

# *Coastbusters*

The Cross Currents Newsletter for Mid-Atlantic Paddlers

January 2022

## **Cobb Island: An Island Out of Time**

*Mike Hamilton*

I think it is fair to say that it is the water that primarily draws the kayaker's attention. The stillness of a glass-like pond fills us with meditative reflection, the raging river elicits a primordial instinct to survive, the marsh brings wonders around every curve with armies of crabs along the shore or a Great-Blue Heron fishing along the edges and especially the surf, which perhaps captivates me the most through its display of raw and indifferent power. But these wonders, which I feel so keenly, are framed by the land which tells many long-forgotten stories of the sea.

There is one story which has captured my attention these last few years that I want to share now. It's about a nineteenth century family, a dangerous stretch of water and a sandy beach far offshore. The kayak trip described below outlines my pilgrimage to an island and to the ruins of an old building which for 60 years made the difference between life and death for mariners of old.

### **A Wagonload of Salt**

*Cobb Island* was previously called Sand Shoal Island. It was patented to William Satchell and Andrew John Fabin in 1794 by the provincial governor. After two generations, it was sold by heirs William and Elizabeth Fitchett in 1839 for \$1050 and a wagonload of salt to Nathan Cobb, a boat builder from Eastham, MA. In 1840, Cobb and

his family moved to the lower Delmarva Peninsula to make a new life for themselves on this primitive coastline. Recognizing the economic importance of the location of the island that would become known as Cobb's Island and later simply Cobb Island, he capitalized on the treacherous shoals of the Atlantic and built a rescue and salvage business from scratch. For over 30 years, the family successfully saved shipwrecked crews at no cost, but made lots of money salvaging ships and cargo.

### **The Coast Guard Stations**

In 1848, the federal government stepped in to provide maritime rescue services with the organization of the U.S. Lifesaving Service. The first Lifesaving station was built on the south end of Cobb Island in 1876. Two years later, a storm moved the station 17 feet off its foundation. In 1879, the station burned down and was rebuilt in 1880 but was located safely away from the coastline where its remains can be seen to this day. In 1915, the Lifesaving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service were combined, forming the United States Coast Guard. A new station eventually was built to replace the 1880 station. This 1936-era structure remained in place near the previous station until 1998, when the Nature Conservancy moved the building to the nearby fishing village of Oyster, VA and renovated it.



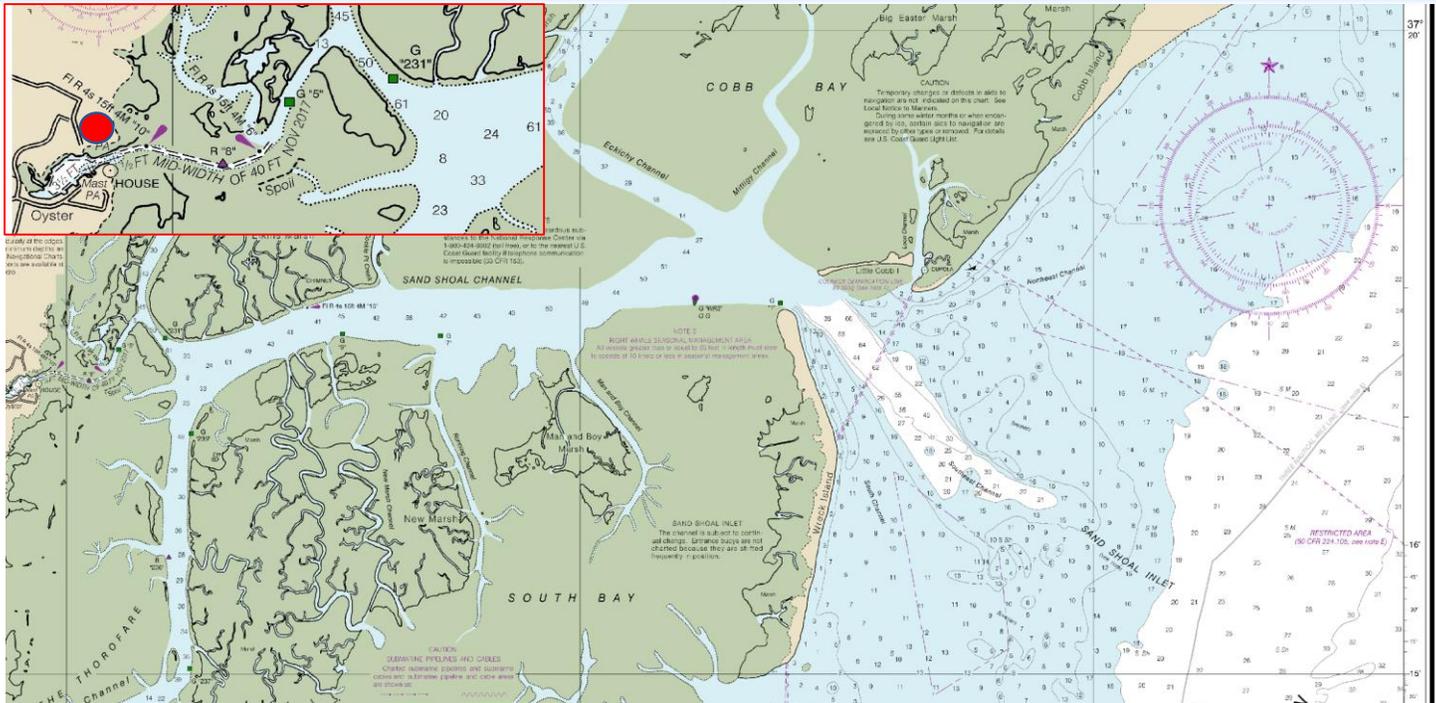


Figure 2. Cobb, Wreck and Sand Shoal Inlet from NOAA Chart 12224. Insert: Location of old Coast Guard Station in Oyster, VA

### The Paddle to Cobb

For this trip, I shared the experience with eight of my paddle tribe, the “Pod”. We set out from the tiny fishing village of Oyster, VA at sunrise on December 4, 2021, with the goal of reaching Sand Shoal Inlet, with Cobb Island to the north and Wreck Island to the south. It is an 8nm trip to the inlet, so a minimum 16nm trip that day. We planned to check out the sea state and if time and nature allowed, circumnavigate Wreck Island, adding another 6nm+ for a total of at least 22 nm. The sunset was at 4:46 pm, and we wanted to be back by then. Low tide was at 1:42 pm and we wanted to wait for the flood current to start before returning home, so we had a narrow window to begin the return trip.

As we left the ramp at 8 am, I pointed out the Cobb Island Coast Guard Station, now located next to the boat ramp in Oyster (red dot, Fig. 2). Previously located at the south end of Cobb Island, the Nature Conservancy moved the station to Oyster by barge (see Figs. 3 and 4) and performed a full renovation, using it until recently as a conference center. It was sold to a private buyer a few years ago for 2.3 million dollars. The station is not the only building to be moved from Cobb, but it was the last.



Figure 3. The renovated 1836 Station. Photo: Richard Essex



Figure 4. On the barge. Source: Kagawa and Kellam, 2003

Paddling to Cobb Island was a pleasant trip. We timed the tides to have the current in our favor. The weather was fair and the water not too cold for December. We first went to Man and Boy Marsh for a rest break and to get eyes on the inlet from afar.

We saw that the charts did not agree with all the aids to navigation that we encountered. One buoy (G "231") had been removed by the Coast Guard as part of the Virginia Inside Passage disestablishment project. We also saw that a large nun buoy was washed into the inlet during a storm and grounded in a place that had us scratching our heads until we realized that it moved. Aids to navigation at inlet entrances are sometimes not marked on charts, since they are frequently moved by storms, as do the channels they mark.

Looking toward Cobb Island from our vantage point on Man and Boy Marsh, something else looked wrong. We should have been looking at Little Cobb Island with Cobb Island in the background, but it appeared that Cobb Island was in the way. That can't be right. That's not what the charts say and that's not what the aerial photo shows. Something has changed.

This became a decision point for the group: do we head to the south end of Cobb and check it out or do we veer further south to begin a circumnavigation of Wreck? Eventually, we decide to head to Cobb, having no information yet about the surf or swell conditions. Besides, this would give me the opportunity to fully explore the 1880 station. Moreover, we were not convinced that we had enough daylight for the circumnavigation... and we later learned that we would be right about that.

As we approached the inlet, we felt the ebb current in full force. At times, I would test the current to gauge the speed and direction. It was clear to me that the current was running about 4 knots in places. Ahead, I saw several paddlers affected by the current, paddling forward, but being swept sideways towards the inlet as fast as they made forward progress. I altered my course to the north to counter the strong current and adopted a ferry angle to converge with the group ahead at the apparent point of landing.

### Things Have Changed!

We landed at the northwestern corner of what appeared to be a hook which had formed at the south end of Cobb Island. As we took refreshment, most of us checked our charts to make sense of where indeed we were. After much consultation, we realized that we were standing where our charts told us was in water. The island sand had migrated south and west. Where we should have been looking at the site of the old Coast Guard Station, we saw Little Cobb Island. It was hard for us to wrap our heads around.

It was now obvious to me that the sand at the south end of Cobb had indeed migrated, explaining our confusion upon landing. The sand had formed a hook (see figure 4). The northwestern point of the hook was where we stood ruminating, debating and snacking (red star). It also appeared to me that the westernmost portion of Little Cobb Island was also gone.

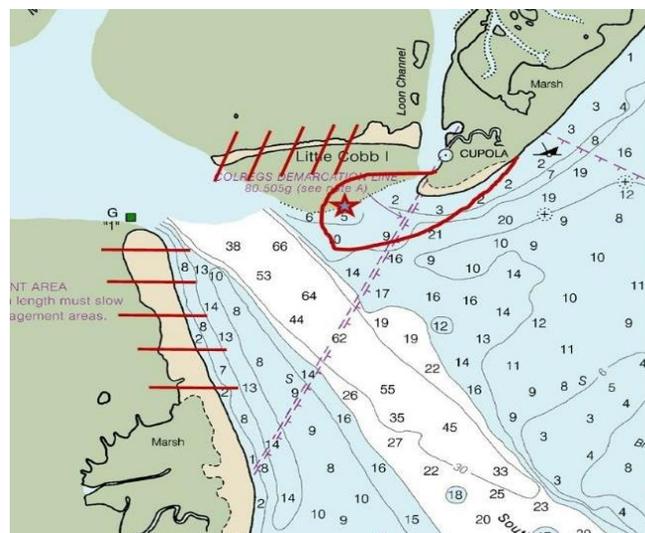


Figure 4. Changes to the south end of Cobb and north end of Wreck.

At Wreck Island to the south, we found that that sand had also migrated. Later, during our return trip, we passed alongside day marker G "1", but as you can see on the chart above, Wreck Island previously extended to the marker. On this day, we saw that the island lay almost a mile south of the marker. The red hash marks on the chart indicate the parts of the islands which were no longer present.

After some debate, we decided that due to the short Fall day, we did not have enough daylight to both circumnavigate Wreck Island and make it back to the ramp by sunset. We decided that a prudent course of action would be to paddle to the inlet and check out the surf, which appeared upon our approach to be rather flat. If that observation held, we would round the southern point of Cobb and paddle north to the approximate latitude of the 1880 Life Saving Station and explore the island.

Back into the current and on the way out of the inlet, we were treated to some fantastic swirling whirlpools and very playful water. We all took turns having our sea kayaks effortlessly spin in place. Smiles all around!

On the outside, the ocean was absolutely flat and quiet, almost eerily so. I felt that we were being welcomed and invited to land. It seemed like overkill to be wearing our helmets, but .....

Around the corner, we first saw a line of dilapidated pilings reaching out into the ocean. This must have marked the location of the station. That's where we landed.



*The giveaway for the station location Photo: Richard Essex*



*Photo: Mike Hamilton*



*Source: Kagawa and Kellam 2003*

After landing, I set out to find the site of the old 1880 station. Crossing the dune along the water's edge (bird nesting season ended Sept 1, so inland exploration was possible), I immediately saw the ruins of the 1880 station and the now empty site of the 1936 station in the distance. Leaving the group behind, I carefully crossed the wrack of flotsam and jetsam and slowly approached the ruins.

In the photo above, you can see the 1936 Coast Guard Station in the foreground with the 1880 Lifesaving Station in the background. We landed along the shore in the photo background and I approached the 1880 site from the east. BTW, on the chart you will find a "cupola" at the site of the 1880 station. You can see that it indeed had a cupola.

### What to Say?

I find the next part difficult to communicate. I'm not a sentimental person by nature. I've never lived on Cobb Island, nor was I related to anyone who lived there at any point (as far as I know).

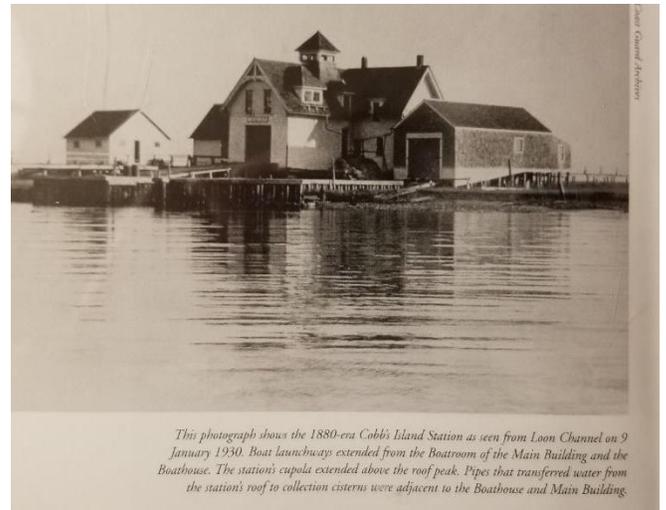
Upon seeing the ruins of the 1880 station, I was immediately reminded of a song written by the late folk singer, Kate Wolf. It was called Carolina Pines and it is about how she felt about an old, abandoned house in the country. She could feel the lives of those who lived there years before and felt a sense of melancholy. I felt the same melancholy looking at the remains of the 1880 Lifesaving Station.



The remains of the 1889 station Photo: Gail DaMota

*Just an old house with the roof falling in  
Standing at the edge of the field  
Watching the crops grow as it's always done before  
Nobody lives here anymore*

*The sun's going down in the Carolina pines  
I'm a long way from home and I miss that love of mine  
Broken windows, empty doors  
Nobody lives here anymore*



Source: Kagawa and Kellam, 2003

*Old memories come whistling like the wind  
Through the walls and the cracked window panes  
And the grass is growing high around the kitchen door  
Nobody lives here anymore*

*The sun's going down in the Carolina pines  
I'm a long way from home and I miss that love of mine  
Broken windows, empty doors  
Nobody lives here anymore*

Paddling back to the ramp proved slow at first. The ebb current continued to run strongly for at least an hour after low tide, as is the pattern among the VA Barrier Islands. We made it back just in time for a beautiful sunset. It was a beautiful paddle with good friends.

*Just as the day begins and ends, and the tides ebb  
and flow, so go the barrier islands.*





Sunset at Oyster. Photo: Rebecca FitzSimons

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## Emails to the Editor

### Responses to the November 2021 Article: Raise Your Hand if You Know More Than Five Black Paddlers

*Rick, thank you very much. The portion you wrote relating to lack of diversity in paddle sports is by far the best I have seen. I hope that you will pass it on to other DEI groups, e.g. ACA. The rest of the newsletter is great too, but the questions re African American inclusion/lack thereof is exemplary. Thanks again, cheers*

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*Would you please unsubscribe me from the newsletter? As a "person of color," I found the lead article to be deeply problematic, even if well-meaning.*

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*Rick, the piece on Black paddlers is deep. A subject that I have talked about with many of my friends here in New York. I know more than five Black kayakers! However, few minorities and Latinos such as me are paddling. Racism, cost and lack of education-information are the historical reasons. I keep pushing for the inclusion of minorities in sea kayaking, but there is resistance around this industry. .... We need to produce events in urban areas, and write about them. I belong to two paddling clubs. Both of them are trying to reach out to minority communities, but with limited success. It is a process. I am glad the discussion is open.*

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*This is an excellent publication and I really commend your commitment to boldly dealing with demographic issues that matter to our country, to our sport and to the future of conservation and wild spaces generally. You really blew it out of the park with this one. Anyone who grumbles about mixing politics and paddling should just proceed with their lobotomy, since they're already in line for one.*

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*Yes! Rick... thank you for writing this newsletter. I'm sharing this with my class. We talk about Dr. Carolyn Finney's book a lot and how the outdoor recreation industry is lacking in diversity... I feel developing*

*\programs for younger generations is where we can create this change! I talk with my students a lot about how outdoor programming for youth is the "gateway" to getting them to adopt more outdoor recreation activities as they get older.*

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*Rick Please remove me from any further newsletters, emails, calendars, or any other contact. I enjoyed our time on the water.*

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*I read it through without stopping. (I actually forwarded it to my son who is African American for his thoughts.). It was thought provoking, engaging, and so interesting!*

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*I can tell you that spending my childhood in the inner city (Waverly, Baltimore), as the fourth child of a very lower middle class family with one working parent in a very blue collar field, I also had very little exposure to the outdoors beyond playing in the cement alley between the row houses. We did not visit parks of any kind, had no hunting, hiking, skiing, mountain climbing or other adventure family history ..... We moved to Baltimore County (a mile from the city) when I was nine and there was a community park with trees and everything! It was a few hundred acres and that was the first independent and unmonitored exposure that I had with nature. While putting myself through college, I had my first real exposure with backpacking. Kayaking did not come along until my late 30's, mostly for economic reasons .....*

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*unsubscribe*

## Conversations with a Pelican

*Ashley Brown*



*Photo: Sean's Coastal Visions*

I don't pretend to have any understanding of what a pelican must think and feel, if her head hurts from slamming it into the water to catch fish, how the fish's spiny dorsal fin feels going down her throat; do the fish have to be swallowed head first? Do you think she and her squad are annoyed by the presence of kayakers while they glide over the water with kayakers in the way? A yell of "Incoming!!" can be heard as kayakers feel the need to duck while the pelicans pass by.

Pelicans can have a seven-foot wingspan and when they glide over the surface of the water they are

doing something called compression gliding. The bottom of the wings and the top of the water compress the air to make a cushion of air that lets the pelican (and other shore birds) glide using less energy.

She and her trail of companions glide across the breaking surf, in the trough of the waves. I hope that her stomach gets the same butterflies of excitement and fear that mine gets when I am in the trough of a wave, riding the dynamic energy of the water, while she rides the energy contained in the air.



Photo: Andrew Newmark, Macaulay Library

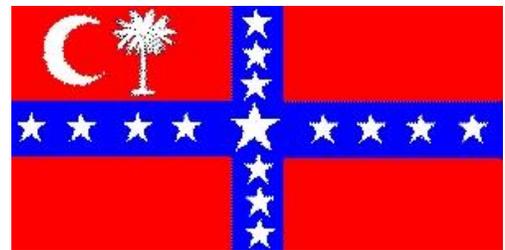
“The Brown Pelican is a comically elegant bird with an oversized bill, sinuous neck, and big, dark body. Squadrons glide above the surf along southern and western coasts, rising and falling in a graceful echo of the waves. They feed by plunge-diving from high up, using the force of impact to stun small fish before scooping them up. They are fairly common today—an excellent example of a species’ recovery from pesticide pollution that once placed them at the brink of extinction.” (Cornell Ornithology Lab)

Pelicans were endangered by the 1960’s and 70’s from DDT. They incubate their eggs by standing on them. But DDT caused thinning of the shells, and they cracked under their parent’s weight. So the species was not surviving. When DDT was removed from use, the populations recovered and pelicans are no longer considered a protected species.

*When pelicans die, it is from starvation. From the repeated blows to the head diving for fish, they begin to go blind. When they can’t see the fish, they can’t effectively hunt for food. Seems like a painful way to go, blind and hungry.*

There are a few bird sanctuaries in South Carolina and there are/were two in the Charleston Harbor. One is Crab Bank, which mostly washed away during a recent nearby hurricane. The other is Castle Pinckney, which is named after a Revolutionary war soldier and then moved through use and disuse for nearly 200 years.

Currently, it is a rookery, “returning” to nature, because it is not being protected. There are some sources that say the state owns it, but some that say it is privately held by a group of “Sons of the Confederacy”. They fly the flag that was created when South Carolina seceded from the Union and formed its own country. This iteration of the rebel flag, lit and flying, is a clear message of SC’s attachment to anti-government sentiment that perseveres still.



But - do you know what else is happening to this beacon of isolation? Pelican poop, boat loads of it. We have rain all the time, but it is not enough to wash away the white wash or that pungent smell that is more effective than the no-trespassing signs.



Photo: Bev Coslett



*Brown Pelican: Photo courtesy of Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

### **Don't ruffle your feathers**

Some friends and I were paddling up the coast of South Carolina and we needed to go into Winyah Bay to the Georgetown boat landing. We had taken a break on the south side of the rock jetty that stretched across our path, extending a half-mile out into the ocean. The weather was changing, but we had spent the morning on the ocean side with no concerns. The surf was tiny, "ankle-biters." So we got back on the water, boats laden with several day's worth of gear. The south wind started to blow. We had to go out around that jetty before we were in the Winyah Bay Channel and had some protection.

The wind drags across the top of the water lifting the waves. As it becomes more consistent and stronger, the waves become steeper and choppier. The wind feathers the tops off the southerly waves that are rising and hitting the east/west jetty.

These are the times I do square breathing, sing to myself, and otherwise talk to myself about best practices, next steps, remind myself that I know how to roll. The increasing wave height was breaking on the beam of the boat and pushing me into the rocks. It was too late to stop and put on a helmet. That opportunity had passed.

The navigation lights placed periodically up on the jetty were mostly dry, the waves not completely covering them, and a few birds perched on them. I started to watch the one pelican; she was just calmly looking around. The water swelled and broke and crashed over the top of the navigation aid, and she simply stood there and lifted her big body higher so the water swirled around her feet, not wetting her feathers. She wiggled and shrugged and settled back down, not even a bit concerned. So I relaxed, settled my hunched-up shoulders and managed each wave as it came by, following the example of the pelican with dry feathers.

## Gino Watkins: Polar Explorer

*Rick Wiebush*

In 2007, the New Zealander Paul Caffyn re-traced in a kayak parts of the southeast Greenland area that Gino Watkins paddled during his 1930 – 32 expeditions. The following year, Paul and his paddling partner Conrad Edwards returned to Greenland to retrace the 600-mile paddle around the southern tip of Greenland that Watkins did in an *open boat*.

In the summer of 2021, the Brit Jeff Allen undertook an expedition to southeast Greenland called “In the Wake of Watkins”.

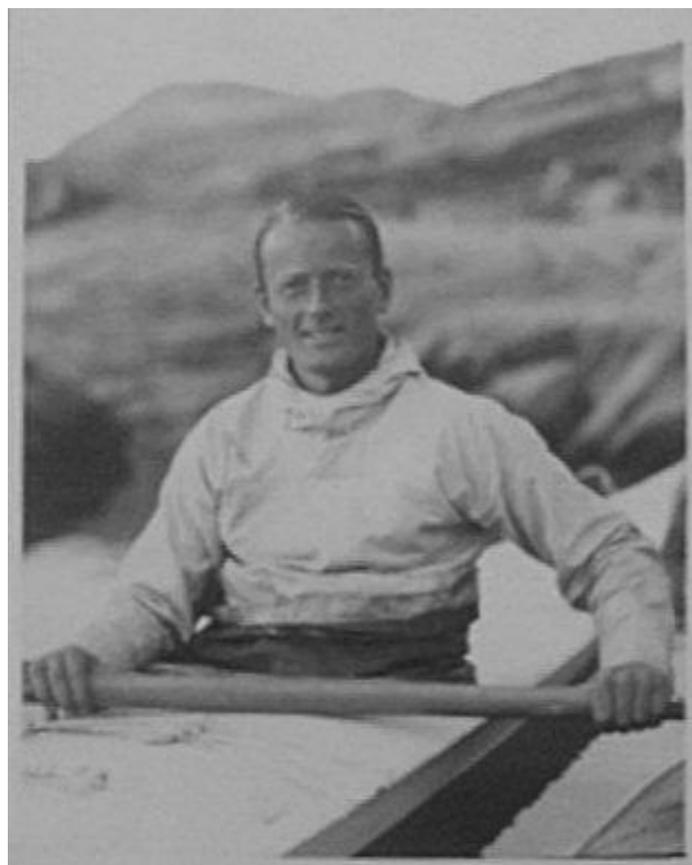
In 2022, Dave King of Polarquest Expeditions will be going to East Greenland to start a three-year film project that will document Gino Watkins’ life and expeditions.

All of which raises the question: “Who exactly was Gino Watkins and why do people care so much about him?”

### Who?

Watkins led an extraordinary life of polar exploration; extraordinary due to his youth (19 at the time he led his first expedition), his leadership style (egalitarian), and his surveying and exploration accomplishments in Norway, Labrador and Greenland.

He became interested in polar exploration while at University, and was influenced by the previous explorations of people like Nansen, Scott, Peary, and Shackleton. Most of their polar trips had taken place prior to World War I. Watkins was to become one of the key figures in polar exploration in the period between the wars.



*Photo courtesy of Scott Polar Research Institute*

### Norway

In 1927, while a second-year student, Watkins was supposed to be a member of an expedition to East Greenland. When the plans for that trip fell through, Watkins, now only 19, decided to organize his own expedition. He chose Edge Island, which is part of the Svalbard archipelago in northern Norway, above the Arctic Circle. He obtained funding from several different sources (including the Royal Geographical



Figure 1. Svalbard Archipelago

Society) and hired a team of eight people, which included surveyors, botanists, a doctor, a geologist, a biologist, and an ornithologist.

In spite of routinely bad weather during their four weeks on the island (they had only five nice days), the trip was considered a success and the findings of the various professionals were published in the *Geographical Journal* in the summer of 1928.

### Labrador

Watkins next expedition was to explore and survey the interior of Labrador, about which very little was known at the time. They (three Brits and two trappers) traveled several hundred miles by canoe in the summer and dog sled in the winter, trying to make sense of the complicated system of rivers, lakes and dense forests of the interior, a totally flat land that was devoid of geographical landmarks. During their winter trips in December 1928 and January 1929, they had to slog through deep snow and contend with temperatures that reached minus 40 (F). Both the team members and the dogs were usually cold, exhausted and near starvation. In fact, four of the seven dogs died. In spite of this, Watkins was already thinking ahead and decided that his next trip would be to Greenland.



Figure 2. Labrador and Newfoundland

### The First East Greenland Expedition

The British were interested in establishing a shorter air route from England to Canada, one that would necessarily go across Greenland. But almost nothing was known about Greenland's weather conditions or the nature of the ice cap that covered 80% of the country. Consequently, the British Air Arctic Route Expedition (BAARE) was established to survey this little-known part of the flight path. Specifically, the expedition would: 1) monitor weather conditions, 2) cross the Greenland ice cap, 3) survey the mountainous coast, 4) report on flying conditions and 5) examine the possibility of establishing an air base in the region.

The expedition was a big deal. It was sponsored and funded by the Royal Geographic Society, the British Air Ministry, the War Office, as well as several commercial sponsors. Moreover, the Prince of Wales was the chair of the committee overseeing the project. Finally, in addition to a team of 14 men, 49 huskies, sledges and provisions, the expedition would be supported by two power boats and two aircraft (for better surveying).

And it was to be organized and led by 21 year-old Gino Watkins.

The staffing was interesting in that it included the typical array of professionals (i.e., surveyors, biologists, geologists, etc.), but most of them were under age 25 and only two had previous experience in the Arctic. In addition, unlike most previous



Figure 3. Greenland (Angmagssalik area circled)

European expedition structures, the team was not organized along military lines with ranks, chains of command, and formal discipline. Instead, Watkins led by example of his self-discipline, relentless work, his appreciation of the scientific aspects of the expedition, his hunting skills, and by his treatment of team members as friends rather than subordinates.

### Using Kayaks

This expedition lasted 13 months from mid-1930 to mid-1931. Operating from a base camp near Angmagssalik, it consisted of a series of trips across the ice cap to various parts of Greenland. On one of the later trips, two of the men used dog sleds to cross the entire ice cap from east to west. It took them two months. They carried kayaks the whole way on their sleds so they could use them once they got to the fjords along the west coast. Once there, they were able to switch to the kayaks, but they then had to deal with massive ice floes in the fjords that ended up contributing to the length of the trip.

Kayaks also figured into the last trip made during this expedition. Wanting to survey the southern coast of Greenland, Watkins and two other men used two open boats, each with a four-horsepower engine (!) to make the 600-mile trip. They carried three kayaks on the boats in case of an emergency. But Watkins also used one to hunt to keep the small party fed. (This is the trip that Paul Caffyn and Conrad Edwards replicated in kayaks in 2008.)

### Learning from the Inuit

During the first expedition, Watkins learned hunting and fishing methods from the Inuit. These included how to handle a kayak and a harpoon, and how to use them to track and kill seals. As a result, Watkins was able to “go light” on the food supplies he needed for his men and dogs on journeys. On that last 600-mile trip around the southern tip of Greenland, he brought very little food along, instead relying on his hunting skills to keep the group fed. This lightweight approach to polar travel was a major contribution to the field.

### Alone on the Ice Cap

In 1930, the first journey was made to erect the weather station at 8,000 feet on the ice cap. The plan was to have two men operate the weather station in rotating eight-week shifts. The first change-over worked well. But the second relief party (in November, 1930) ran into trouble – in the form of outrageous weather – that seriously delayed their arrival at the weather station. The delay resulted in their consumption of most of the food that was intended for the men that would be handling the weather station shift during the winter months. Knowing that there was only enough food for one person, one of the men volunteered to man the station alone during the winter. That was almost a deadly mistake.



*The area around Angmagssalik. Photo: Rick Wiebush*

During that winter, the plan was to use the planes to drop re-supplies to the weather station, which was 130 miles from the base camp. But first an inability to locate the station, and then weather that grounded the planes, short-circuited that plan. In early March, an overland relief attempt (which ended up lasting 40 days) was again unable to find the station and was ultimately stopped by extreme cold, high winds, and then a blizzard that lasted for six days.

Knowing that the person manning the ice cap station had only enough food to last until early May, another party, this time led by Watkins, set out in mid-April to reach him. What they found made clear why the other parties had been unable to locate the station – it was totally buried under 10 – 11 feet of snow! This relief party was able to find it only because they saw a few inches of a ventilation tube sticking out above the snow. It was May 5 and although the person manning the station was safe and healthy, he had enough food for only a few more days and was almost out of fuel.

When they returned to England in 1931, the group – and Watkins in particular – was treated as heroes. They received honors from the geographical societies of England, Scotland and Denmark. Gino met the King of England. He was constantly invited to give lectures across the country (which he did in part to pay of the debts incurred by the expedition).

#### Food

For dog sled trips, Watkins worked out a daily diet that would provide 6,000 calories from just 2.2 pounds of food per person. That consisted of 8 oz. of pemmican, a similar portion of butter, 4 oz. each of biscuits and sugar cubes, 3 oz. each of oats and chocolate, 2 oz. each of “pea flour” and a protein powder, and 1.5 oz. of cocoa and malted milk.

### Cut Short: The Second Greenland Expedition

Upon returning to England, Watkins immediately started making plans for a new polar expedition. This time he wanted to head to the south pole and cross Antarctica using just dog sleds. But since the Depression had started, he found it impossible to raise sufficient funding for that trip. So he decided to go back to Greenland instead and to make it a very small, more affordable expedition. He planned to continue work on the Arctic Air route and as a result received funding from the Geographical Society, Pan American Airways, and The Times of London. He took just three other men.

This expedition lasted from late July 1932 until August 1933. But it finished its limited work without Watkins, who drowned on August 20, 1931 while hunting from his kayak. The story is told by one of his biographers, J. M. Scott:

“Expert in the handling of a kayak, Watkins had nevertheless previously had some narrow escapes while fishing, hunting, or harpooning from the light and easily capsized boat so much used in those

waters. In fact, only a few days before the fatal accident, while harpooning seals on an ice floe, he had come close to death. Upon that occasion a piece of the glacier broke off, fell into the water, and the resultant wave crashed him against a cliff and capsized his kayak to which he had tied himself with a piece of towline. It is thought that something similar may have happened on the 20th. All that is known is that on that day he did not return. And when Rymill and Chapman set out by motorboat to explore the site, pieces of glacier were breaking off and it was only after much searching that they saw indications of their missing comrade’s kayak floating upside down, and, 200 yards from the face of the glacier, the dead man’s sodden belt and trousers on a small ice floe. It is supposed that, having capsized, Watkins had tried to disengage himself from the kayak and his encumbering clothes to swim to shore through the icy waters. His body was never recovered.”

*Note: this article relies heavily on the article by J. M. Scott found in Encyclopedia Arctica 15 and another article from the Scott Polar Research Institute at the University of Cambridge, U.K.*



Watkins hunting. Photo: Scott Polar Research Institute

**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 2022 contest we received over 50 great photos from 20 different photographers, including international entries from the UK and Mexico. The photos were then reviewed 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: Jill Allbritton, Marilyn Cooper, Laurie Collins, Mike Hamilton, Kathryn Lapolla, Denean Machis, Tom Noffsinger, Allison Palmer, Rick Wiebush.

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



*Spencer Lake, Alaska. Photo: Lisa Giguere (MD)*



*Pacific Baja. Photo: Victor Leon (MX)*



*Cornwall, UK. Photo Rupert Kirkwood (UK)*



*Silver Springs, FL. Photo: Rick Wiebush (MD)*



*Muddy Creek, PA Photo: Jean Wunder (MD)*



*Chesapeake Bay, MD. Photo: Lisa Giguere (MD)*



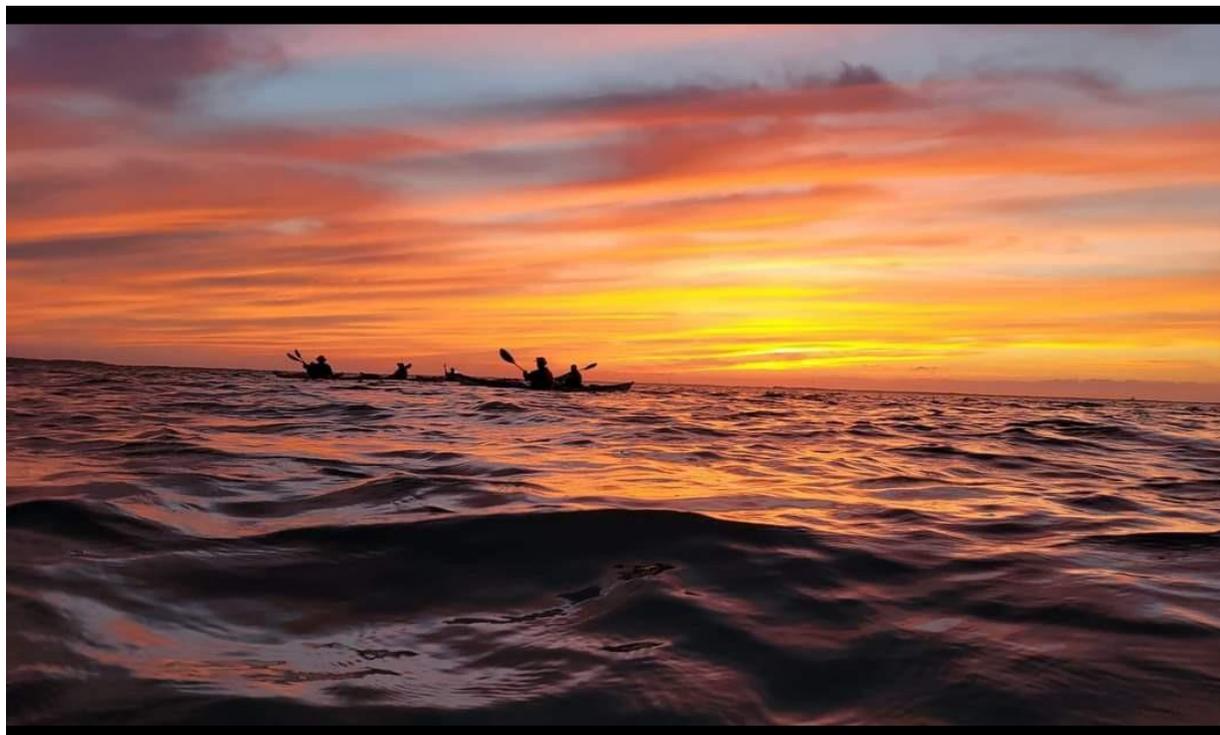
*Smith Island, MD. Photo Mark Baskeyfield (MD)*



*Maine Coast Photo: Jimmy McArdle (MD)*



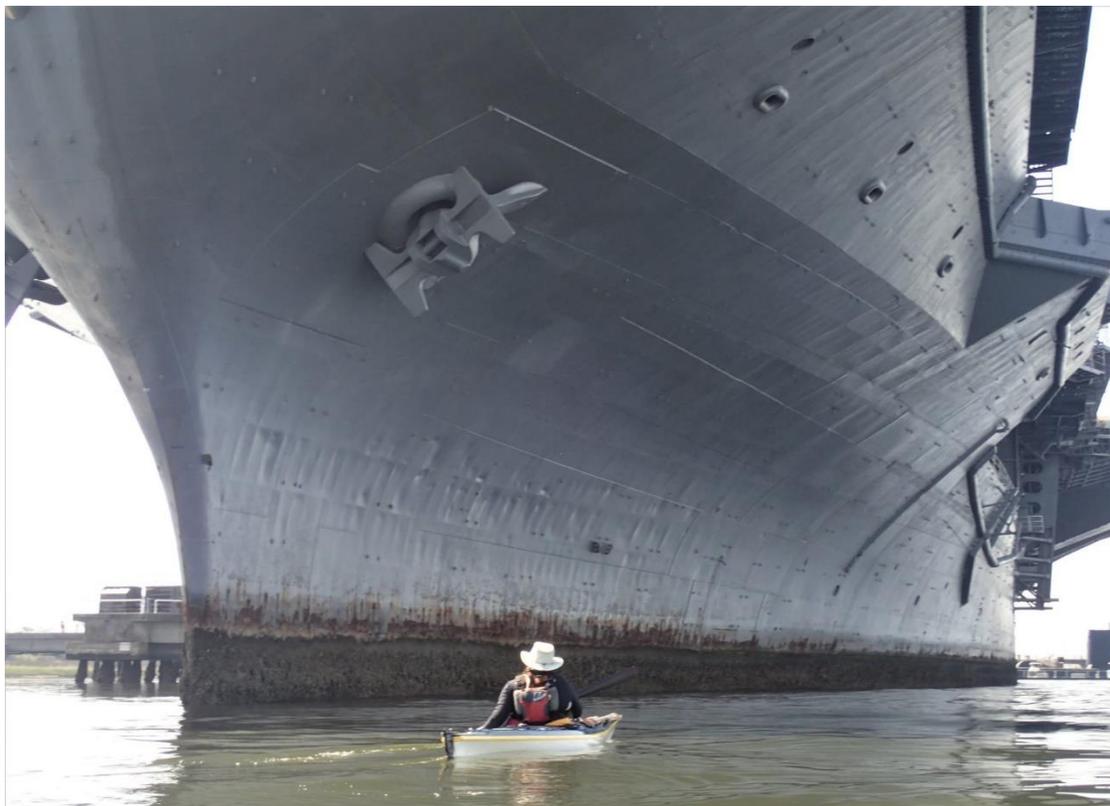
*Straits of Mackinac, MI. Photo: Coleen McFarland (OH)*



*Outer Banks, North Carolina. Photo; Sherry Roy (NC)*



*Muscongus Bay, ME. Photo: Debbie Anderson (NJ)*



*Charleston Harbor, South Carolina. Photo: Laurie Collins (MD)*



*Oregon Coast. Photo: Bill Vonnegut (OR)*

## Hiking (and Paddling) Like A Girl

*Caroline Dooley*



*Photo: Quinn Ainslee*

Every day for years I wore the same outfit: baggy red basketball shorts and pink floral sandals.

For me, this is what it meant to be a girl. My love of floral print combined with a hatred of form-fitting clothing, creating a unique juxtaposition that made me *me*.

As I arrived in Palmer at the NOLS Alaska base to begin a month backpacking and sea kayaking through the Chugach Mountains, I thought I had my

feminine identity figured out: it was all about opposition. I was a climber who cried at sappy movies. I took pride in the skinned knees under my favorite polka-dotted dress.

In my mind, these two sides were opponents who fought for my attention. They separately expressed themselves as dueling parts of my identity.

But why did I feel they inherently conflicted with one another?

I knew there were two sides to me: sensitivity and strength. But a month in Alaska taught me that there's no separating these qualities. They work in tandem.

My NOLS trip featured 15 incredible people who each had their own story, quirks, and worldview. We called ourselves AKX-9 (the official NOLS trip code for our course, Alaska Sea Kayaking and Backpacking, and joked about getting the sequence tattooed.

From the alternative-medicine guru to the gluten-free germaphobe, each person had a unique backstory that enriched my understanding of my surroundings, my peers, and what it meant to be me.

Of these 15 people, just three identified as female. And as much as I adored my group members, there were certain things I didn't initially feel comfortable saying or doing in a male-dominated group.

For one, I struggled physically to keep up with my male peers. Many had long legs and an athletic stature, and I sometimes found myself at the back of the pack. For another, I was nervous to bring up my occasional homesickness, fearful that it would be brushed off with a joke. I saw the males as my opposites, and I struggled to fully be myself.

**Yet I couldn't have been more wrong: we were much more similar than we were different.** One male peer was equally out of breath on hikes, so we took up the rear together, writing songs about the moose trails we passed. My homesickness was eclipsed by my tent mate's, who missed his girlfriend so much that he politely asked the group to stop singing Soulja Boy's hit track about long-distance relationships (you guessed it: "Kiss Me Thru the Phone").

As I began to recognize these nuances, I realized something crucial. I'd been trying for years to balance out my softer traits by developing qualities that made me feel more "strong," even "masculine." I began to see it everywhere in my life: even at



*Photo: Caroline Dooley*

college, my humanities major was opposed by an engineering minor.

At NOLS, I didn't need to compensate for these softer traits. They were some of the best parts of me. Not only that, they were exactly what made me strong.

My creativity, my sensitivity, my empathy: they gave me an edge in the backcountry.

Thanks to my ability to sew, I patched up a ripped tarp with a needle and dental floss. When a tent mate injured his foot, I crafted a makeshift salt bath out of a plastic food bag.

My creativity developed into bold decision-making. I wasn't afraid to take an alternate route to the summit if it meant reaching that awe-inspiring view.

My sensitivity was strategy. I made sure that everyone had an important role round camp that played into their strengths, which kept morale high even on a rainy day.

My empathy became courage. Once I understood that my peers were just as nervous as I was, the challenge of a hard hike seemed a bit more doable. By giving myself and others the permission to celebrate these softer traits, AKX-9 became an even more cohesive group. Our comedic bits over dinner

were supplemented by conversations about our future goals. We still joked about the hot chocolate powder gone missing during week three, but we also made space to share about our difficulties at home and on the trail.

This celebration of soft skills culminated while camping at the base of Shoup Glacier in Prince William Sound. After pitching our tents and making hot drinks, we craned our necks at the mass of ice before us, glacial runoff rushing so loudly we could barely hear ourselves think.

This thing was bigger than any of us. It had witnessed every revolution and administration, every fear and love and triumph. And despite the rapid pace of our changing climate, this massive glacier was likely to remain beyond our lifetime. This group was but a blip in its extensive timeline.

The crisp silence broke as a wise friend said, “you can’t capture this. All you can do is look around and take it in.”

This hit home. To truly appreciate this glacier, soft skills were necessary. I could analyze every feature of the glacial formation, but I couldn’t use logic to document the feeling of looking up at it.



*Photo: Will Suter*

This is why I feel at home outside: Both my basketball shorts and my pink sandals are valued. To fully experience the outdoors, my soft and hard skills work together. I have to know how to climb the mountain, and how to soak it all in along the way.

As I learn to harness my so-called “girly” traits, I only become prouder of that label. If hiking like a girl means hiking with endurance and empathy, wit and warmth, I’ll own it. I couldn’t be prouder to hike like a girl.



*Photo: Will Scott*

## Diversifying the Outdoors

*Rick Wiebush*



*Paddling. Photo courtesy of Soul Trak*

### Outdoor Afro? Brown Women Climb? Soul Trak? Huh?

In the November 2021 edition, *Coastbusters* had an article on the underrepresentation of Black people in adventure sports generally and sea kayaking specifically. This is a follow-up article that highlights organizations created by Black people that are dedicated to expanding diversity and inclusion in outdoor adventure. Five of those organizations are briefly profiled here with links to their websites for those who want to know more.

### Black Women Who Kayak + <https://blackwomenwhokayak.com/>

The story behind this group reflects some of the issues identified as barriers to outdoor adventure for Black people in the previous issue of *Coastbusters*. The group's founder, Tanya Walker, was interested as a child in some of the outdoor adventure activities (e.g. climbing, paddling) she saw on television. But her mother prohibited her from participating because: 1) she was a single parent with limited income; and 2) those things typically weren't a part of Black culture. But after a camp experience as a junior in high school she got hooked on outdoor activities and continued to pursue them



Caving! Photo courtesy of BWWK+

as an adult. Then, in 2018, she started BWWK+ because she wanted to “to create a movement that would break down barriers, defy the myths of what people of color will and will not do, to educate and empower women of color to not only step outside their comfort zone, and to face their fears but to gain more confidence to where they will get their kids and family members involved as well. So, there will be no more kids, like I was, who missed out.”

BWWK+ started in Austin, spread to Dallas and Houston, then to Kentucky, Ohio, and Colorado. A chapter is due to open (and maybe already has) in Washington, DC. Although the name emphasizes kayaking, the group is involved in a wide range of activities including hiking, caving (see photo above), horseback riding, and cycling, among others. They try to serve all socioeconomic groups and have partnered with REI to create a scholarship fund for low income women.

### Soul Trak Outdoors

<https://soultrak.com/>

Soul Trak is a D.C.-based nonprofit whose mission is to build wider, more inclusive pools of outdoor leaders, build support groups for outdoor activities, and expand environmental awareness and protection. They offer a variety of outdoor activities for youth, college students, and adults. Those activities include weekend outing programs (biking, hiking, paddling), social events, technical skills workshops, environmental leadership training, and environment-related community service projects.

One of the ways they develop leaders is through operating a year-long Environmental Leadership Cohort. Participants commit to a twelve-month program that involves meetings twice per month and weekend activities. It’s designed to train adults in outdoor skills (e.g., rock climbing, backpacking, paddling), and develop their environmental leadership and trip-leading skills. During the year-long program, participants mentor younger people and do community organizing around environmental and sustainability issues.

### Melanin Base Camp

<https://www.melaninbasecamp.com/>

Originally founded to encourage more minority participation in the outdoors, Melanin Base Camp no longer operates direct service programs. Instead, it focuses on making sure that the BIPOC groups that are involved in outdoor adventure are reflected and represented in the media. The goal is simply to raise the visibility of Black, Brown, Asian, Indigenous, and Queer People of Color in the outdoors.

Part of that effort includes supporting a network of bloggers who post on the MBC site, and who have a monthly readership of 50,000 people! The bloggers are extremely interesting and skilled people who provide multiple and diverse perspectives on outdoor adventure. They include people like:

- Favia Dubyk - a Black climber, doctor, and cancer survivor based in New Mexico
- Alexa Everson - a writer, trail runner, backpacker, and cyclist who is one of the “Black Foxes” cyclists
- Caroline Hsu - an ethics researcher, skier, skydiver, and outdoor adventurer in Salt Lake
- Nadia Iris - an Afro-Indigenous Latina cardiac nurse, skydiver, climber, and hiker from North Carolina and
- Danielle Williams, MBC’s founder who has written compellingly about being Black, female and disabled in the outdoors:  
<https://www.melaninbasecamp.com/trip-reports/2019/9/26/why-i-dont-write-about-being-disabled-in-the-outdoors>



Hiking. Photo courtesy of Outdoor Afro

### Outdoor Afro

<http://www.outdoorafro.org/>

Outdoor Afro is a *national* network that facilitates Black connections and leadership in nature. It is trying to change “the face of conservation” in the U.S. They have developed and trained more than 100 leaders in 56 cities around the country. They provide comprehensive leadership training to volunteers who are community members. One of their sites is Outdoor Afro DMV, which operates as a Meet Up group in Washington, D.C. The D.C. group has 7,000 members!

### Outdoors Empowered Network

<https://www.outdoorsempowered.org/about-oen>

OEN is an umbrella organization that provides support and technical assistance to its member organizations, all of which focus on getting BIPOC youth involved in outdoor activities. They help local organizations and schools with outdoor leadership training (e.g., for youth workers and teachers) and by organizing “gear libraries” so that economic issues aren’t a barrier to outdoor pursuits. A core goal is to get local community members sufficiently

trained that they can lead outdoor activities on their own.

The member agencies range from small community organizations to special youth programs run by large organizations such as The Mountaineers in Seattle and the Appalachian Mountain Club in Boston. Each organization has its own specific target population but they all basically serve inner-city youth in places like Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago and San Francisco, as well as Hispanic youth in New Mexico and Dine (Navajo) youth in Arizona.



An OEN “Gear Library”. Photo: OEN.

## Upcoming Events

### Cross Currents Winter 2022

# Navigation for Paddlers

**Webinar Series: Seven Wednesdays 7 – 8:30 PM**

**On-Water: Saturday Apr. 23, 10 - 5**

This on-line series is the same as the one we did last winter. That one involved 25 people in two separate groups and everyone loved it. This year, we will cover the same general topics but with new examples and new exercises. The series starts on Weds., Feb 23 and continues for seven consecutive weeks, ending on Weds. April 6. The on-water part is Sat Apr. 23

We will cover understanding charts including aids to navigation, measuring distances, etc., as well as using a compass, plotting courses, using ranges, learning about tides and currents, dealing with wind, trip planning and other topics. The on-water portion will provide an opportunity to apply what you've learned in the "real world".

*This course is rigorous and demanding. Some of the sessions end up running for two hours. There is homework for each session and you will spend at least an hour or two on homework each week. There is a final trip planning exercise that will likely take you several hours to complete. Just sayin'.*

**Cost:** \$295 (\$200 if unable to do on-water portion)

**To register:** email Rick at [crosscurrentsseakayaking@gmail.com](mailto:crosscurrentsseakayaking@gmail.com)

## Florida in March: The Nature Coast

Join us for a week in sunny and warm Florida in early March! We are heading to some new places this year and will be spending about half the time exploring rivers and springs, looking for manatees and other wildlife. We will hit the famous Suwanee River, the Withlacoochie and the Chassahowitzka. The other half will be spent on the Gulf Coast heading out to offshore islands like Anclote Key and the keys of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge. We will have a centrally-located rental house(s). We've been going to Florida every year for about the past eight years, and I just figured we needed to do something new and different – and this is it!

Dates: Saturday, March 5 to Saturday, March 12 and  
Saturday March 12 to Saturday March 19

Cost: \$625 + housing (about \$55/night, per person)

**Book Review****The Watkins Boys, by Simon Courtauld****Paul Caffyn**

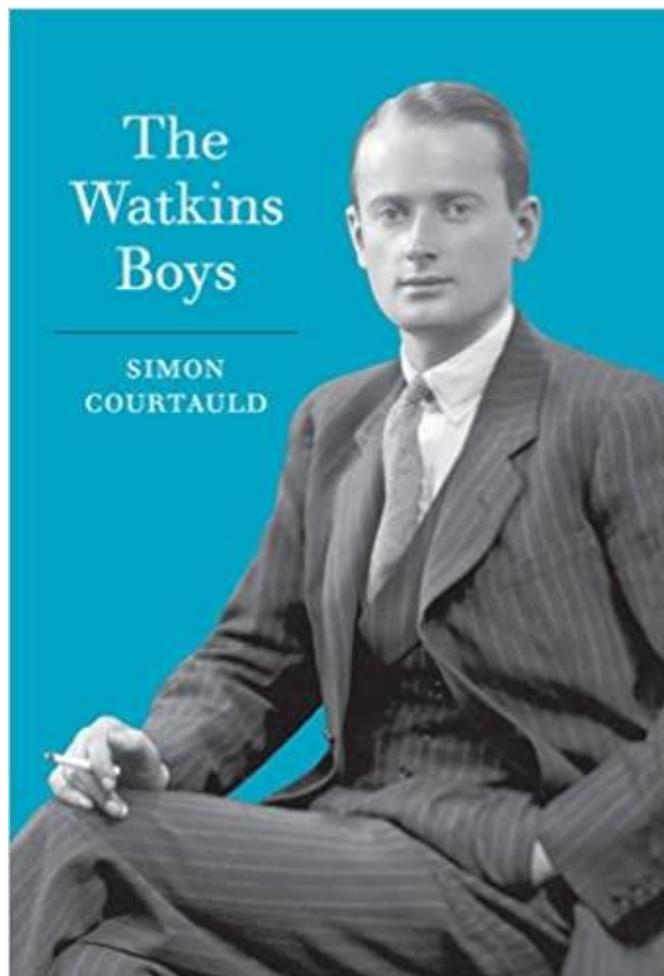
In 1930 a charismatic young Cambridge undergraduate raised financial backing for an expedition of 13 equally young men to the Angmagssalik region of East Greenland with the principal aim of establishing weather stations both on the coast and on the Greenland icecap for a proposed trans-Atlantic commercial air route. It was called the British Arctic Air Route Expedition, or BAARE. The young bloke was leading his third Arctic expedition – Gino Watkins was only 23 years old.

Given a long history of disastrous British polar expeditions - the era of heroic failure when some or all of the participants died through ineptitude and/or poor planning – the outstanding success of BAARE was such a positive breath of fresh air to the British public, who were still suffering from the post war shortages and calamitous loss of British manhood from the First World War.

Simon Courtauld, nephew of August of the ‘stranded on the ice cap fame’, has written a long overdue book on seven of the key figures of BAARE, how they came to be invited to join this expedition and how their time in East Greenland so influenced the rest of their lives.

Following two preliminary chapters, the book summarizes the lives of six of the key members of BAARE who went on to lives of outstanding achievements; August Courtauld, Martin Lindsay, Quintin Riley, John Rymill, Jimmy Scott and Freddy Spencer Chapman; while the final chapter describes the charismatic leadership and short life (25 years) of Gino Watkins.

Publicity in the British media of the plight of August Courtauld, who was stranded at the ice cap weather



station, 120 miles west of the coastal expedition base, significantly raised public attention of BAARE. Buried in his tent by winter snows, August Courtauld was totally reliant on his own resources for five months and, having left his shovel on the surface, was entombed in the ice cap for the last six weeks, with successive re-supply trips unable to find the buried tent. A three-man relief attempt, led by Jimmy Scott, suffered atrocious conditions on the ice cap and unable to locate the buried tent, Jimmy blamed

himself for failing to rescue Courtauld, ruining his confidence so much that he never again returned to the polar regions. The subsequent relief trip, utilized the survey skills of the only Antipodean member of BAARE, John Rymill, to locate the ventilator tube marking the top of August's tent.

The 1934 published expedition accounts by Freddy Spencer Chapman, Northern Lights and Watkins' Last Expedition, were sanitized for the British public. Any salacious material, such as the sexual shenanigans and the native progeny of Gino and Freddy, down to the labelling the steep glacial grunt up to the ice cap as 'Bugbear Bank' instead of what is was actually called, 'Buggery Bank', was removed.

My library now has upwards of 32 books on the two Gino Watkins-lead east Greenland expeditions and accounts by its team members; autobiographies by Lindsay, Courtauld and Spencer Chapman, biographies of Scott, Rymill, Riley, Courtauld, and Spencer Chapman, several with chapters on the leadership style of Gino, and a recent account of the 1986 Australian expedition led by Earl Bloomfield. I had always felt there was a need for a book which described the influence that BAARE had on the later lives of the expedition members, what they got up to in their waning years, if they kept in touch with each other, what contribution they made to inspiring younger folk and how they fell off their perches, whether by their own hand or the ageing process. Simon has satisfied all my demands for such a book with *The Watkins Boys*.

A select bibliography of 28 titles and comprehensive index complete the book.

The photo section is very disappointing, with only eight pages of photos; most of which are commonly seen in other books; pictures such as Gino hunting in his 'white kayak', and the 14 vignette portraits of the BAARE team. I would have liked photos of the six 'Watkins Boys' in later life, on their subsequent expeditions, during the war years or ageing gracefully. A full-page photo of Margy Graham is a strange inclusion. Although Gino asked her to marry him in June 1932, she is not one of the key figures in the book. The last photo has not reproduced well but it shows two Kiwi paddlers in 2007 (Paul Caffyn and Conrad Edwards) by the Watkins Memorial cross in Lake Fjord.

In summary, an engrossing and inspiring read, with my only niggle the choice, quality and number of photographs.

**Title: *The Watkins Boys***

Author: Simon Courtauld

Published: 2010

Publisher: [michaelrussell@waitrose.com](mailto:michaelrussell@waitrose.com)

Contents: 208 pp, index, one map, 8pp b&w photos, bibliography

ISBN-10

ISBN-13 | 978-0859553186

Available: Amazon.

Price: \$66.70



*Photo courtesy of Lonely Planet*

## Cross Currents Courses and Trips 2022

Day/Date	Course	Location	Instructors/Guides	Cost
<b>I. Unconscious Competence Series</b>				
May 28 – Aug. 14	UnCon I	Multiple	Rick Wiebush, Paula Hubbard, Laurie Collins	\$1,095 (13 days)
Apr 29 – Aug. 7.	UnCon III	Multiple	Wiebush, Hubbard, Mike Hamilton, Ken Fandetti,	\$1,195 (12 days)
<b>II. Individual Courses and Trips</b>				
Wednesdays Feb 23 – Apr 23	Navigation for Paddlers (Online)	Your house + On water session Apr 23 Annapolis	Rick Wiebush, Paula Hubbard	\$295 (\$200 if no on-water session)
Sat – Sat Mar 5 – 12 and Mar 12 - 19	Florida Nature Coast	Tarpon Springs/Crystal River area	Rick Wiebush	\$625 + housing
Fri – Sun May 13 - 15	Outer Banks and Cape Lookout	Emerald Isle, NC	James Kesterson, Rick Wiebush	\$325 + housing
Sat - Sun May 21 – 22	Intensive Intermediate Skills	Kent Narrows, MD	Laurie Collins, Denise Parisi, Shelly Wiechelt	\$225
Sat June 4	Intro to Kayaking	Spa Creek, Annapolis MD	Paula Hubbard	\$125
Sat – Sun June 4 - 5	Greenland Skills	Rocky Gorge	Mike Hamilton	\$225
Fri – Fri June 3 -10	Outward Bound Staff Training (Private)	Lower Chesapeake Bay	Rick Wiebush	n/a
Sat – Sun June 18 - 19	Paddle Smarter: Women's Skills Weekend	Chestertown, MD	Paula Hubbard	\$225 + housing
Sat. June 19	Rolling: Video Analysis	Rocky Gorge Reservoir	Mike Hamilton	\$100
Fri – Sun June 24 - 26	Open and Rough Water Skills + Leadership	Cape Charles, VA	James Kesterson	\$295 + housing
Fri – Sun July 1 - 3	The Gathering at Tangier	Tangier Island, VA	Rick Wiebush, Laurie Collins	\$325 + housing
Sat July 9 + 23 + Aug 6.	Rolling Instruction Series Three sessions	Rocky Gorge Reservoir	Mike Hamilton	\$195 (for all three)
Sat July 16	Intro to Kayaking	Spa Creek, Annapolis	Denise Parisi	\$125
Sat July 24	Incident Management	Chestertown, MD	Paula Hubbard	\$125
Fri July 29 – Sun July 31	Women's Surf and Bouncy Water Weekend	Metompkin Inlet, VA Eastern Shore	Ashley Brown	\$325 + housing
Sat – Thurs Aug 6 - 11	Cape Cod Exploration		Paula Hubbard, Rick Wiebush	\$525 + housing
Fri - Sun. Aug. 12 - 14	Rocks and Ledges	Newport, RI	Ken Fandetti, Rick Wiebush, Paula Hubbard	\$325 + housing
Sat. Aug 20	Intro to Kayaking	Spa Creek, Annapolis	Denise Parisi, Shelly Wiechelt	\$125
Sat – Sun Aug 20 - 21	Intensive Intermediate Skills	Spa Creek, Annapolis	Laurie Collins, Luci Hollingsworth	\$225
Fri – Sun Aug 28 - 29	Gathering at Rehoboth Bay	Camp Arrowhead, DE	Jeff Atkins, Mike Hamilton, Rick Wiebush	\$295 + housing
Weds - Thurs Sept. 21 - 22	British Canoeing: Sea Leader Training (4*)	Cape Charles, VA	Todd Wright	\$275
Fri – Sun Sept 23- 25	10th Annual Kiptopeke Symposium	Cape Charles, VA	Wright, Williams, Noffsinger, Atkins, Brown, Sigethy, more	\$375 + housing

**Special Legal Supplement**

**Buyer Beware: Risk and Responsibility**

*Ian Frazier*

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT,  
SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT, TEMPE, ARIZONA  
CASE NO. B19294, JUDGE JOAN KUJAVA, PRESIDING  
WILE E. COYOTE, Plaintiff  
-v.-  
ACME COMPANY, Defendant**

Opening Statement of Mr. Harold Schoff, attorney for Mr. Coyote:

My client, Mr. Wile E. Coyote, a resident of Arizona and contiguous states, does hereby bring suit for damages against the Acme Company, manufacturer and retail distributor of assorted merchandise, incorporated in Delaware and doing business in every state, district, and territory. Mr. Coyote seeks compensation for personal injuries, loss of business income, and mental suffering caused as a direct result of the actions and/or gross negligence of said company, under Title 15 of the United States Code, Chapter 47, section 2072, subsection (a), relating to product liability.

Mr. Coyote states that on eighty-five separate occasions he has purchased of the Acme Company (hereinafter, "Defendant"), through that company's mail-order department, certain products which did cause him bodily injury due to defects in manufacture or improper cautionary labelling. Sales slips made out to Mr. Coyote as proof of purchase are at present in the possession of the Court, marked Exhibit A. Such injuries sustained by Mr. Coyote have temporarily restricted his ability to make a living in his profession of predator. Mr. Coyote is



Figure 1. Court Jurisdiction

self-employed and thus not eligible for Workmen's Compensation.

### Faulty Rocket Sled

Mr. Coyote states that on December 13th he received of Defendant via parcel post one Acme Rocket Sled. The intention of Mr. Coyote was to use the Rocket Sled to aid him in pursuit of his prey. Upon receipt of the Rocket Sled Mr. Coyote removed it from its wooden shipping crate and, sighting his prey in the distance, activated the ignition. As Mr. Coyote gripped the handlebars, the Rocket Sled accelerated with such sudden and



*Plaintiff's exhibit #1: Acme Rocket Sled*

and precipitate force as to stretch Mr. Coyote's forelimbs to a length of fifty feet. Subsequently, the rest of Mr. Coyote's body shot forward with a violent jolt, causing severe strain to his back and neck and placing him unexpectedly astride the Rocket Sled. Disappearing over the horizon at such speed as to leave a diminishing jet trail along its path, the Rocket Sled soon brought Mr. Coyote abreast of his prey. At that moment the animal he was pursuing veered sharply to the right.

Mr. Coyote vigorously attempted to follow this maneuver but was unable to, due to poorly designed steering on the Rocket Sled and a faulty or nonexistent braking system. Shortly thereafter, the unchecked progress of the Rocket Sled brought it and Mr. Coyote into collision with the side of a mesa.



*Plaintiff's exhibit #2: Mr. Coyote and said mesa*

## Resultant Injuries

Paragraph One of the Report of Attending Physician, prepared by Dr. Ernest Grosscup, M.D., D.O., details the multiple fractures, contusions, and tissue damage suffered by Mr. Coyote as a result of this collision. Repair of the injuries required a full bandage around the head (excluding the ears), a neck brace, and full or partial casts on all four legs.

## Problematic Explosive Devices

Mr. Coyote states that on occasions too numerous to list in this document he has suffered mishaps with explosives purchased of Defendant: The Acme "Little Giant" Firecracker, the Acme Self-Guided Aerial Bomb, etc. (For a full listing, see the Acme Mail Order Explosives Catalogue and attached deposition, entered in evidence as Exhibit C.) Indeed, it is safe to say that not once has an explosive purchased of Defendant by Mr. Coyote performed in an expected manner.

To cite just one example: At the expense of much time and personal effort, Mr. Coyote constructed around the outer rim of a butte a wooden trough beginning at the top of the butte and spiraling downward around it to some few feet above a black X painted on the desert floor. The trough was designed so that a spherical explosive of the type sold by Defendant would roll easily and swiftly down to the point of detonation indicated by the X. Mr. Coyote placed a generous pile of birdseed directly on the X, and then, carrying the spherical Acme Bomb (Catalogue # 78-832), climbed to the top of the butte. Mr. Coyote's prey, seeing the birdseed, approached, and Mr. Coyote proceeded to light the fuse. In an instant, the fuse burned down to the stem, causing the bomb to detonate.





*Plaintiff's exhibit #3: Failure of Acme explosive device to perform in the expected manner.*

In addition to reducing all Mr. Coyote's careful preparations to naught, the premature detonation of Defendant's product resulted in the following disfigurements to Mr. Coyote:

1. Severe singeing of the hair on the head, neck, and muzzle.
2. Sooty discoloration.
3. Fracture of the left ear at the stem, causing the ear to dangle in the aftershock with a creaking noise.
4. Full or partial combustion of whiskers, producing kinking, frazzling, and ashy disintegration.
5. Radical widening of the eyes, due to brow and lid charring.

### **Spring-Powered Shoes**

We come now to the Acme Spring-Powered Shoes. The remains of a pair of these purchased by Mr. Coyote on June 23rd are Plaintiff's Exhibit 4 on the following page.

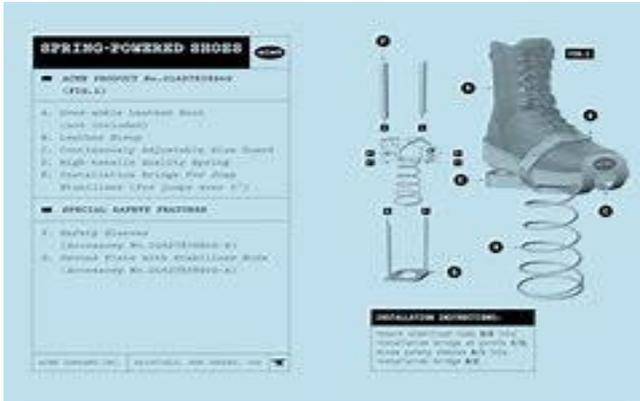
Selected fragments have been shipped to the metallurgical laboratories of the University of California at Santa Barbara for analysis, but to date no explanation has been found for this product's sudden and extreme malfunction. As advertised by

Defendant, this product is simplicity itself: two wood-and-metal sandals, each attached to milled-steel springs of high tensile strength and compressed in a tightly coiled position by a cocking device with a lanyard release. Mr. Coyote believed that this product would enable him to pounce upon his prey in the initial moments of the chase, when swift reflexes are at a premium.

To increase the shoes' thrusting power still further, Mr. Coyote affixed them by their bottoms to the side of a large boulder. Adjacent to the boulder was a path which Mr. Coyote's prey was known to frequent. Mr. Coyote put his hind feet in the wood-and-metal sandals and crouched in readiness, his right forepaw holding firmly to the lanyard release. Within a short time, Mr. Coyote's prey did indeed appear on the path coming toward him. Unsuspecting, the prey stopped near Mr. Coyote, well within range of the springs at full extension. Mr. Coyote gauged the distance with care and proceeded to pull the lanyard release.

### **Something Goes Wrong**

At this point, Defendant's product should have thrust Mr. Coyote forward and away from the boulder. Instead, for reasons yet unknown, the



Plaintiff's exhibit #4: Design of Acme spring-powered shoes

Acme Spring-Powered Shoes thrust the boulder away from Mr. Coyote. As the intended prey looked on unharmed, Mr. Coyote hung suspended in air. Then the twin springs recoiled, bringing Mr. Coyote to a violent feet-first collision with the boulder, the full weight of his head and forequarters falling upon his lower extremities.

The force of this impact then caused the springs to rebound, whereupon Mr. Coyote was thrust skyward. A second recoil and collision followed. The boulder, meanwhile, which was roughly ovoid in shape, had begun to bounce down a hillside, the coiling and recoiling of the springs adding to its velocity. At each bounce, Mr. Coyote came into contact with the boulder, or the boulder came into contact with Mr. Coyote, or both came into contact with the ground. As the grade was a long one, this process continued for some time.

### Systemic Physical Damage

The sequence of collisions resulted in systemic physical damage to Mr. Coyote, viz., flattening of the cranium, sideways displacement of the tongue, reduction of length of legs and upper body, and compression of vertebrae from base of tail to head. Repetition of blows along a vertical axis produced a series of regular horizontal folds in Mr. Coyote's body tissues—a rare and painful condition which caused Mr. Coyote to expand upward and contract downward alternately as he walked, and to emit an off-key, accordion-like wheezing with every step. The distracting and embarrassing nature of this symptom has been a major impediment to Mr. Coyote's pursuit of a normal social life.

As the Court is no doubt aware, Defendant has a virtual monopoly of manufacture and sale of goods required by Mr. Coyote's work. It is our contention that Defendant has used its market advantage to the detriment of the consumer of such specialized products as itching powder, giant kites, Burmese tiger traps, anvils, and two-hundred-foot-long rubber bands. Much as he has come to mistrust Defendant's products, Mr. Coyote has no other domestic source of supply to which to turn. One can only wonder what our trading partners in Western Europe and Japan would make of such a situation, where a giant company is allowed to victimize the consumer in the most reckless and wrongful manner over and over again.

### Punitive and Actual Damages

Mr. Coyote respectfully requests that the Court regard these larger economic implications and assess punitive damages in the amount of seventeen million dollars. In addition, Mr. Coyote seeks actual damages (missed meals, medical expenses, days lost from professional occupation) of one million dollars; general damages (mental suffering, injury to reputation) of twenty million dollars; and attorney's fees of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Total damages: thirty-eight million seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. By awarding Mr. Coyote the full amount, this Court will censure Defendant, its directors, officers, shareholders, successors, and assigns, in the only language they understand, and reaffirm the right of the individual predator to equal protection under the law.



## 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.

*Paul Caffyn* - lives on the west coast of New Zealand's South Island. In addition to being the first person to circumnavigate Australia in a sea kayak, he has circumnavigated the British Isles, New Zealand, New Caledonia and Japan and has done major expeditions in Alaska (the whole coast) and Greenland. Paul also has an extraordinary collection of sea kayaking-related books from around the world. Check out his website at <http://paulcaffyn.co.nz/>

*Caroline Dooley* - is a writer, student, and NOLS alum based in Chicago area. After growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, Caroline now attends Northwestern University where she leads backpacking trips for incoming students. This article originally appeared in the NOLS blog on March 16, 2020.

*Ian Frazier* - is a really funny staff writer for the New Yorker magazine. He has written 12 books, one of which is a collection of humorous essays entitled *Coyote v. Acme*. The article reprinted here first appeared in the February 26, 1999 edition of the New Yorker. Note that I added the photos and sub-headings.

*Mike Hamilton* - is an ACA L3 instructor who specializes in Greenland paddling and is one of the main organizers of the Delmarva Paddler's Retreat. Mike lives in Sykesville, MD.

*Rick Wiebush* - runs *Cross Currents Sea Kayaking* and is the editor of *Coastbusters*. He is an ACA L3 IT who lives in Baltimore.

*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. Articles should be limited to about 2,000 words and submitted in Word. Photos should be submitted in .jpg format. Please send your submissions to Rick Wiebush at: [crossecurrentsseakayaking@gmail.com](mailto:crossecurrentsseakayaking@gmail.com)

*Coastbusters* is a publication of *Cross Currents Sea Kayaking*