

Coastbusters

The Cross Currents Newsletter for Mid-Atlantic Paddlers

January 2020

Ten Days in East Greenland

Rick Wiebush

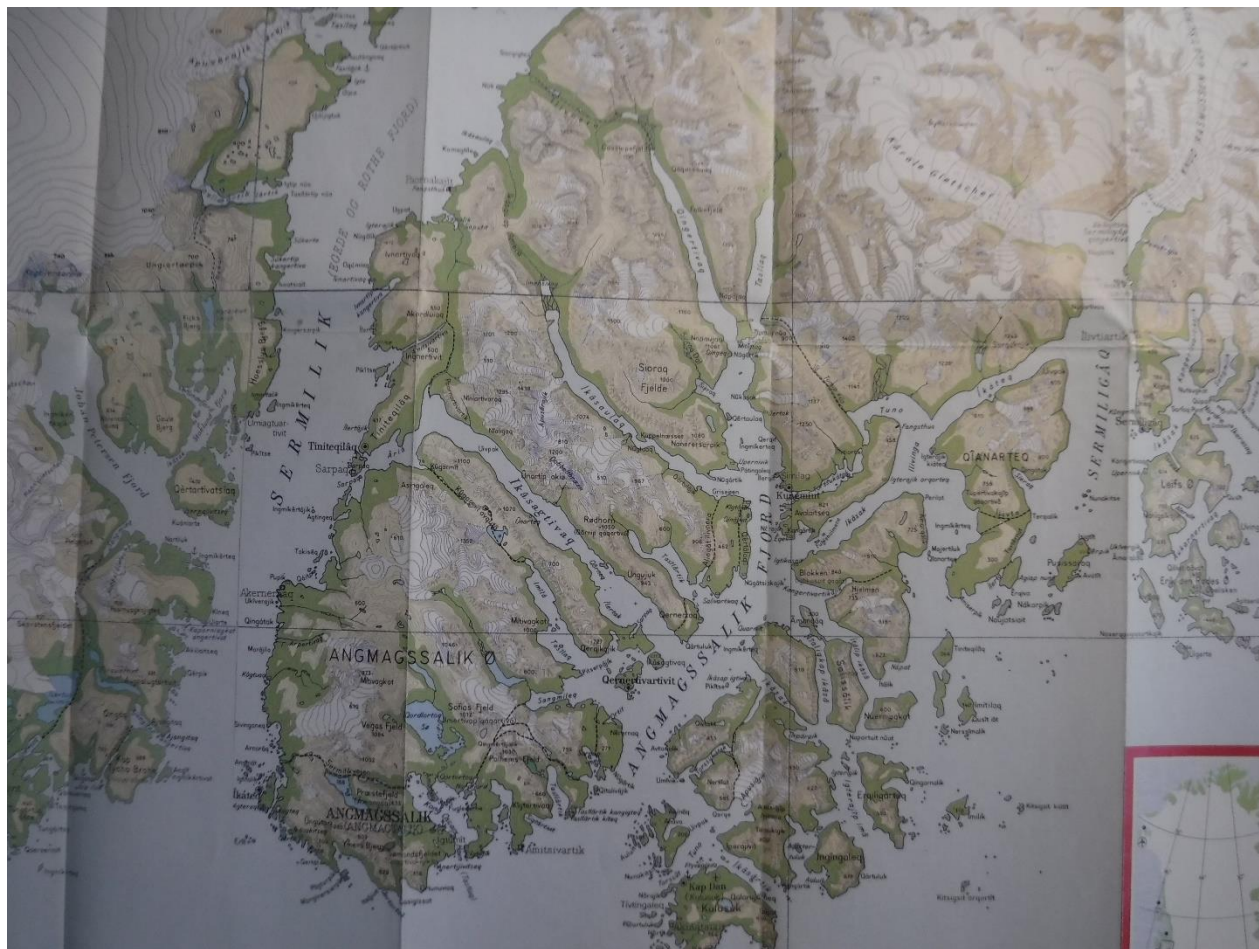
We think of Greenland as being very remote, isolated, having few people, and cold. It is all those things.

Remote? The only way to fly there is via Iceland, and it takes 12 – 14 hours from either New York or London. Cold? Eighty percent of this, the largest island in the world, is covered by a permanent ice sheet that is several *miles* thick. Sparsely populated? There is a grand total of 46,500 people (90% Greenlandic Inuit) who live there. Of those, about

half live in the relatively warm capital, Nuuk, in the extreme southwestern part of the island.

But where we paddled was the *southeastern* part of Greenland in the area around Tasiilaq and Ammassalik. The people in Nuuk think of *this* area as being very remote, isolated, sparsely populated and cold! They too are right: there are three or four towns with a few hundred people in each. The area straddles the Arctic Circle. The people in East Greenland are largely subsistence fishermen and hunters.





Kulusuk/Angmagssalik area: Kulusuk (put in) is the far south island. The destination glaciers are the white semi-circle top right.

The Basics

This was a guided expedition, in July, using a Reykjavik-based outfitter, Ultima Thule, who supplied Feathercraft doubles (and one single), tents, food and, surprisingly, only a spray jacket to deal with 45-degree water. Most people had brought at least wet suits with them.

Departing from Kulusuk, we spent eight and a half days on the water, covering approximately 65 miles, camping each night.

Weaving in and out of the islands that sit in between the Angmagssalik and Sermiligaq fjords, we headed north toward the Arctic Circle, with an ultimate goal of the Karale and Knut Rasmussen glaciers at 66 degrees north.

Day time temperatures hit 60 when sunny, 50-55 when cloudy and 45 when rainy. Nights were typically around 40 -50F.

The Group

It was an international team with two Americans, a Canadian, a Swede, a Belgian couple, and the Icelandic guide. Of course the Europeans each spoke about five languages. There were just two of us who had extensive experience sea kayaking.

The Swedish woman was a long-distance (100 K) ice skater and knew something about dealing with cold weather. Every day when we beached the boats at our camp site, she would get out of the boat, immediately take off all her clothes in front of everyone and change into dry stuff. Meanwhile, the rest of us would be screwing around setting up tents, moving gear around, unrolling sleeping bags and doing other chores, all while still damp from paddling or rain. When we finally changed our clothes it was too late – we remained chilled for the rest of the night while she was comfortably toasty.

Frequently the passages between the islands were clogged with ice and we had to carefully pick our way through, following leads as they presented themselves. *(All photos: Rick Wiebush)*



Sometimes we confronted dead ends in the leads and had to transfer ourselves and our boats by sliding them over ice bridges until we got to open water on the other side.



But once in more open water, the views were spectacular: snow covered mountains everywhere, rising up out of the water that held ice of all different shapes and sizes.



The camp sites weren't tough to take.



Since it was July, we had almost 24 hours of sunlight. The pic below is from a campsite at 1 AM



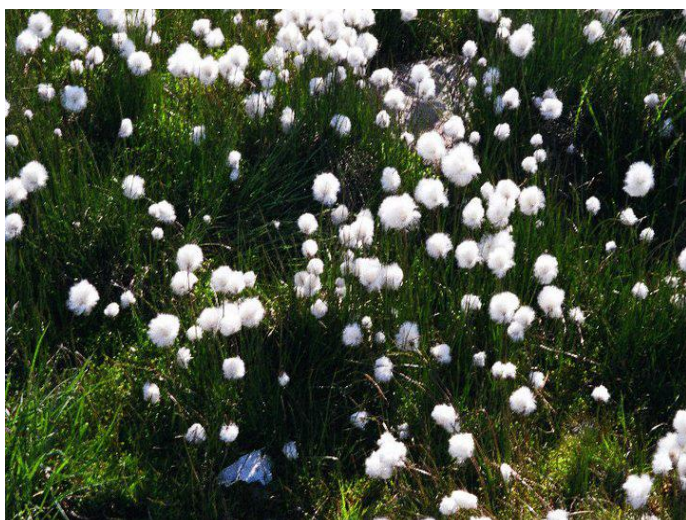
But the ice was the main player in this story. An impressive number of shapes, sizes and colors: Icebergs, sheet ice, bergy bits, growlers, brash ice; white, blue, green; irregular squares, lopsided rectangles, pointy triangles, rounded mounds, etc. The front, horizontal chunk of the berg shown below was about 50 yards long and 40 feet high. The chunk sticking up in the rear on the left side was about 100 ft high - picture a 10 story building. Recall that what you can see of this berg is just one tenth of its' actual size. It's blue because it is very dense; much of the oxygen has been compressed out of it.



We didn't see much wildlife. This Arctic Fox spent some time sniffing around one of the camps. On a different day, we found one of his relatives trying to open dry bags that were in the cockpit of one of the boats.



There also wasn't much greenery – too rocky, too windy, and too cold. Some of the “evergreens” we saw on rocky hillsides were four inches tall. One exception was this patch of dandelion-type cotton grass on a hillside in the little community of Sermiligaaq (population 225).



Up near the Karale and Rasmussen glaciers and the Arctic Circle: the clouds, mist, rocks, ice, and light create an eerie, cold, black and white world.



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Upcoming Events

Dates	Event	Location	Sponsor	Website/Contact
2/7 - 9	Paddle Golden Gate	San Francisco Bay Area	California Canoe and Kayak	paddlegoldengate@calkayak.com
2/8 -15	SW Florida Exploration	Bradenton, FL	Cross Currents	Crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
2/15 - 17	Matanzas Rough Water Training	St. Augustine Beach	Dale Williams	Wavepaddler.com
2/15 - 22	Jacksonville Journeys	Jacksonville, FL	Cross Currents	Crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
2/21 -23	Sweetwater Symposium	St. Petersburg, FL	Sweetwater Kayak	Sweetwaterkayak.com
3/13 - 15	Canoeconopia	Madison, WI	Rutabaga Paddlesports	darrenb@rutabaga.com
3/28	Paddling Film Festival	Baltimore, UMBC	Cross Currents	Crosscurrentsseakayaking.com
4/18 - 25	Greece	Poros, Greece	Cross Currents	Crosscurrentsseakayaking.com

Body, Boat, Blade Risk Assessment Model

Calvin Croll

(Editor's Note: this is the second in a series of articles that examine different risk assessment models developed for sea kayaking.)

Arguably the most important skill you can develop as a sea kayaker is your judgement. It is crucial to know when and where to go, especially when leading a group of others. Still, each year there are numerous rescues involving the Coast Guard and occasional fatalities in this sport. While reading incident reports and debriefs from a wide variety of sea kayaking mishaps, one theme tends to stick out to me again and again: a lack of proper risk assessment done before getting into the problematic situation.

When I say “proper risk assessment” I mean a thorough, thoughtful, and systematic approach to assessing risk before, during, and after being on the water. I think it is safe to say that most experienced paddlers consider information such as the weather, tides, currents, and swell before getting on the water. Often, though, these pieces are not brought together and the interactions between all factors considered.

The system described in this article was developed by Shawna Franklin and Leon Somme at the Body Boat Blade kayak school on Orcas Island, WA. While working there as a coach for two years, I used and taught this system to kayakers from first-time-in-a-boat paddlers all the way up to advanced tide race classes. It is an adjustable system, and adaptable to both the situation and the paddlers.

“Go or No-Go”

The entire point of this particular risk assessment model is to answer the question, “should we go?” Going might be for a play in a surf spot, a journey

around a headland, or a crossing to a remote island... any situation in which you are getting on the water in your kayak. To answer that question, we look at the factors that increase risk and plot them all on a chart in order to get a snapshot of the total amount of risk we are taking on. The chart is a simple red/ yellow/ green bullseye that allows us to see all the different risk factors, as well as their severity, at a glance.

Figure 1. Risk Assessment Base Model

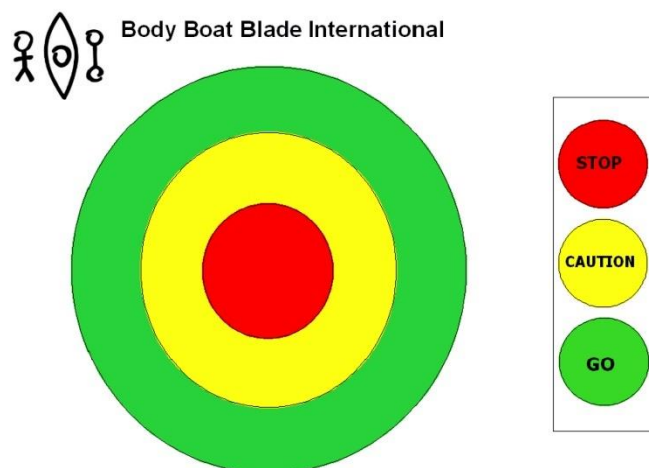


Figure 2 on the following page shows a list of some of the risk factors we face when heading out as kayakers. Note that they are divided into four different categories. We will come back to that.

To assess the risk in a given situation, we need to consider factors from each category and plot them onto our risk bullseye. This will give us a more accurate picture of all the different types of risk a particular venue or journey might entail.

Figure 2 Risk Factors

RISK ASSESSMENT



“Green, Yellow, or Red?”

So, where does the risk factor you are trying to plot belong? In general, the categories work the way they are described on the bullseye sheet.

Green is Go! - Risk factors are plotted in the green if they have low consequences and are unlikely to affect your safety. For example, let's say we are paddling in the Gulf of Florida in summer and thinking about water temperature. If you capsize, the risk from warm water is low, so that would be a definite green. Now, say you are paddling in Maine and the water is considerably colder. The water would probably be solidly in the yellow area, so you choose to wear a dry suit in order to mitigate that risk.

Yellow is Caution - This is the area that trips up the greatest number of people when using this risk assessment tool. A large number of factors can end up in the yellow. I try to think of it this way: something is in the yellow if it will affect my paddle. If I have to pay attention to it and mitigate the risk from it in some way, it is likely in the yellow. For example, although I would feel quite happy paddling in 2-foot wind waves, I would still plot that as in the middle of the yellow area because I will certainly be affected by those seas and take them into consideration in my trip planning... especially if they will be against any tide at any point.

Red is STOP! - As with many risk assessment tools, the factors that belong in the red are pretty easy to identify. Wind that is too strong to paddle against, dumping breaking waves that close out the entire length of the beach, very low temperatures, or strong currents without eddies to allow you to return upstream. If you have any factors in the red, it is clear that your answer is “Don’t Go!” It is time to change venues, change the route, or just head to the pub to tell sea stories.

As we start to plot our risk factors, it is important to realize that this is a spectrum, so any particular factor can be “very in the green” or “in the green but close to yellow,” etc. Also, any one of these factors can change over time.

Applying the Model

You and a group of friends are looking to surf at the outlet of a river where there is a sandbar known to produce nice spilling surf. The weather is clear and sunny, 70 degrees, with an onshore breeze blowing 5-10. There is a 4-foot swell coming in. Everyone has been in this kind of surf before and has appropriate boats, immersion gear, and safety equipment (including tow belts and helmets). There are beaches on either side of the river mouth, though they are very steep and dumpy with this swell and not great for landing the group. There is a 3-knot outgoing current on the ebb, and a 2-knot incoming current on the flood. When would you want to start your surf session?

Risk Assessment for the Ebb

Let’s think about what the risk assessment bullseye might look like if we head out on the ebb. To start, we should consider factors from each category and plot a couple from each.

Weather:

Temperature: warm and sunny, definitely in the green.

Wind: 5 – 10 knots onshore – this is a safe wind strength and direction for this group. Green.

Water:

Current: 3 knots of current at max ebb is a lot to deal with. If an incident happens when it is near max, we will not be able to head back up the river to the put-in. Yellow, getting close to red (depending on the time of the cycle).

Breakers: the waves we are going to play on look pretty good right now. I will plot this in the yellow with an arrow moving towards the red. This is due to the tide lowering throughout the ebb, making the sand bar shallower and a chance for the breakers to become dumpier as the session goes on.

Group:

Group experience/ability: everyone in the group is experienced in surfing shore-break waves and most have solid rolls. This should plot in the green.

Equipment: the group is well equipped with proper boats and gear for this situation. This is in the green.

Land:

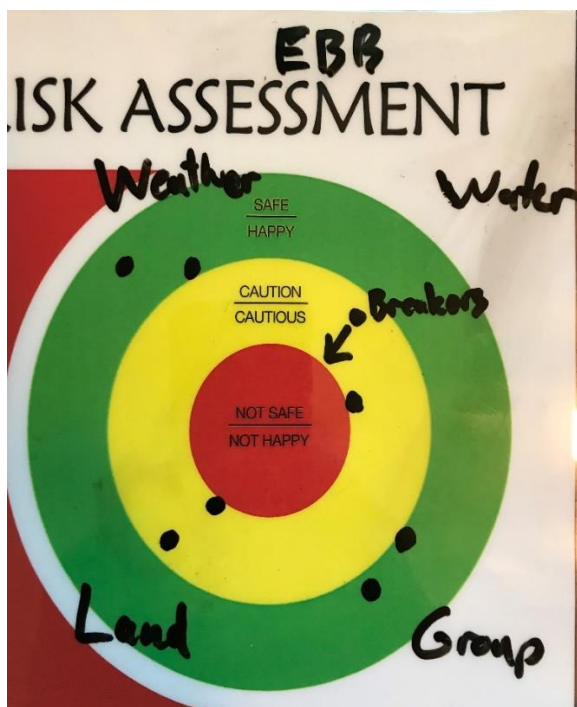
Landings: due to the outgoing current, if an incident occurs the rescue will happen as the group gets pushed out to sea. After sorting things out, the only available landings will be the dumpy surf beaches on either side of the river mouth. These will plot pretty far into the yellow, as there is a strong chance that a person or a boat could get broken attempting the landing.

Bail Outs: There are roads along the river and the beaches, so getting access to outside help in this situation is feasible. Since it would be difficult to get on the beach, I would still rate this in the yellow.

Now that we have all the factors plotted, let’s take a look at the big picture. (See Figure 3 next page.)

There are many factors plotted in the green, given the nice weather and experienced group. However, the strong outgoing current and the dumpy surf beach landings are deep in the yellow. As the tide

Figure 3. Risk Assessment for the Ebb



lowers (and paddlers tire) the breakers will likely get more energetic, moving them closer to the red.

Overall, plotting the risk factors on the ebb gives us two dots close to the red “no go” zone and another moving in that direction. This shows us that there is considerable risk, despite the group experience and pleasant weather. It may be wise not to launch in this venue right now.

But what about later in the day, on the flood? Let’s consider starting our surf session at the slack before the flood and take a look at the risk plot.

Risk Assessment for the Flood

This looks significantly different (See Figure 4.) Although the group and the weather have stayed the same, some other factors have changed position on the plot.

Land:

Landings - since the current is no longer carrying us out, we can access the easy up-river landing where we launched. This is now in the green.

Bail Outs - Now we have easy road access if outside assistance is needed.

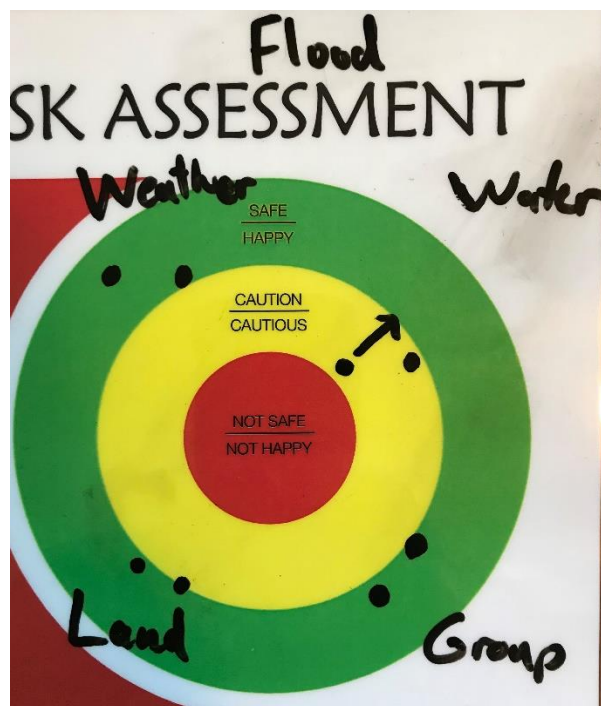
Water:

Current - Starting with slack and having a current building in a favorable direction, we can plot this much closer to the green. We still have to pay attention to it, but it will not hinder our ability to land safely as before.

Breakers - Since we are starting closer to low tide, the breakers will be more energetic initially. But, as the tide cycle progresses, the water depth will increase. This will help since the waves should have less power as our session goes on and our energy declines. So the dot will drift back toward the green.

In terms of risk assessment, we are now looking at a lot of green factors, or yellow factors closer to the green area. Launching at the slack before the flood seems like a much safer plan.

Figure 4. Risk Assessment for the Flood



Pros and Cons of the Model

As with any model, there are benefits and drawbacks to this way of assessing risk.

One big drawback is that there is no set standard or clear definition for what constitutes “green”, “yellow”, or “red”. So the model can be fairly subjective. For example, is 25 knots of wind yellow or red? It might depend on you and your group. It takes experience in a variety of environments and groups – as well as an honest assessment of skills – to apply this model effectively. Because of that, I try to plot as much as possible in the yellow. For example, if I have not paddled with everyone in the group before, that factor is plotting firmly in the yellow until I see evidence that it should change. People are prone to overestimating their abilities, and the only way you can tell how they paddle in conditions is to see them paddle in conditions.

That there are not clear definitions for what constitutes “green”, “yellow”, or “red” is also an advantage. It means that you can apply the model dynamically to different groups, situations, or even

hours of the day. As I lead a group along I am often thinking “are any of my factors getting more red? More green?” and adjusting plans accordingly.

Another advantage of this model is that you can choose how thoroughly you apply it. You can just plot one factor from each category, assess the risk from that, and call it good. If the result isn’t clear, you can keep adding more and more factors until you have a good answer. I count 45 different factors listed on the chart, and there are surely more you could come up with to plot!

The last advantage of this model, and I think its biggest strength, is that it forces you to look beyond the typical weather forecast and sea state and consider a myriad of factors, including the land, the group, the relationship of environmental factors to each other, and think about how all of these will change over time. Whether you use this model or a different system, getting into the habit of pausing to thoroughly assess risk before getting on the water will keep you and your fellow paddlers safe. The more you do this, the better your judgement will become. That, in the end, is arguably the most important skill you can develop as a paddler.



Ancient tree in Dismal Swamp VA Photo: Tom Noffsinger

Photos of the Month



Angmagssalik Greenlanders circa 1908

Photo: Thomas N. Krabbe

Photos of the Month



Taking Off!

Photo: R. Dennis Green

Photos of the Month



Coming Up!

Photo: Joey Schott

The Romany Family of NDK/SKUK Sea Kayaks:

26 Years of Solid Performance

Randi Kruger

“The year was 1993... and one of the most enduring kayaks ever made paddled onto the sea. The Romany was produced by Nigel Dennis Kayaks - now Sea Kayaking UK - in Anglesey, Wales. It was designed to be easy to handle in rough conditions, neutral in wind, fun in the surf, have enough speed and gear storage for several days, and be strong enough to withstand a good whack on the rocks. The Romany introduced keyhole cockpits, day hatches, and skegs to North American seas.” (Neil Schulman, Adventure Kayak Magazine)

And so it started... the Romany is iconic. It continues to be the choice of kayak instructors worldwide, as well as discerning paddlers across the US. It also makes up about 25% of my total sales here at Capital City Kayak. To put a number on that percentage: about 15 sold in 3 years.

Before I dive into the description of this family of boats, let me talk about a pet peeve of mine. The name is pronounced ROW-MAN-EE; as though one stuck a long e on the end of Roman. It is the name of Nigel's daughter, who was named for the Roma, sometimes called Gypsies, the bands of families travelling eternally. When someone says RAW-MAN-EE, it's like nails on a chalkboard. Maybe this is because I'm a history buff? Or maybe because I'm a parent and sympathize with a child's name mispronounced?

Just to remind you: You'll see some things mentioned in my articles like “volume,” “paddler weight,” and “rocker.” Please read up on the elements of design. You'll do yourself a huge favor with a little research. I will not be including standard stats in my article. Those are easily acquired on the Sea Kayaking UK (SKUK) website, or elsewhere. Instead, I will cover my experience

with the boats and give an unbiased opinion. Well, as unbiased as an NDK dealer/fanboi could give!

Romany Classic

Let's start with that banner boat the Romany, now known as the Romany Classic. This boat has changed little since its introduction in 1993. Maybe one or two small design tweaks, but mostly just the same. The Classic is the boat I pull from my quiver when I want to look like a rock star. It is the boat I use for Instructor Certification Exams, and teaching. It is so predictable, and well-known to me, that it feels like an old friend.

Pros: The boat's performance is fairly neutral, it tends to weather cock less than many boats, and it doesn't squat down in waves. It surfs well, paddles straight, and edges solidly. It is an all-around do-gooder.

Cons: I find the low knee position burdensome on my lower back. With a bit of lower back pain comes some hip pain. It does not behave as well when overloaded. Paddlers over 185 pounds are not going to enjoy premium performance from this boat. Because it can carry a max load around 300 pounds it won't sink, but it won't be as stable, turn as nicely, or generally be the rock star it would be with a 150 to 180-pound paddler. It is also slower than many boats. Although it is listed as capable of multi-day trips, it would not be the boat I would load to head out on an expedition.

Paddlers who use this boat often include Dawn “Sandy Bottom” Stewart, Paula Hubbard, and yours truly.



Dawn Stewart, and two Classics at Southport NC. Photo: R Kruger

Romany LV

Next up is the Romany LV, Low Volume. “It has been a very long time, years, since I ordered one,” says the US importer Dale Williams.

This boat no longer has an advocate at NDK. It was originally envisioned as a smaller person’s main ride, but the truth of the matter is a smaller, lighter paddler needs a narrower boat, not just a lower deck. I have paddled one in the past. It was outfitted with no seat at all, but a foam seat is what Nigel recommends.

Pros: it has a one-inch lowered deck, and a smaller cockpit opening than the Classic. It rolls like a Greenlander’s dream.

Cons: the lowered deck created the “banana squish” problem, making the boat’s handling sluggish, removing one of the things that makes the Classic shine. Its deck is so low it is hard to paddle

comfortably for most people. And it is as wide and long as a Classic. Just not a good combination.

Who paddles this boat? I saw a post on Facebook that had a photo of someone in one, but to date I’ve not met anyone who paddles one.



Romany Surf

Next, near and dear to my heart, the Romany Surf. This is the first NDK I purchased. I was on the lower end of its weight range (180 to 230 pounds) but it made me comfortable. Its knee bumps were easy on my lower back, and the boat is stable as a gentle trail horse. Its higher max load, around 375



Romany Surf next to a Classic. Photo: R Kruger

pounds, meant I could use it for almost everything. I paddled Surfs exclusively for 3.5 years. I learned to surf and roll in a Surf. I expeditioned out of a Surf, using it for many trips that were five or six days long. I will order a carbon/Kevlar Surf for my shop demo in 2020. I've missed this boat.

Pros: it is Nigel's most neutral boat, neither weather nor lee cocking much, and needing a skeg less than all the other boats in his line. It is stable, edges predictably, and swallows gear for a lighter paddler like me. The knee bumps mean more comfort. It is both day trip and expedition worthy. It pearls less than any other boat I surf, due to its increased volume.

Cons: the cockpit opening is wider than I prefer. I've been sucked out of this boat by waves more than any other boat I've ever owned. (Part of this is probably my size) It is a half-inch wider than the Classic and so I find that some technical maneuvers are beyond my reach in this boat. (Again, my size may be to blame) It isn't the fastest boat around.

It is the best all-around boat a medium- to large-size paddler could ask for. Rock solid performance. This boat allowed me to get where I am today, so fast. I would put every paddler that weighs 180-230 pounds in this boat, hands down. Paddlers you may know who often use this boat are James Kesterson

and Nigel Dennis himself. What better endorsement than that?

Romany Excel

The Romany Excel is the big brother of the Surf. It too has knee bumps, a wider cockpit opening and roomy fit. It's rated for the 220 pound plus paddler. It is the definition of "high volume." It makes easy work of 400 pounds of paddler and gear, plus some.

Pros: Great do-everything boat for the large paddler. It has the most foot room of any boat in the NDK/SKUK line. Most six-footers will be able to get their feet in this boat. It works like a champ for surfing, day trips, or light expeditions. Stable, solid performance, in the spirit of the Romany design.

Cons: It is a big boat and can be a handful. It's heavy, and I've been told it may weather cock some when carrying a lighter load. Therefore, careful attention should be paid to its skeg, making sure it is clean and unkinked.

All in all, this boat is often the best option for paddlers who weigh more than 220 lbs, have size 12 or larger feet, or are taller than six feet, and not dainty. I have sold more Excels than I would have guessed. It clearly fills a niche, and fills it well.



Red and black Excel against an NDK backdrop. Photo: R Kruger

Romany Excel Expedition

The last boat in the Romany family, and the only one I haven't personally paddled, is the Romany Excel Expedition. One might consider it the limo version of the Excel. To date I have never had one in my shop; not seen one in the other NDK retailers I frequent.



Jeff Atkins in his Romany Excel Expedition. Photo: T. Bishop

So that brings me to Jeff Atkins. In 2017 he started saying that he was working on Nigel Dennis, trying to get him to make an Expedition-version of the Excel. And Jeff can use it! He has plenty of reasons to need an even larger version of the Excel. He also needed an Expedition lay-up, which is thicker and heavier than the standard layup. Well, 2018 rolls around and there it is, the big Papa boat, bigger even than the Explorer HV. I'd like to give you pros and cons, but as you can infer from my story, I don't have direct experience with it. I'd call upon Jeff but he's...you guessed it...on expedition. I believe, however, that we can infer that the boat is a solid performer that fills a small niche.

That concludes my review of the composite Romanys. The next article will cover the rotomold line that was "bred" from Romany stock, the Sport and Sportive. Until next time, see you on the water!

Incident Management: What Was Supposed to be an Advanced Surf Class Turned into a Full-Blown Shit Show

Tom Noffsinger

What was supposed to be an advanced surf class, quickly turned into two nearly simultaneous, real-world, advanced surf zone rescues. The kind no instructor ever wants to do – with paddlers drifting out to sea through increasingly big waves, and kayaks headed toward shore without their owners.

In hindsight, it's likely that a few simple precautions could have prevented at least the second rescue, and probably the first as well. As the lead instructor, I didn't take those extra steps, and the result was a full-blown shit show (the precise phrase I used during our debrief).

We were a group of six students and two L-5 instructors, heading out for inlet surfing on a strong ebb tide that was creating great waves over a series of sandbars. There was a northeast wind blowing about 12 kts. It's a place where I've surfed and taught dozens of times, including just six weeks before this class. I know the inlet; I know how the sand bars had changed this year. I also know the risks.

Before we hit the surf we had an extensive beach talk, identified risks and safe zones, talked about our on-water signals and the procedures for someone coming out of their boat. We were well prepared, in theory. As the great book Sea Kayaker, Deep Trouble points out, it's never one big mistake that causes major incidents. It's a series of small, often unnoticed decisions that compound to create mayhem.



Photo: Rick Wiebush

Mistake 1

There were several students in the class with whom I had never paddled. They had been vetted, but not by me or my co-instructor. I had asked each about their rolls and surf experience, but hadn't witnessed their rough water skills before we entered the surf. What I should have done was ask the entire class to demonstrate a self-rescue in bumpy conditions. It may have changed where we went, and certainly would have given me a better understanding of skills.

We headed about a hundred yards north of the inlet where there was manageable surf, and instructed the group to begin a circular "racetrack" pattern, only going out past the first break, where the waves were about 2-3 feet (subsequent surf breaks get increasingly larger in inlet surf areas). After a cycle

or two through the waves, it looked like there were better-formed waves about 30 yards south of our location, just on the other side of a shallow sandbar. So as each student exited the surf on a ride, I told them to circle around to the south where the waves were better.

Mistake 2

I should have had the entire group gather together, waiting until everyone completed the circuit, and then we could have moved the short distance south as an entire group. Instead, when the last surfer missed the communication and headed back out for his next run, the group started separating. That paddler went past the first break and into the second. When he started to surf the larger 3 – 4 foot waves back in, he capsized and came out of his boat.

He was able to walk the kayak in to shallower water over the bar, but the rescue took too long and by the time he was in his cockpit, it was half full of water and we were in the first row of breakers.

We got his skirt on and he started paddling toward shore. But he again came out of his boat, and this time he also let go of it. The boat headed to shore, and he started drifting out through the breakers – no longer able to stand up. By now the rest of the group was too far around the sandbar and probably couldn't see the developing problem. I used the paddle signals we had discussed to alert the others, but needed to keep an eye on the swimmer and paddle out through the dumping surf to reach him.

Mistake 3

My co-instructor should have recognized the group wasn't all together with him on the south side of the sandbar, and held everyone in place. That would have let us deal with just the one rescue, and other people would have been available to come help out. I should have made it clear that we were staying as one group, not dividing.

I was able to get to the swimmer and paddle him in to the shallows, while he was in the water with his arms and legs wrapped around my bow. It wasn't

the preferred method, but at this point I wasn't confident he would be a successful back-deck-swimmer without endangering both of us.

Meanwhile, the rest of the group had started surfing as soon as they got around the sandbar and quickly ventured out too far, past the initial break. Almost immediately that group had a swimmer out of his kayak.

Mistake 4

With a new swimmer in the surf zone, the students and the other instructor needed to manage another rescue. The students were closest, and as planned during our briefing, they started the rescue. But they were unable to control their boats effectively in the surf zone. Helping out, the other instructor hooked a tow onto the swimmer's kayak for a rescue under tow. Unfortunately, this reduced his ability to coordinate the rescue. Then the swimmer got separated from his kayak and, to compound things, the towline broke at the belt.

Mistake 5

At that point the instructor should have let the kayak go, and gone after the swimmer for a back-deck rescue. Instead, the students – who already had difficulty controlling their boats - were attempting to rescue the swimmer in ever-larger crashing waves.



Photo: Tom Noffsinger

At this point we had two paddlers on the sandbar (one of them the first swimmer), and a third paddler who had gone to the main beach to rest. That left the second swimmer, two instructors and two students still dealing with the chaos.

I was able to paddle over and relieve the student who was trying to rescue the second swimmer. After a few minutes dealing with the breaking surf and the swimmer hugging my bow, I then talked the swimmer through the steps of climbing on my back deck for a swimmer rescue through the surf.

He got up successfully but it got harrowing: I had to execute at least two combat rolls with him on my back deck. With the first, I made it up half-way, before getting pulled back over in part by the swimmer. I remember thinking while upside down. "I have GOT to nail this roll." Thankfully the swimmer let go of my kayak and I rolled up. He climbed back on and we eventually were able to reach a nearby sandbar, and from there we got everyone reunited with their kayaks. Now sorted, we headed to the beach for a debrief and lunch.

The rest of the day was spent playing on smaller waves with clearly defined spacing and play zones. The rest of the day also involved a lot of "What if" thoughts in my head, and relief that it wasn't worse.

Lessons Learned – We can't assume that all those in an advanced class have the skills to successfully meet the challenge. A few things I could have done differently include:

- Requiring all students to demonstrate a self-rescue – roll and out-of-boat – before entering the surf.
- Better communication between the instructors before the class about how we'll move as a group; how we'll keep an eye on each other; and expectations for keeping everyone together.
- A warm-up session in smaller waves to get a sense of skill levels. While the surf we started in wasn't big by advanced surf zone standards, going out past the second break was definitely advanced surf.
- Use three-person groups, rather than the buddy system. In advanced conditions, a single buddy may not be enough when things go wrong.

Ultimately, we ended the day with smiles and some good surfing, but the entire day could have been much more productive if we had significantly limited our mistakes!



Photo: Tom Noffsinger

Winners of the 2020 Cross Currents**Calendar Photo Contest**

Judges: Jeff Atkins, Ashley Brown, Laurie Collins, Marilyn Cooper, Paula Hubbard, Kathryn Lapolla, Tom Noffsinger, Mike Thomas, Shelly Wiechelt

Each year, Cross Currents publishes and distributes a calendar that contains 13 spectacular kayaking-related photos that have been submitted (primarily) by sea kayakers. The submitted photos are rated by

a panel of judges and the individual ratings are then aggregated to identify the 13 winners. This year about 65 photos were submitted by 22 different paddlers. This section of *Coastbusters* presents this year's winners.



Photo: Betsey Carmona



Photo: Chris Bickford

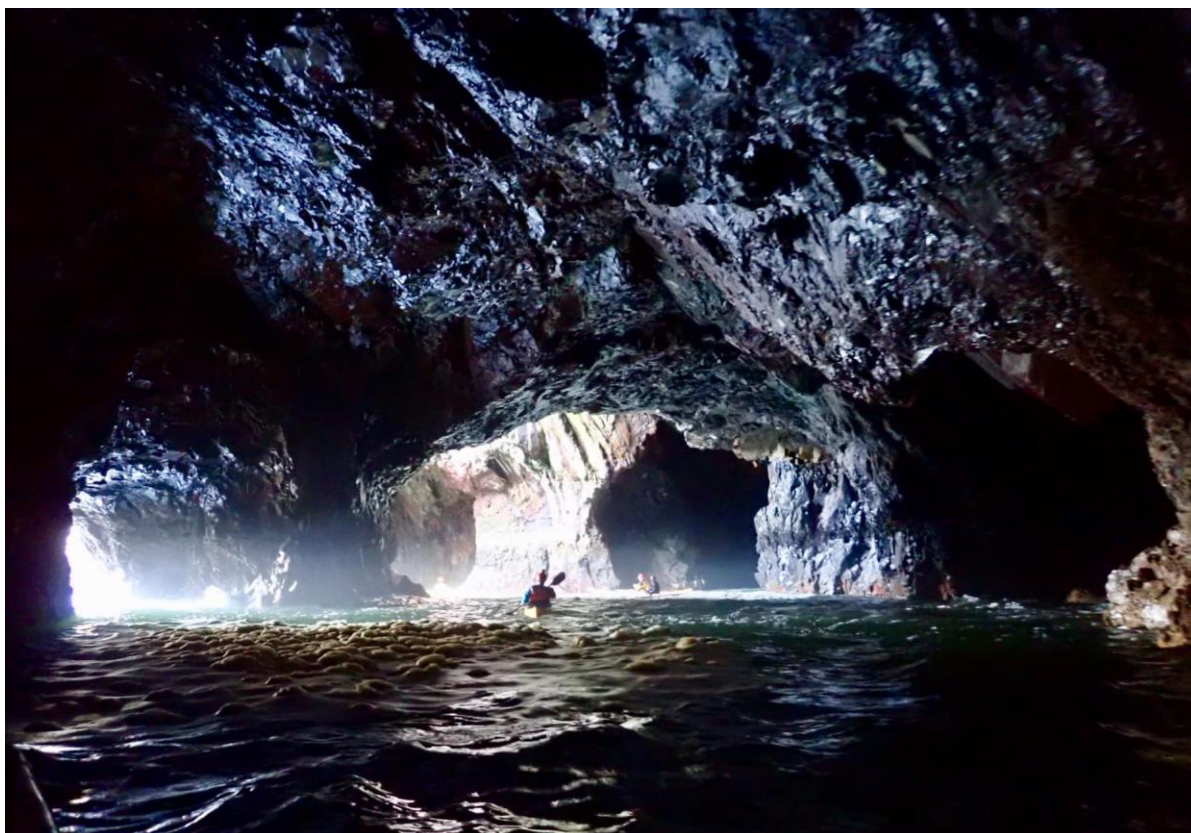


Photo: Bill Vonnegut



Photo: Victor Leon



Photo: Will Camacho



Photo: Gery Kirkner



Photo: Rob Pearlman



Photo: R. Dennis Green



Photo: Rachelle Skrzysinski



Photo: Bill Vonnegut



Photo: Curtis Warrenfeltz



Photo: Michael McGee



Photo: Mike Kowalsky

Frequent Paddler Program Pays Off Big Time

Last year, Cross Currents started a Frequent Paddler Program in which people earned \$100 each time they completed six days of trips or classes. So if someone did a week-long trip, or two three-day weekend classes, they got a \$100 credit toward their next class or trip. It was our way of consistently rewarding people for their continued support of Cross Currents programs.

It paid off. There was a total of 37 people who earned one or more awards. Thirty of those people cashed in and collectively saved \$3,000 on subsequent classes and/or trips. Several people applied their awards to the Kiptopeke Symposium and paid just \$150 or \$250 instead of the usual \$450 cost!

The Frequent Paddler Program will be continuing in 2020!

Contributors

Calvin Croll – spent 13 years leading Outward Bound expeditions before coaching and teaching at Body, Boat Blade in Washington State. He is a British Canoeing Advanced Sea Leader (5*) and an ACA L4 instructor. Last year he completed the first solo winter circumnavigation of Vancouver Island. The 47-day expedition included snow, 60 knot winds, and record-breaking wave heights.

Randi Kruger is an L4 Instructor who runs Capital City Kayak and is the NDK/SKUK representative for the metro DC area.

Tom Noffsinger is an ACA L5 instructor, a sea kayak surfing aficionado, and is experimenting with living on a boat moored in Portsmouth, VA.

Rick Wiebush is an ACA L3 Instructor Trainer and BC Sea Leader. Rick runs Cross Currents Sea Kayaking and organizes the Kiptopeke Symposium. He has paddled the Sea of Cortes, the Amazon, the Exumas, Greenland, the U.K., Australia and New Zealand. He lives in Baltimore.

racer, who lives in northern New Jersey.

Coastbusters welcomes submissions of trip reports, incident descriptions and analyses, skills and “how-to” articles, boat and gear reviews, book and video reviews, and photographs.

We are interested in receiving submissions from all paddlers. It just so happens that many 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.