

# Coastbusters

The Cross Currents Newsletter for Mid-Atlantic Sea Kayakers

November 2018

**“There We Were”:**

## **Dead Man Walking – Croc Attack in Far North Queensland**

*Dave Winkworth*

Wednesday 18th August was a typical winter’s day in north Queensland — sunny, warm and windy. This was the day our expedition would end in dramatic circumstances.

Arunas, Mike and I had left Cairns just over three weeks earlier, bound for Thursday Island in Torres Strait, a distance of about 1000 kms. We’d driven together to Cairns, and paddled north as a close-knit team, camping on the mainland and islands within the vast Great Barrier Reef.

From our launch today, we paddled in following seas to Round Point where we departed the coast for a 37 km crossing. The massive white sand dunes of Shelburne Bay, stretching away to the south west, reflected the morning sun. With building seas and winds, we surfed wave after wave across the bay; Arunas and Mike assisted by their sailing rigs. Surfing down the waves, a quick glance at the compass and a touch of stern rudder stroke would keep our group nicely on course.

Every ten minutes or so, I turned around to check for a black and a blue sail — Arunas and Mike respectively. At one point I looked back to see one black sail only – Mike had been engulfed by a big wave and had gone over. I turned around to go back and nearly backward looped on the first wave! Mike self-rescued OK and retrieved a few floating bits and pieces.

“Let’s land on the island ahead for lunch,” I shouted over the wind. Arunas and Mike nodded in agreement. We paddled around to a small sand cay



protected from the wind on the north-western tip of a reef. A prominent sign above the beach here proclaimed this place to be Macarthur Island. From here, the coastline was visible, 12 kms to the west.

Shallow warm crystal clear water and clean white sand fringed by reef greeted us as our kayaks touched the beach. This was heaven on earth, no doubt about it!

### The Attack!

With the boats just clear of the flooding tide, I stripped off and entered the water for a swim in the shallows. Mike prepared a fire for a cuppa at the top of the beach and Arunas circumnavigated the island, a journey of about four minutes duration!

Arunas joined me at the water's edge. I sat down next to my boat as Arunas stripped off and waded out into the sandy shallows of our little cove. He flopped forward into the water, a little further out than where I had swum, but still in only thigh-deep water.

And then it happened .....

Arunas let out a cry — a half scream, half shout. He was on his feet; there was terror in his eyes as he looked at me. The surface around him was froth and foam, the sand all churned up. A big animal had him by the leg. Was it a shark? Was it a croc?

I jumped up and ran out into the water the ten or so metres to him. Below the surface I could see the outline of this thing. It was a big crocodile, and it was trying to sweep Arunas off his feet in a death-roll.



*Stock photo*

Arunas stuck his fingers in its nostrils. It didn't let go. He put his hands in the croc's mouth, attempting to prise open the jaws, cutting his hand on a tooth. Still it wouldn't let go, its teeth firmly embedded in Arunas' right leg. I straddled the croc's back and put my arms around its smooth hard belly and hung on.

Whether it was me on its back or not, we'll never know...but it did let go. It shot through so powerfully with barely a flick of its tail, back out onto the reef from where it had come. I felt the curve of the croc's body as it spat me off. THIS was a big hard strong animal.

The croc was gone, but would it come back? I stood up next to Arunas. We were now in deep shit! There was an angry croc out there and we were still in its hunting territory. It now had four legs to choose from!

"Get out of the water Dave," yelled Arunas.

"Not without you mate.... come back with me.... keep coming," I coaxed. I held my arms outstretched out in a defensive position as we retreated.

### First Aid

Mike was there with us at the water's edge, and we now worked as a team to care for Arunas. We lowered him to the sand. His right leg was a mass of puncture marks and ripped flesh, but luckily there was little blood loss and minimal shock for him. I put my rashie around Arunas' thigh as a precautionary tourniquet. We were later to find that the croc's teeth came perilously close to his femoral artery.

At the water's edge we were still in danger. The croc could come back at any moment.

We helped Arunas to his feet and I supported him from behind, as the narrowness of his escape hit me - "Oh shit mate, shit, shit, oh God."

We moved together further up the beach, Mike and I observing Arunas as we went. We didn't want him to fall over because if he did, we didn't think we could pick him up again. At the top of the beach we lowered him to the sand with a plastic bag behind his leg keeping sand out of his wounds. I put up the tent while Mike stayed with Arunas. Mike and I took turns to stay with him at all times. As we lifted Arunas to take him to the tent, he nearly passed out.

### Distress Signals

To this stage, there had been no talk of calling for help. I'd earlier thought that we could tow him to the mainland where our map showed 4WD access to the coast, but would there be anyone there? Infection was going to be Arunas' big problem — crocs have dirty teeth. We had to get help quickly or Arunas could die.

Mike had brought an EPIRB with him but none of us had ever had to use one in an emergency. If ever there was a time, this was it. (I wonder how the Maatsuyker Club<sup>1</sup>, who shun such modern rescue devices, would have handled this scenario?)

"The EPIRB Mike — switch it on," said Arunas, as we propped him up on cool water bags in the tent.

Mike wedged the little yellow EPIRB into the sand at the top of the beach and switched it on. It immediately began singing its song to the satellites.

We dressed Arunas' wounds, administered strong painkillers, a double dose of antibiotic capsules and his favourite black tea. We kept a written record of all medications and obs for the paramedic we hoped would come soon.

There was nothing more we could do for Arunas but we still had other jobs to do. We moved the kayaks to the top of the beach out of the reach of the tide and placed two of them in a V, the internationally recognised distress sign. We cut up a large yellow plastic bag of Mike's and made a two-metre-long V sheet. Using another yellow bag, we attached it to a paddle as a signal flag. We wrote the words CROC

ATTACK — ONE EVAC in the smooth sand of the beach in metre-high letters. We did this many times as the strong wind continually smoothed out our writings. We also prepared a smoky signal fire.

### Rescue!

We saw several ships travelling north way out to the east in the inshore shipping channel but were unable to attract their attention ... and then ... exactly two hours after the attack, we were buzzed about six times by a small passenger plane. It banked low over our island.

"You bloody beauty," we shouted. "You'll be out of here soon Arunas, he's seen our sign for sure." Mike and I then cleared a helipad on the top of the island which we marked with a large yellow plastic "H" and sat down to wait — there was nothing more we could do.

We heard the resonating "thump thump thump" of the chopper before we saw it, coming in low from the north and homing in on the EPIRB signal. What a beautiful sight! The pilot landed the chopper and a paramedic and volunteer assistant went to Arunas in the tent.

Paramedic Dave Barz inspected Arunas' wounds, pronouncing "You're not going to die". He inserted an intravenous line and within ten minutes Arunas was gone, on his way to Thursday Island Hospital.

We agreed that Arunas would arrange a fishing boat to pick us up from the island as soon as possible. We had two weeks' food and unlimited fresh water with our desalinator. We were content to share this island with the crocodile. It was gone for now but would come back later.

### Another Rescue!?

Mike and I sat down and made a cuppa, trying to "come down" from the tension of the previous four hours: "Shit," I said, shaking my head. "Yeah, shit," sighed Mike.

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the Tasmanian sea kayaking club – ed.

As the sun disappeared behind the coastal sand dunes, we were preparing dinner. Suddenly two rubber duckies full of sailors appeared off our beach. We ran down to the water:

“Don’t get out in the water, there’s a big croc here,” we shouted. They ran their boats up the beach and jumped out. A few sailors carried automatic weapons. The croc appeared on the surface off the point at our beach.

“There he is,” called a sailor, and we saw weapons being cocked and raised. “You’re not going to shoot it?” we questioned. They didn’t, but we think they would’ve if we hadn’t been there.

“Where’s the patient? I’m a paramedic” said one of the sailors. “You’re too late. He went hours ago,” we replied.

The Executive Officer then introduced himself: “We’re from the minehunter HMAS Huon which is waiting out in the channel. There are also three warships standing by to assist out in the Coral Sea. We’ve come to rescue you.”

“We don’t need rescuing. We’re OK,” we replied.

“We’ve come to take you to Thursday Island,” he said.

“Can you take our boats too?” we asked.

“No can do. Just you.”

We folded our arms; body language speaks volumes. “Then we’re not going,” we said.

This was going to be interesting! We know the Navy is in need of some good publicity but can you imagine the tabloid headlines: “SEA KAYAKERS REFUSE TO BE RESCUED BY NAVY!”

There was a flurry of radio chatter to the mother ship. The Ex came back to us: “OK, we can take the kayaks too.”

And so we left this beautiful place to the crocodiles, with our kayaks balanced precariously across a rubber duckie. We were transferred to the Thursday Island Navy boat at 4 AM in mid-channel near Thursday Island. The boat was full of media — cameras, reporters, spotlights — you name it. These guys work fast and the Navy needed good publicity — remember?

Meanwhile, at Thursday Island Hospital, Arunas was also being well-looked after. They kept his wounds open for a week before stitching him up to check for infection and pumped massive amounts of powerful antibiotics into his veins. There was no infection at all.

### The Aftermath

Mike and I stayed with the Navy for a few days — they were terrific. We had accommodation, a place to keep the boats AND they kept the media away. We thought if we didn’t say anything at all to the media that they would go away but that was naive — they just made stuff up! Cheque-book journalism is alive and well and living in little Thursday Island. — there were lots of offers! In the end we took their money and did a TV piece for “Today Tonight.” We gave the proceeds to Torres Volunteer Rescue and Thursday Island Hospital.

We shipped the kayaks back to Cairns for \$50 each. When Arunas was discharged we flew back to Cairns, picked up the vehicle and kayaks and, with the patient on a mattress in the back, headed for home, stopping at hospitals each day for Arunas to have his wounds dressed. It was nice to finish as a team.

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## Embracing Rocks and Ledges

**Lora Woodward**

I learned to kayak as a kid spending summer vacations on the Maine coast. My grandparents had a yellow tandem kayak we called the “sea slug” and a couple rec boats that we’d take out in the harbor on calm days. When I was 18, I started working at Maine Sport Outfitters in their boat department. I sold kayaks, canoes, paddlesport accessories, and car top carriers. It was a fun job that I kept for summers between college. I learned hull design, paddlesport nomenclature, and how to help customers find a boat to meet their needs.

That first summer of working in the boat department I attended some store-run kayak trainings, taught myself how to roll, went surf kayaking at Popham Beach, and paddled long stretches of coastline between harbors. In kayaking I found a sport that I’d continue to come back to for next 17 years. Whether in a river, lake, or ocean, kayaking connects me with the water and water connects with everything.

This past August I gained a new appreciation for kayaking and the rocky New England shoreline. I spent three days paddling with a group along the Rhode Island coast and the funny thing was *we didn’t really go anywhere*. Instead we stayed within a couple miles of our launch site and near the rock outcroppings and ledges exposed by the tide--places

I’d normally have stayed well away from out of fear that I’d get sucked in and flip my boat.

We watched waves go in and out of the rock formations creating temporary channels that our 17’ sea kayaks could slip through when timed well.

Waves built up behind ledges and pushed our boats up and over the craggy surfaces with each release. I found a new application for many of the strokes I’d learned in previous kayak trainings, like the side slip, the bow draw, and cross bow rudder. It was important to turn quickly. Our guides taught us the Colorado Hook, and I used it to seamlessly turn around a large rock and into the next wave break.



Running a rock chute. Photo: Rick Wiebush

The timing didn't always work and I'd get stuck on the seaweed and barnacle covered ledges (both soft and sharp) as the water sucked away building into the next wave. The uncomfortable feeling of being trapped and not knowing how to get out became an opportunity to practice patience and trust my ability to anticipate and react to change. There's comfort in viewing the rocks and waves and me in my boat as one. Not something to fight or fear, but to embrace.

A new wave would gush in and lift me in my boat, over 200lbs of weight, up and onto the other side of the rock formation into calmer water. I'd take a

moment to adjust my equipment, let out a nervous giggle, and circle back for another run.

My former thinking of paddling as a form of transportation--a way to get from point A to point B, harbor to harbor, downriver, to the island--has forever been changed. While I'll still paddle distances, I'll include more excursions built on exploring a specific area, experiencing it with wonder and curiosity.



*The author half-buried in churning water while doing Rocks and Ledges in RI. Photo: Rick Wiebush*

## Nova Scotia Has A Way of Entering Your Soul

*Kerry Kirk Pflugh*

The grey foggy morning enveloped us, giving the bay a weary ancient feeling. The spruce trees lining the shore were weather-beaten and tattered. The giant shale and granite boulders and rocks were sharp and hard and not welcoming to paddlers. The textured water was grey and cold, yet gentle and inviting. Such were the conditions experienced by 15 kayakers for most of the week-long journey in Nova Scotia last July.

This year, Cross Currents' big trip was a series of day trips to six notable sea kayaking venues on the Southern and Eastern shores of Nova Scotia. The Eastern shore of Nova Scotia is roughly 150 miles from Halifax to Canso. It is famous for a jagged shale coastline with little vegetation. The Southern shore from Halifax to Yarmouth is about 200 miles. This coastline is more diverse with a rocky granite coast, marshes, sandy beaches and large bays.

Our base camp in Halifax was campus housing at Dalhousie University, about two miles from downtown and the historic Halifax harbor. Except for our inaugural paddle, each of the remaining five venues were roughly an hour from the city. In addition to convenient paddling locations we had the pleasure of a local host, Sergio Greguoldo, a long-time friend and colleague of Rick Wiebush.

Sergio is not only knowledgeable about the water and paddling venues, but he is also a wealth of knowledge about history, culture, and people of the region. At each launch site he regaled us with stories about events that happened there long ago. He also provided us with recommendations on great places to eat at the end of each day.

Our first day on the water was a paddle in the historic Halifax Harbor. The wind was gentle. The air was warm. The sky was overcast. And the water was cold and placid. We launched from MacCormick Beach, Eastern Passage, Dartmouth, and paddled past Lawlor Island to circumnavigate



*Lighthouse near Feltzen South. Photo: Rick Wiebush*

McNab's Island. As we approached the southern tip of McNab's island the surf increased, giving us a chance to play and surf in some unexpected rolling waves.

McNab's Island was once considered by the French to be a North American fortress. It later became a summer retreat from the hustle and bustle of Halifax. Now most of the island is owned and operated by Parks Canada. Remnants of its days as a military base remain however, making for interesting exploration. We stopped for lunch on the island and walked to the highest peak. From our vantage, we had breathtaking views of the busy port of Halifax and the Atlantic Ocean. We returned to our dorms, later that evening excited for more adventure.

For the next four days we were afflicted with heavy fog and grey skies. Each day as we traveled to our destination I wondered if we would have enough visibility to paddle. And each day the fog dissipated enough allowing us to launch. In many ways, the fog enhanced our paddling experience by creating a moody, mystical feeling which emphasized the rugged, natural beauty of the region. Hidden in the mist were coastlines worn



*Moody fog. Photo: Rick Wiebush*

and beaten from centuries of waves and surf crashing on their shores. The grey green spruce trees looked tired, but determined to stand tall, almost like an army of centurions protecting the land. Inland were small hamlets and fishing villages with brightly colored cottages and active marinas that looked like they had been operating continuously for decades. The Eastern and Southern Shores of Nova Scotia were nothing short of a vision of a waterman's paradise. The 15 of us not only had the pleasure of visiting these little towns and their residents, but we also had the joy of paddling on the waterways from which many of them made their living.

Each of our paddle destinations offered something fun and unique. In Feltzen South, we paddled over

rolling waves in a dense fog that prevented us from crossing Lunenburg Harbor, but allowed us to experience the thunderous booming of The Ovens, a series of caves that are a part of Ovens Natural Park. In Tangier, we played in rock gardens along the shore of Borgles Island, challenging the surf and testing our timing as we wove in and out of the crevices before the surf could catch us and toss us against the jagged rock walls.

Tangier also gave us that one perfect paddling day when every imaginable condition was experienced: from grey and fog, to brilliant blue and sunny skies; from flat, quiet waters to crashing waves; from calm windless conditions to a wicked headwind, and finally, from open waters to a hidden sandy beach that made you feel like you had found Eden.

On the southern shore, we visited Lower Prospect. Its famous cream-colored granite boulders form a string of rocky islands that created an inner and outer bay. The inner bay offered us the choice of calm waters for quiet reflection, while the outer bay afforded us play time in more dynamic waters which were just right for some surfing.

But of all the places we visited, Blue Rocks, also on the southern shore, epitomizes Nova Scotia. Perhaps it was the jewel-like sparkle of the water, or the delicious chocolate croissants and fresh brewed coffee from the General Store, or the iconic white steeple church in the center of a sparsely populated

village, or the colorful summer wildflowers at the entrance of every home warmly welcoming visitors, or the juxtaposition of the new ecotourism and the ancient waterman industry cohabiting there. Whatever it was, this is the place I envision whenever I close my eyes and recall our time in this remarkably beautiful province.

Nova Scotia has a way of entering your soul. It's sometimes harsh and rugged environs in contrast to its warm and welcoming people is seductive and compels you to resolve to return for more.



Rock Play: Photo; Greg Hollingsworth



Blue Rocks Harbour. Photo: Todd Mitchell

## Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Location	Sponsor	Website
Nov. 2- 4	<b>Autumn Gales</b>	Stonington, CT	Kayak Waveology (Greg Pacquin)	Kayakwaveology.com
Nov. 30 – Dec. 2	<b>Beating the Bump</b>	St. Augustine, FL	Riverwind Kayak (Tom Nickles)	Riverwindkayak.com
Jan 18 - 20	<b>Wave Play</b>	Southport, NC	Capital City Kayak (Randi Kruger)	Capitalcitykayak.com
Feb 16 - 22	<b>Rough Water Skills</b>	Matanzas Inlet, FL	Sea Kayak USA (Dale Williams)	Wavepaddler.com
Feb. 16 - 23	<b>The Gathering at Jacksonville</b>	Jacksonville, FL	Cross Currents (Rick Wiebush)	Crosscurrentsseakayaking.com

**Photos of the Month**



***The Wave!***

*Photo: Chris Bickford*

**Photos of the Month**



*After The Storm*

*Photo: Chris Bickford*

**Photos of the Month**



***Clapotis!***

*Photo: Chris Bickford*

*Note: See all of Chris' work at <http://chrisbickford.com/>*

## Skills: What Do I Do With My Paddle? - Key Elements of the T Rescue

*Rick Wiebush*

People often perform various aspects of the T-rescue that are outdated, inefficient, and/or potentially unsafe. This article highlights some of those practices, discusses the problems associated with them, and posits what we believe to be the most effective strategies for getting someone back into his/her boat.

The goal of any T-rescue is to get the swimmer back into their boat as quickly and safely as possible. The need for speed emerges from the threats associated with “out-of-boat experiences” in some environments such as rough seas, cold water, or proximity to swell and rocks. The need for safe practices when doing T-rescues is self-evident: it makes no sense to “rescue” someone in a way that has inherent threats to the safety of the swimmer or the rescuer.

1. Look before you leap! Potential rescuers need to stop and assess the viability of conducting an assisted rescue in some environments. Caution is warranted in surf and around swell and rocks. These contexts often threaten to create a second victim (i.e., the rescuer) if a rescue is attempted. It may be more prudent to let the swimmer ride his/her boat into shore, drift into a safe zone, or have them push their boat out and swim away from the rocks.
2. Flip the boat! Unless injured, swimmers can help speed up the rescue by taking action. A prime example of this is to have the swimmer flip his boat upright while the rescuer is paddling toward them. This does two things: 1) it gives the rescuer a second read on the swimmer’s condition (in addition to asking “are you ok?”); and 2)

gets the boat in the position that it needs to be in to start the rescue. The old school approach had the rescuer reaching way down to grab the upside down bow in order to lift and flip the boat. But that creates instability and can be a major strain on the rescuer’s body. It’s a time-consuming, unnecessary, and unsafe practice.

3. Get to the bow and get there quickly! If one goal is speed, we can facilitate that by going directly to the swimmer’s bow. That’s after making sure the swimmer isn’t panicking, and then paddling with a purpose to get there. We want to get the person back in their boat, not chat with them over coffee while we mosey over. Get there!
4. The swimmer goes to the rescuers boat – not to their own stern. The swimmer going to his/her stern is counterproductive: it makes communication harder, makes maneuvering the swimmer’s boat more difficult, and serves no useful purpose.

Instead, the swimmer walks along their boat – holding on to the deck lines – to get to the rescuer’s boat. And they *never* let go of one boat or the other. In flat water, letting go of a boat may seem inconsequential. But to the extent that the way we practice informs our behavior in “real” situations, letting go of a boat spells big trouble.

When the swimmer comes to the rescuer’s boat, they take the shortest route. It doesn’t matter if they end up in front of or behind the rescuer’s cockpit. Don’t make the

swimmer “walk” all the way around her boat to get to one location or another on the rescuer’s boat. It just wastes time and tires out the swimmer.

5. Free your hands! The single biggest problem for people executing a T-rescue is what to do with the paddle. People frequently: 1) put the paddle down in the water; or 2) lay it on their deck; or 3) hold it in one hand while trying with the other to pull the boat up on their deck. None of those strategies work very well in flat water, let alone rougher water. Sliding the paddle under the bungees may work ok IF it is under at least two bungees. If it’s under just one bungee in bouncy water, it can slash around like a knife, endangering the swimmer.

Try this instead: tuck the paddle shaft under the bottom edge of your PFD (or under your tow belt bag) and use the back of your arms and elbows to trap it in place. This frees both hands to maneuver the swimmer’s boat.



*Paddle tucked under the tow bag. Photo: Mike Thomas*

6. No need to wring out the boat! If the rescuer pulls the swimmer’s boat up until the front hatch is even with the rescuer’s chest, that is far enough. Turn the boat over, edge away, wait two seconds, turn it right side up, and slide it back into the water. You don’t need to wait five minutes for those pesky last 17 drops to drain. Flip, edge away, two seconds; done!



*Edging away to help drain the boat. Photo: Rick Wiebush*

7. Bow to stern or bow to bow makes no difference! In wind or waves, you may end up struggling mightily and waste time if you try to force a bow to stern position. If the fastest way to arrange the boats is bow to bow, do it. It makes no difference in the rescuer’s ability to stabilize the boat or in the swimmer’s ability to get back in. Try it!
8. Don’t corkscrew into the cockpit when doing a heel hook re-entry. Done correctly, the corkscrew is a quick, fluid move. It works great for the 35 year-old who weighs 125 lbs. A 55 year-old who weighs 200 or more? Not so much. The drawback to the corkscrew is that once in the cockpit, the swimmer turns *away* from the rescuer’s boat. And their rolling weight tips their boat *away* from the rescuer. That puts a lot of torque on the rescuer and can result in the swimmer ending up back in the drink. I’ve seen this happen way too often.

Instead, once the swimmer has heel-hooked into the cockpit and is facing down, they should stop their roll and turn *toward* the rescuer’s boat. This produces less torque on the rescuer and her boat also supplies support for the swimmer while they turn.

Try these strategies the next time you practice rescues – they work!

## **Unsalted and Shark Free – The Ladies of the Lake Paddle Sports Festival**

*B Dawson*

If someone asked “what is the largest body of fresh water on Earth?” would you know the answer? If you said Lake Superior, you would be correct. The “superior” is well earned as she is the coldest, deepest and highest in elevation of all the Great Lakes, the other four of which could fit within her plus an additional three Lake Eries! Lake Superior’s shoreline runs for 2,726 miles if you include all the inlets and bays. With all that to explore, an excellent starting point is The Ladies of the Lake Paddle Sports Festival, held each year in August.

Inspired by a 2002 “All Women” issue of Paddlers Magazine, Bill Thompson of Downwind Sports decided to organize an annual woman’s only paddle festival and launched The Ladies of the Lake in

2004. Originally held at different locations each year, LOTL now calls Munising, MI home, hosting over 100 paddlers from all over North America.

The symposium runs four days and this year offered 18 kayak, 4 SUP and 3 canoe classes as well as 7 kayak tours (including one out to the wreck of the Bermuda, visible 14 feet below the surface) plus two overnight Specialty Tours to scenic Grand Island, part of the Hiawatha National Forest. Paddlers of all skill levels can find something to suit their liking no matter if they want to kick back and sightsee or challenge themselves. And not to worry if you brought along someone with a Y chromosome - there’s Man Camp! After playing kayak sherpa at the put in, the fellas have their very own kayak skills classes on Saturday!



*Lake Superior shoreline. Photo: Paula Hubbard*

Classes and tours are headed up by coaches (LOTL prefers that term to “instructors”) with ACA and BCU certifications but credentials take a back seat to camaraderie. This in combination with sometimes loose organization gives the gathering a definite summer camp flavor. That may take some getting used to for those who prefer symposia executed with military precision, but it’s an adjustment well made. Learning while having fun and chatting up other women can’t be beat!

Superior’s scenery is the stuff of legend. Sandy beaches give way to pebbled shores and elegantly sculpted cliff faces with a fluidity that only nature could create. Paddle around a rock outcropping and be surprised by a cascading waterfall, explore small water caves hollowed out by centuries of wind and water or try your paddle at a little rock gardening.



*Abandoned Lighthouse on Grand Island. Photo: B Dawson*

Conditions on the lake are also the stuff of legend and can change in a moment. Superior is so large that she makes her own weather, keeping paddlers ever watchful for unexpected shifts in the wind and waves. The water is crystal clear and some of the most pristine in the world, but with water temperatures in the low 50’s a capsized can be a chilly adventure! All of this adds up to a brilliant opportunity to sharpen on-water skills.

Dry suits and wetsuits may be the daytime dress code, but après-paddle events let you cut loose. The welcome social on Thursday featured a Wine and Chocolate reception followed by a presentation on the Galapagos Islands. Friday night, hungry attendees feasted at a buffet dinner and enjoyed a talk by expert paddler and author of **Yoga for Paddling**, Anna Levesque. She spoke passionately about “Confidence”, addressing that little voice inside each of us that is so quick to downplay our accomplishments. You can find her “Three Secrets to Confidence” at [mindbodypaddle.com](http://mindbodypaddle.com). After Anna’s inspiring talk, lots of lucky folks went home with NRS goodies from the raffle.

If Superior provides for unforgettable paddling, then Saturday night at TOTL is the unforgettable NRS-sponsored Costume Theme Party. This year the 387 Restaurant and Beer Parlor transformed into Studio 54, that 70’s icon of excess, and women decked out in their finest disco garb got their boogie on to the beat of a DJ.

There are only two downsides to The Ladies of the Lake. The first is the location. Driving to the Michigan Upper Peninsula will take a good 14 hours from the Mid-Atlantic States. There is also the option to fly and rent gear (high end P&H, Eddyline, NRS and Werner) from the organizers. The second downside.... you ARE going to fall in love with Superior and dream of return visits to explore more of the mystical “big lake they call Gichi-gami”.

Find out more about The Ladies of the Lake Paddle Sports Festival at [www.ladiesofthelakeseakayaksymposium.com](http://www.ladiesofthelakeseakayaksymposium.com) or find them on Facebook.



*Painted Rocks National Seashore on Lake Michigan. Photo: Paula Hubbard*

### **Coming Up In The January Issue**

- **Paddling with Whales in the Saguenay Fjord!**
- **Queensland Croc Attack Revisited**
- **Lessons Learned from an Ocean City Surf Session**
- **Paddling the Pine Barrens**
- **Isle au Haut and the Maine Coast**
- **Skills articles and more!**

## Contributors

*Chris Bickford* is a professional photographer who lives in the Outer Banks.

*B Dawson* is a free spirit who calls West “Almost Heaven” Virginia home. Her favorite places to paddle are anywhere there’s adventure to be found in a 17’ sea kayak.

*Kerry Kirk Pflugh* is an ACA L3 instructor and was for several years the president of the Jersey Shore Sea Kayaking Association. Kerry lives in northern New Jersey.

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

*Dave Winkworth* is an Australian sea kayaking instructor and expeditioner. Dave lives on the rugged southeast coast of New South Wales.

*Lora Woodward* lives in Pepperell, MA and is an ACA L3 instructor. She owns *Coach Outdoors* and loves paddling the nearby Nashua River and New England coastline.

*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 several of this month’s contributors are instructors. That is not a requirement.

Articles should be limited to about 750 – 1,000 words and submitted in Word. Photos should be submitted in .jpg format. Please send your submissions to Rick Wiebush at [rwiebush@gmail.com](mailto:rwiebush@gmail.com).

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