

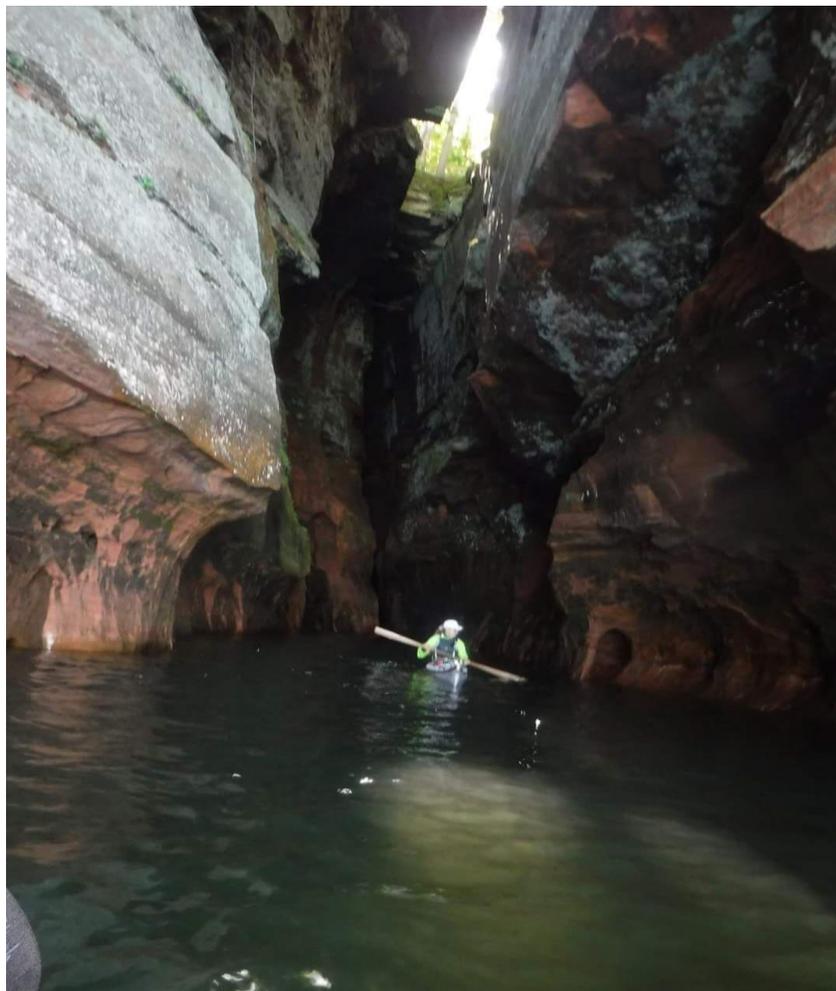
Coastbusters

The Cross Currents Newsletter for Mid-Atlantic Paddlers

September 2022

Six Women. Six Days. Several Islands: An Adventure in the Apostle Islands

Kerry Kirk Pflugh



It took my breath away

After two full days of driving, it was good to be moving around. Our access to the Apostle Islands started with a long steep staircase from the parking lot of Meyers Beach and the National Park Service. It required several up and down trips before we launched into a clear blue sunny day with calm seas. The caves were a short one-mile paddle from the beach. I could hardly contain my excitement.

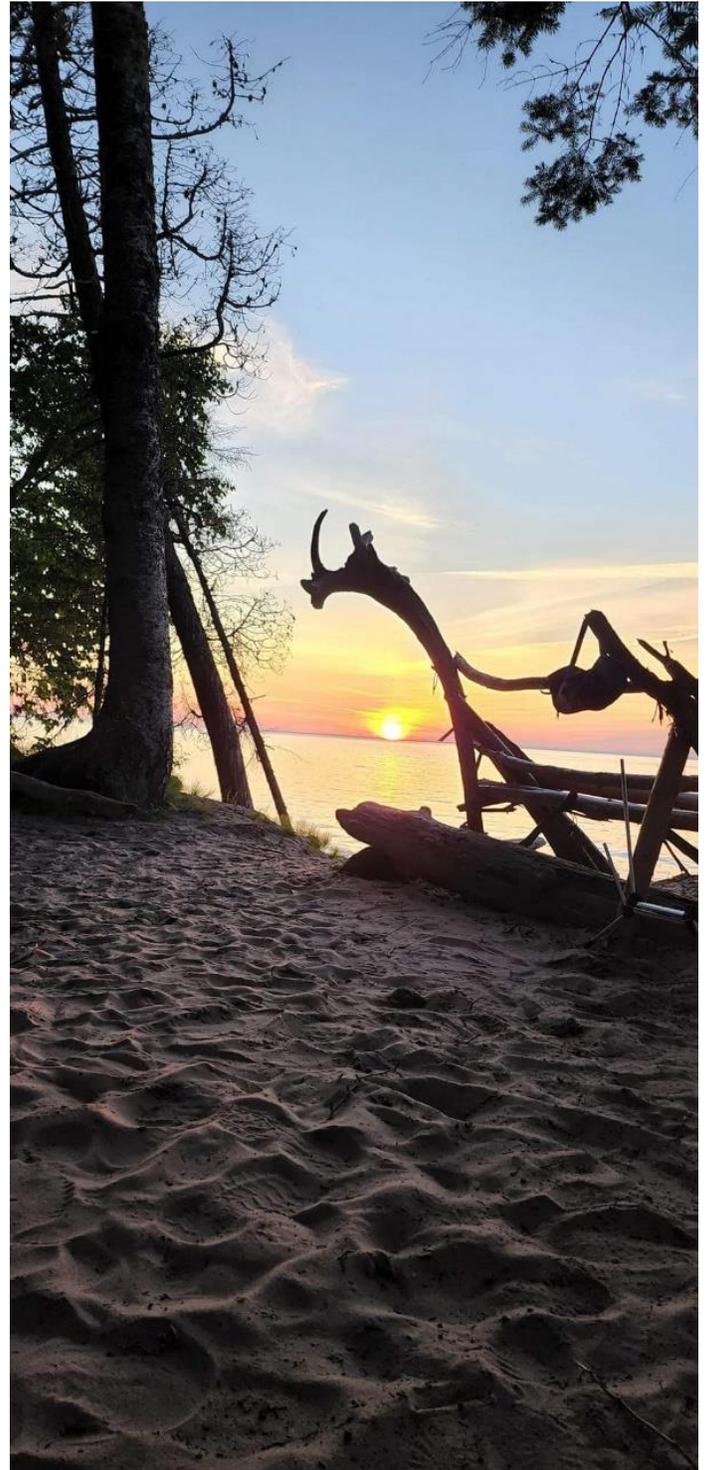
I paddled close to the shore so I wouldn't miss a thing. As we drew closer, the red/brown sandstone bluffs and caves came into view. The centuries of crashing waves and icy winters was evident in the deeply carved out arches, stacks, towers and caves.

We spent the next couple of hours weaving in and out of the various formations and challenging ourselves to squeeze through the passages and duck under the low hanging ceilings of the caves. As I wove in and out, I was both exhilarated and terrified, thinking that at any moment there could be a landslide, or a ceiling might collapse. However, the wonder of these natural sculptures overpowered any scary thoughts as I poked into every nook and cranny possible.

After a couple of hours playing, Deb, our watchkeeper and navigator extraordinaire, reminded us we had miles to go before we sleep. The wind had picked up a bit, gusting now to 12, and the lake was textured. The passage to Sand Island was about 1.5 miles. Once across, we had another 4.5 miles to our campsite. The crossing was bumpy. The confused 1–2-foot waves and the wind gusts made us work. But as soon as we reached Sand Island, the wind died down, and the water became as still as glass.

I have experienced moments on the water when the sunshine, the jewel-like glistening of the water, and the crisp silvery color of the atmosphere is so finely etched, that you feel the beauty of it in your soul. As I turned around to make sure we were all ok, I saw it. It took my breath away. I didn't want to

leave that moment. I can still see it now when I close my eyes.



1st camp Photo: Kerry Kirk Pflug

The impetus

Throughout the years and over the course of my many travels, kayaking has introduced me to a wonderful group of adventurous women. I have been fortunate to maintain these friendships and despite time and distance, we have managed to periodically reunite for kayaking adventures.

We were six women hailing from five states, spanning five decades – Deb from New York; Pat and Gwen from Michigan; Leah from Iowa; Katina from Wisconsin and me from New Jersey. All these ladies are experienced paddlers with a sense of adventure, an ability to be flexible, are genuinely kind, thoughtful and full of fun.

I was the common denominator of the group, having paddled, trained or expeditioned with each one of them at one time or another. Gwen and Pat and I are friends through the Jersey Shore Sea Kayak Association, the Greenland Kayak community and numerous symposiums we had attended together. Deb has been my recent kayaking adventure pal, paddling in Maine, and Nova Scotia. Katina, Leah and I met last year on the Great River Rumble on the Mississippi River. On that trip, Pat, Leah, Katina and I formed a paddling pod along with one other woman, Barb and we paddled together and camped together each night.

It was at the Rumble that I first learned about the Apostle Islands. I heard several people talking about them. “What are the Apostle Islands? Where are they?” I asked.

“They’re in northern Wisconsin on Lake Superior,” I was told. “They have sea caves.”

They had me at sea caves.

Although four of the six of us were from the mid-west, none of us had ever paddled the Apostle Islands before. Fortunately, our friend Barb, one of our Rumble pod mates, was from the area and had paddled them many times. And although she was unable to join us for the trip, she became our local



expert and trip advisor pointing out the best islands for caves and camping and giving us many warnings about wind, weather and bears.

The Apostle Islands Archipelago are a group of 22 islands in Lake Superior, off the Bayfield Peninsula in northern Wisconsin. They are known for their dramatic and colorful shorelines, sea stacks, arches, and sea caves. They are also home to more than 240 species of birds, nine lighthouses and beautiful hiking trails. The Islands are dominated by a boreal forest – white birch, white pine, balsam fir, quaking aspen and white spruce. Human activity on the islands dates to 100 B.C.

With Barb’s help, Deb and I settled on a plan that included roughly 12 paddling miles each day. This included sea cave exploration and open water crossings from island to island. We calculated five nights and six days for a total of roughly 70 miles from Meyers Beach to Bayfield. Flexibility was built in should we need to hunker down for a day or two.

Coyotes and rogue waves

Now, finally, we were on our way. At the end of that first thrilling day, we arrived at our campsite, pitched our tents, made dinner, and settled in for the night. The campsite had a picnic table, a bear box and a thunder box with toilet paper. This would be true at each of the four campsites we stayed. The crackling campfire, and a little wine warmed us as we relaxed and watched the sun begin to set. However, our geographic location fooled us. Being so far west, the sun wasn't going to set until after 11 p.m. We were snuggled in our tents asleep long before that.

Howling and barking outside my tent woke me with a start. I yelled to the girls, "Do you hear that?"

"It's coyotes, they sound closer than they are," they said, and we all went back to sleep. It seemed like a minute passed before the birds starting chirping and it was dawn, Day 2. But we stayed in our tents until full light. There were lots of grumblings about those "damn birds at 4:30 a.m." and "morning came too quickly." But we managed to stumble out of our tents and greet the day joyously all the same. Our next stop - Oak Island, some 12 miles away - is famous for having the densest population of bears in the Apostle Islands - lucky us!

Our charts indicated more caves at the eastern end of the island beyond the lighthouse. It turned out they were more interesting than depicted and we ended up playing in them longer than planned. Before too long however, we realized that in order to stay ahead of afternoon winds, we needed to move on. Like a reluctant child, I tore myself away from the fun and continued the paddle.

Our first crossing was two miles to York Island. The water was calm and the winds light as we made our way. We took a brief bio break on the island, then paddled around to the southern end where we found a sandy beach and stopped for lunch.

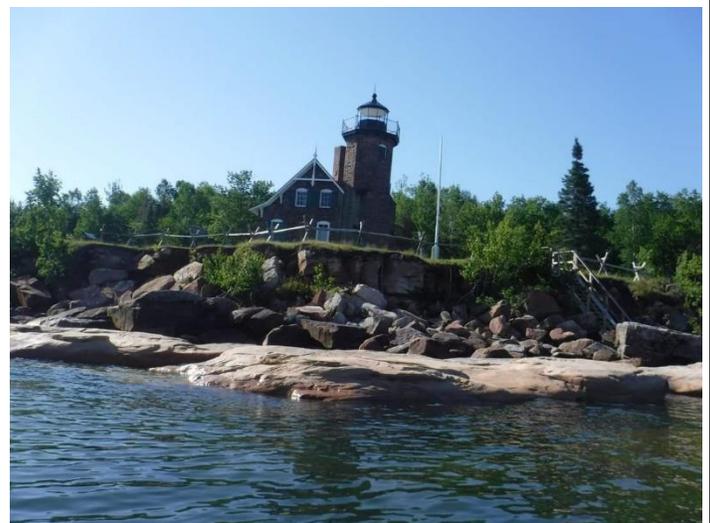
The cool morning had given way to a warm day and we stretched out in the sun to lounge. Suddenly, a rogue wave hit us. Mayhem ensued. Kayaks began

floating away, gear flew in all directions and forget about lunch. We scrambled to rescue our stuff.

Once we had retrieved floating kayaks, gear and what was left of lunch, we looked around to see what the heck caused the wave. The conditions were calm. There was no wind. Nothing was obvious. Then, in the very far distance, we caught site of a motorboat cruising along the mainland coast. It had to be more than five miles away. It is hard to imagine that a boat that far away was the cause. But it is the only logical explanation. Needless to say, after that, we took distant motor craft and fetch very seriously.

Our second two-mile crossing took us past Raspberry Island and the beautiful lighthouse on the point. Raspberry Lighthouse came into production in 1863. In the early 2000's, major engineering was needed to shore up the eroding bluff. The lighthouse is now open daily to visitors. Unfortunately, we didn't have time to stop, but we were able to enjoy its grandeur as we paddled by.

Oak Island was now in our sight. We entered the cove and noticed two sail boats moored offshore near our camp site. As we prepared to land, Leah and Pat heard the sailors from one of the boats calling to us. Turns out their dinghy had floated away after the line had become entangled in the



Raspberry Is. Lighthouse Photo: KKP

the propeller and snapped. Not missing a beat, Leah paddled to the dinghy, hooked up her tow line and paddled the dinghy back to the sailors. Pat paddled with her to offer assistance. The sailors were so grateful that they rewarded Leah and Pat with a bottle of wine. Good thing too, since one of our bottles got left in the car. That evening we enjoyed a lovely dinner, bottle of wine and a gorgeous sunset. No bears joined us for the festivities – fortunately.

Superior is a tough place

The original plan for day three was to paddle to Devil's Island and explore its famous sea caves, then paddle to Rocky Island where we would stay for two nights. Located on the northern shore of the island, the caves are vulnerable to crashing waves and wind. Access by kayak is only recommended under calm conditions. We had been monitoring the weather for the past couple of days. Unfortunately, the report wasn't favorable.

Lake Superior is the largest of our great lakes. It is 159.7 miles wide and 350 miles long with three states and Canada straddling its border. Ships have sunk and lives have been lost. Waves of 12 feet have frequently been recorded with the largest being 29 feet. Barb had warned us to take heed of any foul weather warnings, so we decided the safest bet was to paddle directly to Rocky Island make camp and reassess.

When we left Oak Island, the sky was gray and moody. Light filtered through dark heavy clouds and the still, granite-colored water was almost indistinguishable from the sky. Despite the impending storm, the crossing to Rocky Island was uneventful and quiet.

Once we made camp, conditions improved. We checked the weather again and it seemed the storm had tracked away from us, so Pat, Deb and I decided to circumnavigate Rocky Island. The east side of the island where our campsite was located, conditions were calm. When we rounded the



Photo: KKP

northern point and headed west, the water became textured. The wind started to pick up and we ducked into a cove and paddled close to the shore. Eventually, it died down and calm conditions returned. Five miles to the west of us was Devil's Island. It was windy with white caps on the water. The crossing would have been challenging and exploring caves under those conditions would have been difficult. The decision not to go was prudent.

Ships have sunk and lives have been lost. Waves of 12 feet have frequently been recorded with the largest being 29 feet.

No go

During that third night the wind kicked up a bit. We fell asleep to crashing waves on the western shore. The predicted storm never arrived. Knowing we didn't have to pack up, we all slept in a bit and had a leisurely breakfast. Gwen treated us to bacon. Funny how something so familiar can taste like a royal meal when wilderness camping. After breakfast, we decided to explore the island. North of the campsite the National Park Service had a small house where volunteer rangers stayed while maintaining the campsites. We stopped to visit for a bit then continued our hike through a beautiful forest of mixed hardwoods and spruce with a forest floor covered in ferns, lichen and moss. The three-mile hike took us to the western most bluff of the island with a clear view of Devil's Island. The temperature had easily dropped 10 degrees and the wind was howling. Lots of white caps filled the expanse between Rocky and Devil's Island. On our way back, we stopped again to talk with the volunteer rangers. While we were there, a Park patrol boat pulled up and the captain told us he had been ordered off the water for the next hour due to an incoming storm. The rain started just as we zipped ourselves into our tents. A nap seemed like a nice option. An hour later, the sun came out and we played along the shore line, looking for agates and swimming.

That night, the captain of a sailboat that was moored offshore joined us at our campfire. He was a local who ran a sailing outfit. He told us all about each of the islands and where the best caves were. He recommended paddling on the eastern shore of Stockton, so we could see the sea stacks, arches and more caves. Although that wasn't the plan, it sounded like a possibility depending on the weather.

19 miles to the caves, stacks and arches

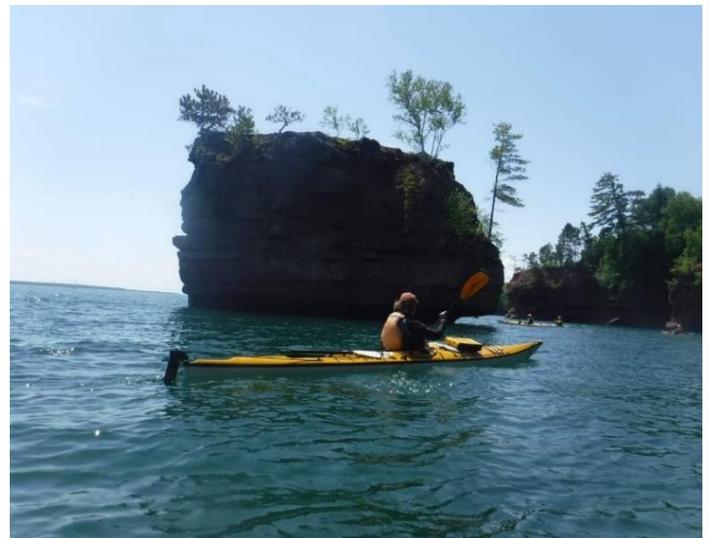
The skies were sunny and conditions were calm when we awoke on day 5. We decided to revise our plan and head east around Stockton Island to see the caves. This change increased our paddle from

roughly 12 miles to 19. However, we felt the caves were worth it.

The first crossing was a short one – a half mile to Otter Island. We paused and confirmed with each other that the long way around was a go. With a thumbs up from everyone, we started the next crossing – three miles from Otter to Ironwood. Once across, the wind had nearly disappeared and the lake was again like glass. The sun was warm and any threat of a storm seemed a distant possibility. We paddled around Ironwood to its southern-most tip, took another break, then launched into our five plus mile crossing to Stockton.

The conditions remained perfect as we headed east—no wind, no waves, sunny, warm and pleasant. Although we still had a long day ahead of us, there were sea stacks and sea caves to explore just around the corner.

The sailor had steered us right. The caves, stacks and arches were amazing and well worth the additional miles. We played for a bit in them but as we rounded the eastern most tip of Stockton to head west to our campsite, we noticed the sun was less bright, the wind had picked up slightly and the water was becoming textured. We checked the forecast. There were thunderstorm warnings back in the forecast for the region.



Sea stack. Photo: KKP

About three quarters of the way to our campsite was a visitor center and marina. We stopped there, assessed the situation, and decided to make a break for it. Half of us were anxious to make camp before the next rain dump, so they took a shortcut to cut out a mile or two. Katina and I decided to follow the shoreline in case the storm changed track. Just as we got to the middle of the harbor, a huge clap of thunder boomed. Katina and I high tailed it to the shore and hugged the shoreline until we found a safe place to pull off. Thunder, lightning and torrential rain crashed all around us for the next 40 minutes or so. When it finally stopped, we paddled the short distance to the campsite, rejoined the rest of the group, had some dinner, then happily and gratefully fell asleep.

(Temporary) Goodbyes

Our last day on Lake Superior was a gift - beautiful sun filled skies, calm water and no wind. Sadly, there were no more caves, but the beautiful landscape of Stockton Island and the two islands we crossed to on our way back to Bayfield – Hermit and Basswood - were gorgeous with rocky shorelines and thick vibrant green forests. When we reached the marina in Bayfield after 14 miles, Deb and I did our obligatory roll, thanking the water gods for safe passage and good times.

The most difficult part of any kayaking expedition for me is the ending, especially when you have shared the adventure with people you cherish and who you know you won't see again for some time. I don't like endings. I don't like departing from special people. But as my father used to say at the closing campfire of summer camp many years ago, "without the sadness of goodbye, there would never be the joy of hello!" I look forward to our next hello!



The group. Photo: KKP

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Emails to the Editor

Is it ethical to climb Mt. Everest?

Note: The July edition of Coastbusters included an article that questioned the ethics of climbing Mt. Everest. We asked, "what would you do if you were in shape, and you were offered the opportunity to climb it for free?"

No

Everest is an ego peak and the ultimate outdoor vanity which is of little interest to me.

In my adventures I have cared about the experience of the journey not the achievement of the destination.

The extreme danger of such an effort outweighs the experience of the ascent compared to other destinations and efforts which have much more favorable risk reward ratio.

What has one achieved really if others have drug your ass up the mountain and risked or even given their own lives for your ego? Is that moral? I say no.

Secondarily, the environmental impact of such an effort is unjustified.

So NO even if it were possible and free and even if it was guaranteed to be death and injury free.

- *Hank McComas*

No

No. I would not climb Everest.

I am a mountaineer having climbed peaks on three continents for more than 30 years. Our group of four climbs every year. We have climbed several peaks in South America and have more than a dozen first ascents in Alaska. It is a great sport, but not without risk.

Several years ago – well before our small group got together - I was with a commercial guided group high on Denali in Alaska. One of the seven summits. Snowstorms had been an issue during each phase of our climb.

At 14,000 feet, site of the last major camp, we were prevented from climbing higher with another snowstorm. However, climbers below us could continue their climb until stranded with us at the 14,000-foot camp.

After three days of waiting it was a blue bird day, clear and cold. We were out of the tents early heading for 16,000 feet with high camp at 17,000 feet almost in sight.

The snow was deep and the travel was slow.

And we were in a line of almost 200 climbers. Just like the dangerous backups on Mt. Everest.

As I looked at that long line, I realized that I could die here. All that was needed was another major storm.

I was an experienced climber, but I decided that if I survived this one, I would never climb with a commercial group again.

I have not and will not be in another one of those lines of climbers.

- *James Kesterson*

Planned and Unplanned Adventures: UnCon in Rhode Island

Richard Essex

This is the third year of the Unconscious Competence kayaking group (Uncon III, for short) that I have been part of. One of the Uncon III expeditions planned for this year was a rock gardening trip to Rhode Island that is commonly known as “Rocks and Ledges”. The Uncon group that gathered for this paddle has been growing together as sea kayakers for the last three years. Given this experience, when we work together doing a paddling exercise or an assisted rescue, we sometimes can function like a well-oiled machine.

Other times not so much.

During the 3 days of paddling along the rocky shores at the southern end of Narragansett Bay we had some less than stellar performances, some personal triumphs, and some unplanned adventures.

Our Uncon crew also did Rocks and Ledges in 2021, but we really didn’t get the full experience. The paddle was cut short by a day due to tropical storm Elsa coming ashore the first day. A five- to six-foot storm swell rolling in from the ocean for the following two days also limited the features we could safely access.

Then year’s trip was jeopardized when Rick Wiebush, the organizer and trip leader, was sidelined with an injury. Through some last-minute heroics, Rick was able to get Jeff Atkins from Charleston, SC and Samm Magsino from Silver Spring, MD as substitute leaders for the trip. Rocks and Ledges was on! And this time the weather report was predicting three beautiful days in Rhode Island.



Riding up the rocks Photo: Rick Wiebush



Photo: Jeff Atkins

The weatherman did not disappoint. The prediction for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday in coastal Rhode Island was hot and mostly sunny with 10- to 15-knot winds generally from the south and seas of two to three feet. That is pretty much what we had all three days, which made for excellent rock gardening conditions.

Fort Wetherill Fumbling

The first day of paddling we put in at Fort Wetherill in Jamestown, about half-way up the east side of Conanicut Island. After a review of “Dos and Don’ts” for navigating rocks and ledges we spent the morning paddling around and through various features, slipping into slots, and generally enjoying the bounce. There were no incidents of note, but toward the end of the day Jeff and Samm had us do some rescue practice. Every member of the group has done multiple assisted rescues in a variety of conditions. But on this day, we did not cover ourselves in glory.

In a small cove near the launch area one of the Uncon paddlers, Don, volunteered to play victim for the rescue. To add to the rescue scenario, Don was asked to go over but also to let go of the kayak. So, it was our job to keep Don off the rocks, get his boat, and help get him back into it. In something resembling a scene from the *Keystone Cops*, three or perhaps four of us (including me), fumbled around getting Don, getting his boat to him, and getting him in it. The whole exercise took probably five minutes, but it felt like eternity. It was certainly way too long for an unplanned rescue in real conditions.

After this consciously not-so-competent (NotCon) performance we did a few more rescues and managed to get our mojo back.

For a group of reasonably experienced paddlers with a lot of time working together, that fumbling rescue was particularly embarrassing. Even while it was happening, I was wondering, “what is going wrong here?” “Where have we gone off the rails?”

Each one of us knows how to do an assisted rescue and chase down a loose kayak. Dissecting what happened, I came away with my theory. First, we were thinking too much about the “exercise” and second, nobody was the clear leader for the rescue effort.

Earlier in the day the trip leaders had been doing their job, showing us how to recognize hazardous conditions and discussing various tactics for dealing with incidents in a dynamic rock gardening environment. We discussed situations in which we might have a swimmer grab our toggle so that we could tow them to a safe zone, or giving a quick well-aimed push to get an empty kayak out of a hazardous area rather than trying to attach a tow line.

I suspect that for at least a couple of us, these concepts were rattling around our heads during that initial rescue. I found myself thinking: is my goal here to practice the things we talked about today or to perform the most efficient and effective rescue? I suspect that indecisiveness was at least a factor in the resulting confusion and the lack of clear leadership in coordinating the rescue. In the following days we performed better and got to carry out a properly coordinated, real-life rescue or two.

Kings Beach Combat Rolls

The second day of paddling started with a launch from Newport’s Kings Beach, which directly fronts the Atlantic and faces almost due south; next stop Bermuda! The morning was kind of misty but that burned off quickly and again there was a southerly breeze with two- to three-foot waves. This turned out to be an excellent day on the water with some surfing, pour-overs, and shooting through narrow channels on surging waves.

One particular feature provided most of the day’s excitement. Part of the group was paddling a pour-over that was out in the middle of some deep water a couple hundred yards from a cliff-bound point. (This was home to a large, ornate, and imposing stone mansion which I learned later is called Seafair and currently belongs to Jay Leno.)

Some of the three-foot waves were creating a choppy break as they passed over the submerged rock. On my second pass over this feature, I got flipped and bailed. Jeff was on the spot pretty quickly and within a minute or two I was back in my boat and paddling again. Since I was the only one who ended swimming (unintentionally) the day before, I was feeling that perhaps I needed to dial back the level of challenge I was willing to take on.



photo: Rick Wiebush

However, it turned out I was not the only paddler to go over trying to negotiate the chaotic water of this feature. Another paddler got dumped but pulled off a combat roll, making him the first ‘hero’ of the day. Then, after lunch, one of the newer members of the group was negotiating an even more chaotic pour-over when she went over. But she also recovered nicely and was able roll up. For our little group these were a couple of the first true combat rolls in challenging conditions.

The Best-Laid Plans.....

The plan for the last day was to do some more relaxed paddling and get off the water early in the afternoon so folks could start the long drive back home. That was the plan anyhow. We put in at a small beach on the mainland located on the University of Rhode Island Narragansett Bay Campus, which is on the western shore at the southern end of Narragansett Bay. The weather was again warm and sunny with a fresh breeze building from the south.

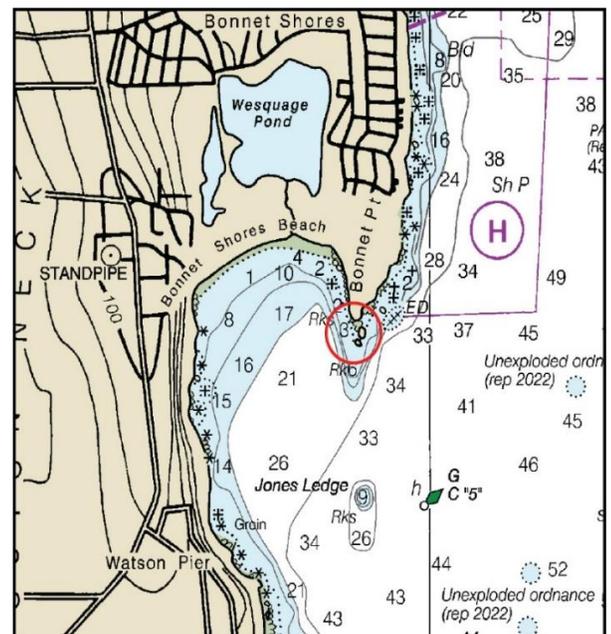
We started the morning paddling south along the coast playing in and around some of the small rock features and little sheltered coves created by the rocks and boulder. As we worked our way south toward the mouth of the bay the waves were building. By about noon they were 2 to 3 feet coming in from the south.

About this time, we grouped up in a sheltered area formed by a rocky prominence that was just a few yards offshore from a rocky point jutting from the mainland. Jeff and Samm polled the group and we decided to paddle into the bay on west side of the point and see what opportunities there might be for play and a lunch stop. That is when things got interesting.

Jeff took the lead to scout the features along the rocky point that we were rounding. I was following him fairly closely to see what sort of fun was next. The shore along the point was a jumble of large boulders with seas breaking against them. As we paddled to the west along the point, it was clear the waves were steepening up pretty quickly, and Jeff decided we should get out of this area. I turned

around and was heading directly away from the point just in time to see another Uncon paddler heading into the area but even closer the point. I had just enough time to shout “outside” as the first of a larger set of waves came barreling in. Half a second later he was surfing – well, getting surfed – right toward rocks on the face of rapidly building wave. He described what happened next:

“I braced into the wave as it pushed me toward the rocks. The wave flipped me over and as I was coming up, the force of the water popped my skirt off the cockpit without my touching (it) and separated me from the boat. It also sucked off my right shoe. As I came up, I was in a rocky area that appeared safe from the waves and allowed me to stand comfortably and securely on the rocks. I could see my boat behind me among some rocks. I learned afterward that the boat had been thrown up over the rocks and rotated 180 degrees from my direction of travel. The boat was lying on its’ starboard side. Samm was right there and I asked her what she wanted me to do. She indicated that when she gave the word I was to jump in and swim to her boat...”



Using a bow carry, Samm paddled him out of the surf/rock zone. She then called me over to transfer the swimmer to my bow so she could help Jeff retrieve the boat. But wait – there’s more!

While all this was going on, someone else did not hear shouted warnings and somehow did not notice what had just happened. He paddled toward the hazard even closer to the point than the first swimmer. He also got surfed toward the rocks and flipped. After several valiant attempts to right himself, he too ended up coming out of his boat, amongst rocks and breaking waves. Despite the opportunity for further chaos, Jeff, Samm, and the rest of the Uncon group were able to clean things up. Jeff went in and pushed the second swimmer’s boat away from the rocks. Samm got it and towed it to a safe zone.

Another bow carry got the second swimmer out of the danger zone. We got the second swimmer sorted after emptying his filled cockpit. Meanwhile, a good Samaritan who was fishing from shore helped to free the first swimmer’s boat which was wedged between some rocks. After retrieving that boat, we were all afloat again.

At that point, we gathered in a loose group away from the breaking waves, and away from the rock-jumbled shore. Despite the carnage, there were no injuries and all vessels were fully seaworthy. That said, Jeff and Samm accurately gauged the mood of the group and determined that we had had enough adventure for one weekend. So after a short debrief, we paddled back to the launch with no further incidents.



Some Lessons

Looking back on that last incident, there were definitely some lessons to be learned. For the previous two days we had similar conditions, although at different locations. Generally, we were dealing with isolated features in deep water where steep cliffs dropped right down into the water. Even larger sets of waves didn’t really build until they would break over the rocks. So, in most cases, we could paddle right up the features without the waves breaking. This was also the case for much of the way as we paddled south on the third day.

Jeff had specifically warned us on the first day about the difference between the wave action against cliffs and what happens when waves break on a shallowing shore. I suspect some of the group got surprised when we encountered swell on the more gradually sloping sea floor as we rounded the point. We were not expecting the steeper and breaking waves that would push our boats around like toys.

A lack of situational awareness also played a factor. We were following Samm and Jeff around the corner, but it seems that some of us turned toward the shore “when” they turned, rather than “where” they turned.

On the upside, once the real rescues started the group made up for our performance in the practice rescue on the first day. Samm and Jeff were clearly coordinating the rescue and the rest of us either held position in a safe zone or provided any assistance they requested. It is common sense that the goal is to avoid incidents while paddling but we all know that the sea is unpredictable. That is why we wear PFDs and helmets and why we practice rescues. Rocks and Ledges was intended to be a learning experience for the Uncon group, and it certainly was. All in all, it was a great weekend. There was fun, exciting paddling and good company for three beautiful days in Rhode Island.

Short Story

Paddler's Magic*Randi Kruger*

I glanced at the clock. Not quite time to go.

Lainy stayed home from school today. I can't say I blame her. Her weekly doctor's appointment is today, in any case. I saw her younger brothers off to school, tidied up a bit, and then called up the stairs.

"We'll have to leave soon, Lainy!"

I heard the tumble of her footsteps, down the stairs and into the kitchen, as she pulled a hat on to her head.

"Can we stop and look for glass?" she asked with a hopeful expression. I looked at her pale face. Glancing again at the kitchen clock, I thought... "Okay, yes, we'll only have a half hour before your appointment, if we leave now. You'll wear the gloves, right?"

She made a face, then gave a shrug and a soft "yes." We drove into town towards the waterfront. It was a glorious spring day, unusually sunny. We pulled up to the Memorial and parked. In the middle of a workday, and before the tourist season, the lot was empty.

I handed her the disposable gloves, purple this time. She made the same disapproving face and pulled them on. We climbed out of the truck.

We stood at the rocks looking down at the mud flats. The tide was all the way out. Lainy must have checked before she asked.

There was someone down there already.

We climbed down carefully, the huge granite boulders were slippery and had spaces between

them that could swallow a whole leg. Lainy immediately went ahead of me, eyes already searching the rocks and mud.

The person down there was a woman, oddly dressed. She was wearing some kind of one-piece jumpsuit, in yellows and grays. The outfit reminded me instantly of a fish. Her hat matched, and she wore sunglasses that looked like the reflective eyes of a seal.

She turned towards me and said, "it's all sharp." I paused, taken by surprise. She had a bit of an accent, "the glass, it's all sharp."

Oh, I thought. This is an odd tourist.

"Yes," I said, "the other tourists come and take most of the good sea glass away." I looked over the flats. "Only a few dozen, or maybe a hundred, each summer but it's enough." The woman gazed away at the flats and the water beyond it.

"I've been coming here since I was a kid. My father brought me. The first time, I must have been 6 or 8."

Her head turned towards me; I had her full attention now.

"He told me that this is hundreds of years of glass. But like I said, the tourists carry a lot of it away." The woman seemed to consider this, and said, "I found a whole lamp over there," gesturing.

I glanced over and spotted Lainy, poking in the mud. I thought, good thing, those gloves.

The woman said “I thought perhaps this was an old dumpsite, from many years ago. We see these often along the shores.”

I said “No, my dad told me that the glass comes from all over. It just naturally lands here because of the tide.”

The woman looked at the rock wall coming down from the memorial and the sea wall extending out into the water. She seemed to be calculating something.

“Well,” she said, “I am a paddler. I paddle up and down the coasts looking for sea glass. I can go where most can’t. I found a few good pieces today. But I left them over there,” she pointed. “I feel like I shouldn’t take them, since I have opportunities others don’t.”

“No,” I told her, “it’s fair game, you should take it or someone else will.”

She looked down at her feet. I looked down too, and realized her feet were covered by black flipper-like shoes. So strange, I thought, and glanced back at her face.

She smiled at me, a tight-lipped smile that hinted of something. She said “I’ve found three buttons on

this trip.” She said the word buttons, like “but-tons,” pronouncing both Ts. It sounded like a foreign word, the way she said it.

I said “What?” and she said “But-tons, three but-tons.” A little shocked I asked, “you found buttons? I didn’t even know that was possible!” She nodded, her eyes inscrutable behind her glasses.

She stood there, for a moment, silent, and we both looked out over the flats, where Lainy bent over. The wind stirred my hair. I caught it and pulled it back out of my face.

The woman seemed to smell the wind, or maybe she was listening to something I couldn’t hear. She said, “the tide has turned, time to go.”

With a little nod at me, she turned to the sea wall. There was a man up there, dressed like her, but in blue and black. I hadn’t noticed him before. She climbed slowly and carefully up to him. He took her hand and held it as she climbed down the other side. Then he stepped down out of sight.

I walked immediately over to where the woman had indicated she left the sea glass. There, I found a little stack of lovely glass.



Artwork and Photo: Randi Kruger

I picked the pieces up and looked at them laying in my hand. Lainy squelched over through the mud and said: “Did you know her?” I shook my head, “No, she’s a tourist. I think she said she came here in a canoe or something.”

Lainy looked at me like I was insane. (Kids always think their parents are insane, right?)

We looked at each other. And then we both looked at the sea wall. Without a word we crossed the flats

and began climbing the wall. Once we got to the top, we had a view of the harbor, with the lobster boats at anchor and the islands in the distance. The sun sparkled off the water. We didn’t see the woman, or any canoes. Just water, and the tide ripping out of the Narrows.

We stood in silence for a long moment. Then Lainy turned towards me, eyes wide and shining, “Mom,” she whispered, “I think that was a selkie.”



Artwork and photo: Randi Kruger

Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Location	Website
Sept 2022	Bay of Fundy Symposium postponed to 9/29 – 10/1/2023	Nova Scotia	Bofsk.com
Sept 21-22	Intermediate and Advanced Surf Camps	Cape Charles, VA	Crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
Sept. 23-25	10th Annual Kiptopeke Symposium	Cape Charles, VA	Crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
Oct 6 - 9	33rd Annual Delmarva Paddlers Retreat	Lewes, DE	Derlmavapaddlersretreat.org
Oct 19 - 22	Sea Kayak Georgia Symposium	Tybee Is., GA	seakayakgeorgia.com
Oct 28 - 30	Autumn Gales Symposium	Stonington, CT	http://www.autumngales.com/

Photos of the Month



Cartwheel

Photo: Bill Vonnegut

Photos of the Month



Dawn at Metompkin Inlet

Richard Essex

Photos of the Month



Tehapaeuo

Todd Glaser

Injuries and Medical Conditions Among Kayakers Paddling in the Sea Environment

Colin Powell

Note: this article summarizes the results of a study done in the UK that focused on the types of injuries suffered by sea kayakers. The article originally appeared in Wilderness and Environmental Medicine, 20, 327–334 (2009). It has been edited for length.

Introduction

This study aims to investigate the perception, prevalence, and nature of reported injury and medical conditions among those using kayaks in the sea environment.

A questionnaire focusing upon the nature and rates of injuries was distributed over a 1-year period on weekends and during school holidays. Respondents were asked to answer questions with reference to the main activity they undertook in the sea environment and the type of boat used. Respondents were also asked questions relating to: 1) their personal experience of health impacts and 2) their perception of injuries and medical conditions encountered by the wider group of people kayaking in the sea.

Questionnaire distribution took place at a range of launch sites in the Welsh coastal county of Pembrokeshire. Pembrokeshire was chosen because it is regarded as one of the primary coastal kayaking areas in the UK. The conditions and locations encountered in a small geographic area are varied, ranging from holiday beaches, harbors, and sheltered water to internationally known tidal races, overfalls, and exposed sea crossings. In addition to this, participants at the Anglesey Sea Kayak

Symposium in North Wales were invited to participate in the study.

Results

One hundred and seventy-eight completed questionnaires were returned. The ages of the respondents ranged from 16 to 69 years, and the mean age of the sample was 37 years.

The majority of the respondents reported that their main activity was ‘surfing’ (n = 64). This was followed by ‘coastal touring’ (n = 53) and ‘recreational paddling’ (n = 31). These 3 categories accounted for 85% of the responses.

Perceived Injuries and Conditions

Participants were asked questions relating to what they thought were the most common health impacts among those who kayak in the sea (Table 1). ‘Sprains and pulled muscles’ and ‘cuts and abrasions’ were quoted as the most common injuries or medical conditions. These were followed by a range of injuries, including ‘painful or stiff back’, ‘sunburn’, ‘painful joints or tendons’, ‘blisters’, and ‘bruises’. These factors combined accounted for 92% of the responses.

The back was identified as the single most commonly injured part of the body, accounting for 19% of the responses; this was followed by hands (13%), shoulders (12%), and the head (11%). The majority of respondents (n = 141) regarded most injuries and medical conditions associated with kayaking as not serious.

Table 1. Perceived most common injury or condition among kayakers in general

<u>Injury or medical condition</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Cuts and abrasions	33
Bruises	12
Blisters	19
Painful joints or tendons	19
Sprains and pulled muscles	34
Dislocation	2
Hypothermia	5
Near drowning	3
Sunburn	20
Painful or stiff back	21
Other	3
Total	171
Missing	<u>2</u>
Total	173

Self-Reported Injuries and Conditions

Approximately 35% (n=60) of the respondents indicated that they had received injuries or developed medical conditions as a result of kayaking in the sea. Of these 60 respondents, 21 stated that they had received medical treatment. Seven respondents stated that their injuries or conditions resulted in time off work, college, or school; three respondents stated that the injuries or conditions had resulted in a change in lifestyle. Twenty-seven of the respondents indicated that injuries or medical conditions had resulted in them taking time off kayaking. Four respondents regarded their health impacts as serious.

Positive Health Effects

Ninety-six percent of the respondents (n =166) stated that they thought that there were positive health effects associated with kayaking in the sea. Of these, 46% felt that there were both physical and psychological benefits to kayaking: as one respondent stated, “Good all-round exercise ... sharpens your senses and good for the soul!”

Discussion

The majority of respondents reported that they had not received injuries or developed medical conditions as a result of kayaking in the sea. Most respondents regarded injuries and medical conditions as uncommon and not serious. This view was reflected by those who had experienced injuries and medical conditions. This supports the findings of previous studies that the majority of injuries in kayaking are not serious.

What was seen as the ‘most common injury or medical condition’ and the ‘most commonly injured part of the body’ varied according to type of boat used and activity undertaken. For example, people who paddled playboats were more likely to have experienced an injury than those who used sit on tops, recreational boats, or sea kayaks. In addition, those who paddled sit on tops were significantly more likely to have experienced injury to the head than sea kayakers, play boaters, or recreational kayakers.

People who kayak in the sea differ in terms of age, activity, boat use, experience, skill level, duration and frequency of participation, and environments encountered. The significance and nature of injuries and medical conditions and the associated causal factors may vary according to these characteristics.



Rick (n=1) has what might be considered a “serious” kayak-related injury. Photo: Tracey Feild

A Terrorist Attempt on the Cape May Ferry

Rick Wiebush

The Arrest

Just as we had finished carrying our boats from the improvised take out at the edge of the Cape May Ferry terminal to the ferry boarding area, a NJ State Trooper comes rolling up, gets out of his car, demands our identification, and tells us to forget boarding the ferry because we aren't going anywhere. We are under arrest for something like a potential-terrorist-landing-and-ninja-style-invasion-of-the-United-States-of-America. Or something along those lines.

It appears that we were caught on Homeland Security cameras as we: 1) landed our boats on a little beach adjacent to ferry property; 2) formed a conga line and passed our boats hand-to-hand up a little incline; 3) lifted them over a split-rail fence onto the ferry property; 4) carried them brazenly across a treeless, sunbaked lawn the length of a football field; 5) in broad daylight with about 100 people watching; 6) set the boats down in a nice little line near the boarding area and 7) sat down in the shade, though unfortunately, 8) because the ferry terminal is a port, it falls under the jurisdiction of Homeland Security. One can see why the authorities would scramble on high alert given these suspicious actions, not to mention that such actions were undertaken by a group of 60-something-year-old arthritis-encumbered white people in PFDs and spray skirts.

After taking our IDs, the cop went and sat in his car for the next hour, apparently doing nothing except making us miss our ferry and generally busting our balls, he sternly advised us that we could have been Arrested and advised that we “not do it again.” OK.



Ready to load. Photo: Rick Wiebush

The four Delaware Bay crossings we've done - all of which have used the same spot for a take-out, the exact same procedure for getting to the ferry, and all of which took place *after* 9/11 - haven't had a similar denouement. In fact, all have been spectacularly fun and rewarding.

The Crossing

Cross Currents periodically runs a two-day Open Water Skills class at Cape Henlopen, DE, and makes the Delaware Bay crossing on one of the days. That crossing - from Cape Henlopen State Park to the ferry terminal at Cape May, NJ is approximately a 15 NM trip. The crossing itself is

about 10 NM and can be quite challenging due to strong currents, shoals that generate standing waves, and the need to cross a major shipping channel that leads to/from Philadelphia. It requires careful planning to take the 2+ kt currents into account and to determine a correct heading. It also takes fairly skilled paddlers (at least L3) and knowledgeable leaders (at least L4).

In addition to the pure satisfaction of doing a crossing of that length, there are several things that can stand out:

Out of Sight

In the first couple of miles – especially if it's hazy or foggy – you can't see Cape May on the other side at all. And when you can see the other side, there aren't any good ranges to use. That means that you have to rely solely on your compass bearing. On one trip, we had set the heading to account for a flooding 2 knot current, so we were aiming for a point about 3.5 NM east of Cape May Point (which was our initial destination on the NJ side). Not being able to see land was a little unnerving because several of us had the sense that we were heading for France instead of Cape May. But the calculations worked out perfectly. We subsequently looked at our GPS track and it showed a perfectly straight line between Cape Henlopen and Cape May Point.

Hot, Hot Hot

It can get pretty “bakey” out there since there are no trees or any other form of shade – just vast expanses of open water. On one trip the heat index for the day reached about 110. It didn't really feel that bad out on the water, but we nonetheless had to constantly keep ourselves wet either by splashing, dumping water-filled hats onto our heads, or just rolling.

Lots of Current

It's best to plan your timings so that you hit the shoals on the NJ side and the Cape May channel right around slack. But things start to get a little hairy right there almost as soon as the ebb starts.

You can be less than a half mile from shore and maybe a half hour into the ebb and already the current can be strong enough to create standing waves and treat you like you are on a treadmill. Moreover, the battle/slog to head upriver to get to the ferry entrance is something you don't need after already doing 12 nm!

Dolphin

There are almost always dolphin around, particularly during the ebb. We have seen anywhere from three to 15 dolphin feeding in the channel as we came through. If you stop to watch, some of them are likely to get very interested and swim close to your boats for a closer look. It's a real treat to have such graceful creatures so close!

The Ferry

The ferry ride back to Lewes is a bonus. What a pleasure it is after doing that crossing to just sit back in the shade, letting the breeze cool you off, sipping on a coke (or whatever) and surveying the seascape knowing you had just come across these same waters in a little boat. What a great way to end the day, especially after you've been detained and interrogated as a would-be terrorist!



Photo: Keith Betts

Book Review

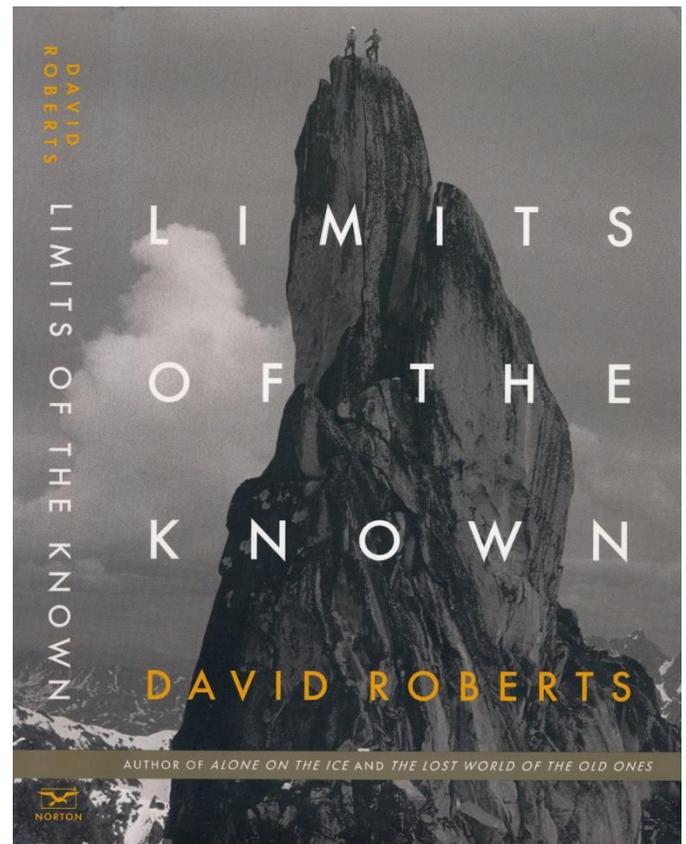
Limits of the Known, by David Roberts*Paul Caffyn*

David Roberts is not a bad mountaineering adventure writer. His first book titled *The Mountain of My Fear* was published in 1966, a gripping yarn of four young university students having a go at the committing west face of Mt Huntington in a remote Alaskan range. From that classic tome of a first bleeding with a serious face climb, he went on to author another 27 books about mountaineering, polar exploration, history and anthropology.

His latest book and sadly probably his last, is an exploration of what drives the human race to tackle adventures. A prologue relates a 2015 trip by the two surviving members of that first 1966 Alaskan mission back to Talkeetna marking the 50th anniversary of the climb. Talkeetna is an end-of-the-road accessible airstrip from where climbers gather to wait for weather to fly in for climbing the likes of McKinley (Denali) or unclimbed virgins.

David noticed a lump on the side of his neck but is assured by his mate it is only a cyst. However, it is not a cyst, and back in the big smoke, a round of scans and biopsies reveal aggressive throat cancer. Rounds of both chemotherapy and radiation leave him a shadow of his former self, barely able to walk a city block with the aid of a stick.

After the initial prologue, David moves onto an assessment of Fridtjof Nansen and what drove him to design a boat what would survive crushing in the Arctic Ice and lead the *Fram* expedition, which involved sailing the vessel into the ice north of Bering Strait, and then hoping the westward drift of



the ice pack would take *Fram* closer to the North Pole than any other expedition had been. Once Nansen realized the drift would not take them anywhere near the pole, he set off with one companion, a dog team, provisions for a couple of months and two collapsible kayaks. Nansen was keen to attain the North Pole. Long story, but it is a remarkable eight-month story of survival in a winter wasteland of ice. And the *Fram* eventually was released from the ice pack's clutches, returning to Norway not long after Nansen and Johansen also returned to civilization.

The second chapter is titled *Blank on the Map* and if you have read the book by the same name, it is about Eric Shipton and what drove him to his 'untraveled world' of Asian mountain ranges, glaciers and valleys that had not been previously sighted by Westerners. Shipton was a member of five Mount Everest expeditions between 1933 and 1951 but didn't have much time for the big military style organized mountain conquests. Shipton and his mate Bill Tilman pioneered the lightweight expedition style. 'If it couldn't be planned on the back of an envelope, it wasn't worth doing'.

Although I was expecting further chapters on more of the most famous adventurer/explorers, David Roberts moves onto a burgeoning interest in the ancient cliff dwellers of the USA south-west, the people who ground steps out of steep sandstone buttresses providing access to granaries and where they lived. Roberts wrote several books about his research into the remote gorges and mesas, but this seemed to diverge from what I saw as the overall slant of the book, what drove adventurers to do what they did.

The *First Descent* chapter was of more interest to me, with tales of white-water and rafting adventures that David was tasked to cover as a writer. Particularly in this chapter he writes about how the degree of commitment with expeditions has changed, from the 50s and 60s when even a written letter may have taken months to reach civilization and chance of rescue was zilch, to these days with blogs updated nightly with photos and text and a helicopter evacuation is only a sat phone call away.

The *First Contact* chapter has much on gold exploration in New Guinea in the 30s, and how the natives viewed sometimes quite savage encounters with the white miners. *The Undiscovered Earth* chapter is about caving and the challenge of seeking

the deepest (and the longest) hole in the world. New Zealand's big caves don't rate a mention but having been the geologist on a 1973 expedition to the highlands of western New Guinea, which was tagged 'The Search for the Deepest Hole in the World', I thoroughly enjoyed being brought up to date with the international challenge to get a depth record.

His last chapter titled *The Future of Exploration* pulls all the threads together, his terrible time with treatment for the throat cancer and the evil cancer metastasis into lung nodules. Writing seems to be his salvation from a physical body slowing down, even though he can't type anymore and has to either write long hand or dictate to his wife Sharon. The last few paragraphs are tear jerkers.

Apart from an author mugshot on the inside of the dustjacket, there are no photos at all, just two rather small-scale maps that you need a microscope to read the place names.

With most of David Robert's mountaineering and polar books in my collection, I thoroughly enjoyed his new tome, though saddened and sympathetic to learn of his fight with cancer.

Title:	Limits of the Known
Author:	David Roberts
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Website:	www.wwnorton.com
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ISBN:	978-0-393-60986-8
Available:	Amazon.
Price:	\$13.96.

Contributors

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 served for 27 years as the editor of the newsletter of the Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers. Check out his website at <http://paulcaffyn.co.nz/>

Richard Essex - started sea kayaking on lake Michigan and the rivers near Chicago about 20 years ago. However, it is only after moving to Maryland a few years ago that he started to seriously pursue the sport. Since then he is out on the water most weekends developing his skills as an open water sea kayaker.

Randi Kruger - is the owner of Capital City Kayak, the D.C. region’s SKUK NDK dealer and representative. She is an ACA L3 Instructor Trainer, as well as a River L2 Instructor. She lives and teaches on the Potomac River, as well as in Southport NC, in the Cape Fear region.

Kerry Kirk Pflugh - is an adventure kayaker. She has traveled across the country, Canada and Mexico enjoying multiday kayaking trips on oceans, bays, rivers and lakes. She is a past president of the Jersey Shore Sea Kayak Association, and a former ACA Open Water Level 4 Kayak Instructor. Her favorite paddling adventure is the one yet to be taken.

Dr. Colin Powell - is a professor in the School of Medicine at the University of Wales in Cardiff

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

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

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

Coastbusters is a publication of Cross Currents Sea Kayaking