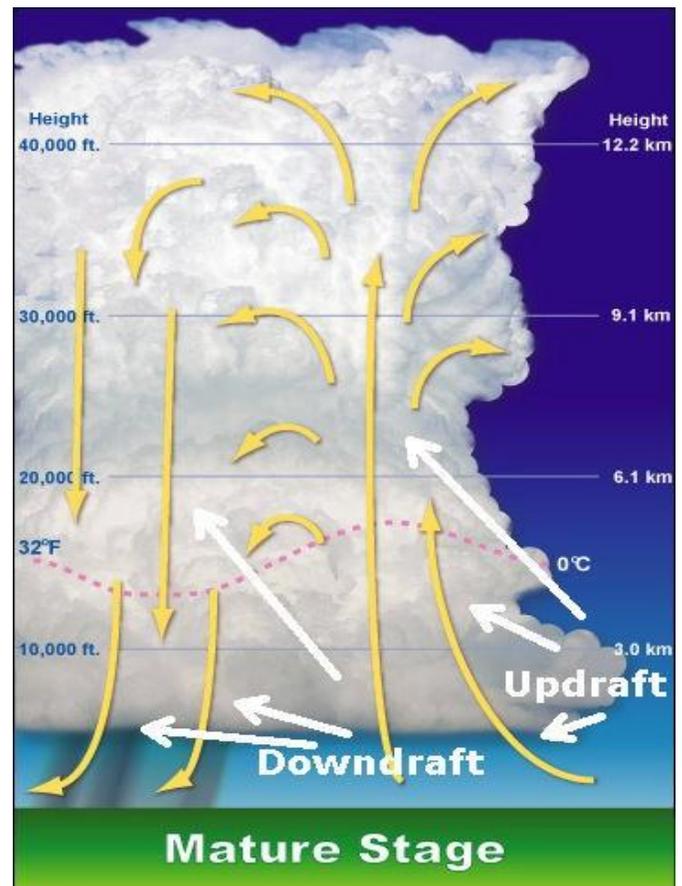


Figure 1. Structure of a thunderstorm

too heavy to remain suspended by the storm's updraft and begin to fall. As they fall, some of the particles evaporate before reaching the ground, which further cools and increases the density of the air within the downdraft. Since the speed of a downdraft is determined by the difference in temperature between the air within the downdraft and the surrounding air, evaporational cooling can dramatically increase the speed and destructive potential of the downdraft.

The National Weather Service (NWS) does not have an official threshold for a downburst, but a downburst is simply a strong downdraft. A “microburst” impacts an area less than 2.5 miles wide for fewer than five minutes. A “macroburst” affects an area greater than 2.5 miles wide and lasts more than five minutes.

Downburst arrives and boats get clobbered

The long-lived thunderstorm reached the fleet a little after 7:00 pm as many of the racers were approaching the finish line in Newport Harbor. Based on observations from boats that were in the race, wind speeds rapidly increased from 5 knots to 50 knots in just a few seconds. One sailboat observed at least 50 knots (the limit of the boat’s anemometer) before dangerously heeling to nearly 90 degrees. The maximum wind observation for the event -- 75.3 knots – was recorded by a different sailboat at 7:04 pm. The winds quickly decreased to less than 10 knots a couple of minutes later, but the damage was done.

Since the fleet was actively racing and under full sail, the sudden and unexpected arrival of the downburst caused several boats to be knocked down. Some smaller boats were swamped and at least two boats were sunk. Crew members from many boats slipped overboard during knockdowns or while struggling to lower sails and gain control of the boat. Damage to sails and rigging was widespread. Fortunately, rescue efforts got underway immediately and there were no serious injuries. The relatively protected location of the racecourse and the short duration of the high winds also helped recovery efforts.

We can be prepared

What are the lessons from the storm on Narragansett Bay? Forecasting the possible impacts of an approaching thunderstorm with 100% certainty is a challenging task, but there are many readily-available resources that can offer clues regarding a storm’s potential for life-threatening

behavior. Such clues can promote shortening sail or returning to the dock prior to a storm’s arrival. The necessary detective work begins with the forecast.

The Forecast

Assessing the possibility of thunderstorms should always start with a review of the large-scale weather pattern. The Daily Weather Map issued for August 25, 2020 showed a cold front extending from a low pressure system in eastern Canada approaching the northeastern US (Figure 2).

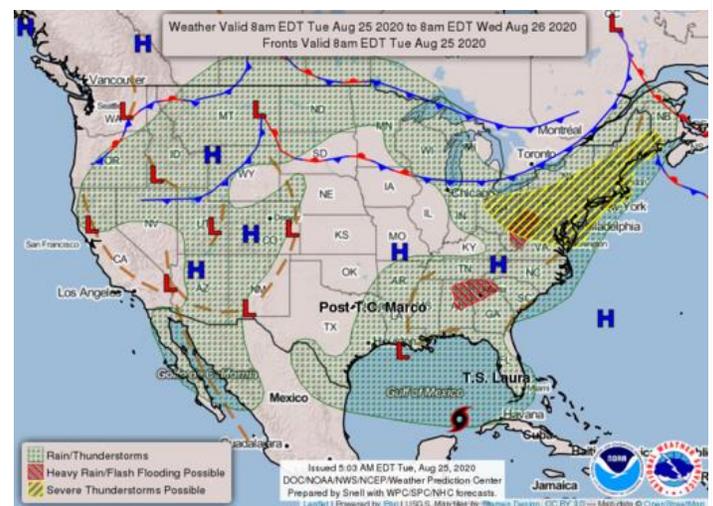


Figure 2. Daily Weather map

The approach and passage of the cold front was expected to promote thunderstorms in the area highlighted by yellow diagonal lines, which included Narragansett Bay. Not all cold fronts produce thunderstorms, but severe weather is frequently associated with the passage of a frontal boundary. A weather-savvy sailor or paddler always considers the possibility of thunderstorms and closely monitors conditions whenever a frontal boundary is in the neighborhood.

Risk of Severe T-storms. The Storm Prediction Center (SPC) is a branch of the NWS that specializes in forecasting and monitoring thunderstorms and organized severe weather. The NWS defines a severe thunderstorm as capable of producing a wind gust greater than 50 knots, a hailstone at least 1” in diameter, or a tornado.

Severe thunderstorms and organized thunderstorms such as squall lines and convective clusters present an enhanced risk because of their propensity to produce damaging winds. The likelihood that a thunderstorm will reach severe status increases the longer it persists. The SPC issues a daily **Convective Outlook** outlining those regions with a potential for severe thunderstorm development. The Convective Outlook for August 25 (Figure 3) placed Narragansett Bay under a *Slight (SLGT; see yellow section)* risk of severe thunderstorms.

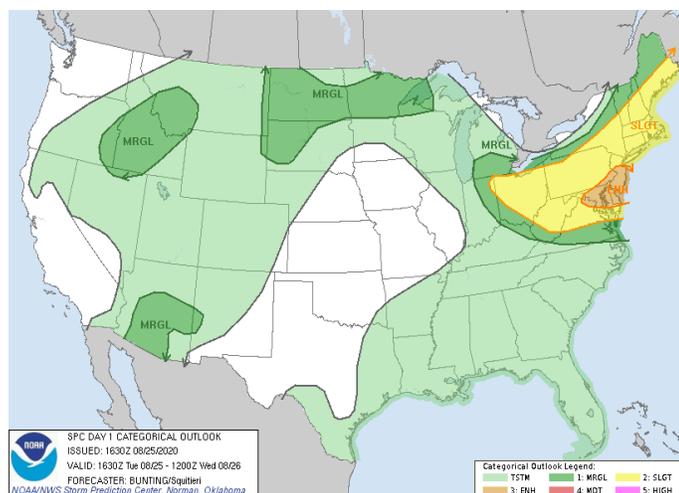


Figure 3. Storm Prediction Center Convective Outlook 8/25/20)

The SPC also issues *Thunderstorm Outlooks* which outline the probability for the development of any type of thunderstorm (severe and non-severe). Each Outlook covers a 4-hour period, so six images are required to assess the potential for thunderstorms for a single day. The Thunderstorm Outlooks for August 25 covering the period from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm (Figure 4) placed Narragansett Bay under a 40% chance of thunderstorm development.

Marine forecasts. Local NWS forecast offices also published products designed to help boaters determine the threat of thunderstorms. The marine forecast for Narragansett Bay issued at 4:16 pm reminded mariners that a severe thunderstorm watch was in effect until 10:00 pm and mentioned the potential for damaging winds.

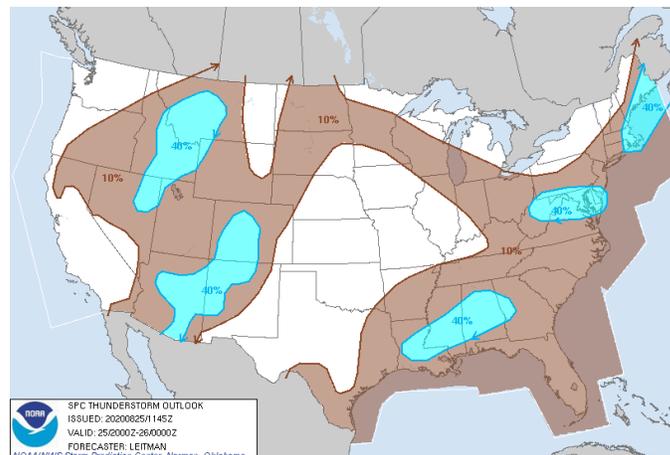


Figure 4. T-storm Outlook., 4-8 PM (light blue = 40% chance)

416 PM EDT Tue Aug 25 2020

...SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WATCH 450 IN EFFECT UNTIL 10 PM EDT THIS EVENING...

TONIGHT...NW winds 10 to 15 kt. Gusts up to 20 kt after midnight. Waves 2 to 3 ft. A chance of showers and thunderstorms this evening. Some thunderstorms may be severe with damaging winds and large hail.

In addition to marine forecasts, NWS publishes a **Hazardous Weather Outlook (HWO)** several times a day. HWOs discuss the potential for the development of severe weather, along with details regarding the geographic area at risk, timing, and nature of the severe weather threat. They are written in non-technical language and are extraordinarily beneficial for mariners.

The HWO issued at 4:28 am on Tuesday morning included the following:

A few strong to severe thunderstorms are possible this afternoon. Damaging wind gusts are the primary threat but large hail is also possible. The greatest risk for severe weather may end up south of the Mass Pike and especially across eastern Connecticut, Rhode Island, and southeast Massachusetts.

HWOs are a great decision-making resource that help fill in the blanks, particularly on those days when the marine forecast includes the wavering “showers and thunderstorms possible”.

Monitoring Watches and Warnings

Once thunderstorms are underway, the most effective resource for monitoring their location, intensity, evolution, and movement is Doppler weather radar. (Click [here](#) if you would like to read a primer on using Doppler weather radar.) In addition, staying current on official severe weather watches, warnings, and local storm reports are part of the recipe for staying weather-wise and safe on the water.

Based on the approaching cold front and the favorable environment for thunderstorm development, the NWS's Storm Prediction Center (SPC) issued *Severe Thunderstorm Watch #450* at 3:10 pm for much of the northeastern US, including Narragansett Bay. The Watch mentioned that severe thunderstorms moving southeast across the Watch area would bring a potential of damaging wind gusts to 70 mph.

The thunderstorm that ravaged the sailing fleet formed inside the Watch area near southwestern Massachusetts at approximately 4:00 pm (Figure 5). Steadily picking up speed, the fledgling storm covered the 110 nm to Newport in just 3 hours (Figure 6).

Many radar applications allow NWS Watch and Warning polygons to be overlaid on the radar image. Reading the text of a Watch or Warning is as simple as clicking on the polygon's outline (for an example, click [here](#)).

When severe weather threatens, trained volunteer spotters support decision-making by relaying information and damage observations to their local NWS office as *Local Storm Reports* (LSR). There were several LSRs indicating damaging wind gusts and downed trees as the storm moved through eastern Connecticut on its way to Newport. This additional data significantly improves situational awareness by allowing a mariner to quickly determine if they are inside the warning polygon, assess the storm's potential hazards, and review recent impacts.

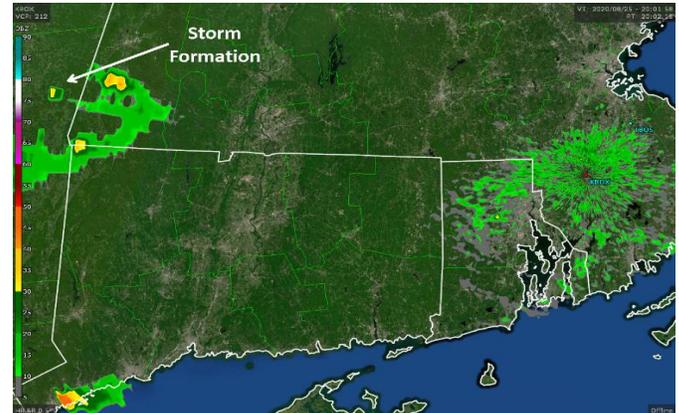


Fig 5. T-storm forms (upper left) in watch area at 4PM

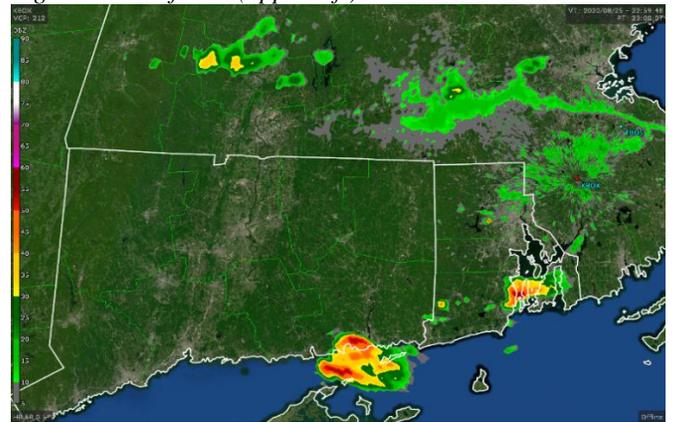


Fig 6. At 7 PM the storm hit Narragansett Bay (lower right)

At 6:38 pm, a **Special Marine Warning** was issued for Narragansett Bay and the offshore waters south of Newport. The Marine Warning advised boaters that the storm, which was 16 nm NW of the racecourse, could produce wind gusts to 50 knots and advised boaters to “move to safe harbor”.

The thunderstorm reached the fleet a little after 7:00 pm and lived up to the Warnings by unleashing winds to 70 knots with blinding rain. Fortunately, large injury-producing hail did not occur.

Conclusion

Managing severe weather is part of the challenge for all mariners. Fortunately, the widespread use of smartphones, cellular internet access, improvements in weather forecast models, and the development of easy-to-use forecasting apps has made the process of monitoring severe weather much easier. Read the forecast, check the radar, keep an eye to the sky, and enjoy your sailing and paddling.

Photos of the Month



Lake Superior Keyhole

Photo: Rick Wiebush

Photos of the Month



Dolphin Acrobatics

Photo: Kathryn Lapolla

Photos of the Month



Lotus Bloom

Photo: Mark Baskeyfield

Respect and Reconciliation: Acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the Land

Rick Wiebush

Introduction

I recently started a course – held on the Chesapeake Bay - with an acknowledgement to the traditional custodians of the land, the Indigenous people of the Piscataway nation that lived along the western shore of the Bay. It was a sign of recognition and respect to those who lived here, who cared for the land here, and who paddled here, long before we, the White man, showed up.

The people in the class didn't quite know what to make of it. This article is both an explanation of why I did the acknowledgement, and an encouragement for other paddlers to consider taking up the practice.

Part I: Background

When British colonists started settling in Maryland and Virginia in the first two decades of the 17th century, there were approximately 25,000 Indigenous people in the area. They comprised three large chiefdoms - the Piscataway (southern and central Maryland); the Nanticoke (Maryland Eastern Shore) and the Powhatan (northern and coastal Virginia). The ancestors of these people had been in the area for 10,000 years before the British arrived. 10,000 years.

The chiefdoms had a fairly sophisticated multi-level system of government. They developed political and military alliances and practiced diplomacy.

They established trading routes and trading centers. They shared a language (Algonkian), variations of which were spoken from the Carolinas to New York.

The people lived in villages. They had elaborate cultures. They worked: raising corn and other vegetables; hunting, fishing, and shell-fishing in the rich environment of the Chesapeake Bay. They had families – wives, husbands, kids, grandparents, aunts and uncles. They had dreams. They ate, they peed, they shit. They paddled! In those respects, they were *just* like us.



Quiet Reflection. Painting by David Wright

Unlike us, the Indigenous culture viewed their relationship to the natural world as one of integrated mutuality. In Native American culture, humans are viewed as part of nature, just as are the animals, the plants, the rivers, the mountains. All are pieces of a whole; a “mutual entanglement”. As a result, they treated natural places with great care, respect and humility. The Native American scholar Len Necefer, when talking about the wilderness says things like “our relatives’ spirits are out here” so “we treat natural places (like mountains, like oceans) as relatives”. This perspective stands in stark contrast to our Western view of nature which sees humans as separate and apart from nature; nature as an “other” that needs to be tamed or conquered. Instead of conquering mountains or oceans “because they are there”, Indigenous people “introduce themselves” to the mountains, rivers, and oceans, and remain *humble* before them.

Part II: Enter the White Europeans

In the 1620’s, when the British were first establishing colonies along the eastern seaboard, Lord Baltimore was the King’s representative in charge of the Maryland colony. His official title was “Lord Proprietor”. Fulfilling this role, he distributed “the King’s land” to English settlers. The local bands of the Piscataway population – as well as the Matapeakes, the Nanticokes, the Assateagues - objected. Wanting to stay on their good side for trading purposes, Lord Baltimore then arranged for the land owners to give “grants” to the Native Americans that would allow them to stay on their own land. In return, the Native Americans had to pay a tax – in the form of prized beaver pelts. Just to be clear, that is like me coming over to your house, stealing your car, putting the title in my name, and then offering it back to you under a temporary lease arrangement.

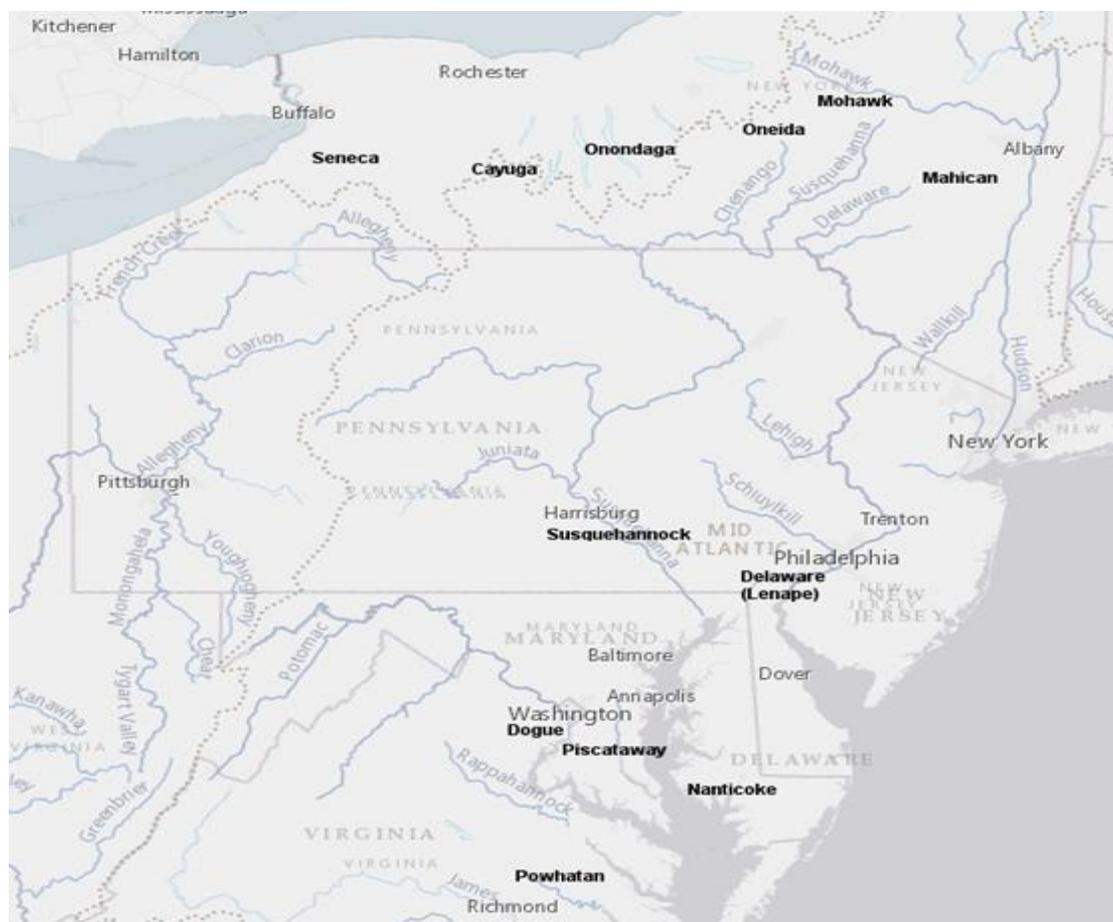


Figure 1. Distribution of the major mid-Atlantic chiefdoms

This and similar interactions between the colonists and the natives of the Chesapeake area set a pattern that would continue for the next 100 years – until all the indigenous people were gone from the area. Within 40 years the Powhatan, Nanticoke and Piscataway tribes and cultures were crippled by the introduction of new diseases and war. During the ensuing decades, the remaining tribes were forcibly removed from their homelands. People that remained were often sold into slavery in the Caribbean Islands.

It's hard to get precise population figures, but scholars estimate that the Powhatan chiefdom included about 12,000 people when Jamestown was settled in 1607. Only 1,000 were left by 1700. The Piscataway chiefdom had about 8,500 members at the time of English settlement, but only 300 remained by 1700.¹

Part III. Respect and Reconciliation.

When I was working in Australia between 2005 and 2015, all public meetings – all of them – started with a formal acknowledgement that the meeting was taking place on land that had originally been under the stewardship of the Aboriginal people. Called an “Acknowledgement of Country”, it is a way of paying respect to First Nations/Aboriginal people (who also had all their land appropriated by the colonizing British). The precise wording of the acknowledgement varies from place to place, as does the extent to which it is treated in a sincere or pro forma way. However, it goes something like this:

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognize their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

¹ Later, during westward expansion, between 1776 and 1887, the United States seized over 1.5 **billion** acres from America's indigenous people by treaty and executive order.

² The US government has made a formal apology to Native Americans for some practices. But the [Apology to Native Peoples of the United States](#) has never been read aloud by any



This practice is part of a larger effort by the Australian government to promote reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider Australian community. It includes a National Reconciliation Week, on-going programs designed to strengthen appreciation of indigenous cultures, and action to address the systemic disadvantages faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Similar reconciliation efforts and “acknowledgements of country” are on-going in New Zealand and Canada. (There is no formal reconciliation process in the U.S., either with respect to Native Americans or African-Americans.)²

Part IV. Paddling and Acknowledgement

As noted in the introduction, I have recently – albeit sporadically – started trips or classes with an acknowledgement to the traditional custodians of the land, the Piscataway tribes that had been in the Chesapeake Bay area. In that class, I also gave an overview of the history that I wrote about in the “Background” section of this article. People were somewhat puzzled to say the least. But (I think)

elected official. It was signed into law by President Barack Obama, buried on page 45 of the 67-page [Defense Appropriations Act 2010](#). The act is primarily concerned with the purchase of weapons and its signing was closed to the public. There was no official White House announcement about it.



Illustration: National Park Service

they found it interesting, and I hope it generated some subsequent thought.

Why do this ‘acknowledgement’? For me, there are a couple of reasons. First, I personally want to keep in my awareness the fact that the places we paddle were *stolen* from Indigenous people by my/our ancestors. I believe it is important to acknowledge this history of theft and the subsequent genocide. It’s not guilt, it’s owning it; recognizing it as a reality.

Second, while I don’t feel personally culpable for what happened in U.S. history, I do feel responsible for pointing it out, making others aware that our history, our country, the places we paddle, didn’t suddenly come into being when Columbus, or the Pilgrims, or the Jamestown settlers showed up. We need to counter the “doctrine of discovery” with the true story. In telling the true story, I want to offer recognition and respect to the Indigenous people who lived here before us.

The third reason has to do with my/our relationship to the natural, the more-than-human, world. The colonial mentality felt it was the white man’s right

to take land from the Indigenous people because they were an inferior “other”. That same mentality informs our treatment of the land and the environment today: it is an “other” that is there for us to *use* the way we want. A key word in many of the “acknowledgements of country” is “custodian”, or “steward”. It is a caretaking concept. That concept stands in stark contrast to the Western/colonial notion of “ownership”, which implies the right to use the land, the rivers, the oceans for whatever purposes we desire. Nanticoke Chief Little Owl said: “To Europeans, the earth and its land were mere possessions, to be bought and sold according to the whims of men”.

I am trying to discard notions that the places we paddle, whether spectacular or routine: 1) are defined by who “owns” them; or 2) are there primarily for our use. The Virginia barrier islands for example are “owned” only in the narrow legal sense. They don’t “belong” to the Nature Conservancy – they belong to everyone and no one. In addition, while we may paddle and play in the waters around those islands, they don’t exist so that we can use them as a playground. No utilitarian

rationale is needed to justify their existence. They exist because they *are*. Further, anyone who has paddled in the current and surf of the Virginia barrier islands knows that we aren't going to "conquer" anything. That ocean decides whether it will or will not invite us in to play. Consequently, we would do well to approach those places by first "introducing ourselves". I totally agree with Indigenous beliefs that we are part of the natural world, not apart from it, and that we need to go into our paddling destinations with humility and respect.

I hope that starting classes or trips with an acknowledgement that Native Americans are the traditional stewards of the land we use, and the

waters on which we paddle, will help us recognize and respect both the Indigenous people themselves, as well as their beliefs about how we "fit" in the world.

Part IV. What about you?

If these issues resonate with you, consider starting your next trip with an acknowledgement of the traditional stewards of the land and waters that you'll be using. Give recognition and respect. To facilitate that, I have tried to compile an accurate picture (not easy!) of which tribes lived in the different areas in which many of us paddle. Those are shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Tribes of the Mid-Atlantic

State	Area	Tribes
MD	Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Howard, Montgomery, St. Mary's, Calvert, Charles and PG counties	Piscataway chiefdom: with tribes Accocek (in Accocek), Nanjemoy and Potopoco (in Charles County), Pawtuxent (AA and PG)
	Eastern Shore: Cecil County	Lenape
	Eastern Shore: Most counties	Nanticoke: Tocwogh, Wicomiss, Matapeake
	Southern Eastern Shore – Ocean City, Chincoteague, Saxis, Crisfield, Salisbury	Pocomoke: with Assateague, Annamessex and Choptank tribes
VA	Northern VA near DC	Dogue
	Fredericksburg area	Powhatan chiefdom: Mattaponi, Rappahannock
	Richmond/Hanover/Henrico	Powhatan chiefdom: Pamunkey, Chickahominy
	Northern Neck (Westmoreland County, Reedville area)	Powhatan chiefdom: Patawomeck, Cuttatawomen, Onawmanient, Moraughtacund
	Middle Peninsula (Mathews area)	Powhatan: Wereowocomoco, Opiscopank,
	Virginia Peninsula (York, Williamsburg)	Powhatan: Kecoughtan, Kiskiack, Monacan
	Tidewater	Chesapeake, Nansemond
	Eastern Shore – Accomac County	Accohannock
Eastern Shore – Northampton County	Accomack	
DC	DC proper, part of western PG; part of southern Montgomery	Anacostans (Nacotchtank)
DE	Northern/Coastal: Wilmington, Newark and coastal area to Lewes	Lenape (aka Delaware in this area)
	Central and Southern Interior	Nanticoke
NJ	Central and Southern	Lenni -Lenape
	Northeastern: Raritan Bay to Morristown to NY state line	Munsee - Lenape
PA	Lower section of the Susquehanna River, York, Lancaster	Susquehannock
	Southeastern PA and Philly	Lenni- Lenape

Incident at Metompkin Inlet: The Hole Story

Ray O.

Losing My Lucky Sponge

I had been feeling off my game all weekend. A nagging feeling that I wasn't typically comfortable in my kayak. It started on Friday, when during our first venture into the waves I found myself upside down, head raking across the sand.

Wanting to set the example for the first run of the day, I charged into a wave train, pushing further out than most of the group to into the largest waves I could find. In position, I looked at the group and waited for my stern to lift and paddled hard. I surfed the wave and closed in on the shoreline. The waves quickly turned to soup though as another set was coming in from 90 degrees; one of these caught me off guard and I flipped. I tried my 'strong side' roll, but the current pulled me under. I needed to roll on the other side. I laid back but couldn't get my paddle and body where I wanted it and only managed to grab a little air. I tried again and again but couldn't get my body into position. Then my paddle and even my head were touching the sand. I gave up and came out of my kayak involuntarily for the first time in about five years. Even worse, I lost my lucky sponge. How embarrassing.

The rest of the day and weekend went well – well enough – though I couldn't shake the worry that I wasn't comfortable in my new-to-me Rockpool Alaw. Having owned the Alaw for about three months, offside rolls were intermittently an issue, but I couldn't say why. Sometimes I just couldn't setup for the roll as I needed; perhaps it was a shoulder issue – I have many. Perhaps it is the



Photo: Ray O.

kayak. The rear deck is higher on my back than I would like, and it is a very wide and flat bottomed boat. I am certainly at the lower limit of its weight range; but the problem never manifested in my old Romany, or any of my other boats for that matter. (I still love the Alaw. It's faster than a Romany, edges so well the stern easily comes out of the water, and the high volume hates to be submerged in the big stuff).

Surfing Five-Foot Waves

On Sunday we headed back out to Metompkin Inlet. At the mouth waves were colliding and forming confused L shapes, which knocked kayaks about but offered some fun play. The flooding tide pulled everyone incessantly in. Paddling against the current, further away from the inlet some beautiful 5' breakers were coming in perpendicular to shore. Those were the waves I wanted. I could see the first set forming at an outer sandbar, building,

breaking, rolling and forming again and again over the shoals before dying on the sand.

I went further north than the rest of the group, wanting to catch these cleaner waves. I caught several rides, but found they were no Hawaiian dream – most of the waves quickly built and broke, but they didn't subside after breaking. They fell over, churned and broiled while still driving forward. It was easy to nearly disappear into their foam.

On one particular run I pushed far out from shore hoping to both grab one of the bigger breakers and have a longer run. As I began to line up one large wave broke behind me. I was still 45 degrees to the break but instead of broaching, the wave caught my bow, straightened me out and I fell down the wave face. Literally dropping down a few feet off the face of the wave, my kayak shot forward and I surfed at a high speed.

This was a big'un. The ride didn't last long however. The churning white wall behind me

caught up, and I couldn't tell you why, but I went sideways. I had been ruddering on the other side of the kayak and there was no chance to brace on the direction I was turning before I rolled. I setup for my roll, but was pulled under. I suspect I tried on the wrong side and the wave action was counterproductive. I tried again, this time on the other side (I think) but once again didn't have the flexibility; or maybe I tried on the wrong side again. I'm just not sure. What I am sure of is that I was very short of breath, having just powered through a lot of waves. When I missed my rolls I tried to quickly gasp at the surface but mostly inhaled water. Out of air, more disappointed in myself than panicked, I knew it was time and pulled my skirt.

At the surface I saw another kayaker ready to lend assistance. He asked if I was ok and I made the circular "O" with my arm and tapped my helmet three times acknowledging I was alright. He turned off and went on his business almost immediately.



Photo: Ray O.

Bam! !&*#@#!

Still coughing and breathing hard from the exertion, I made assessment of my predicament and thought about whether I could do a cowboy scramble in these waves. Decidedly not. It's my favorite self-rescue and even my party trick in big waves and swell, but these breakers weren't going to have it. Re-enter and roll it was. Not needing or wanting an assisted rescue at this point, and wanting to re-enter and roll I was still holding my boat at the cockpit. I noticed another paddler closing in on me and gave him the same helmet-tap "OK". He seemed a good distance away, but was still paddling. I looked back at the oncoming waves, my boat and the kayaker getting closer.

My spidey senses were going off and I was thinking "don't do it! don't come any closer!" A look to my left confirmed my worry. There was a wave steamrolling at us. Still holding my cockpit, I felt the wave impact, push me underwater, and side-surf my flooded kayak. I saw that my kayak either hit, or nearly hit the other kayaker who had paddled up to me, his bow "T'd" up with my own. It took a moment, but as I rolled my kayak over I saw a large crack in the bow. A moment later it rolled to the

other side and saw that it wasn't just one crack: the bow was punctured through, the top and bottom halves of the boat were separated, and the deck opposite the bow had nearly been blown out. "There's no walking this off" I thought. Expletives came out instead.

The Weight

Frustrated and angry, I decided to swim back to shore. I probably could've used help, or made it faster with assistance but I didn't want any. On the beach, the kayaker I collided with was there to help. He grabbed for the stern as I tried to get the cockpit clear of the surf and I snapped "DON'T PICK IT UP!" Being able to see the damage, my Alaw was full of water and the boat probably weighed three hundred pounds. There was a real possibility that lifting the stern as I pulled the bow would have torn the bow clean off. I should not have been pulling from the bow anyway. Even emptying the kayak was no small chore. The Alaw's cockpit is enormous, pumping it would take forever; but rolling it over was like flipping a large rock. As I pumped out the front hatch the kayaker whom I collided with humbly apologized.



The hole and ripped bow. Photo: Ray O.

The Repair

Flustered, but not one to sulk, I started a repair immediately. In my day hatch I carry a repair and survival dry bag. In it I had two feet of Etrnabond RV roof sealant and several feet of Gorilla HD tape, as well as a small Leatherman/Gerber type knife. I completely forgot about the utility tool. It would have been a big help in grabbing the fiberglass pushed into the kayak and would helped preserve the blade on my rescue knife. Instead, using my Spyderco Salt knife (and even the handle on my pump!) I pulled the depression out and re-seated the shattered panels into place.



The Hole. Photo: Ray O.

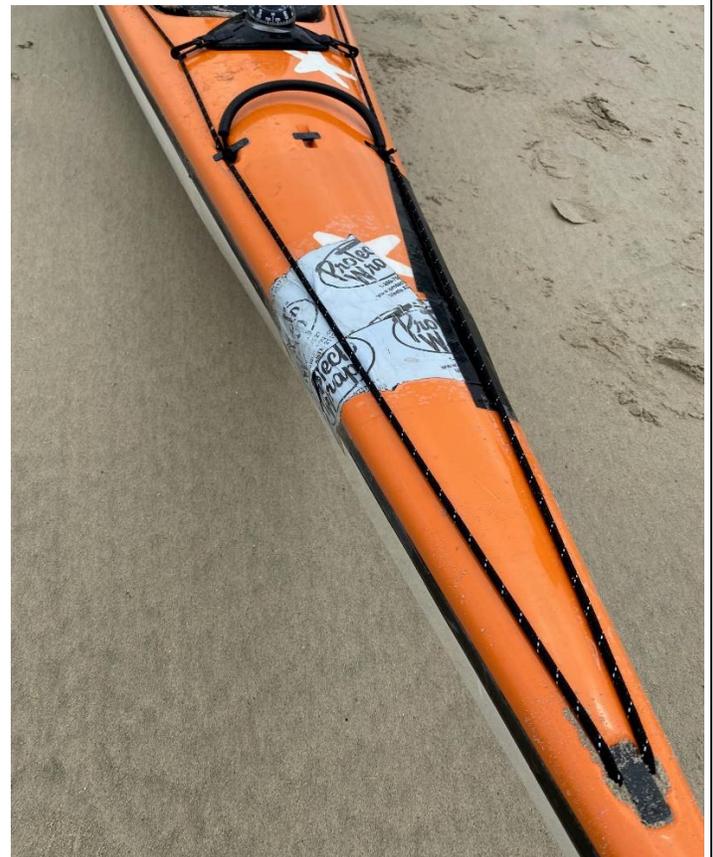


The other side – it went through. Photo: Ray O.

My fellow paddler and friend Tedward surprised me as I was peering into the hole. Never one to let a job go unsupervised, Tedward lent assistance over the next hour. Together we covered all the major damage with my tape and patches but it wasn't enough.

Ted produced some Denso patching and his regular clear Gorilla tape. We patched the major holes, taped along the minor crack and splits, ran tape far along the busted seam of the kayak, and wrapped tape all the way around the kayak to ensure the top didn't separate from the bottom.

After deliberation we put two generously donated paddle floats inside the compartment as well. I was certain that fiberglass splintering was going to puncture them, but it did not.



The Etrnabond. Photo: Ted Gormley



Taped up. Photo: Ted Gormley

I was mostly confident in the repair but I wasn't sure what to do with the rest of my afternoon. There were only two options: Don't risk it - call it a day, gently paddle straight back to the boat ramp and have no fun and sulk. ORRRR throw caution to the wind, have fun, maybe get over my bad mood and potentially tear the entire front end off of my kayak and sink. There was no contest. HAVE FUN!

Lessons Learned

In the end, I don't regret any of what happened. I completely accept the other kayaker's apology and hope he has no remorse. Kayaking, *when done right*, is risky business. When the activity of your choice involves zipping along at 20 miles an hour in a piece of fiberglass, or paddling in an ocean swell miles offshore, etc., you have to be willing to accept that some things will happen that are outside of your control. I wish I had put the hole in my kayak while some stupid daredevil stunt, but that doesn't change anything: kayak surfing is inherently risky and I accept that risk. There were clearly lessons to be learned from the incident though, and some of those lessons are:

- Don't "cross the T". Kayaks in a T arrangement, in waves, is a recipe for disaster. Stay off to the sides unless/until you are coming in for an assisted rescue.
- In some conditions, an assisted rescue of both a paddler and boat simply aren't possible. It may be possible to wrangle a kayak OR a kayaker, but trying to hold onto a kayak for a rescue while big waves rake over you will not end well.

On this day the waves were just too big and their rolling, churning nature wasn't conducive to a rescue. Holding onto another boat in this surf would have probably broken both boats or broken hands, fingers, or faces; however, it probably would have been possible to bring me to safety on the back deck of a kayak, while another paddler clipped onto my deck line and towed my boat with a 50' line.

- Carry a repair kit even though you aren't rock gardening. I should have remembered my multi tool and carried more Eternabond and Gorilla HD tape. Both were amazing.
- Be thankful for your friends.
- When something bad happens, learn from it, move on, smile and get out there again.

Contributors

Mark Baskeyfield – is a great amateur photographer who lives in Maryland and has paddled just about EVERYWHERE.

Laurie Collins - Laurie started kayaking as a substitute exercise when hip replacement surgery put an end to running, but soon discovered the world looks better from a boat. It helps that her home, near Baltimore, affords her easy access to the Chesapeake and its tributaries. Always in search of new places to paddle, this year Laurie attended Paddle Golden Gate in February and the Great Lakes Sea Kayak Symposium held on Lake Superior in July. An L3 Coastal Kayak instructor she loves introducing others to the physical and mental challenges inherent to the sport.

Kathryn Lapolla - is an ACA L4 instructor and the owner/operator of Savannah Coastal Ecotours. Kathryn is a Georgia native and currently lives in the Isle of Hope, near Savannah. Find out more here: <https://www.facebook.com/SavannahCoastalEcoTours>,

Ray O. – lives in Virginia Beach, VA. He grew up paddling a sea kayak in the bayous of Louisiana. Twenty something years later, he and his kayaks have ventured as far north as Newfoundland and as far south as Key West. Ray is largely self-taught, paddles alone, and longs for big conditions. He has dreams of one day paddling in Northern Labrador and Norway.

Mark Thornton – has been sailing for more that 25 years and is also a paddler. He is the president of LakeErieWX LLC, a company dedicated to providing marine weather education and forecasting resources for recreational boaters, Mark also publishes a marine weather blog and teaches basic forecasting seminars to recreational boaters. He conducted a fabulous marine weather forecasting seminar for 34 Cross Currents folks in March 2020. His website is www.lakeeriewx.com.

Glenn Wallace - lives in the Ottawa Valley in Ontario, Canada. Formerly an avid whitewater kayaker, he transitioned sea kayaking and canoeing in his thirties and forties. He has paddled all over the world, from New Zealand to the Yukon.

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. He has paddled in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Greenland, the Amazon, Nova Scotia, and his favorite place, Baja.

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.